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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ

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ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ
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(850 - 1000)

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CHAPTER SEVEN

AT THE COURT OF CONSTANTINE VII PORPHYROGENNETOS

Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (born on May 17 or 18 of 905) was the son of Leo VI and his fourth wife Zoe Karbonopsis or Karbonopsina ("Of Black Eyes"). A long-awaited heir to the throne, his entire life, from the cradle on, seems to have been ill-fated: as an infant he was a victim of the political struggles surrounding the Tetragamy, then a toy in the hands of (respectively) his insane uncle Alexander, his ambitious mother Zoe and the regents, including Nicholas Mystikos; finally, Romanos I (920-44) took the helm of the state, married the fourteen-year-old Constantine to his daughter Helene, and took over the throne of Byzantium, having pushed his son-in-law backstage. Romanos I was removed and succeeded by his sons Stephen and Constantine, and only in 945 did the partisans of Constantine VII manage to overturn and exile Romanos' sons. The Porphyrogennetos remained the sole ruler until his death in 959.

Even Constantine's final years were not those of happiness. His wife Helene was Romanos I's daughter and the sister of Stephen and Constantine who had fended off the Porphyrogennetos as a powerless puppet and whom he, in his turn, sent into exile after successful political maneuvering. Constantine not only tried to distance himself from Romanos' foreign and domestic policy but openly accused his father-in-law of mismanaging the administration of the state. Even though the sources are silent about Helene's attitude toward the family feud, the situation was not that of family harmony. Another brother of Helene, Theophylaktos, was Romanos I's appointee to the throne of the Constantinopolitan patriarch. He remained on the throne until 956, contributing to the difficulties of the secular ruler. As if this was not enough, Constantine's son, the future Romanos II, a reckless libertine, caused trouble for his father; the tensions grew, and rumors spread that Theophano, Romanos II's wife, a daughter of a humble inn-keeper, had conspired to poison her father-in-law.

Neither were the political circumstances of his reign cloudless. From his predecessors Constantine inherited a war with the Arabs that resulted in the catastrophe of the

Byzantine expedition against Crete in 949 and in the defeat of the Byzantine army by Sayf ad-Dawla in the East in 953. Only at the very end of Constantine's reign did the Byzantine generals Nikephoros Phokas and John Tzimiskes succeed in establishing some stability on the eastern border.

Notwithstanding all these political and personal mishaps, few Byzantine emperors have been so enthusiastically eulogized by modern scholars as Constantine VII, especially for his role in the development of culture. In the words of A. Rambaud, Constantine deserves to be honored for having initiated the great intellectual movement of his times: he reorganized public education, generated grand literary and artistic enterprises, and contributed to this movement through his own works.¹ A. Toynbee seems to be more cautious, but nevertheless confesses that he lost his heart to the Porphyrogennetos: his Constantine was an administrator perforce but a scholar by temperament, whose literary activity comprised works that he promoted and those he wrote or compiled himself.² Gradually, however, attempts are being made to evaluate Constantine's literary achievements more critically. Thus I. Ševčenko pares down the volume of the emperor's output under the assumption that he wrote only parts of works with which he is credited.³

Numerous works written by Constantine or, rather, by predominately anonymous *literati* at his court are extant (in full or partially) forming part and parcel of the so-called "Byzantine encyclopedism" of the mid-tenth century. Following in the steps of Photios' *Bibliotheca*, Constantine's collaborators produced an enormous encyclopedia or gathering of excerpts (Ἐκλογαί) of ancient and late antique authors, divided into 53 subjects, of which only *On embassies*, *On virtues and vices*, and some others partially survived.⁴ At the

¹ A. RAMBAUD, *L'Empire grec au dixième siècle: Constantin Porphyrogénète*, Paris 1870, repr. New York 1963, 68f.

² A. TOYNBEE, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World*, London 1973, 23f., 575-580. Much has been written on Constantine: see the surveys by MORAVCSIK, *Byzantinoturcica* 1, 356-390; HUNGER, *Lit.* 1, 360-367; LEMERLE, *Humanisme*, 268-288. See also V. LATYŠEV, K voprosu o literaturnoj dejatel'nosti Konstantina Bagrjanorodnogo, *VizVrem* 22, 1915/16, 13-20; G. L. HUXLEY, The Scholarship of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Proceedings of the R. Irish Academy* 80, 1980, C. 2, 29-40; L. TARTAGLIA, Livelli stilistici in Costantino Porfirogenito, *JÖB* 32/3, 1982, 197-206; A. MARKOPOULOS (ed.), *Κωνσταντῖνος Ζ' ὁ Πορφυρογέννητος καὶ ἡ ἐποχὴ του*, Athens 1989; B. KOUTABA DELIBORIA, *Ὁ γεωγραφικὸς κόσμος Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Πορφυρογεννήτου*, 2 vols., Athens 1993.

³ I. ŠEVČENKO, Re-Reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in J. SHEPARD - S. FRANKLIN (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, Aldershot 1982, 187f. Cf. the Russian version of this article, Id., Perečityvaja Konstantina Bagrjanorodnogo, *VizVrem* 54, 1993, 6-38.

⁴ Major editions: C. DE BOOR, *Excerpta de legationibus*, 2 vols., Berlin 1903; Th. BÜTTNER WOBS ROOS, *Excerpta de virtutibus et viciis*, 2 vols., Berlin 1906-10. See E. TAUBLER, Zur Beurteilung der constantinischen Excerpte, *BZ* 25, 1925, 33-40; A. DAIN, L'encyclopédisme de Constantin Porphyrogénète, *Lettres d'humanité* 12, 1953, 64-81; B. A. SEREMENOVKER, Enciklopedii Konstantina Bagrjanorodnogo: bibliografičeskij apparat i problemy attribucii, *VizVrem* 45, 1984, 242-246; D. LEE - J. SHEPARD, A Double Life: Placing the Peri Presbeon, *BS* 52, 1991, 15-39; P. SCHREINER, Die Historikerhandschrift Vaticanus graecus 977: ein Handexemplar zur Vorbereitung des Konstantinischen Exzerptenwerkes?, *JÖB* 37, 1987, 1-30.

command of Constantine VII an anonymous author compiled a book called *Geoponika*, a collection of fragments from the works of ancient writers on various agricultural topics.⁵ In its goal the *Geoponika* supplements the *Excerpts*.

The book *On the themes* bears the name of Constantine in the title, which also spells out the fact that the author's intention is to explain the origin and the character of the names of the themes.⁶ The author, whether Constantine or not, provides the reader primarily with the etymology (usually mythical or pseudo-historical) of the names of the provinces and lists of *poleis*, which however by the tenth century were mostly in ruins. The author's attention is directed toward the past, whereas the contemporary situation in the themes is as a rule neglected.

The so-called *Book of ceremonies* also has Constantine's name in its title.⁷ It is a dossier containing a description of individual ceremonies (processions, coronations, promotions and so on) which were celebrated at the court, as well as records of triumphs, military expeditions, and acclamations for Nikephoros II (evidently a later insertion). Some entries (chapters) are borrowed from late antique sources, some possibly gleaned from imperial archives. In a short preface to this work, the author stresses his main purpose: to restore the "order (τάξις) of imperial dignity" (the key word *taxis* is repeated in the preamble five times, not counting its derivatives) that should reflect "the harmony and movement" established by the Creator. In accordance with the idea of "reflection" the author uses the image of the "lucid and clear looking-glass" that is to be installed in the palace. One more simile, "to cull like flowers from a meadow" (a paraphrase of the evangelical "grass from the field" [Luke 12:28]), underscores another task of the treatise — the search for ancestral customs.

The treatise conventionally titled *On the administration of the empire* is also attributed to Constantine.⁸ It is addressed to his son and heir Romanos II. In its content as

⁵ H. BECKH, *Geoponica, sive Cassiani Bassi scholasticae de re rustica eclogae*, Leipzig 1895; Russian tr. and commentary by E. E. LIPŠIČ, *Geoponiki*, Moscow-Leningrad 1960. See E. FEHRLE, *Studien zu den griechischen Geoponikern*, Leipzig-Berlin 1920; J. KODER, *Gemüse in Byzanz*, Vienna 1993.

⁶ *Costantino Porfirogenito. De thematibus*, ed. A. PERTUSI, Vatican 1952 [ST 160]. On this work, see Th. PRATSCH, Untersuchungen zu De thematibus Kaiser Konstantins VII Porphyrogennetos, *Varia* V, Bonn 1994 [Poikila Byzantina 13], 13-145. The precise date of composition is under discussion; see G. OSTROGORSKIJ, Sur la date de la composition du Livre des Thèmes et sur l'époque de la constitution des premiers thèmes d'Asie Mineure, *Byzantion* 23, 1953, 38-46 (between 934 and 944); H. AHRWEILER, Sur la date du 'De thematibus' de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, *TM* 8, 1981, 1-5 (after 944); T. LOUNGHIS, Sur la date du De thematibus, *REB* 31, 1973, 299-305 (after 952).

⁷ *Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, ed. J. REISKE, 2 vols., Bonn 1829-30; the edition by A. VOGT, *Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, Le livre des cérémonies*, 4 vols., Paris 1935-1940, remains unfinished.

⁸ *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio*, critical ed. Gy. MORAVCSIK, Engl. trans. by R. J. H. JENKINS, 2nd ed. Washington 1967, and F. DVORNIK and others, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio. Commentary*, London 1962; another edition with a

well as in its vocabulary the treatise differs substantially from such works as *On the themes* and the *Book of ceremonies*, since the material the author deals with here is primarily contemporary. There are extensive quotations from historical works in the text but they rarely go farther back than Theophanes (chs. 17, 21, 22, 25), while late Roman emperors (Diocletian, Constantine, Theodosios I, Justinian) are mentioned only infrequently. In the preface, it is notable that "Constantine" emphasizes less ancestral tradition and more his personal observations: "These things have I discovered of my own wisdom," he says without any pretence to modesty. If not antiquarian, the book is definitely historical, with numerous excursus into the past of the neighbors of Byzantium.

Three treatises on imperial campaigns survived,⁹ of which only the third (and longest) bears the name of Constantine and an address to his son Romanos. In the preamble to this tract, however, "Constantine" refers to the memorandum of the *magistros* Leo Katakylas, a courtier of Leo VI, which allegedly was stylistically lacking but nonetheless praiseworthy. He goes even farther back, to the preceding emperors, by which he unexpectedly means the Iconoclastic (heretical!) Isaurians, and in the second treatise he describes a campaign of Julius Caesar. Whether these texts form a "dossier" (as P. Speck speculates) or not, they lack the historicity of the book on the administration and define the duty of officers, the service of the imperial household, and other elements of campaigning in only a general way.

Moravcsik enumerates several minor works of Constantine, some of which were lost.¹⁰ Among those extant is a speech (or epistle) addressed to commanders of oriental armies¹¹ and a sermon *On the translatio of the relics of John Chrysostom*, which, according to the editor, K. Dyobouniotes, is probably a revision of an earlier original.¹² The name of Constantine Porphyrogennetos stands also in the title of the "tale (διήγησις) gleaned from

Russian translation by G. LITAVRIN - A. NOVOSEL'CEV, *Konstantin Bagrjanorodnyj, Ob upravlenii imperiej*, Moscow 1989. Much has been written about this work, see recently T. LOUNGHIS, *Κωνσταντίνου Ζ' Πορφυρογεννήτου, De administrando imperio*, Thessalonike 1990; Cl. SODE, *Untersuchungen zu De administrando imperio Kaiser Konstantins VII Porphyrogennetos, Varia V*, Bonn 1994 [Poikila Byzantina 13], 147-260; B. BEAUD, *Le savoir et le monarque: le Traité sur les nations de l'empereur Byzantin Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, Annales ESC* 45, 1990, 551-564.

⁹ Critical edition with English translation by J. HALDON, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, Vienna 1990. On this work, see P. SPECK, *Über Dossiers in byzantinischer antiquarischer Arbeit, über Schulbücher für Prinzen, sowie zu einer Seite frisch edierten Porphyrogennetos, Varia III*, Bonn 1991 [Poikila Byzantina 11], 269-292; G. L. HUXLEY, *A List of ἀπληκτα, GRBS* 16, 1975, 87-93.

¹⁰ MORAVCSIK, *Byzantinoturcica* 1, 361; cf. BECK, *Kirche*, 551f.

¹¹ See now H. AHRWEILER, *Un discours inédit de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, TM* 2, 1967, 393-404.

¹² BHG 878d, ed. K. I. DYOBOUNIOTES, *Κωνσταντίνου Πορφυρογεννήτου, Λόγος ανέκδοτος εις την ανακομιδήν του λειψάνου Ἰωάννου του Χρυσοστόμου, Epistemonike Epeteris Theologikes Scholes Panepistemiou Athenon* 1, 1926, 303-319.

various historical works" about the icon of Christ delivered to Abgar, the king of Edessa.¹³ In a "letter" (ἐπιστολή), Constantine announces that he, although "an emperor and ruler," reveres saint Gregory the Theologian like any commoner from the crowd.¹⁴ Despite the title, the text is evidently not a letter; eight genuine letters of Constantine addressed to Theodore of Kyzikos are known.¹⁵

However important the treatises of "Constantine" are for the study of Byzantine diplomatic relations and internal structure, they are non-literary texts in any strict sense of the term and we shall therefore abstain analyzing them. What matters for our purposes is the nostalgia for the past that permeates them and the trend to regain access to a forgotten antiquity. It is the case, however, that historicism is typical of the major literary works produced at the court of Constantine VII.

A. Biography of Basil I

Theophanes Continuatus, Chronographia, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1838, 211-353

According to its title, the biography (we shall avoid here and below the term "Vita," which has a hagiographical hue) of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty was diligently compiled from various sources by his grandson Constantine. As for the other works attributed to the emperor Constantine VII the authorship of Basil's biography is questionable, although in the preamble the author plainly identifies himself as Constantine VII: he deliberates that if his life continues, and he is spared the burden of illness, and if exterior circumstances do not prevent him from writing, he will be able to describe the deeds of Basil's descendants and proceed to his own time. We shall leave the question of authorship unanswered.

The work is totally partisan.¹⁶ Its purpose is not only a panegyric of Basil I but an exposure of Michael III, whose evil qualities led to his deserved fall. Accordingly the book is divided into two principal parts: Basil's life before his ascent to the throne in 867, and his reign. In its turn, the first part falls into two sections. First, the author tells his hero's biography up to his proclamation as co-ruler (p. 212-242), and then states that having

¹³ BHG 794, ed. E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Christusbilder*, Leipzig 1899, 39*-85**.

¹⁴ BHG 727, ed. I. SAKKELION, *Κωνσταντίνου Ζ' του Πορφυρογεννήτου Ἐπιστολή πρὸς Γρηγόριον τὸν τῆς θεολογίας ἐπὶνυμιον, Deltion tes Historikes kai Ethnologikes Hetaireias* 2, 1885, 264.12-14.

¹⁵ DARROUZÈS, *Epistoliers*, 26.

¹⁶ Germ. tr. L. BREYER, *Vom Bauernhof auf den Kaiserthron*, Graz-Vienna-Cologne 1981. On it, see I. ŠEVČENKO, *Storia letteraria* (in French), *La civiltà bizantina dal IX al'XII secolo*, Bari 1978, 89-127; P. AGAPETOS, *Ἡ εἰκόνα τοῦ αὐτοκράτορα Βασιλείου Α' στή φιλομακεδονική γραμματεία* (867-959), *Hellenika* 40, 1989, 306-322. Cf. F. BORNHANN, *Rifunzionalizzazione cristiana di motivi pagani nella Vita di Basilio I di Costantino VII, Paideia cristiana*, Rome 1994, 559-565.

reached this point of his narration he shall delay (σχολλάσαι) for a while the story of Basil-emperor and instead dwell on the life of Michael III, showing how the latter had misbehaved and how he frittered away the state coffers (p. 242.11-16). The author wants to make it clear that it was divine will that summoned Basil to power, and that Michael himself whetted the sword which hit him. His actions were lawless, proclaims "Constantine" at the outset, and he concludes this section by stating that every day Michael perpetrated wicked acts and others that were worse than wicked (p. 247.16-17).

The author commences the second part with a remark indicating a new theme: "Thus Basil who until this moment was second in the state hierarchy came to the command of the whole" (p. 255.6-7; cf. 256.8-9). He attempts to organize the second part as a sequence of topical units: first he speaks of Basil's domestic policy (p. 261.19), then of military campaigns that the emperor started after having solved domestic problems, then he returns to administrative affairs and judicial activity, then warfare again, this time against the Paulicians. Afterwards, several points are presented without any clear order, but finally the biographer moves to the history of wars, dividing them clearly (p. 288.10-12; cf. 308.3-4) into eastern and western campaigns. The course of military actions is described in detail, the author gives the names of commanders and indicates the places of battles. He finishes this section with a vignette: "Such are the military exploits of Basil and his generals of which I have heard, on the sea and mainland, in the West and East" (p. 313.21-314.2).

A new section follows. Putting aside the history of events, the author turns toward a "theory of political wisdom." If we believe "Constantine," Basil listened to historical narratives, political dogma, moral science, spiritual indoctrination, and even himself "exercised his hand" in writing. Again the author underscores the historical interests of Basil who investigated morality, administration and warfare [of the past] in order to imitate them in his policy. He also studied the lives of pious men so as to learn about ways by which he might discipline his own desires. This great theoretical pattern funnels down to a few episodes describing the emperor's indebtedness and gratitude to those who had cared for his upbringing. Then begins the last, and substantial, section of the second part: how Basil ordered the repair and construction of churches and secular buildings, which are here described in minute detail (p. 321-38).¹⁷ This is followed by the family history (p. 345-352): the death of Constantine, conflict with Leo, and the demise of Basil.

Despite some disorganized digressions, the topical structure dominates in the work. The author usually points out the transition from one theme to another or comments on his story-telling: "it should not be silenced" (p. 218.4), "it will be told later" (p. 241.17, 257.13, 271.22), "as was said above" (p. 292.16). The statements linking sections and episodes can be complex, as for instance "The story should return to its course and elucidate what happened thereafter" (p. 282.22-23) or "It is necessary to direct the tale to

¹⁷ See V. LIHAČEVA - Ja. LJUBARSKIJ, Pamjatniki iskusstva v 'žizneopisanii Vasilija' Konstantina Bagrjanorodnogo, *Viz Vrem* 42, 1981, 171-183.

the actions of Basil and to report how he always heeded common interests" (p. 314.3-6). Moreover, "Constantine" emphasizes that he has control over his narrative and in a "constructivist" manner makes manifest the unity of what is being told and the style of telling: "Nobody should be astonished or execrate me, if my narration is concise and plain, presenting such great affairs at a rapid pace; for the tale has to reflect the rush of events, and therefore my narrative is plain and speedy" (p. 279.14-17).

The composition of Basil's biography is radically different from the universal and chronological (annalistic) pattern of the greatest Byzantine historian of the early ninth century Theophanes — the organizing principle here is not the year but the subject-matter. The biographer is aware of the novelty of his approach, and says in the preamble that he would like to describe all the time (χρόνος) during which the Byzantine empire existed and the actions of her autokrators, archons, generals and officers, but such a goal presupposes much time (again he uses the word χρόνος), enormous toil, abundance of books and freedom from obligations. Although the idea of *chronos* haunted him (at least on the level of vocabulary) he decided to deal with a single emperor and present his activities from his earliest days to his death (p. 211.18-212.9). The narrative focuses on Basil upon whom all the virtues are conferred.¹⁸ The protagonist of the story possessed both physical strength and high intellect, statesmanship and piety. "Constantine" develops the image pictured by Leo VI in the funeral speech on Basil I, and like Leo he places emphasis on the traditional "quartet of virtues," fortitude, intelligence, chastity and righteousness (p. 315.7-9). He is often more specific than Leo: he relates that Basil toiled day and night, striving to the best of his ability to see to the well-being of his subjects; he did not permit the powerful to oppress the poor; and presided in person over the *genikon*, the chief fiscal department. Basil's personal military prowess, on the other hand, is neglected in his biography. In a vague way the author affirms that his hero extended the frontiers of the empire thanks to his own endeavors, manliness, and lofty spirit, but these efforts comprised administrative measures rather than military deeds: Basil drew up lists of soldiers, paid their wages, trained them and polished their skills (p. 265.8-14). His expeditions are not characterized as successful, and the only martial episode in Basil's life is the crossing of the Euphrates, when the emperor distinguishes himself by carrying a load three times heavier than that of the ordinary soldier (p. 269.1-15).

"Constantine" is more attentive than Leo to the problem of Basil's ancestors. It was Photios who introduced the idea of Basil's descent from the Armenian royal line of the Arsacids, and Leo dwells but briefly and reluctantly on this idea: in essence it is a separate topic, and he touches on it only lest he is accused of breaking the rules of panegyric. "Constantine" is more eloquent on the theme, and even asserts that Basil's mother could pride herself on descent from Constantine the Great and Alexander Macedon. But he is

¹⁸ S. VRYONIS, The Vita Basilii of Constantine Porphyrogenitus and the Absorption of Armenians in Byzantine Society, *Euphrosynon: Aphieroma ston M. Chatzidaki*, Athens 1992, 693.

more interested in the humble boyhood of Basil and the wonderful signs foretelling his brilliant future.

While Basil is meant to be an ideal ruler and man, he is not free from human weakness. The historian relates, for instance, that the death of his eldest and favorite son Constantine had a profound impact on Basil. Whereas a civilized man, says the author, has to hold at bay irrational passions, Basil, in his mourning, overstepped the reasonable and behaved in a feminine manner, ignoble and unworthy. Eventually he recovered and followed the example of Job who bore his losses in a noble way (p. 345.11-19). Sometimes the emperor was a victim of bad men from his entourage. Thus, he listened to the slander against his able general Andrew the Scythian and dismissed him — even clever people, comments the story-teller, are often deceived by gossip (p. 286.15-18). More serious was Basil's error in believing Santabarenos' slander against the prince Leo. Santabarenos persuaded Leo to carry a dagger to protect the emperor against his enemies, and this dagger was found in Leo's boot; Basil angrily ordered Leo to be arrested despite the protests of some senators. But where statesmen had failed, a parrot was finally able to achieve, for it was a parrot that squawked during an imperial banquet: "Ai, ai, lord Leo!" With tears in their eyes everyone present entreated Basil to be reconciled with his son, and at last the emperor agreed (p. 349-51).

Michael III is the anti-hero of the story. As Basil is the vehicle of all the virtues, Michael is the incarnation of all the vices: he made a laughing stock of divine rites and mocked both state institutions and the laws of nature (p. 243.1-2), gathered round himself impious, wretched and evil people and showed no respect for the dignity of imperial power, ridiculed the symbols of Christian creed, appointed the jester Gryllos as a fake patriarch and called himself archbishop of Koloneia, imitated Dionysos after a drunken bout, behaved like Erinyes and Titanos, and was eager to transform the all-night office into a performance of [ancient] drama (p. 251.8-13). He wasted state resources on charioteers and himself performed as a charioteer. "Constantine" accumulates deprecating epithets that characterize Michael as frenzied and deranged (p. 251.6), cowardly and miserable (p. 252.4), unbridled and heedless (p. 292.14). But he goes beyond simple labeling and paints a complicated picture of his archenemy: when intoxicated, Michael became cruel, consigned innocent people to execution and torture, but in the morning, when the alcohol had evaporated and the thick fog in his brain dissolved, he revoked his previous night's commands, looked for those whom he had sent to death, repented and wept (p. 252.7-13). Sometimes Michael's dissoluteness is represented in "realistic" scenes, such as the practical joke the young emperor played on his mother whom he invited to meet the patriarch. She rushed to see the revered Ignatios (as she thought) and fell to his feet, but it was Gryllos who stood up from the chair, turned his back to Theodora and "greeted" her with "a donkey's noise from his guts," causing Michael to laugh.

The conflict of the good hero and wretched anti-hero is common in Byzantine biographical (hagiographical) works. The special nature of the situation in Basil's biography is not only the lack of *agon* (such we met in the *Vita of the patriarch Ignatios* by

Niketas Paphlagon, in which the protagonists act on parallel levels, without any direct clash) but a negation of *agon*: Michael is Basil's benefactor up to the moment when he appointed Basil his co-ruler and placed with his own hands the crown on Basil's head. The only way to explain away such a paradoxical situation is to declare it exceptional: "After he accepted and raised Basil, Michael returned to his habitual misbehavior" (p. 247.18-19). Certainly, Basil did his best to persuade the emperor to pursue a better course, but in vain. He only irritated Michael, whose companions egged the emperor on against Basil. In his wretchedness Michael decided to kill his former protégé; but he could not find a convincing pretext. The conflict reaches its culmination: who, exclaims the biographer of Basil, be he a man with a heart of stone or the gentlest person, would not be enraged by all these misdeeds or inflamed by the desire for revenge. So the best functionaries and the most reasonable members of the Senate came to an agreement, and using the soldiers of the palace guard, put an end to Michael's life a scorpion. His end was nothing but deserved.

Thus the nature of the conflict is changed. Here it is not a pagan ruler who is slaughtering a holy man but the best and most reasonable of people (Basil's participation in the conspiracy is, of course, ignored) who slay the scoundrel. The roots of the image of the anti-hero are certainly intricate. One can discover in Michael's portrait some traits of ancient rogues¹⁹ or even the features of a folkloric king-mime,²⁰ but this is not the whole story: the author of the biography of Basil reached a new stage both in composition and in shaping the interaction of his protagonists.

Minor characters in the biography are usually shadowy figures, and their character is often defined by the political tendencies of the biographer. Constantine VII is allied with the kin of Phokas, and it goes without saying that Nikephoros Phokas the Elder is very positively evaluated (p. 313.1-2, 7-8). Other generals are either wholly good (as Andrew the Scythian and Niketas Oryphas) or absolutely unworthy (as Stephen-Maxentios, the *strategos* of Cappadocia, responsible for the defeat of the Byzantine army sent to Italy, or Kestas Styppiotēs). Since the dispute of the Ignatians and Photians is over, "Constantine" has no tendency to take sides. Accordingly, Ignatios possesses "a retinue of virtues" (p. 276.12-13), and Photios is the wisest teacher and instructor of the emperor's children (p. 276.17, 277.1). More developed and more complex is the image of the Caesar Bardas. To begin with, his relations with Basil are described in neutral tones. He even foresaw Basil's ascent to the throne. Then a change occurs: Bardas envied Basil and was apprehended by his rival's growing influence at the court; he acted arrogantly and caused people to fear him.

¹⁹ On the imitation of Plutarch's biography of Antony, see R. J. H. JENKINS, Constantine VII's Portrait of Michael III, *Académie R. de Belgique. Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques* 34, 1948, 71-77, repr. in ID., *Studies*, pt. I. Jenkins even suggests that the lost (!) life of Nero served as a source for Michael's portrayal.

²⁰ Cf. Ja. LJUBARSKIJ, Der Kaiser als Mime, *JÖB* 37, 1987, 39-50; E. KISLINGER, Michael III. Image and Reality, *Eos* 75, 1987, 389-400; P. KARLIN HAYTER, Imperial Charioteers Seen by the Senate or by the Plebs, *Byzantion* 57, 1987, 326-335.

P. Alexander considers the work of "Constantine" the earliest complete example of the revival of secular biography in Byzantium,²¹ linking it with the tradition of the imperial oration, the principles of which were outlined by the rhetorician Menander and practiced by such late Roman authors as Eusebios in the *Vita of Constantine* (Kazhdan, *HBL* (650-850), 127-129) and Prokopios of Gaza in the panegyric of the emperor Anastasios I.²² "Constantine," however, imitated neither of these texts. Prokopios' panegyric is a speech addressed to the emperor, abstract in its eulogy (only rarely are names and facts cited), full of scholarly comparisons of the hero (with Aristides, Cyrus, Agesilaos and so on), and — most importantly — does not contain a trace of the moral competition of the hero and anti-hero forming the core of Basil's biography. No more productive are Alexander's attempts to find intermediary stages of the secular biography between the Roman standards and "Constantine's" work. The chance similarity of single phrases in the biography of Basil and hagiographical discourses, as well as in Leo VI's funeral oration, simply suggests the existence of a common fund of traditional expressions or, at most, "Constantine's" knowledge of preceding literature. Rather, these loans should not make us blind to the author's fundamental difference from his predecessors, his originality. Certainly, in the biography we may discover some features of the imperial oration as recommended by Menander, but the truth of the matter is that a panegyrist can hardly praise a king without mentioning such items as his administrative activities and military expeditions.

The biographer is a Byzantine intellectual of the tenth century. He is still wary of the ancient heritage. He hastens to stress that Basil was brought up by his father and had no need of the centaur Cheiron (the instructor of Achilles) or the legislator Lycurgus or Solon (p. 220.4). Indeed, his education encompassed medieval values: piety, reverence for his parents, obedience to authority, and sympathy for the needy. On the other hand, it is the worthless Michael whom the author likens to the mythical god Dionysos. In true hagiographical manner, the life of Basil is impregnated with miracles: once the infant Basil was left in a field, and a graceful eagle appeared and stopped in the air over the boy covering him with the shade of his outstretched wings (p. 218.13-18); the *kathegoumenos* of the monastery of St. Diomedes had a dream predicting Basil's ascent to the throne; he refused to believe the "fantasy" but the dream recurred (p. 223.14-224.6); another monk recognized Basil's imperial future as Basil entered the church of St. Andrew in Patras (p. 226.11-23); Basil's mother also had a prophetic dream in which she saw an enormous golden cypress tree on top of which Basil was seated (p. 225.17-21); a mounted man tried to kill Basil but missed and the spear hit the ground, then suddenly his horse ran to a precipice and the murderer fell and died (p. 249.15-19). Later we hear a story about an archbishop dispatched to baptize the Rus': the 'barbarians' refused to believe in Christ, but

²¹ P. ALEXANDER, *Secular Biography at Byzantium*, *Speculum* 15, 1940, 197, repr. in ID., *History*, pt. I.

²² Ed. and French tr. by A. CHAUVOT, *Procope de Gaza, Priscien de Césarée, Panégyriques de l'empereur Anastase Ier*, Bonn 1986, 2-51.

the archbishop, following the example of the three young Jews in the furnace (a common hymnographic topic), threw the Gospel book in the flames, and immediately the fire was extinguished while the book suffered no damage (p. 344.11-17). This list does not exhaust the predictions and prophetic dreams in the narrative.

Basil's biography reflects not only what we might term general medieval trends but also specific problems of the Byzantine state in the mid-tenth century when agrarian legislation and the so-called defense of the poor were at the focus of social propaganda. In accordance with the tenth-century ideology, strongly colored by Christian ethics, "Constantine" presents his hero as a protector of the indigent. Social peace is Basil's mission: the powerful should not oppress the feeble, but the poor, in their turn, should abstain from assaulting the rich; the *dynatos* should embrace the *ptochos* and the poor man should glorify the powerful as his savior and father (p. 315.17-21). Basil's policy proved successful. "The weak limbs of the poor," says the panegyrist, "became stronger, since the emperor gave everybody the opportunity to till his field and to plant his vineyard in security, and nobody dared to disentitle the poor of his paternal olive and fig-trees" (p. 258.17-20).

Thus, if we believe "Constantine," Basil I managed to achieve what the contemporaries of his biographer had failed to do, that is, to solve the agrarian problem. Did Basil follow the course lately chosen by Romanos I or did he find more efficacious means to pursue his ends? This is how "Constantine" explains the success of his hero: first, Basil appointed "the best men" to the highest offices; these people kept their hands clean, did not take bribes, and of all the virtues respected justice — it was they who did not permit the rich to trample the poor under foot (p. 257.21-258.5). "Constantine" eulogizes Basil's judicial reform that enabled peasants to find justice at the Constantinopolitan tribunals. Basil personally participated in the investigation of peasants' claims, defending those who had been abused by tax-collectors. He commanded that the tax records be put in order and rewritten in large letters so that peasants were able to read them. During Basil's reign the inhabitants of the provinces enjoyed various tax exemptions and were allowed to use the deserted tenures of their neighbors without paying any duty (p. 348.2-6). At the same time, the writer castigates those fiscal officials who wanted to increase taxes (p. 346.8-9).

The picture of the blissful life of the countryside is surely far from the reality, but it is nonetheless suggestive of the program at the court of Constantine VII, which differed from that practiced by the administration of Romanos I. While Romanos placed the responsibility for the impoverishment of the peasantry on the shoulders of the country magnates who accumulated the land of the destitute, Constantine or his collaborator aimed at the functionaries, above all the fiscal officials. In his view, the solution to the problem lay not in constraining the growing country nobility but in reorganizing the state apparatus.²³

²³ A. KAZHDAN, *Iz istorii vizantijskoj hronografii*, 1. O sostave tak nažyvaemoj 'Hroniki Prodolžatelja Feofana', *VizVrem* 19, 1961, 85f.

The biography of Basil marks the birth of a new genre of secular panegyric. It contains some casual features recommended by Menander for the imperial oration, but it differs substantially from the extant imperial eulogies of the late Roman period, and it is futile to speculate to what extent it depends on Plutarch's biography of Nero, as this biography is lost. "Constantine's" work belongs to the tenth century: its political and social problems are those of the Macedonian dynasty, and its artistic approaches are a critical continuation of historical and rhetorical literature of the ninth and early tenth century. It is a negation of Theophanes' annalistic chronography and the development of Niketas Paphlagon's pamphleteer style, and its replacement of the physical *agon* with a moral opposition of protagonists marks a new stage in image building.

B. Continuation of Theophanes and the Book of Kings

Theophanes Continuatus, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1838; *Josephus Genesius, Regum libri quattuor*, ed. A. LESMÜLLER WERNER, Berlin-New York 1978

In manuscript Vaticanus gr. 167 of the first half of the eleventh century the biography of Basil I is copied as the fifth book of the anonymous *Continuation of Theophanes*.²⁴ It is more probable (as I. Ševčenko has suggested) that the four preceding books were written after the biography was completed. The *Continuatio* is prefaced by a short address to "the wisest emperor," that is Constantine VII, one of whose merits is the regeneration of the past, an interest in history. The author ascribes the honor of writing the chronicle to Constantine himself, whereas his own hand served only as a tool (lit. "help") to the emperor. Neither this flattery nor an enigmatic (defective?) phrase in the preamble pronouncing Constantine "the grandson of Theophanes (to emend "Basil I"?)" nor some lexical similarities in the *Continuatio* with other works of Constantine's milieu can justify the attribution of the chronicle to the enlightened emperor;²⁵ it was produced by an anonymous intellectual at the court of Constantine VII.

In the preamble the historian reminds his reader that "the blessed Theophanes" brought his chronicle to the end of the reign of Michael I. He proceeds from this point, beginning his narrative with Leo V (813-20) and finishing with a portrayal of the wretched Michael III.

²⁴ Russ. tr. Ja. LJUBARSKIJ, *Prodolžatel' Feofana. Žizneopisanija vizantijskih carej*, St. Petersburg 1992. On the *Chronicle* see, F. HIRSCH, *Byzantinische Studien*, Leipzig 1876, repr. Amsterdam 1965, 175-302; H. G. NICKLES, The *Continuatio Theophanis*, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 68, 1937, 221-227.

²⁵ So J. SIGNES CODOÑER, Algunas consideraciones sobre la autoria del Theophanes Continuatus, *Erytheia* 10, 1989, 27. At the end of his article, Signes admits that his conclusions are "sólo parcialmente correctos," whatever this means.

The *Continuatio* is close in content and purpose to the chronicle entitled (at the inception of the second chapter) *Peri Basileion* (The Book of Kings).²⁶ It is commonly thought that the author of the chronicle was Genesios, even though in the single manuscript of the work (cod. Lips. 16, 11th or 12th c.) the text was copied as anonymous, and the name ΓΕΝΕΣΙΟΥ was added by a later hand, above the Latin title.²⁷

The name of Joseph Genesios emerges in the preamble to the *Chronicle* of John Skylitzes where the chronicler presents a list of bad historians who did not follow the beneficial example of Theophanes but instead described, each in his own way, his particular subject (οἰκεῖαν ὑπόθεσιν): one praised an emperor, another vituperated a patriarch (Niketas Paphlagon is named here), and the third eulogized his friend. There is no proof that Skylitzes meant the *Book of Kings*, because he may well have been writing about a lost discourse; the more so that this *Chronicle*, also a continuation of Theophanes, does not treat a particular subject, and the praise of an emperor and criticism of a patriarch similarly do not constitute key topics of the narrative.

Thus we do not know anything about the author of the *Book of Kings*. The idea suggested by Hirsch (which survived in the preface of Tsoungarakas) that Joseph Genesios' ancestor was an Armenian noble, by the name of Constantine, active under Michael III is pure fantasy.²⁸ But anonymous as he is, he unquestionably belonged to the inner circle of Constantine VII. Mixing verses and prose in his short proem, the anonymous author relates that he carried out his *opus*, "studiously and industriously," at the behest of Constantine, the son of the wise Leo, and like the Continuator of Theophanes he endeavors to belittle the emperors preceding the Macedonian dynasty.

The two works are closely related, and since "Genesios" states that no other book deals with the events he narrates (p. 3.18) Hirsch proposed that it was "Genesios" who served as the source for the *Continuatio*.

The central theme of "Constantine's" biography of Basil I is the contrast of Basil and Michael III. The Continuator of Theophanes and "Genesios" extended this opposition and designed a series of corrupt emperors, from Leo V through Michael III, whose artistic function in the discourse was to provide a contrast with the virtues of Basil. In the *Book of Kings*, the reign of Basil — a parallel to "Constantine's" biography — occupies a relatively insignificant part of the whole text (par. 29-42, or 11 pages), whereas the chapter on

²⁶ Germ. tr. by A. LESMÜLLER WERNER, *Byzanz am Vorabend neuer Grösse*, Vienna 1989; modern Greek tr. by P. NIAVIS (with a reprint of the original text: *Ἰωσήφ Γενέσιος. Περί βασιλευσών*), Introduction by D. TSOUNGARAKES, Athens 1994. On Genesios, see G. WÄSCHKE, Genesios, *Philologus* 37, 1878, 255-275.

²⁷ F. ŠTEINMAN, Vopros o lichnosti avtora 'Knigi carej' Genesija, *Viz Vrem* 21, 1914, 37-39. "Auch dieses unter den Namen des Genesios laufende Werk ist in Wirklichkeit ein Anonymus," says LESMÜLLER WERNER, *Byzanz*, 13.

²⁸ On this Constantine [Maniakes] the Armenian, see P. KARLIN HAYTER, Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III, *Byzantion* 41, 1971, 484-496, repr. in EAD., *Studies*, pt. IV.

Theophilos is twice as long and that on Michael III two and a half times longer. In the *Continuatio* Basil enters only at the very end of the last chapter, and the author refers for the early part of his career to the "history devoted to him," that is the biography. In both chronicles a deprecatory tone (*psogos*) dominates over the direct panegyric. Certainly, "Genesios" is full of praise for Basil: he states that the emperor received his power from God (p. 80.86) and applies to him the epithet "magnificent" (μεγαλουργός), reminiscent of Plutarch's (*Caes.* 58:2) "natural spirit of magnificence" applied to Julius Caesar. And he strengthens this epithet by the use of a polyptoton: not only the king (the archaic word ἄναξ is used) is magnificent but his deeds are magnificent as well (p. 91.28-29). The emphasis, however, is on the negative qualities of the Amorion emperors.

The Continuator begins with an exterior portrayal of Leo the Armenian, who looked imposing. He was of noble height and "seemed" civilized in his conversation (p. 6.20-7.1). The word "seemed" (δοκοῦντα) is significant: the writer immediately questions his own direct statement and with obvious pleasure narrates how Leo (at that time, still a military commander) fled from the Arabs having betrayed (προδοῦς, the verb is masterfully chosen, the reader would normally expect here a human object) the army's treasury, and was severely punished. After a flogging ("on the back and chest," stresses Continuator) he was sent into "an eternal flight" (p. 11.12-12.6). The historian means "exile" but the epithet αἰδιος has a theological connotation, and the *Apostolic Constitutions* employed it to characterize eternal punishment. The motif of betrayal and ingratitude reappears several times in Leo's portrait. For instance, he betrayed Bardanios, then Michael I; and eventually the Continuator introduces a man who reproached Leo for betraying his benefactor. His other vice is cruelty (the Continuator's rhetorical expression is ὀμότητι συντραφεῖς καὶ ἀγριότητι ἐκτραφεῖς, p. 12.15-16), but the worst of his vices is impiety: the Continuator is outraged by Leo's negotiations with the Bulgarians whom the emperor allowed to swear not on God and the Mother of Christ but on dogs and other impure objects (p. 31.10-19).

The *Book of Kings* preserves all the main features of the portrait, but it is generally shorter and less graphic. A typical example is the coronation scene. As the patriarch Nikephoros put the crown on Leo's head he expected to find soft hair but discovered thorns and caltrops which, like needles, hurt his hand greatly (Theoph. Cont., p. 29.8-13); "Genesios" restricts himself to a simple statement to the effect that Nikephoros felt pain as if he was galled by thorns and caltrops (Gen. p. 12.63-64).

A feature in the Continuator's image of Leo deserves a special attention. The writer is not afraid to speak about the evil emperor's positive achievements. Leo trained the army, built towns and was successful in wars. The writer even quotes the patriarch Nikephoros (a victim of Leo!) who said that the emperor, although a wicked man, cared about society, had no base concern for money, pursued justice, and appointed officials on the basis of their merits rather than wealth (Theoph. Cont., p. 30.8-22). "Genesios" is briefer both in the general evaluation of Leo's good deeds and in borrowing from Nikephoros, but he dwells with more relish than the Continuator on an anecdote about Leo's punishment of a senator who had raped a woman (Gen. p.14.15-31).

The aversion of both chroniclers to Michael II is even stronger. The Continuator is especially critical of Michael's Iconoclastic position ("the war against the Christians," as he calls it, p. 48.3-5), although in reality Michael was more tolerant of the Iconodules than Leo. His other vices are licentiousness, ingratitude, avarice, and illiteracy; disdainfully, the Continuator notes that this man of a humble origins — Michael — was an expert in matters relating to swine, horses, donkeys, mules, sheep and cows (p. 43.18, 44.5-9). The theme of insincerity, only hinted at in the chapter on Leo, comes to the fore here: Michael had promised to restore the cult of icons, but refused to fulfill his promise, referring to what we may call the freedom of creed (p. 47.20-23). For the Continuator this stance was nothing more than prevarication.

Theophilos is also depicted in somewhat black terms. He is a tyrant and Iconoclast, an unjust emperor (p. 104.15) who only feigned concern about justice (p. 85.1-4). He put on airs and claimed military prowess, but was defeated in all eighteen wars and never erected an imperial trophy (p. 139.10-11). "Hated by God" is the thoroughly damning appellation served on him by "Genesios" (Gen., p. 43.92). Unexpectedly, however, the Continuator reveals that this stubborn Iconoclast revered the Mother of God, and each week visited her shrine in Blachernae (Theoph. Cont., p. 87.9-12). He also praised Theophilos' building projects.

The image of Theodora, the restorer of icon worship, was in Byzantium traditionally positive; she was, after all, proclaimed a saint. In the Continuator's words, she is God-loving and Christ-loving (p. 149.17, 153.10). But even she is not spared criticism directed against Constantine VII's courtiers, for she loved her husband, the heretical Theophilos, to excess and endeavored to attain his salvation through church prayers. "Genesios" (Gen., p. 57.69) describes this behavior on her part as "unreasonable (or abnormal) love for her husband" (since the late Roman period, the word φιλανδρία acquired also another, pejorative meaning: "love of the male sex"). Certainly, the story about Theodora running a merchant ship can hardly be construed as praise, and the portrait of the empress who, after the murder of her adviser Theoktistos, ran around the palace, her hair undone, filled the chambers with her wailing (Theoph. Cont., p. 171.5-16), is probably designed to mock, since display of excessive grief was contrary to the rules of solemn demeanor. This picture is omitted in "Genesios" who soberly notes that Theodora was expelled from the palace.

The censorious portrait of Michael III imitates the biography of Basil I. In both cases the emperor was insane, thirsty for glory, addicted to "theaters" and horse races, and a drunkard; he squandered money, he fled from the battle-field, and so on and so forth in both chronicles. But at the end of the chapter on Michael, the Continuator, on second thoughts, decides that he should say something in praise of the emperor. Thus, he recalls Michael's donations to the church of Hagia Sophia: a *diskos*, a chalice, and a golden *polykandylon* weighing 60 pounds (p. 210.19-211.5).

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which foretold his fall. Yet they do not conceal the positive role played by Bardas in reforming the education system (Theoph. Cont., p. 185.7-8, Gen., p. 6953-57).

The portraits of Basil's predecessors are negative, but the time of brazen rogues was over, and the chroniclers, especially the Continuator, attempted to season their criticism with some traces of objectivity, some rudimentary positive features. No less significant a novelty was the tendency toward psychologism. Under the term "psychologism" we understand both the capacity to observe mental phenomena and to explain the motives behind individual behavior. The characters in the *Continuatio* think, ponder, and deliberate. Thus the Continuator notes that Leo V could not distinguish serious (mortal) sin from simple errors (Theoph. Cont., p. 25.22). When describing the Caesar Bardas, the writer relates that the man secretly nurtured the desire (ἔρως) for the imperial power. Having said this, he makes an effort to define this passion: it was, he says, not a simple (οὐκ ἀγεννής) feeling, an ordinary feeling that temporarily flames up and can be later constrained by reason, but a catastrophic yearning that was impossible to assuage (p. 168.5-8). When Michael II heard about the revolt of Thomas the Slav he sent against the rebels an inadequate army, since he thought that the rumor was greater than the actual danger (p. 55.14-15). Again, the Continuator writes that the emperor, liberated from the inimical assaults, had to propitiate God, but acted lawlessly because he believed that he had been saved by his own designs and not by God (p. 78.4-8). Perhaps the most characteristic example is the episode of Michael I's war with Krum. Michael wanted to avoid engaging in a battle the result of which was uncertain, but Leo the Armenian, commander of the army, persuaded him that it was improper for the emperor of the *Rhomaioi* to flee before the enemy. Leo did so, comments the Continuator, not because he cared about the soundness of the decision; his mind was corrupt and his ultimate goal was to seize power over the Roman state (p. 14.20-22).

All these inchoate attempts to penetrate into the inner world of the protagonists and understand the motives behind their actions are not to be found in "Genesios." For instance, describing Michael I's defeat by Krum he says only that the emperor sought a truce, but the khan of the Bulgarians, in his barbaric and haughty manner, would have no settlement. Thus Leo was urged (ἐπείγεται) to fight against the Bulgarians (Gen., p. 10.7-11). The motivation behind his treason is overlooked.

The Continuator even moved beyond individual motives and touched upon the problem of historical causality (αἰτία): "Only this," he says, "is edifying so far as political events are concerned... I wonder whether a historical work that does not explain causality could be instructive" (Theoph. Cont., p. 21.19-22.2). And elsewhere he says that "The historical flesh is empty and poor if it ignores the causality of events" (p. 167.18-19). Certainly, his causality is often primitive, and a simple prediction can function as a cause, raising the morale of one party and creating havoc in another, but in an exceptional case he came close to a socio-economic explanation of events. The attack of the Spanish Arabs on Crete in the 820s was caused, in his opinion, by the poverty of their own habitat and

population growth. In other words, they were compelled to act because of the multitude of inhabitants and the shortage of food (p. 74.5-6).

The abandonment of the annalistic approach in the biography of Basil I may have been a result of its generic peculiarity: in essence, it belonged more closely to the genre of the princely mirror. The works of the Continuator and "Genesios" were chronicles adjoined to the *Chronography*, the Continuator overtly setting Theophanes as his paragon; yet the composition of both chronicles differs cardinally from that of Theophanes.²⁹ The narration of the Continuator is divided into four "chapters," each of which possesses its own structural unity (plot) — from the promising start to a catastrophic fall that is usually prophesied from the outset. The author subordinates the chronological sequence of events to the principles of thematic exposé. The release of the narrative from chronological sequence is plain to see when one compares the entry on the deposition of Michael I in the *Continuatio* and the *Book of Kings*. "Genesios" (Gen., p. 6.88-1) sets the events in a chronologically determined sequence: Leo V entered the palace, Michael was forthwith tonsured, and led with his wife to the chapel of the Theotokos called Pharos. Leo spared their lives, but confined Michael in a monastery and separated his spouse and children (of whom Ignatios was castrated) from him. The tale of the Continuator is more complex: after mentioning that Michael and his family were taken to Pharos (Theoph. Cont., 19.15-17), the Continuator inserts a digression on the etymology of the name and the distinction between the Constantinopolitan Pharos and that in Alexandria. The second point, Michael's exile to the island of Plate, is followed by an excursus on the fate of his sons Eustratios and Niketas-Ignatios. Departing from strict chronological order the Continuator mentions, by way of prolepsis, that Michael lived for another 32 years (p. 20.1-2). He returns to the death of Michael after having narrated how his wife was put in a convent, that his son Eustratios passed away five years later and that another son, Ignatios, became patriarch of Constantinople and was buried in the monastery of Satyros, the etymology of which is then discussed. The excursus is concluded with a remark that shows the awareness of the break in the chronological framework: "All this happened not then but after a significant period of time" (p. 21.13-14). Prolepsis is common in the *Continuatio*. For instance, the *protospatharios* Photeinos, according to the Continuator, was the great-grandfather of Zoe, the future *Augusta* crowned by God (p. 76.9-11); and, the Arabs acted successfully in southern Italy until the reign of the emperor Basil, but this, our narrator tells us, will be left for later in the history, in the account of Basil's reign (p. 83.12-16).

The chapter on Michael II also demonstrates the Continuator's freedom from strict chronological sequence. It begins with Michael's proclamation (p. 40-42) followed by a flashback, which provides us with an account of his life before his ascent to the throne. It is introduced by the statement that the story-telling will deal with his motherland (p. 42.7),

²⁹ Ja. LJUBARSKIJ, Nabljudenija nad kompozicijej 'Hronografii' Prodolžatelja Feofana, *VizVrem* 47, 1988, 70-80.

and is concluded by the indication that the author now returns to the main thread of the story (p. 49.17-18). The Iconoclastic policy is only cursorily mentioned, whereas the revolt of Thomas is inflated out of all proportion (26 pages of 44). The historian begins by saying that the civil war broke out in "this time" (p. 49.20) and immediately goes back to the origins of Thomas. Having said that Michael was hated by everybody because of his heretical views, the Continuator starts the description of the riot, in the middle of which a digression is inserted about a Gregory Pterotos who offended the emperor and was banished to an island. The long story of Thomas has a clear concluding mark: "Such was the end of the affair of Thomas" (p. 71.15-16). The next episode is the Arab attack on Crete that took place "at the time of Thomas' insurrection" (p. 74.14-16). It, too, bears a concluding mark: "In this manner the Cretans were severed from the Christians" (p. 78.1-3). After the entry on Michael's marriage to Euphrosyne, the author comes back to the Arab conquest of Crete; then he describes the loss of Sicily to the Arabs. The chapter ends with a summary of events: Michael did not want to stop his hostility to God; he led the war with the Arabs (the revolt of Thomas is a part of the anti-Arab campaign); and Dalmatia became independent (the event is not mentioned in the main text). The exposé underscores the subject-matter approach of the historian.

The Continuator presents himself as the master of his narration: the story is full of cross-references: "As I said above," "As I explained in the preceding chapter," "Let us return to our story," and so on. Such cross-references are less common in "Genesios" (e.g., Gen., p. 9.94, 73.66, 81.16-17). As we have already seen, the Continuator often marks the end of an episode by means of special vignettes: "Such is the story about Amorion," "Such disaster was caused by their attack," "Such was the death of Theophilos." These cross-references and vignettes show again that the event, not the year, is the organizing unit of the narrative, and that this principle is consciously applied.

The chapters consist of smaller units-episodes that have their own plot, as for instance the story of Theodora's veneration of icons, prohibited by her royal husband. The Continuator relishes relating details of Theodora's disobedience: she kept the icons in a box, and took them in her hands. Her daughters imitated her behavior, and when Pulcheria, the little girl, kissed the box, she attracted attention to the secret cult. A jester who was loitering in the chamber saw the icons and asked the empress what they were. She answered — in the vernacular, as the writer underlines — that they were her favorite puppets (vivía). At the table the jester told Theophilos about "the ninnies of mother Theodora." The emperor immediately went to his wife and accused her of idolatry, but her pithy response was that the jester had seen the figures of maid servants in a looking-glass (p. 90-92). This novelette is absent from the *Book of Kings*.

Children of their milieu, fond of antiquarian subjects, both chroniclers refer time and again to ancient myths, historical events and proverbs. They also show some knowledge of rhetorical skills. For instance, in the *Continuatio* we find paronomasia in the story of the conflict between the young Michael III and his mother's favorite Theoktistos (Theoph.

Cont., p. 169.4-10). Michael, so the story goes, had an instructor (παιδαγωγός) who was poorly instructed (ἀναγωγός); the emperor asked Theoktistos to promote (ἀναγαγεῖν) the man. Theoktistos refused to be obsequious to his obsequiousness (ἀρέσκειν ἀρεσκείαις), retorting that one has to administer in a worthy way (ἐπαξίως) and not worthlessly (ἀναξίως).

However, what is more important is that the chroniclers (especially the Continuator) in their system of imagery and in their wording went beyond the manuals of classical rhetoric. They were not purists who avoided contemporary terminology or the vernacular idiom. Thus the Continuator (p. 199.17-20) tells us how Michael III asked a woman (a wretched huckster, according to his description) in the street to invite him to her house since he desires to have a piece of plain (πιτυρώδης³⁰) bread with feta cheese (ἀσβεστότυρον³¹), "to use his own expression," adds the Continuator. Both words employed by Michael are vernacular. In a similar way, when "Genesios" describes wrestling he applies a local, as he says himself, term πόρρεζαν to designate a clever trick (Gen., p. 78.27-28); the term is unquestionably Slavic.

Beyond traditional rhetoric is the so-called materialization of a metaphor. The Continuator describes the furious Theophilos: the emperor, he says, was out of his mind and boiling as if heated by fire, and he demanded (ἐδεῖτο, the verb has also another meaning, "he was in need") that some cold water from melted snow be brought to him (p. 131.16-18). "Boiling" and "fire" are metaphoric, of course, but they are contrasted with objects of the real world, melted snow and cold water. The materialization of a metaphor is taken even further: after this drink, Theophilos fell sick and died. Another "strong" metaphor is used to describe Thomas' first victory. He gulped down, says the Continuator, a part of the defeated army as a thirsty man [drinks] a beverage (p. 55.16). The image of bees is a stereotype of Byzantine literature, but the Continuator transforms the fossilized simile into a colorful image when he quotes the general Manuel leading his warriors to save the besieged Theophilos. "Be ashamed [by the example] of bees," he exclaimed, "who would fly after their queen (in Greek masculine, "emperor") hit by love (φίλτρῳ βαλλόμεναι)" (p. 117.4-5). The simile is reinforced by a pun, since the verb βάλλω implies that Manuel hinted his soldiers to be prepared to fall in battle. So far so good, but the Continuator unfortunately concluded this episode by extending his image, inserting a standardized simile with the warriors attacking the enemy "like a lion."

Both "Genesios" and the Continuator of Theophanes represent a new type of chronography focusing on the image of the protagonist rather than the automatic flow of time. They are more coherently organized than the annalistic Theophanes. Similar in their approach and in their political aims, they differ from each other with regard to their

³⁰ Ph. KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός* 5, Athens 1952, 21 n.3, with a reference to Ptochoprodromos 3.316.

³¹ KOUKOULES, *Βίος* 5, 32 and 330. The reference is only to the Continuator and a parallel passage in pseudo-Symeon (Theoph. Cont., 661.3-4).

literary skill. We do not know which of them was closer to the original, but the Continuator was obviously a better story-teller than his counterpart.

C. Eloquence in prose and verse

New chronography was probably the main achievement of Byzantine literature of the mid-tenth century, but the literary activity of Constantine VII's courtiers was not limited to scholarly treatises and chronicles. The emperor claimed to be (and possibly was) an intellectual, and this laid fertile soil for oratory of all kinds.

One of the most productive rhetoricians of the middle of the tenth century was Theodore Daphnopates, a high-ranking functionary (*patrikios* and *protasekretis*) during the reign of Romanos I,³² and eparch of Constantinople under Romanos II. Daphnopates is known as the author of letters, both official (to the pope, to the emir of Egypt, to Symeon of Bulgaria) and private, some of which are diplomatic and theological tracts;³³ hagiographical texts (*Vita of Theophanes the Confessor* [BHG 1792], *Vita of Theodore of Stoudios* [BHG 1755], *Martyrion of St. George* [BHG 674], and the unpublished *Enkomion of St. Barbara* [BHG 218d]); rhetorical discourses³⁴ and liturgical verses.³⁵ He compiled a collection of excerpts from John Chrysostom's homilies (PG 63, 567-902),³⁶ a work typical of the encyclopedism at the court of Constantine VII. The attribution to Daphnopates of several discourses remains dubious. This category encompasses the anonymous speech *On the peace with the Bulgarians* in 927,³⁷ an appendix to the speech *On the translatio of the mandylion of Edessa* ascribed to Constantine VII,³⁸ and a historical discourse discussed in

³² On his role as the emperor's letter-writer, see J. DARROUZÈS, *Un recueil épistolaire byzantin*, *REB* 14, 1956, 117.

³³ *Théodore Daphnopatès, Correspondance*, ed. J. DARROUZÈS - L. G. WESTERINK, Paris 1978.

³⁴ *Dve reči Feodora Dafnopata*, ed. V. LATYŠEV, *PPSb* 59, 1910, 1-38 (text), with Russian tr. and commentary. The *martyrion* of St. George is published in an appendix, *PPSb* 59, 1911.

³⁵ Ch. HANNICK, Theodoros Daphnopates als Hymnograph, *JÖB* 35, 1985, 183-185; cf. A. KOMINIS in *AHG* 4, 1976, 840 n.3.

³⁶ PG 63, 567-902, see on it S. HAIFACHER, *Studien über Chrysostomus-Eklogen*, Vienna 1902, 2-15; cf. M. G. DE DURAND, La colère chez s. Jean Chrysostome, *Revue des sciences religieuses* 67, 1993, 61f.

³⁷ R. J. H. JENKINS, The Peace with Bulgaria (927) Celebrated by Theodore Daphnopates, in P. WIRTH (ed.), *Polychronion. Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1966, 287-303, repr. in *Id.*, *Studies*, pt. XXI; I. DUJČEV, On the Treaty of 927 with the Bulgarians, *DOP* 32, 1978, 217-295. A. STAÛRIDOU ZAPHRACA, 'Ο ἀνώνυμος λόγος 'Επὶ τῇ τῶν Βουλγάρων συμβάσει, *Byzantina* 8, 1976, 343-406, rejects this attribution.

³⁸ Ja. SMIRNOV, Slovo X veka o tom, kak čtilsja obraz Spasa na Ubruse v Edesse, *Commentationes philologicae*, St. Petersburg 1897, 209-219, with a supplement in *VizVrem* 5, 1898, 358f.

the preface to the chronicle of Skylitzes that possibly might be the last section of the *Continuatio* of Theophanes, adjoining the biography of Basil I and the stories of Leo VI, Constantine VII and Romanos I (which were borrowed from the *Chronicle* of Logothete, on which, see below) and dealing with the period of 948-61.³⁹ This section was produced by a contemporary who was evidently involved in Constantinopolitan political life: the author lists all the eparchs to administer the capital during this period (Daphnopates is one of them); he passionately castigates a certain Zonaras, an insignificant functionary in the department of the eparch, as "the plague and disease of the empire of the *Rhomaioi*" (Theoph. Cont., p. 442.7-8); he describes in detail the preparations for the expedition against the Cretan Arabs, as well the monastic community on Mount Olympos. Constantine VII is the author's favorite, and the author emphasizes (and exaggerates) the emperor's aristocratic pedigree and the nobility of his milieu. Even Theophano, Romanos II's spouse, the daughter of a petty merchant, is presented as the child of noble ancestors (p. 458.9). Constantine's domestic policy is characterized in the manner of the biography of Basil I. "The emperor has heard," asserts the historian, "about injustice and exactions by the *strategoi*, protonotaries, and foot and mounted soldiers to which the miserable and unfortunate poor were subjected during the reign of his father-in-law Romanos, and he dispatched pious and virtuous men to alleviate the heavy burden of improper levies (in the original a rhetorical pun is used: τῶν κατὰ καιρὸν ἀκαίρων ἀπατησέων) imposed on the unhappy needy" (p. 443.13-18). At the court of Constantine VII it was construed that the high taxes, not the seizure by the "powerful" of the tenures of the poor (as Romanos I had announced) accounted for their predicament, and virtuous tax-collecting was considered the key to the salvation of the suffering peasantry. Daphnopates or not, the author of this discourse was an encomiast of Constantine VII's policy.⁴⁰

The private correspondence of Daphnopates reveals the problems and interests that Constantinopolitan intellectuals addressed. In a letter to Philetos, metropolitan of Synada (ep. 29),⁴¹ Daphnopates offers his correspondent "two kinds of meal": "external," i.e. physical, "which makes the man fleshy and fat," and "inner," which furnishes the mind with

³⁹ On the possible authorship, see M. SJUZJUMOV, Ob istoričeskom trude Feodora Dafnopata, *Vizantiskoe Obozrenie* 2, 1916, 295-302; S. ŠESTAKOV, K voprosu ob avtore Prodolženija Feofana, *Ile Congrès d'Études Byzantines*, Belgrade 1929, 35f.; A. MARKOPOULOS, Théodore Daphnopatès et la Continuation de Théophane, *JÖB* 35, 1985, 171-182, repr. in *Id.*, *History and Literature*, pt. VIII. Cf. P. FREI, Das Geschichtswerk des Theodoros Daphnopates als Quelle der Synopsis Historiarum des Johannes Skylitzes, *Lebendige Altertum*, Vienna 1985, 348-351.

⁴⁰ KAZHDAN, *Iz istorii*, 1, 91-96.

⁴¹ A small collection of letters written by Philetos Synadenos, former judge, has survived (DARROUZÈS, *Epistoliers*, 249-259). Given that Philetos is an unusual name, the question arises as to the identification of the two. The former judge, however, was a friend of the magistros Nikephoros Ouranos and must have been active ca. 1000, a generation or two later than Daphnopates. He may have been a nephew of the metropolitan.

energy and increases religious piety. The external kind includes the exchange of gifts (Daphnopates mentions specifically dry fish, fruits brought from Asia, grapes, and so on), and discussion of objects. "The raisins of [this] present," writes Daphnopates to a friend (ep. 22), "differ significantly from ordinary ones. The regular [fruit] are small and astringent or taste of honey that makes them exceedingly sweet, whereas [mine] have moderate sweetness, are meaty and crescent-like, and hide their juiciness under the black [skin]; their rind is shriveled as if their natural moisture has been snatched away by the rays of the sun." In the letter to *kanikleios* Eustathios (ep. 28), Daphnopates narrates how a man met him at the threshold of his house and gave him a hare, and he thanks the *asekretis* Basil Ouranos (ep. 31) for providing him with lavish food for the feast of Brumalia. The gulping down of tasty gifts is naturally mocked as gluttonous behavior (*λιχνεία, ἀδηφαγία*); well chewed tidbits slip down to the belly, the least honorable part of the body. The description of these gifts is heavily colored by a critical tone — Daphnopates uses verbs *παίζειν* and *προσπαίζειν* (ep. 27.2 and 24.15) and plainly censures overindulgence (ep. 26.7-8).

The "inner" meal includes stereotypes of friendship and "true love" (ep. 34.9), but now and again Daphnopates surpasses the standard and empty formulas. He writes to an anonymous friend: "After studying the *kontakion* that I sent to you, return it to me as soon as possible — I need it" (ep. 27.14-15). Was this *kontakion* a work of Daphnopates himself or is this a case of intellectuals sharing their favorite poetry with their friends? Correspondents discuss theological problems and air their views vis-à-vis the visible world and the world of visions. For instance, the emperor Romanos II had a dream and asked "the patrikios and eparch Theodore" for an interpretation (ep. 15). Daphnopates answered in the style of court flattery: "Your wondrous vision, O my sweetest lord, loved by the entire world, is not only greater than the visions of other [men], but rivals the visions of prophets" (ep. 16.3-5). The future can be forecast, he contemplates further, by virtue of dreams, apparitions, visions and revelations (l. 15-16), and he provides a definition of all these categories, revelation being the most sublime. Then Daphnopates interprets the dream of the emperor as exhorting mankind to spiritual perfection, and ends his long letter by insisting that Romanos should not tell anybody else about the "mystery" he had seen. In another letter to Romanos II, Daphnopates suggests a symbolic interpretation for the imperial hunt; its latent meaning (lit. "symbols and riddles") is victory over barbarians (ep. 14.37-38).

Several pieces in the collection of letters were produced during the reign of Constantine VII. In a letter addressed to this emperor (ep. 12), Daphnopates reminds his addressee that, at the emperor's orders, he had to leave for the countryside and dwell with the Cimmerians "deprived of the sun" (Odys. 11: 14-19), far from the "rays of your lordship." Does this imply that the author had fallen temporarily into disfavor? At any rate, Constantine again hired the rhetorical skills of Daphnopates, and in 945 or 946 Theodore was ordered to compile an "epistle" (or short speech) as if from Constantine Porphyrogenetos on the occasion of the *translatio* of Gregory the Theologian's relics, which

included a "modest" sentence: "Putting aside the brilliance of imperial dignity, I don the cheap and humble attire" (ep. 11.15-16). Also during the reign of Constantine VII, ca. 956, Daphnopates delivered two orations, the first on the birth of John the Baptist (the Precursor) and the second on the *translatio* from Antioch of the hand of John the Baptist. The speeches were interconnected, forming a part of a "serial": in the second discourse, Daphnopates proclaims that he is about to speak "again" of the Precursor, to treat "another" feast (Latyšev, p. 17.1-3). And a little further on he states that he will not deal "as previously" with John's birth or with his severed head, but comment instead on the hand.

The treatment of such a sublime topic gives rise to a difficulty, as explained by Daphnopates in the rhetorical preamble to the first oration (p. 3.1-8). Had John the Baptist needed earthly eloquence (*τῶν κάτω λόγων*) to be praised, this speech (*λόγος*) would have been purposeless since rhetorical skill (*λόγος*) is incapable of accomplishing properly such a task. Moreover, John was eulogized from the [heavenly] summit by the supreme and first Logos, and this again makes any oration superfluous. Even if all rhetorical mastery (*πᾶς λόγος*) were channeled into a single resonance full of bright and great sounds (*φωνή λαμπρόφωνος καὶ μεγαλόφωνος*), it would not be sufficient to provide listeners with the praise deserved by the Baptist who was inspired by God (*θεόληπτος*) and whose actions are beyond understanding (*ἄληπτα*) and description (*ἄπερίληπτα*) (p. 3.8-13). A series of paronomasias is crowned with the conclusion that it is better for him to remain silent, especially since he is feeble in general, and especially inept for such a purpose.

Here Daphnopates changes tack and, having jettisoned rhetorical figures, states in simple language that "many" have disagreed with him, urged him to write the speech, found his hesitation improper, and were cross with him. Against his will, therefore, he decided to desist from further reticence and present his speech (even though he "modestly" dubs it inadequate) to those who wanted it.

The theme of silence, which seems to be a prefatory stereotype, becomes a key point of the discourse. The speech (the title uses the word *enkomion*) focuses on Zacharias, John's father, rather than on John himself. Daphnopates praises the brilliance and glory of the *γένος* (p. 5.10), the dignity and order of the prophetic line, dwells in detail on Zacharias' vision of an angel, and then suddenly announces that the prophet pursed his lips, and henceforth ceased to converse with anybody, not uttering a sound (p. 8.3-4). Daphnopates fills his narrative with words designating silence: *σιωπή* (p. 8.20, 9.8, 11.12), *ἄφωνία* (p. 9.5), *σιγᾶν* (p. 9.3). Later, however, the silence is broken: Zacharias, says the orator, "replaced his temporary silence with well-timed utterance" (p. 11.11-14). The sentence is highly rhetorical. Daphnopates begins with a definition of Zacharias as prophet using two rare epithets from the patristic lexical pool, *προαγορευτής* and *προκῆρυξ*, and then plays on the words *καιρός* and *εὐκαιρότερος* ("time" and "well-timed"), *ἄφθεγξία* and *φθέγμα* ("voicelessness" and "voice"), reinforcing the latter pair with the similar sounding *ἀμειφθῆναι*, "to be rewarded." The author was compelled to switch from reticence to speech, just like his protagonist Zacharias announcing to the world "the silenced secret" (p. 13.6).

Daphnopates declared that he would choose from the whole story (John's life, persecution and death) only a single event, the Baptist's birth (p. 4.17-20), but in fact he focuses on a "personal" experience, the transition from silence to sharing the message, from reticence to revelation. Likewise, he promises to be selective in the oration (*hypomnema*) on John's hand: the four Gospels, he says, clearly present the story of the Baptist's life, while he will speak only about a specific event related to a specific feast (p. 19.1-17). The narration of the second speech is consistently historical. The story is introduced by Daphnopates' statement that he will describe how the holy relics escaped "barbaric hands" (p. 18.6; cf. "the barbaric hand," p. 28.14) — an allusion to John's "hand" brought from Antioch is obvious. Then Daphnopates tells his listeners about the fate of the relics under the emperors Julian and Justinian I, about the barbarian conquest of Antioch, and about the deacon Job who committed the pious theft. Indeed, the story of Job forms a novelette: he struck up a friendship with the *skeuophylax* of the church of St. Peter where the hand was treasured; he regaled the man profusely (here the drinking bout is more appropriate than in the *Vita of Antony the Younger*) and induced him into a deep sleep, "neighboring death;" then Job grabbed the keys of the reliquary, entered the church in the dead of night, helped himself to "the revered hand," and fled. The orator describes Job's unheroic fear of being caught by the enemy and his prayer to the Baptist; it was only when he reached the "Roman frontier" that Job laid aside his nervousness and boldly (sic!) entered the capital.

The author effectively sets the direction in which his story is to proceed. Having related the story of John's execution, Daphnopates stops and states: "Having reached this section of the discourse, I would like to set forth before this sacred audience (he uses the "pagan" word "theater") something about this prophetic body and the hand attached to it, which is based on an old tale" (p. 21.22-24). The importance of sources is stressed on several occasions. For instance, Theodore tells what he heard and what the "archaic histories" relate (p. 22.1-2), and what the ancients have narrated (p. 25.16). He knows that people tell different stories about the hand but is not confused by this diversity, stating benignly that all stories are truthful (l. 17-19). He is more critical in his commentary on a miraculous act of the hand: the story, he says, is not far from the truth, since the Baptist is certainly able to work greater miracles, but it is not close (οὐκ ἔγγυς) to the truth either, since it is based only on hearsay.

The true hero of the discourse is not John but the hand itself, which acts as an independent agent. At the very beginning of the *hypomnema*, Daphnopates speaks of the hand that rejected all earthly concerns and greeted the Lamb of God (p. 17.14-18.2). He states further that, as it usually happens, the Baptist's hand moved following (συνδιακινεῖν), and stressed his fearless words. These are introductory statements, preceding the moment when the hand begins to act. The listeners are first told how John's thumb killed a dragon (p. 27.4-6): here we have a typical serpent myth in which the city of Antioch

annually offered the dragon a virgin as sacrifice. But under Daphnopates' pen the tale acquired an unusual climax: the lot fell on the daughter of a Christian, who entreated John the Baptist for help. He came to the shrine where the priceless hand was stored, dispersed gold [coins?] on the floor, and while the sacristan was picking them up the despondent father cut off the thumb from the holy hand and eventually threw it into the serpent's throat killing it on the spot. The novelette about the theft of the thumb is duplicated by the story of Job's pious theft of the hand, and Daphnopates felt uncomfortable with the double miracle. He thus concluded the novelette with a lengthy comment on the truthfulness of the legend (p. 27.18-24).

Job also experienced the power (δύναμις) of the saint's hand. It was his propitious ally protecting him from ill-fate (p. 30.20-22). The hand, Daphnopates states, was surrounded by immaterial *dynameis* and astonishingly contained the *dynamis* of the Spirit (p. 33.4-6). He refutes the reservations of those who pointed out that the hand was severed from the holy body: the grace of the saints, responds Daphnopates, is neither measured in bodily terms nor diminished by geographical distance (l. 7-9) — rhetorical paronomasia strengthens his idea that each particle of a saint's body contains some energy of the Spirit (l. 9-12).

The *translatio* of the holy hand provides Daphnopates with an opportunity to praise Constantine VII, faithful and Christ-loving king. John the Baptist is said to have succored Constantine from the womb on, and it was thanks to the Precursor's intercession (προεβέβη) that Constantine received the imperial power as his paternal heritage and became victorious over his enemies (p. 38.13-16).

Daphnopates is a skillful rhetorician. One of his treatises written in the form of a letter (ep. 8) bears a lemma saying that it was compiled in a "common idiom" (διὰ τῆς καθωμλημένης φράσεως). There is, however, nothing vernacular in the text of this refutation of the heresy of Aphthartodocetism. In the *hypomnema* Daphnopates applies diverse figures such as anaphora ("The sound of the speech, the brightness of the sun, the imprint of the law, the firstling of the grace," concluding with an extended clause: "The host and leader of the all-best and heavenly gift," p. 38.3-5), paronomasia, synonyms ("not obscure and general but clear and evident," p. 8.28), and assonance (σχήμασι καὶ κινήμασι, p. 18.14). Sometimes, although not consistently, he uses dactylic endings, such as in the preamble (p. 17.1-9) and epilogue (p. 38.9-24) to the *hypomnema*. In general the preamble and epilogue to this discourse are more rhetorical than the main ("historical") text.

Gregory, archdeacon and referendarius of Hagia Sophia, must have been a contemporary of Constantine VII (Beck, *Kirche*, p. 551f.), but we are scarcely aware of him, and his most important surviving work, the speech *On the translatio of the mandylion* in 944 (BHG 796g), remains unpublished.

Constantine, the author of the iambic *Ekphrasis of Constantinople* and, in particular, of the shrine of the Holy Apostles,⁴² is somewhat better known. He calls himself Constantine Rhodios in the acrostic of the preamble (as well as in the title). "Rhodios" is not his family name, however. In the dedication to the second part of the work (Legrand, v. 423-24) he characterizes himself as a native of Rhodes and he is aware of the palladium which the inhabitants of Lindos (on Rhodes) had venerated before they accepted Christianity (v. 156-58). According to the title of the *Ekphrasis*, the author held the office of *asekretis*. He was a contemporary of Constantine VII to whom the work was dedicated. Since the writer speaks of four beacons governing Constantinople (v. 22-26) it is reasonable to surmise that he wrote between 931 and 944, when there were four emperors in Byzantium: Romanos I, two of his sons (Stephen and Constantine) and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos.⁴³ The writer names the latter "the seed of my glorious (πάγκλυτος, a non-classical adjective, used in the *Ekphrasis* no less than six times) emperor" (v. 28) and speaks of himself as his father's servant (v. 2), which suggests that he started his career under Leo VI.⁴⁴ In the same way, Constantine Rhodios calls himself "a faithful servant of the emperor Leo" in an epigram on the crucifix he dedicated at Lindos (*Anth. Gr* XV: 15.4). In another epigram Constantine Rhodios attacked Leo Choirosphaktes (see above, p.81) which also indicates that he was active at the beginning of the tenth century.

In the texts of the tenth century we encounter the names of Rhodios and of Constantine separately, and certain scholars attribute all the mentions of Rhodios and some of Constantine (Constantine the Sicilian, Constantine the Philosopher) to Constantine of Rhodes⁴⁵. The Logothete-chronicle names a Rhodios, who served as Samonas' notary (Leo Gram., p. 284.2), and who could, of course, be any man originating from Rhodes. Caution needs also to be exercised with regard to other evidence — the

⁴² Ed. E. LEGRAND, *Descriptions des œuvres d'art et de l'église des saints Apôtres*, REG 9, 1896, 31-102, and G. P. BEGLERI, *Hram svjatyh apostolov i drugie pamjatniki Konstantinopolja*, Odessa 1896. Begleri omitted v. 190, which causes a slight change of numeration.

⁴³ P. SPECK, *Konstantinos von Rhodos*, *Varia* III, Bonn 1991 [Poikila Byzantina 11], 249-268, suggests an earlier date for the ekphrasis and considers it a *Lehrgedicht* for a young Constantine VII.

⁴⁴ On Constantine's biography, see G. DOWNEY, *Constantine the Rhodian: his Life and Writings*, *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of A.M. Friend Jr.*, Princeton 1955, 212-221. Constantine's work has been studied primarily from the art historical perspective; see for instance A. SALAC, *Quelques épigrammes d'Anthologie Palatine et l'iconographie byzantine*, BS 12, 1951, 12-25; A. WHARTON EPSTEIN, *The Rebuilding and Redecoration of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople*, GRBS 23, 1982, 81f.; Ch. ANGELIDI, *Η περιγραφή τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων ἀπὸ τὸν Κωνσταντῖνον Ρόδιο: Ἀρχιτεκτονική καὶ συμβολισμός*, *Symmeikta* 5, 1983, 91-125.

⁴⁵ M. D. SPADARO, *Sulle composizioni di Costantino il Filosofo del Vaticano 915*, *SicGymn* 24, 1971, 175-205, distinguishes Constantine Rhodios and Constantine the Philosopher, but speculates that the latter could be the same person as the poet Constantine of Sicily (his anacreontics are published by MATRANGA, *AnecdGr*, 689-698; cf. an epigram in *Anth. Gr.* XV.13) or even Constantine-Cyril, the apostle of the Slavs.

participation of the imperial cleric Rhodios in the negotiations with the Bulgarians in 927 (Leo Gram., p. 316.12-13).

The *Ekphrasis*, Constantine's major surviving work, opens with an introductory dedication to Constantine Porphyrogennetos, adorned with an acrostic bearing the name of the author. There then follows a description (lit. "narration," διήγησις) of the statues and largest columns of Constantinople. Competing with the ancient concept of the seven wonders of the world, Constantine lists seven major buildings of the capital; "other statues and constructions" (Legrand, v. 257) are left offstage. In this transitional section, Constantine promises to describe Hagia Sophia (the promise remains unfulfilled) and the shrine of the Holy Apostles (the subject of the last section) (v. 268-269, 358-363), and addressing "the wise lord Constantine" (v. 277-278), "the victorious and wise lord" (v. 418-419) (strange sentences if we accept the theory of the educational character of the *Ekphrasis*) he — unexpectedly for a Byzantine *literatus* — praises in the highest terms his product, as clear and versatile song (μέλος) surpassing the lyre of Orpheus (v. 287-288). He transcends Orpheus, however, not in talent but in content, for he does not write about "evil demons," Zeus, Demetra, Kybela and Attis, but brings to the emperor "divine melodies" (v. 299) in line with the emperor's beneficial orders. Constantine invokes the Muses, not as "reckless Homer" but as mighty Solomon; his Muses are the pure virgins, the divine virtues (v. 305-306). The final theme of this "second introduction" is the arrival of travelers by sea and land who view the marvelous city from afar and are astounded by its magnificent buildings. This prompts the Rhodian to return to the theme of his "first miracle," the statue of Justinian who, stretching out his hand, repulses all barbarian tribes, Medoi, Persians and Hagarenes (v. 368-369). This sentence may indicate that Constantine was writing after the peace with Bulgaria in 927, since all the barbarian threats are located on the eastern border. The last section of the *Ekphrasis*, provided with its own heading (v. 423-424), is the description of the church of the Apostles. In this chapter the author again distinguishes seven wonders, this time of the shrine.

The *Ekphrasis* is written in iambics but we should not confuse metrical composition with poetry. Unlike Kassia and Clement, Constantine has no personal, emotional attitude toward the objects he describes. His mind is looking without, not within. Constantinople is not perceived as a city but as a series of external objects which "actually" exist. It is not the writer who observes the capital but a foreigner (ξένος) coming by the sea or a wayfarer (δδίτης), a pedestrian (πεζοδρόμος, a non-classical word) who observes the remarkable monuments of Constantinople. "Remarkable" is ξένος in the *Ekphrasis*, literally "strange or alien", a meaning not recorded in Liddell-Scott, but Constantine uses it all the time, speaking of *xena* miracles (v. 350, 443), exploits (v. 380), statues (v. 62), buildings (v. 539), men (v. 220), and so on. Constantine's vision of objects is "alienated" by narration and vocabulary from his personality.

The first wonder in the church of the Apostles is the scene of the Annunciation. The description is devoid of any reflection or association, let alone emotion. The story is dry

and matter-of-fact: Gabriel brings the good tidings about the incarnation of the Logos, and the rejoicing Virgin speaks steadfast (εὐσταθεῖς) words to the commander of the heavenly host, asking him the interpretation (ἐρμηνεύμα) of the remarkable birth. The words themselves serve to highlight the difference between this "steadfast interpretation" and the passionate scene painted by the patriarch Germanos in his sermon *On the Annunciation*. One exception is the portrait of Judas with his pallid face, compressed jaws, gloomy and murderous look, and nose exuding anger (v. 891-893), but even this is a stereotype rather than the image of a "realistic" rogue.

Constantine's abstract "objectivism" finds its realization not only in the coldness of his imagery but also in attention to architectural volumes and arithmetical figures. Describing the shrine of the Apostles, the writer refers to its architectural features: cube (v. 553, 554, 557, 558, 602), pillars (a rare word πινός, v. 562, 578, 582, 604, and neologism πινσόπυργος, — v. 592, 594, 635), cylinder (v. 578, 621), sphere (v. 565, 574, 580, 588; cf. neologism σφαιρόμορφος, v. 581), circle (v. 575, 587, 711). The figure "seven" plays a key role in Constantine's composition, but he is fascinated by other figures too, such as "four": in five lines (v. 560-564) we meet τέτταρας, τετραρίθμους, τετρασκελεῖς, τετραπλοῦς. An example of abstract delineation is the itemization of places from where stones were carried for the construction of the church of the Holy Apostles. First, in general terms, Constantine mentions India, Libya, Europe and Asia. Then he lists individual provinces that supplied particular materials: a rose column from Phrygia, plates from Caria, white, purple and emerald-green columns from Thessaly, etc. His similes remain abstract: columns are compared with taxiarchs of military troops, with *strategetai*, with body-guards of the omnipotent Lord (v. 714-716), and *pinsoi* stand in unshakable ranks, like *strategoï* and military troops, forming a cross-shaped phalanx and resembling giants who stretch out their hands with interlinked fingers (v. 614-619).

A mid-tenth-century intellectual, Constantine pays tribute to historicism. His aim is to describe Constantinople as viewed by a traveler but he digresses from simple observation into historical excursus. He says that Constantine, "victorious and wise" (he employs the same epithets with which he praises Constantine VII; cf. "the mighty and wise," v. 150), was the first ruler to venerate Christ and fortify this city (v. 64-66). Constantine put into a foundation twelve great baskets (cf. Matth. 14:20) in case the city would ever suffer from the lack of bread (v. 75-82). The writer speaks of Theodosios I and the mutiny of Maximos (p. 225-226), of Arkadios who erected a pillar in Forum Tauri (p. 203), of Leo I, his wife Verina and her brother, the wretched Basiliskos (p. 108-110), of the statue of Justinian I mounted, and his architects Anthemios and Isidore whose work "all the historians-logographoi" have extolled (v. 550-552). He ranks the thaumaturge Artemios, a healer popular in Constantinople since the seventh century, among the apostles (p. 485-486).

Constantine's diction is artificial. He followed the example of Photios and Leo VI by producing an ekphrasis, and he endeavored to put the new genre on a broader scale, encompassing not a single church but the whole of Constantinople. He couched it in iambic verse, but his technical skill was perhaps inadequate for such an enormous task. The

ekphrasis sounds patchy, amateur and incoherent;⁴⁶ it contains unnecessary repetitions. His vocabulary abounds in composita: Constantine's epigram inveighing against Leo Choirosphaktes contains dozens of long, artificial words, and in the *Ekphrasis* there are numerous composita not registered in the lexika of classical Greek, as, for instance, the city "extremely loved by the world" (v. 59, 267) or the cross "of four lights" (v. 166). His favorites are neologisms with the second element meaning "composite": σφαιροσύνθετος (v. 503, 610), τετρασύνθετος (v. 554, 605), πεντασύνθετος (v. 572), κυκλοσύνθετος (v. 622), αστροσύνθετος (v. 457), χαλκοσύνθετος (v. 196, 364), etc.

The *Ekphrasis* was created approximately a century after the *Parastaseis*. The work is much better organized, and the author endeavors to describe the monuments instead of accumulating incredible anecdotes. There is no feigned antiquity in the *Ekphrasis* or fantastic miracles. But at the same time, the energy emitted at every point of the *Parastaseis* has disappeared, the passionate mistrust of the imperial power vanished, and there is no longer room for healthy laughter. The *asekretis* Constantine shows slavish respect for the emperor, victorious and wise, and his deceased father; he adores his city, its statues and churches, and is conscious of the propriety of decorous writing.

Constantine promises to describe the church of Hagia Sophia but his promise is never fulfilled. We may hazard a guess that this was the case because, at around the same time, an anonymous author compiled the prose *Tale on the construction of Hagia Sophia*.⁴⁷ We do not know precisely when this latter work was compiled, but a supplementary passage informs the reader that "today" marks the 458th anniversary since the foundation of the church — thus the main body of the text must have been completed before 995. Four late manuscripts attribute the authorship of the *Tale* to Symeon the Magistros,⁴⁸ a piece of information that can be neither proved nor disproved.

The anonymous tale begins with a short historical note — the history of the site from Constantine the Great to Justinian I — including a description of the place and the building and short accounts of some pious contributors (for instance, the widow Markia who sent columns from Rome). The central episode of the *Tale* concerns the appearance of an angel (a divine gesture sanctifying the whole enterprise) to the son of the architect Ignatios, who was ordered to guard the instruments of the workers. Unlike Constantine's

⁴⁶ Another theory is that we have a mutilated version: Th. PREGER, in the review of the publications of Legrand and Begleri, *BZ* 6, 1897, 166-168, drew attention to some similarities between Constantine and Kedrenos; he assumes that Kedrenos consulted the complete text.

⁴⁷ Ed. Th. PREGER, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* 1, Leipzig 1901, 74-108; Fr. tr. and commentary by G. DAGRON, *Constantinople imaginaire*, Paris 1984. Cf. Eu. VITTI, *Die Erzählung über den Bau der Hagia Sophia in Konstantinopel*, Amsterdam 1986; S. G. VILINSKII, *Vizantino-slavjanskije skazaniia o sozdanii hrama sv. Sofii Caregradskoj*, Odessa 1900; R. MARICHAL, *La construction de Sainte-Sophie de Constantinople dans l'Anonyme grec (Xe siècle?) et les versions vieux-russes*, *BS* 21, 1960, 238-259.

⁴⁸ F. DÖLGER, *Justinians Engel an der Kaisertür der H. Sophia*, *Byzantion* 10, 1935, 4 n.1.

rhetorical *Ekphrasis*, the anonymous *Tale* is matter-of-fact, crammed with details, names, technical terms and figures. Also the author does not forget to mention ordinary workers. Even if the *Tale* was not a work of Symeon, *magistros* and logothete, it certainly seems to resemble, in style and approach, the historical work attributed to Symeon.

D. Anti-Macedonian chronography

In contrast to the official writing at the court of Constantine VII (Basil I's biography, "Genesios" and the Continuation of Theophanes), which survived in single manuscripts, the historical account bearing the name of Symeon Logothete⁴⁹ is known in dozens of copies usually adjoining the work of George the Monk and forming a part of a world chronicle. It was popular in Byzantium and translated into Church Slavonic and Georgian as well. The work of the Logothete proper encompasses the period 842-948, but some copies continue the narrative beyond 948.

The name of the author appears either in the title of some copies, as "The historical [book] of George the Monk and [of] Logothete"⁵⁰, or in marginal notes, as in the Moscow manuscript of George the Monk (Historical Museum no. 264, Vladimir no. 406, fol. 182) thus: "Up to here the chronicle of George, from here on only the Logothete's."⁵¹

Symeon Logothete is known from other sources. He authored a poem on the death of Stephen, a son of Romanos I, in 963.⁵² A little earlier, in 959, a certain Symeon, who is called patrikios and *asekretis*, composed a dirge on Constantine VII.⁵³ A collection of letters "of Symeon, *magistros* and logothete of the *dromos*," survived, in a peculiar form, combined and interspersed in an epistolarium with the letters of Nicholas Mystikos⁵⁴ —

⁴⁹ See on it V. G. VASIL'EVSKIJ, Hronika Logofeta na slavjanskom i grečeskom, *VizVrem* 2, 1895, 78-151; G. OSTROGORSKIJ, Slavjanskij perevod hroniki Simeona Logofeta, *SemKond* 5, 1932, 17-37; A. KAZHDAN, Hronika Simeona Logofeta, *VizVrem* 15, 1959, 125-143; R. J. H. JENKINS, The Chronological Accuracy of the 'Logothete' for the Years A.D. 867-913, *DOP* 19, 1965, 89-112, repr. in ID., *Studies*, pt. III; W. TREADGOLD, The Chronological Accuracy of the Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845, *DOP* 33, 1979, 157-197 (Treadgold studies the part of the chronicle preceding the Logothete proper); A. MARKOPOULOS, Sur les deux versions de la Chronographie de Syméon Logothète, *BZ* 76, 1983, 279-284, repr. in ID., *History and Literature*, pt. VI.

⁵⁰ C. DE BOOR, Die Chronik der Logotheten, *BZ* 6, 1897, 245.

⁵¹ E. G. MURALT, *Hronograf Georgija Amartola*, St. Petersburg 1859, 721.3. On fol. 205 a note informs us: "The end of the Logothete's" (MURALT, p. 851.21). Thereafter follows an essay by Symeon Logothete "On the creation of the world [culled] from diverse chronicles and histories" (fol. 205-8).

⁵² V. G. VASIL'EVSKIJ, Dva nadgrobnih stihotvorenija Simeona Logofeta, *VizVrem* 3, 1896, 575f.

⁵³ I. ŠEVČENKO, Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII in the Madrid Manuscript of Scylitzes, *DOP* 23/24, 1969/70, 210-221: text, Engl. tr. and commentary.

⁵⁴ DARROUZÈS, *Epistoliers*, 99-163.

possibly the epistolographer was the same person as the *asekretis*. In the case of one letter (ep. 87), at least, he wrote in the capacity of *protasekretis*. The missive to the monks of several communities is especially valuable for the dating of the correspondence, for Symeon informs them that "the evil and godless Hamdas" is now "at the gates" (ep. 83.5-6). Darrouzès places this message within the reign of Nikephoros Phokas (963-69) but it is hard to accept this date, since under Nikephoros the Byzantines were victorious over the Hamdanids, whereas in 938 Sayf ad-Dawla defeated the Byzantine general John Kourkouas on the banks of the Euphrates.⁵⁵ Symeon is probably referring to the same period in ep. 89.6-7, where he complains that recently the Hagarenes were endangering contacts with the Armenians. Another "dating" letter is one dispatched to the monk Dermokaïtes, former *strategos* (ep. 86). Dermokaïtes was already a celebrated monk in 946,⁵⁶ thus the letter must have been sent earlier, soon after the addressee had donned the monastic habit.

Thus it is probably fair to date the correspondence of Symeon, at least in part, in the 930s, and the epistolographer is to be identified as patrikios and *protasekretis* Symeon, active between 923 and 930 (*DAI*, cap. 46.68). Was this the same patrikios and *protasekretis* Symeon who composed novels of 964 and 967? Vasil'evskij hypothesized that the chronicle was written before 963, since Symeon is silent about the death of Stephen, Romanos I's son. Even though *argumenta ex silentio* are risky we may cautiously assume that his *floruit* must be placed in the 930s-960s, if, that is, the author of the chronicle and of the letters was one and the same person.

The manuscript tradition of the *Chronicle* is complicated: the copies are not only numerous but differ in respect of the text they preserve. Several copies were published as independent works, wrongly attributed to varying historians named Leo Grammatikos, Theodosios of Melitene and so on. We distinguish now two major "families" of the Logothete: one is represented by the manuscript finished in 1013 by the copyist Leo Grammatikos,⁵⁷ another by the anonymous *Continuation* of George the Monk in cod. Vatic. gr. 153 ("The Vatican George").⁵⁸ There are some intermediary redactions as well.⁵⁹ The supplement to the *Continuatio* of Theophanes, which is appended to the biography of Basil I and deals with the reigns of Leo VI, Alexander and Constantine VII, ends where the Logothete ends and is close to the Logothete, especially in his second version,⁶⁰ even

⁵⁵ M. CANARD, *Histoire de la dynastie des H'amdaniides de Jazîra et de Syrie*, Paris 1951, 742f.

⁵⁶ D. M. NICOL, The Byzantine Family of Dermokaïtes circa 940-1453, *BS* 35, 1974, 2.

⁵⁷ *Leo Grammaticus, Chronographia*, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1842.

⁵⁸ V. M. ISTRIN, *Knigy vremen'nyja i obraznyja Georgija Mniha* 2, Petrograd 1922, 1-65.

⁵⁹ See the survey by A. SOTIROUDIS, *Die Handschriftliche Überlieferung des 'Georgius Continuatus' (Redaktion A)*, Thessalonike 1989.

⁶⁰ The resemblance was indicated by F. HIRSCH, *Byzantinische Studien*, Leipzig 1876, repr. Amsterdam 1965, 41-44.

though it contains substantial additions. A special version is formed by the so-called *Chronicle* of pseudo-Symeon preserved in cod. Paris. 1712,⁶¹ which contains many insertions both in the part dealing with the period 842-948 and in earlier sections (George the Monk proper).⁶² Unfortunately, we are still without a critical edition of the Logothete-chronicle, and until its publication conclusions concerning the character of the Logothete's work will remain tentative. We shall conventionally consider the version of Leo Grammatikos as being the closest to the original (the thesis cannot be proved).

The *Chronicle* of the Logothete can be divided into three sections: the first covers the reigns of Michael III and Basil I, the second encapsulates the time of Leo VI and Alexander, and the third deals with Constantine VII and Romanos I. The last section seems to be a work of a contemporary, who refers to oral witnesses, describes details and indicates the chronology of events. The first precise date is September of the third indiction (Leo Gram., p. 293.20), i.e. 914, the surrender of Adrianople to Symeon of Bulgaria; before this, at the end of the section on Leo VI, the Logothete uses only the vague dating method of months: in June (p. 285.7) or in October (p. 285.1).

The difference between the first and second sections is less obvious. We can note, however, that the first section has very significant distinctions in different manuscripts whereas the second part is more or less uniform. Furthermore, the first section practically neglects *prodigia* (comets, earthquakes and so on). This dissimilarity, probably, reflects the different nature of sources the Logothete used for different sections, but it is impossible now to reconstruct the methods he employed to obtain his information.

The first section of the Logothete (the reigns of Michael III and Basil I) treats the topic that found, as we have seen above, a biased presentation in the court historiography of Constantine VII. The Logothete evaluates the character of the protagonists in a different way. It is true that the chapter on Michael concentrates here, as in the Continuator and "Genesios," more on Basil (Leo Gram., p. 230-235, 242-252) than the emperor (Basil is introduced by name 54 times in this chapter, whereas the name of Michael III appears only 18 times; the ratio is slightly lopsided since several times Michael is concealed under the term "basileus"), but the Logothete does not express animosity toward the young ruler. The dark portrait image of the detestable emperor jester and charioteer that forms a core of the story in the Continuator and related texts is absent from the *Chronicle* of Logothete. The chronicler says that Michael did not act "in the imperial and noble way" (p. 240.22) during the assault of the Rus', but he evaluates positively Michael's military expeditions against the Bulgarians and Arabs (p. 238.10-12, 240.16) and

⁶¹ Ed. I. BEKKER, in Theoph. Cont, Bonn 1838, 601-760, see on it A. MARKOPOULOS, *Ἡ χρονογραφία τοῦ Ψευδοσυμεὼν καὶ οἱ πηγές της*, Ioannina 1978.

⁶² See for instance F. HALKIN, *Le règne de Constantin d'après la chronique inédite de Pseudo-Syméon*, *Byzantion* 29/30, 1959/60, 7-27, cf. R. BROWNING, Notes on the 'Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio', *Byzantion* 35, 1965, 406-411.

his destruction of the fleet of the Rus' (p. 241.11-12). On the other hand, the Logothete has no respect for Basil I: while courtiers of Constantine VII emphasized the strength of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, the Logothete, having briefly described his stature and courage (p. 234.6), narrates a story of how Basil, young⁶³ and having a "huge head," visited Theophilitzes who gave him the nickname Kephalas ("With a Large Head") and appointed him to look after the horses. Another detail is Basil's sentimentality: after his murder of Bardas, Basil was crowned co-emperor, though he, albeit the "strong man," wept at the coronation (p. 246.16-17).

Basil's activity at the court of Michael III prompts serious criticism. As in the biography, Basil's life abounds with predictions, but these predictions (except for the vision of the *prosmonarios* Nicholas) are full of foreboding. For instance, the empress Theodora foresaw that Basil "would exterminate all our kin" (p. 235.1), and Leo Philosopher is said to have warned the caesar Bardas to beware of Basil (p. 243.10-11, 21-22). In Basil's conflict with Bardas neither party invites much sympathy: both men endeavored to destroy each other (p. 242.13-14) and Basil plotted against his rival (p. 244.4); finally Basil hit Bardas with a sword and murdered him (p. 245.4-5). Then it is the turn of Michael III: the Logothete describes in minute detail (p. 250-252) how Basil and his followers slaughtered the drunken emperor, and he opens the chapter on Basil I with the statement that divine justice struck down all murderers (p. 253.6-254.2). In the same vein, the Logothete makes Photios call Basil a "robber and murderer unworthy of divine communion" (p. 254.21-255.1). The chronicler proclaims not only Leo (p. 249.3) but also Constantine (p. 258.13) sons of Michael by [his mistress] Eudokia, the future legitimate spouse of Basil. On the other hand, Alexander, an example of the evil ruler, is introduced as Basil's genuine child (p. 255.7). Basil's relations with Leo went from bad to worse. Indeed, the emperor was prepared to blind his heir, and it was only thanks to Photios that he was eventually dissuaded from doing so (p. 260.12-15). As for Constantine, Basil lamented his premature death and resorted to sorcery in order to conjure up his image (p. 259.4-17). The emperor's military activity was far from glorious despite some successes in the East (p. 258.3-4, 10-12). Basil greatly deplored the fall of Syracuse (p. 257.3-4), and he was beaten during the war against the Hagarenes of Tephrika (Τιβρωκός in Leo Gram., p. 255.8). He was cruel, and not averse to flogging his subjects: the verb appears no less than five times within this short chapter. Finally, Basil's death was ludicrous and tragic: a stag lifted him up with its antlers, and afterwards Basil ordered the decapitation of the man who ran to save him (he had raised his sword to cut the emperor's belt and thus free him from the stag's antlers); Basil heatedly insisted that the man had tried to kill him (p. 262.1-10). This episode is

⁶³ The chronicler uses a non-classical adjective ἐπύγυρος (p. 234.14). Eustathios of Thessalonike, commenting on *Odys.* 15.472 (vol. II, 1788.56), states that the term ἄγυρος, designating a young man, was employed in Thrace and Attica. If the term was actually Thracian, the use of the epithet shows a skillful allusion to Basil's Thracio-Macedonian origin.

related in the *Vita of the patriarch Euthymios*, but the official history-writers in Constantine VII's milieu avoided it.

The panegyrists of the Macedonian dynasty stopped at the death of its founder — they did not produce a historical eulogy of Leo VI. Later, an anonymous scribe added to the biography of Basil a chapter on Leo, borrowed from the Logothete. But the Logothete was not flattering to Leo: the emperor, he says, appointed Samonas *parakoimomenos*, for the man was his accomplice “in every lawlessness and wrong-doing” (p. 279.16-17; the sentence is preserved in Theoph. Cont., p. 370.21-22!); Leo exhibited sacred vessels to the Hagarenes, an action, according to the Logothete, “unworthy of an emperor and a Christian” (Leo Gram., p. 282.22-283.1; cf. Theoph. Cont., p. 375.2-3); Leo would act in wrath (Leo Gram., p. 278.23) and in great despondency (p. 277.2), flogging his subjects (p. 273.12, 275.2), banishing (p. 273.13 and 16) and tonsuring (p. 273.16, 275.2, 283.13) them, and confiscating their property (p. 273.16, 275.2). Alexander's portrait is even more deprecatory: he failed to accomplish anything regal, wasting his time in drunkenness and debauchery (p. 286.9-11), and under the influence of sorcerers he behaved like a swine (p. 287.4-7). He — and not the wretched Michael III — is associated by the Logothete with the Hippodrome: he used the sacred garments and ecclesiastical *polykandyla* to adorn horse races, so that God's hand finally took vengeance on him (l. 9-13).

Unlike the early members of the Macedonian dynasty, Romanos I is treated more positively. The Logothete narrates that Symeon of Bulgaria wanted to meet Romanos because “many people had informed [Symeon] about his [Romanos'] prudence, courage and sagacity” (p. 310.15-17). He speaks of Romanos' modesty (p. 313.14, 314.4), sympathy for the victims of the great famine (p. 319.16), of his victories (p. 324.17 and 20-22), and the desire for peace (p. 310.18, 311.10). He remained silent about the dubious role Romanos played in the battle at the Acheloos in 917, whereas other sources blame him for the defeat.⁶⁴ The Logothete assigned substantial space to the glorious return of the *mandylion* to Constantinople in 944, stressing that the citizens of Edessa had asked Romanos for help (p. 326.1-2). But then he concludes the chapter with an unexpected statement: yes, Romanos was deposed by his sons but it was God who saved him (p. 328.4-7) and who punished those who sought to overturn the emperor (p. 329.3).

The Logothete praised Romanos for his attitude toward monks, among whom the emperor particularly respected “the monastic beacon” Sergios, the brother of the *magistros* Kosmas and a relative of the patriarch Photios. This monk, says the Logothete, preferred nobility of soul to physical nobility (p. 327.13-14), that is, aristocratic origins. This statement corresponds to his critical attitude toward aristocratic families such as the Doukas, Phokas and Kourkouas families. The riot of Constantine Doukas in 913, who was invited to Constantinople by *megistanes*, caused bloodshed (p. 290.6) and we find nothing in the Logothete of the heroic image of Constantine created by Gregory in the *Vita of Basil the*

⁶⁴ LIUTPRANDUS, *Antapodosis* III, 27; Leo Diac., 124f.

Younger (see below, p. 188). Leo Phokas was defeated at the Acheloos, fled to Mesembria (p. 295.16), and soon conspired against the young Constantine VII. The Logothete applies to his actions words such as “mutiny” (p. 298.22, 301.7, 302.3) and “conspiracy” (p. 302.15-16). The military successes of Nikephoros Phokas the Elder under Leo VI are omitted completely and those of John Kourkouas during the reign of Romanos I described only in passing (p. 318.7-8), the Logothete dwelling instead on Kourkouas' suppression of a revolt in Chaldia (p. 308.21-22) and on his replacement by a relative of Romanos I;⁶⁵ we may recall that the exploits of Kourkouas were, just at this time, extolled by the *protospatharios* and judge Manuel in a discourse in eight “books” that has been lost but was, probably, available to Skylitzes.⁶⁶

This neglect and censure of aristocratic lineages in the main textual family of the Logothete contrasts with the extreme interest of the Vatican George in the kin of the Phokas family. The compiler of this version describes the genealogy of the Phokades down to the emperor Nikephoros II (Istrin, *Knigy* 2, 20.19-27), recounts the youth and career of Nikephoros Phokas the Elder (p. 20.30-21.4), and inserts a story about how this Nikephoros seized Amantia in South Italy (p. 24.23-33).⁶⁷ The compiler also included some passages on other Byzantine military commanders, including Constantine Doukas (p. 35.21-23, 39.22-28 [with a reference to hearsay: “As some people say”]).

The chapter on Constantine VII and Romanos I, added to the biography of Basil I in cod. Vatic. gr. 167, was written most probably during the reign of Nikephoros Phokas (the editor calls him emperor, but knows his successor, John Tzimiskes, only as a private person). It shows an interest in the fate of aristocratic lineages, primarily those of the Kourkouas and Argyroi,⁶⁸ but the chronicler is not excited by Romanos to the same extent as the Logothete.

The so-called *Chronicle* of pseudo-Symeon also differs from the first family of the Logothete in its presentation of the reigns of Michael III and Basil I, primarily through the insertion of a few anti-Photian episodes, sometimes very close to the *Vita of the patriarch*

⁶⁵ The text in Leo Gram., 324.20-325.2, is corrupt but can be corrected by the *Continuatio* of George the Monk (ed. ISTRIN, *Knigy* 2, 61.35-62.4): Romanos highly appreciated Kourkouas and suggested that the latter marry his daughter to Romanos II, but “other basileis” disapproved of this marriage.

⁶⁶ Theoph. Cont., 427.20-428.2. Is the judge the same person as Manuel of Byzantion, possibly the author of an *enkomon* on his friend, who is included in Skylitzes' list of bad historians (Skyl., p. 3.27-33)? On him, see KRUMBACHER, *GBL*, 399.

⁶⁷ On these additions, see H. GRÉGOIRE, La carrière du premier Nicéphore Phokas, *Prosphora eis S. Kyriakiden*, Thessalonike 1953, 240f. This information on Nikephoros the Elder and his progeny may have been borrowed by the compiler from the lost historical work on the Phokades, traces of which can be detected in the History of Leo Deacon and Skylitzes. On Manuel and the story of the Phokades, see below, p. 273-274.

⁶⁸ KAZHDAN, *Iz istorii*, 1, 90f.

Ignatios by Niketas Paphlagon.⁶⁹ Pseudo-Symeon goes further than Niketas in his disapproval of Photios repeating, probably, gossip which the more cautious Niketas refrained from including: Sergios, the father of Photios, a man of foreign descent, plundered a convent and married one of the nuns (Theoph. Cont., p. 668.17-20); when she was pregnant with Photios, the saint Michael of Synada prophesied that the child would follow the way of impiety and would deprive many people of salvation (p. 669.2-8). Pseudo-Symeon mentions simple people, the victims of Photios, such as a craftsman (ἐργαστηριακός) whom Photios urged to avoid taking communion while fasting (p. 674.5-11), or slaves who demanded an increase in their provisions reasoning that the patriarch had taught that every man had two souls (p. 673.14-18) and accordingly needs more food. There are in pseudo-Symeon other features that have been inserted, some of which coincide with the version of the Vatican George, for instance the outward appearance of Basil I: "Extremely fresh, healthy, with meeting eyebrows and beautiful eyes, sullen, swarthy, of a good medium height, broad-breasted, downcast and, as some might say, introvert".⁷⁰

One of the major achievements of the court chroniclers of the mid-tenth century was the restructuring of the principles of composition. Instead of annalistic organization of the material they chose the image of the ruler as the cornerstone of each chapter. The Logothete reverts to the annalistic manner, although not entirely: while Theophanes subordinated the start of a new reign to the rigid system of years ("This year Maurice, aged 43, became emperor" [Theoph., p. 252.24] or "This year Leo became emperor, who originated [allegedly] from Germanikeia, but in fact from Isauria" [p. 391.5-6]), the Logothete followed George the Monk whose opening sentences tend to indicate the duration of the whole reign ("After Tiberios, Maurice the Armenian, his son-in-law, ruled for 20 years" [Georg. Mon., p. 656.15-16] or "After Theodosios, Leo the Isaurian or Konon ruled 25 years" [p. 735.13-14]). The Logothete begins in the same manner, such as "Leo, a son of Basil, ruled 25 years and eight months" (Leo Gram., p. 262.14-15), or in more complex mode, "Constantine was a seven-year-old boy when his father Leo died; during the reign of his uncle Alexander he was put under guardians and deprived of power; he ruled seven years with the guardians and his mother, 26 years in subordination to his father-in-law Romanos, 15 years as an independent ruler, in sum 55 years" (p. 288.9-16; naturally 1+7+26+15=49 and not 55; in fact, from the death of Leo VI on May 11 912 to the death of Constantine VII on Dec. 17 959, 47 1/2 years have passed). These introductory sentences, however, do not conceal the lack of inner cohesion and the essential independence of the episodes from one another, whether real or fictitious, as they follow a chronological

⁶⁹ MARKOPOULOS, *Χρονολογία*, 164-170. There is, however, no evidence to substantiate Markopoulos' view that pseudo-Symeon borrowed other data from a historical work of Niketas of which nothing is known.

⁷⁰ Theoph. Cont., 686.12-16 = ISTRIN, *Knigy* 2, 24.20-23.

thread.⁷¹ At the beginning of the chapter on Leo VI, the Logothete itemized events without any logical connection: the stronghold Hypsele was captured by the Hagarenes, a fire occurred near Hagia Sophia; Theodore Santabarenos was brought from Euchaita (Leo Gram., p. 283.15-21). Then, however, he relates in detail the trial of Santabarenos and ends with a prolepsis: "This Santabarenos died under [the emperor] Constantine [VII] and his mother Zoe" (p. 265.21-22). The indications of time, when given, can be vague: "During the reign of Leo" the dux of Lombardia marched against the emperor (p. 265.23), or "Thereafter" (p. 269.14), or "After the death of Zaoutzes" (p. 271.20). But in the last section of the chronicle, the Logothete often recalls exact dates (day, month and indiction), sometimes saturating his narrative with dates. For instance, a page devoted to events from the promotion of Romanos to caesar through the exile of the *magistros* Stephen to the island of Antigone (p. 304.3-19) contains six precise dates. These dates, whether they are correct or corrupt (see, for instance, the nineteenth [!] indiction [p. 304.17]; the Vatican George gives instead the ninth indiction, a plausible date [Istrin, *Knigy* 2: 48.19]), have no organizational function however, and the story remains split into independent episodes: in December Romanos crowned his sons, in April he appointed the *mystikos* John patrikios; in May the patriarch Nicholas died, and so on and so forth. Connections are casual, and in rare cases associative. Thus we are told that Constantine Lips invited Leo VI to the dedication of a monastery; then we are told that "The wind called Lips" blew with a horrible force, destroyed many houses and threatened a cataclysm (p. 280.7-14); the link here between both sentences is nothing more than the identical name of the courtier and the wind.

The Logothete gives names and titles of minor characters but rarely provides them with characteristics, and on those rare occasions when he does so, the characteristics are usually shallow or anecdotal: a certain Anna was shameless and reckless (p. 301.17); the Armenian prince Ashot was able — "so people say" — to bend an iron staff into a ring, compelling the metal to yield to the strength of his hands (p. 293.13-19). The style, alien to portraiture and to rhetoric, is full of motion that emerges through the prevalence of verbs and participles rather than adjectives and adverbs. Thus the episode of Theophilos' defeat by the Arabs (p. 222.1-22) contains 18 verbs, 18 participles and only one adjective and four adverbs. A similar ratio is found in the story of Romanos I' promotion (p. 297.3-21): 19 verbs and 13 participles against five adjectives and three adverbs. The adverbs themselves tend not to describe but to emphasize the motion, *παρευθύ*, "immediately," being one of the most popular in the chronicle. Accordingly, the diction becomes energetic, muscular, as in the scene describing the attempt by the relatives of Stylianos Zaoutzes on Leo VI's life: Zoe, the emperor's wife, heard the noise, looked out through a window and silenced the conspirators. Then she woke Leo up, and he "immediately" took the boat and sailed to

⁷¹ JENKINS, *The Chronological Accuracy of the 'Logothete'*, 91-112, subscribes to the view that the Logothete used a set of annals for the reigns of Basil I, Leo VI and Alexander.

Pegai. In the morning, he speedily (τάχιον) returned to the palace, demoted the *droungarios* of *vigla* John and replaced him with the *hetaireiarch* Nicholas (p. 270.1-9). Event follows event in a relentless movement.

E. Other contemporaries of Constantine VII

Besides Theodore Daphnopates and Symeon the Logothete, four more intellectuals of the middle of the tenth century left more or less substantial collections of letters: Theodore of Kyzikos, Alexander of Nicaea, Theodore of Nicaea and the so-called Anonymous Teacher.

The letters of Theodore of Kyzikos (Darrouzès, *Epistoliers*, p. 317-41) form two groups: the second part consists of relatively short and trivial missives to diverse people whose names and offices are not indicated; the first group, however, is Theodore's correspondence with Constantine VII. From Skylitzes we learn that Theodore was very close to the emperor and urged him in 956 to depose the patriarch Polyeuktos (Skyl., p. 244.14-15); just before his death, Constantine traveled to Mount Olympos to see Theodore and to discuss with him the possibility of Polyeuktos' dethronement (p. 247.68-73). Theodore's hostile letter "to a patriarch" (ep. 19) was evidently sent to Polyeuktos and reflects the campaign against him.

The correspondence with Constantine must be earlier. The only event mentioned there (by Constantine) is the invasion of the Scythians (ep. 5.15), most probably prince Igor's expedition of 941. Constantine's "new-born boy" (ep. 18.6) is Romanos II, born in 939, which points to the same period. The correspondence is uneventful and rhetorical: Theodore flatters the emperor and proclaims his loyalty (e.g., ep. 2.15-16); Constantine insists on his lack of learning (epp. 1.7, 3.5, 7.2 and 8), which Theodore is obliged to refute: the emperor, he announces, was abundantly fed if not with the milk of the Muses (sic!), instead with "the heavenly and divine dew of the Holy Spirit"; the emperor surpasses the [ancient] sages, jurists and recorders (γραμματέων, probably, to read γραμματέων), and shines with "the reason, tongue and voice of divine wisdom" (ep. 8.9-14). More surprising is the praise of the emperor's physical appearance: he is tall, elegant and handsome (ep. 9.6: a typical accumulation of synonymous epithets). Probably, Constantine was actually of a good height — at any rate the friends allow themselves to joke about a stunted fellow who visited the imperial palace (epp. 14.5, 15.3).

Theodore states that he lives away from the city (ep. 9.1) without resorting to the hackneyed complaints concerning his location. Indeed, he says that the cold winds from the mountains and chilly streams alleviate the heat (ep. 11.1-2) rather than bitterly assail him, and he suffers only from a burning in the heart that the sweet voice of his friend is apt to extinguish. Constantine calls him "the absent Olympian" (ep. 10.1). Theodore moved to Olympos where the ailing emperor would go to visit him. It is the emperor who is

depressed by the predicaments of his life and the attacks of a tempest (ep. 18.5-9), without specifying exactly what these are except for the disease of his boy (he speaks in the plural of τὰ ἄρρενα). The correspondence paints a picture of an ideal friendship, free of the usual vexation caused by the friend's silence.

The second epistolographer is Alexander of Nicaea.⁷² Constantine VII appointed him to teach rhetoric (Theoph. Cont., p. 446.11-12). The chronology of his life is still under discussion: Darrouzès suggested that he was alive at the end of the tenth century, since he mentions Theodegios, a bishop of "golden Athens" (ep. 18.9; cf. epp. 19.19 and 20.19) who is known to have signed an act of 997 and died in 1006.⁷³ This dating, however, is problematic: Alexander of Nicaea was an ally of Nicholas Mystikos, who sent him a letter (ed. Jenkins-Westerink, ep. 71) in 921/5 and possibly another (ep. 100) in 919/20. It is hard to imagine that a man mature ca. 920 would still be active around eighty years later. Markopoulos seeks the solution to the enigma by attributing three letters mentioning Theodegios to a different, anonymous author. Theodegios is an unusual name, but can we be absolutely sure that there was only one metropolitan of Athens with this name during the tenth century? Two Leo's of Sardis are known in the same period.

Alexander belonged to the circle of high-ranking intellectuals. He compiled scholia to Lucian (see below, p. 296), and he or somebody from his environment wrote an epigram on the restoration of the bathhouse in Praenetos "by Alexander, the priest of Nicaea, the star of illustrious learning" (*Anth. Gr* XVI: 281). Alexander authored the epigram on Nicholas Mystikos, who "subdued emperors and tamed the enemy" (*Anth. Gr* XXVI: 21). Both epigrams, as well as the epitaph on an otherwise unknown *synkellos* Michael, originate from the same milieu.⁷⁴ The *magistros* Niketas, another high-ranking official (on him, see above, p. 85-88), corresponded with the metropolitan of Nicaea (ed. Westerink, ep. 9), i.e. Alexander, asking him to lend them books by classical writers such as Demosthenes and Plutarch.

Alexander joined a different faction to that of Theodore of Kyzikos: he considered [the metropolitans of] Kyzikos and Herakleia his relentless enemies (ep. 16.16-17; cf. ep. 5.74); their names, Anastasios of Herakleia and Theodore of Kyzikos, are indicated in the title to ep. 10. Anastasios (died ca. 946), whom Alexander caustically dubs "bull-faced" (ep.

⁷² DARROUZÈS, *Epistoliers*, 67-98. See on him P. MAAS, Alexandros von Nikaia, *BNJbb* 3, 1922, 333-336; N. BEES, Basileios von Korinth und Theodoros von Nikaia, *BNJbb* 6, 1927/28, 375-382; A. MARKOPOULOS, Überlegungen zu Leben und Werk des Alexandros von Nikaia, *JÖB* 44, 1994, 313-326, repr. in ID., *History and Literature*, pt. XVII; LEMERLE, *Humanisme*, 267f. n. 67; WILSON, *Scholars*, 141f.

⁷³ On Theodegios, see V. LAURENT, La liste épiscopale de la métropole d'Athènes, *Mémorial L. Petit*, Bucarest 1948, 282, and ID., *Corpus* V,1, no. 595.

⁷⁴ I. ŠEVČENKO, An Early Tenth-Century Inscription from Galakrenai with Echoes from Nonnos and the Palatine Anthology, *DOP* 41, 1987, 462.

14.44) and “pot-bellied” (τρικάρκας, ep. 4.21), supported Constantine VII against the sons of Romanos I (Skyl., p. 236.89). Romanos, if we can believe the *Chronicle* of “Daphnopates” (Theoph. Cont., p.439.5-8), had a vision in which he saw Anastasios being thrown into the inferno. Needless to say, the metropolitan passed away on the same day. Even more influential enemies of the metropolitan of Nicaea were the patriarch Theophylaktos and Romanos Saronites, Romanos I’s son-in-law, whom Constantine VII in 945 removed from the Constantinopolitan administration and sent to govern the theme of Anatolikon (Theoph. Cont., p. 443.18-19).⁷⁵

Alexander’s letters focus on the theme of his exile to an unknown place called Monobata. Markopoulos thinks that Alexander was condemned by the government of Romanos I, whereas Darrouzès argues that it was Constantine VII who, under the influence of the patriarch Theophylaktos, exiled the metropolitan of Nicaea. Taking into consideration the feud between Alexander and such politicians as Anastasios and Theodore, the close supporters of Constantine VII, the latter hypothesis seems the more plausible.

The tone of complaints had become standardized in Byzantine epistolography, but Alexander who tended to enjoy, as we have seen, describing the outward appearance of his adversaries, also endeavored to escape the formulaic tradition in picturing the setting of his exile (the example had been set before him by the patriarch Methodios). He complains that he is placed under the surveillance of hirelings (*misthotai*, the word has a negative connotation) and confined to a cave that is worse than a stinking grave; the air in his dwelling is thick, stifling and vaporous (ep. 6.8-12: a rhetorical accumulation of synonyms). In the “holy place” (a patriarchal palace?) he was beaten by the slaves of the lord (patriarch?), and then endured the imprisonment, banishment and ungodly treatment (ep. 15.11-13). The opening of the letter to Leo of Sardis is formulaic: Alexander wants to write in tears and blood (ep. 1.1). Then he switches to a description: he was invited to the patriarchate, and went there unsuspecting. As he entered, the *ostiarioi* closed the doors behind him, an unusual act and a bad omen. Suddenly Photios, the patriarch’s slave, fell upon him with a cry, pushed him into the *sakelle* and behind closed doors maltreated Alexander in a manner normally reserved for cooks or other servants. That night he spent in the *sakelle* surrounded by a multitude of patriarchal slaves supplied with numerous lamps. Then his private boxes were brought in and searched: “I do not know what for,” says our *homo byzantinus* innocuously. The “another storm” follows, and Alexander was put in a boat and transferred to the [monastery] of Satyros (l. 5-33). The metropolitan pathetically represents the reaction of “the whole of Constantinople” to his arrest: not only the rhetorical tears are mentioned, but the serried throng is described, through which the

⁷⁵ DARROUZÈS, *Epistoliers*, 84 n. 30, suggests that Constantine appointed Saronites *magistros*; the chronicler merely says that he sent the *magistros* Saronites to Anatolikon. The *magistros* had been entrusted with the honorable obligation to protect the poor and needy.

scourge-bearing servants of the patriarch could barely make way (l. 33-40). From the capital he was carried to “the borders of the empire,” to Monobata,⁷⁶ where he has spent five months fed on vegetables and beans, in isolation, deprived of bath and meat, of ink and parchment, suffering from gout and loss of hair (l. 41-58). This is certainly a vivid picture.

The emphasis of the letter to Ignatios of Nikomedia is different. Even though Alexander repeats some of the same complaints (“I suffer from gout but have no physician,” ep. 4.30), the main thrust of the epistle is his resolve to maintain his militant spirit: if he has to go through an *agon*, let it be — he is not yet dead (l. 9-10). And accordingly the style shifts, becoming more rhetorical, more pathetic, with a paronomasia χαλεπόν-χαλεπωτέρω and the pun on the name of Monobata: “in the untrodden (ἀβάτοις) desert of Monobata” (ep. 4.12 and 28).

Theodore of Nicaea, a contemporary of Constantine VII and Romanos II, was a successor of Alexander (his letters in Darrouzès, *Epistoliers*, 261-316). Originating from the region of Nauplion-Argos,⁷⁷ he moved to Constantinople where he held the post of the patriarchal *chartophylax* before being elected to the see of Nicaea: the lemma of ep. 39 “to Theodore the *chartophylax*” should be put in the genitive (“by Theodore”), and from ep. 36.7-9 we learn that the official called *hypomnematographos* was his assistant.⁷⁸ He has not lost contact with his home region and eventually composed a biography of the local saint, Peter of Argos (see above, p. 113-118).

Theodore became metropolitan of Nicaea at the end of the patriarchate of Theophylaktos (d. 956). Some of his missives are addressed to Theophylaktos, and in one of them (ep. 1.19-20) Theodore complains that a certain monk accused him of slandering the patriarch. The nature of the conflict is not clear, and we do not even know if the letters reflect one or more conflicts of Theodore with the patriarch and emperor (Constantine VII). In ep. 42 Theodore asks the patriarch (evidently Theophylaktos) to help him reach reconciliation with the emperor: Theodore expects that “the lord of the universe and basileus” will forgive his inadvertent misdemeanor (l. 48-50). Darrouzès suggests that the conflict was followed by Theodore’s exile, but while the letters are full of self-pity about the author’s plight, the precise nature of his συμφορά is not specified. Thus Theodore asks an anonymous correspondent to persuade the emperor not to abandon him to life in the country (or in an estate, ἐν ἀγρῷ) like wild animals and birds (ep. 23.13-15). Ἀποδημία, of which he writes to the metropolitan[s] of Melitene and Laodikeia (ep. 33.2), can be both an exile and a mission to the province. While the reader expects actual exile, Theodore described it with another word, ὑπεροχία (ep. 30.7 and 13). He seems to have been a free

⁷⁶ Monobata emerges in the correspondence of the Anonymous Teacher: ep. 60 bears the title “To the hegoumenos of Monobata.”

⁷⁷ DARROUZÈS, *Epistoliers*, 51f.

⁷⁸ The *hypomnematographos* was the *chartophylax*’s deputy: see J. DARROUZÈS, *Recherches sur les ΟΦΦΙΚΙΑ de l’église byzantine*, Paris 1970, 367.

man while dwelling in the province, since in a letter to an anonymous correspondent he conveyed his desire to follow his friend to Tarsos; he nevertheless moaned that he suffered from "the winter of despondency and lost hopes" (ep. 19.3-5) while the addressee tarried in Galatia. The verb ἐβουκόλουν, which he used in the sense "to cheat, beguile," had the primary meaning "tend cattle," and it would seem to fit well with the pastoral conditions of "cold" (hence "wintry") Galatia. Meanwhile the correspondent returned to Constantinople, but Theodore could not join him, since the emperor's ears were troubled by false rumors (l. 5-10). As in ep. 23, Theodore complains that he dwells like a wild animal under the open sky, bereft of civilized comforts (l. 18-20). He was definitely sent away from the capital, but was it truly an exile?

From the letter to Theodore, metropolitan of Kyzikos (ep. 27), we learn that Theodore of Nicaea joined his faction; the metropolitan of Kyzikos was close to Constantine VII (see above) and, in all probability, achieved what Theophylaktos, for whatever obscure reason, could not or did not want to do, that is, reconcile his namesake with the emperor. In any case, Theodore of Nicaea is grateful to him for the "return to the emperor" (l. 14-15). In a missive to the *protospatharios* Leo there is an allusion to the power struggle within the church: Theodore thinks that an impious and arrogant man, thirsty for notoriety, is responsible for the conflicts taking place day after day (ep. 30.1-3). Here he probably meant the patriarch Polyeuktos with whom he, however, served [as secretary?] (ep. 20 is recorded as being from Polyeuktos). Leo reproached Theodore for changing his mind because of his fear [of exile?] (ep. 30.4-5).

The data on Theodore's biography are meager and obscure, but thanks to Theodore's letter to Theophylaktos we have some information regarding the external appearance of our epistolographer. The enemies, he says, ridiculed him for not having a large beard or oily (λιπαινόμενος) neck, or huge pot-belly; everything about him is lean and bony (ep. 2.90-93). Theodore acknowledges the truth of the image, but defends himself in the following way: "A fat belly does not produce fine thought" (*Paroem. graeci* 2, 337, no. 22a); the loss of flesh, he meditates, lubricates (λιπαίνονται) the spirit and refines the mind (l. 94-96). As for his hair, his cheeks are sufficiently covered, and he does have a beard, although not long enough to flap away flies (l. 102-3). Besides this remarkable exterior self-portrait, Theodore gives a moral evaluation of himself: he is pious, having been brought up by good parents and the lord (local bishop, possibly Peter), fed by the pure milk that gushed from the breasts of divine fathers (l. 64-70). He had no abode and little property, so he obtained his annual sustenance from generous people and the remuneration (συνήθεια) of his office (l. 71-74).⁷⁹

Theodore is a talented epistolographer. A missive to the patriarch Theophylaktos (ep. 13) shows how masterfully Theodore distinguished between the public function of the

⁷⁹ *Syntheia* was a term designating surtaxes or sportulae: N. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Fiscalité et exemption fiscale à Byzance (IXe-XIe s.)*, Athens 1996, 77 n. 119.

letter as an official document and its role as a tool of private communication. In the first part of the letter, Theodore responds to the patriarch's inquiry concerning the appointment of a man to the position of "the candidate to deaconate." Theodore is strictly against his promotion since the man is rumored to be a trouble-maker and to patronize taverns. Then follows the second part, which is thoroughly personal: "my lord," complains Theodore, is severe to his faithful servant, who did not commit anything against Theophylaktos. So far so good, and Theodore could have stopped at this point. But he knows, and the patriarch knows, that this formula of loyalty is not sincere, so he allows himself a cautious confession: "Unless it was an accidental act caused by his simplicity" or "an action perpetrated in a situation threatening the [salvation] of the soul." This said, Theodore returns to the formula of loyalty, assuring his powerful correspondent that he has never whetted his tongue against his benefactor, although many people urged him to do so (l. 15-21). If we believe Theodore, he has never sinned against Theophylaktos; he was only summoned by numerous men to join their faction, which was hostile to the patriarch; and when he finally joined them, it was by accident or due to his simplicity or because the situation presented some danger to his soul. Theodore ends the letter in an aphoristic manner: "If the slave is despised, the contempt seems to fall upon the lord himself, and if I am humiliated by the lord, the lord himself suffers humiliation from the same cause as I do" (l. 36-38).

The genre of the funeral letter is well developed in Byzantine epistolography. It usually consisted of two sections: consolation and the assurance that the deceased would find salvation in heaven. Theodore's epistle (ep. 6) to his friend the *protospatharios* Leo (to him another letter, ep. 30, was sent) on the death of Leo's mother ignores or at least strongly reduces the second, "heavenly" section. Anxiety and sorrow upon the mother's demise is natural, so he begins, and then goes on to paint a hagiographical image of the woman fond of her children who was widowed for 40 years, abstaining from the mundane desire for gold and luxurious lifestyle and preferring a solitary existence, ragged dress and meager food, devoting herself to fasting, sleeping on the floor, and prayers (ep. 6.5-7). The word "saint" is not pronounced, but all this vocabulary: "ragged dress," "meager food," "fasting," "sleeping on the floor," and "prayers" are typical characteristics of saintly behavior: Theodore raises the dead woman to sainthood. Then he returns to his addressee. The man is lonely and has nobody to turn to for solace, neither father, nor spouse whose warmth might compensate for the loss of parental love. The passage ends with the noun ἀνία (l. 16) mirroring the verb ἀνίᾳ that opens the letter, and this repetition marks the turning point, strengthened in the next passage by expressions such as "I think" and "as I said," which underscore the author's personal attitude, i.e. those who are manly and noble endure the difficulties of life. The mother reappears not rejoicing in paradise but closely connected with Leo: her love protects him and directs him to an existence free of pain (l. 30-31). Theodore concludes with an admonition: desist from sorrow, give respite to your eyes sore from weeping, show that you are the worthy son of your mother and cheer up your brother who is weaker than you are.

Theodore is a proficient narrator. In a letter sent to Constantine VII (ep. 3) he vividly describes the mugging that he experienced in the streets of Constantinople. He starts with a short ironical proem stating that John Chrysostom evidently found him unworthy to participate in the celebration of the feast in John's honor. And then he plunges into the narration. At night (it is worth noting that the most vivid scenes described by Byzantine epistolographers [cf. Ignatios the Deacon and Niketas Paphlagon] take place at night; see another letter of Theodore, ep. 24.2: "Late in the evening I came to the patriarchate"), he was riding on horseback to the shrine of the Holy Apostles, followed by his nephew on a mule. On the way, at the arch of Artopoleia, they came across a gang of rogues commanded by the *koitonites* Basil. The hoodlums struck the mule — a shy creature afraid of its own shadow — on the head, and then attacked the rider. Theodore wanted to dismount and throw himself at the feet of the *koitonites*, but had no time: the muggers assaulted him, beat him with staves and sticks, paying no attention to his name and title that Theodore hurried to shout out. For the sake of his learned addressee, Theodore unexpectedly (and ironically) compares this street turmoil with the expedition of Alexander the Great, asserting that while he was assaulted he kept in mind the skirmish of Alexander's companion Aristoboulos with the army of Eumenes — an anecdote not related in the texts now available to us.

Meanwhile the "battle" (totally one-sided) continued. A scoundrel struck Theodore with a knobbed mace so that he fell from the saddle; the hoodlums kept beating him until someone showed mercy and announced that Theodore was dead. Again, the writer interrupts his tale to indulge in an "excursus" into antiquity: the brawl reminded him of a nightlong Dionysiac vigil. He ends the story by describing how he lay unconscious, as if in a deep sleep, how people passed by without stopping, frightened by the gang, and he assured the emperor that it was not he who started the brawl. We do not know who did start it, but Theodore certainly left us with a colorful episode presented in an ironical tone.

Besides narrating effectively dramatic events, Theodore is interested in emotional fluctuation. He asserts (ep. 22.1-2) that he always treated his slaves as equal, and therefore allowed a certain Demetrios, whom he bought at the age of four and fed for 18 years, to claim "so-called freedom." When, however, Theodore reminded Demetrios of all the good things he had done for him as a slave, Demetrios changed his mind, rejected "the sweet freedom," wept and announced that his decision was hasty rather than wise (l. 9-13). Even finer is the psychological move in the letter to the patriarch Theophylaktos describing how Theodore was maltreated in the patriarchate (ep. 42). Cleverly Theodore contrasts the rough demeanor of low-ranking church officials and the "sweet lord," the patriarch. He begins with the statement that "the crude and merciless words" addressed to him could not be the lord's (l. 1-3), and then contrasts "the knavish and ignoble words" that the messenger attributed to the patriarch (l. 21-22) — he did not even say "how are you" — with the peaceful eyes and smiling face of his addressee. Theodore knows of course that the command to maltreat him came from above, but he plays this off and masterfully paints a picture contrasting the mild lord and crude servant.

The Anonymous Teacher differs from these princes of the church in social status and literary style.

The collection of 122 anonymous letters survived in a single manuscript, cod. Lond. Brit. Mus. 36749, of the late tenth century.⁸⁰ The author's biography can be established only in outline.⁸¹ He was not a child of Constantinople, as can be deduced from ep. 78.2-3, in which the Teacher exempts from paying fees a student who originated from his own "fatherland." Lemerle suggests that this "fatherland" was Thrace, since the writer described himself as more uncultured than the Leibethrioi (ep. 47.36-37), proverbial country bumpkins from the region of Pieria (in Macedonia). The phrase, however, does not necessarily imply the author's own place of origin.

The anonymous author was a contemporary of Alexander of Nicaea, to whom he sent a letter (ep. 69). Leo of Sardis, the addressee of another letter (ep. 85), was Alexander's correspondent (he should not be confused with another Leo who occupied the see of Sardis ca. 1000) and Anastasios of Herakleia (ep. 1) was Alexander's enemy. Gregory of Ankyra (ep. 91) appears in Alexander's correspondence. Alexander, however, lived a long life (see above), and the Teacher's connections with him and his correspondents do not provide us with a secure chronology of the anonymous author. Three letters were sent to the empress Sophia (epp. 8, 98 and 99); she is to be identified as the wife of Christopher. It is unclear why Browning and Mango speak of her as "ex-empress" and "widow" and accordingly date the letters "after 931," when, after her spouse's death, Sophia accepted the monastic habit (Theoph. Cont., p. 471.13-14). Addressed as "the holy *despoina*," the Sophia of the letters is the ruling *Augusta* rather than a nun, and the letter should be dated between 921 and 931. Other identifications suggested by Browning are either irrelevant for dating or questionable: thus Darrouzès rejected the identification of the *mystikos* Theodore as Theodore Daphnopates, Basil of Neocaesarea as Basil of Caesarea, the bishop

⁸⁰ The main part of the collection is published by R. BROWNING - B. LAOURDAS, *Tò κείμενον τῶν ἐπιστολῶν τοῦ κώδικος BM 36749*, *EEBS* 27, 1957, 151-212, R. BROWNING, *The Correspondence of a Tenth-Century Byzantine Scholar*, *Byzantion* 24, 1954-56, 397-452, and B. LAOURDAS, *Ἡ συλλογὴ ἐπιστολῶν τοῦ κώδικος BM Add. 36749*, *Athena* 58, 1954, 176-198; see corrections by J. DARROUZÈS, *Σύμμεικτα*. Corrections aux lettres anonymes de Lond. Addit. 36749, *EEBS* 28, 1958, 444-446. The entire corpus is now available in the edition by A. MARKOPOULOS, *Anonymi professoris epistulae*, Berlin-New York 2000 [CFHB 37]; references are made to this edition.

⁸¹ Besides Browning's commentary, see LEMERLE, *Humanisme*, 246-257; C. MANGO, *The Date of Cod. Vatic. Regin. Gr. 1 and the 'Macedonian Renaissance'*, *Institutum Romanum Norvegiae, Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 4, 1969, 124f. The monograph by A. STEINER, *Untersuchungen zu einem anonymen byzantinischen Briefcorpus des 10. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt a.M. 1987, is a categorization of letters in accordance with the epistolographic subgenres; it also contains translations of many missives.

Euthymios as Euthymios, metropolitan of Antioch in Pisidia, a correspondent of Nicholas Mystikos.⁸²

In one letter (ep. 26.16-20), the Teacher complained that for seventeen years he had to carry a heavy burden, taking care of his relatives displaced by a “universal catastrophe.” This οἰκουμένης συμφορὰ is usually interpreted as the Bulgarian invasion under Symeon but it could be the great famine of 927/8, which would make 944 the year of the letter. In a missive to his archenemy, a certain *kanstrisios*, the Teacher hints at another event of his time: “I saw the drawn bows and immediately gave up like the rebellious Scythians as soon as the emperor appeared” (ep. 17.16-18). In another letter to the same *kanstrisios*, he speaks of repelling the barbarians who used to be troublesome and recognized no truce (ἄσπονδοι) but had now become tame having signed a treaty (ἔσπονδοι) (ep. 44.9-10). “The rebellious Scythians” are the Rus’ of Igor who attacked Constantinople, were defeated in 941 and signed the truce in 944, rather than the Bulgarians, unless we assume that the anonymous author means the peace of 927, though his description does not really tally with the events of 927, since it was not the success of the Byzantines but the sudden death of Symeon that resulted in the peace process.

The letter to the exiled monk Niketas contains another biographical feature: the Teacher, from his own experience, knows what it means to live among the aliens without a single day of joy (ep. 100.2-8, 21-23). In a missive to the *mystikos* Theodore, he calls himself “unlucky friend” who cannot see Theodore / seeking help (ep. 112.4-6). Does this mean that he too was banished, or are these phrases simply the formulaic clichés? By the time of his correspondence, however, the exile must have been far behind him: the man had settled down in Constantinople, and there ran a grammar school, supplementing his earnings by copying and editing manuscripts. He also mentions his own literary production, but we have no sample of his works. He was at loggerheads with many other teachers with whom he competed for students, with parents who refused or delayed the payment of fees, and with various intellectuals, who as he says, spread slanderous gossip about him. His relations with students seem to have been far from ideal: a partisan of strict discipline, he flogged and chastised those who did not study and preferred trading birds to reading books. The letter to his pupil Stephen, reveals the principles of the anonymous author’s pedagogical principles: “Do not dare,” he almost threatens his student, “to overwhelm me with rhetoric... A single principle (λόγος) suffices to elucidate everything, removing these suspicions” (ep. 117.2-5). And further down he says, listen to my advice, “stick to the knowledge that is taught and that will continue to be taught ((ὑποδειχθείσης καὶ ὑποδειχθισομένης),” in other words to the traditional wisdom. But he himself was by no means a traditional figure.

The Anonymous was the first Byzantine professional *littérateur* of whom we know, the harbinger of the eleventh-century freelancers. Neither a member of a monastic community,

⁸² J. DARROUZÈS, Inventaire des épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle, *REB* 18, 1960, 113.

nor an ecclesiastic with a steady income, nor a state official on a regular salary, he earned what he could with his pen and tongue. We may laugh at his petty demands to be paid on time, at his squabbles with colleagues to get more students for tuition, but we should not forget that we are witnessing the birth (or rebirth) of a new intellectual profession.

Teacher and *litteratus*, the Anonymous had his circle of intellectual friends and rivals.⁸³ Among his correspondents few belonged to the higher echelons of society: for example, the empress Sophia, anonymous patriarch[s], the patrikios and logothete Theoktistos (ep. 95), the *sakellarios* Leo (epp. 24 and 25). The main body of people he was bound to were either teachers — *asekretis* and *maistor* Peter (epp. 19, 67 and 23 identical with ep. 97), the priest and *maistor* Philaretos (ep. 68), the *maistor* Michael (epp. 36 and 51) — or men holding secretarial offices, such as *protasekretis* (epp. 40, 108, 111), *asekretis* (epp. 41, 86, 101, 115; see above Peter, *asekretis* and teacher), *mystikos* (especially Theodore) and notary of a *mystikos* (ep. 28), protonotary (epp. 65, 79, 116), *chartoularios* (epp. 2, 3, 38, 39, 78, 93, 114), *chartophylax* (ep. 21), *antigraphus* (ep. 102). Their titles range between the relatively low rank of *spatharokandidatos* and that of *protospatharios*. Among the ecclesiastics there are several metropolitans (Alexander of Nicaea, Anastasios of Herakleia, Basil of Neocaesarea, Gregory of Ankyra, Leo of Sardis, Nikephoros of Philippopolis, and an anonymous archbishop of Selge), a couple of bishops and many deacons, imperial *klerikoi*, church functionaries (patriarchal *protovestiarios* [ep. 66] and a *pigkernes* [ep. 61], *skeuophylax* [ep. 50], *chartoularioi* [epp. 78 and 93]); only one *hegoumenos* (ep. 60) and at least four monks. We may say that this was a representative slice of the middleclass bureaucracy.

Even though many letters of the collection are complaints about enmity and slander, the bonds of intellectual exchange that tied this group together are no less evident. Books were lent, manuscripts sent for critical comment, and friendship praised in the highest terms. The Anonymous and his circle were well-read in classical authors, and ancient imagery constantly emerges in his letters: the misanthropy of Timon (ep. 23.2) was appropriate to the teacher’s mood, and in his relative poverty he could only dream about the horn of Amaltheia (ep. 23.12); the image of Achilles taught by Cheiron (ep. 26.29-30) was popular in the tenth century, and among others the author of the biography of Basil I applied it to his hero (Theoph. Cont., p. 220.4); numerous mythological and historical figures of the Greek past appear in the collection, even the murderers of the tyrant Harmodios and Aristogeiton (ep. 79.26-27), who were not Byzantine favorites.

It is not surprising that the Anonymous applied formulas of modesty. Thus, when addressing the empress Sophia, he describes himself as “insignificant and a cipher” who feels great honor that his letter has been taken “into the hands of the holy *despoina*” (ep. 98.6-8). But his humility goes beyond the stereotyped formulas, displaying the social

⁸³ On the “milieu social et culturel” reflected in the correspondence of the anonymous author, see A. MARKOPOULOS, L’épistolaire du ‘Professeur anonyme’ de Londres, *Aphieroma ston N. Sborono*, Rethymno 1986, 139-144, and Id., Introduction to the edition of the letters, 10*-13*.

consciousness of a man aware of his status. To the metropolitan of Ankyra he says that he is unable to raise up his voice or eye to those who are great (ep. 91.1-2; cf. l. 6), and in a letter to the metropolitan of Sardis he deliberates at length on the distinction between his humility and the high position of his addressee, whom he barely dares to approach: "It is improper for jackdaws," he announces citing an old proverb, "to fly with eagles" (ep. 85.32-40). And as in the letter to Sophia, the anonymous author speaks of the honor, this time to be invited to see the revered countenance of the metropolitan. Typical is his letter to the logothete Theoktistos, the only patrikios in his *epistolarium*: the logothete is "great" while the writer is insignificant, yet Theoktistos allows (lit. "nods, makes the sign," ἐπινεύεις) the insignificant one to approach him (ep. 95.18-22). "Your God-loving soul," deliberates the Anonymous, would think on my weaknesses, my erroneous judgment, my boorish and simple character and other despicable qualities, connected with shamefulness and the lack of experience. And here he rises to a sweeping, wonderfully medieval generalization: "Everyone should remain within his status (τάξις) without trying to overstep its limits." If he himself overstepped his *taxis*, he did it inadvertently. And, accordingly, he quotes Aesop (fable 3bis.1): "The kite should not vie with horses, should not disown the voice fitting to birds of his kin and try and neigh hoarsely."

Each person has to accept his *taxis*, but within the limits of his status or profession the Anonymous holds his head high. He writes to the *kouboukleisios* Theodore (ep. 81.3-16): you have no right to lose the measure of tongue and rashly treat the teachers as if they are illiterate, you must in all events respect the leaders of education. He reproaches the *protospatharios* Theodore: how could you, an educated man, be so contemptuous of those who embraced education (ep. 84.8-10). A humble literatus, prepared to grovel at the feet of big shots, the Anonymous is nonetheless professionally proud of his knowledge.

Few Byzantine writers are so attentive as he is to the technical aspects of their craft. He explains to his student Ioannikios (ep. 96.3-8) that he prefers written text to oral speech: the ear of the listener tends to misunderstand (lit. "be blocked," ἀποφράττεται) arguments expressed "in vivid voice," since the mind stumbles when trying to attend to oral speech. He emphasizes the public function of the letter, writing to his pupil Stephen (ep. 9.2-5) that he is ready to repeat his words so that the new letter would be pleasant in its content and expression ("style," φράσις) to both Stephen and other listeners. To his other pupil, Paul, he relates (ep. 105.14-16) that Paul's letter was read to the students of the school; it displayed the elegance of figures of speech (συνθήκη; like *phrasis*, one of the main Photian terms of stylistics). From his letters we learn that iambs were regularly used in his days: he received an *epistrophe* (apology) of a student-truant written in iambs (ep. 87.2-3), and he recommended to his pupils to compile iambs dedicated to the *mystikos* Theodore, himself "the father of copious beautiful iambs," and to display them in the streets and squares "not for the purpose of mocking, nor to incite a mutiny (we read ἀπόστασιν instead of ed. ὑπόστασιν, "foundation, substance")" but to do something useful (ep. 94.5-9). The Anonymous elucidates how the intellectuals around him collaborated. Thus he

sends to the *asekretis* Stephen his tract (λόγος), "poor in harmonious figures," not to make of it food for woodworms but to give it final form [with Stephen's help] (ep. 101.4-6). To the *koubikoularios* Theodotos he sends his booklet and concludes his letter with a fine pun: he asks that his clumsy (lit. "unstable") handwriting be forgiven; he cares about [spiritual] beauty (φιλοκάλους) not ornamentation (φιλοκαλλωπιστάς) (ep. 5). He asks the *chartophylax* Orestes to read his work and to trim its excess shoots, but if Orestes is too busy he is required to send the abortive child back to its father who will keep it in an obscure nook until the time of birth matures (ep. 21.2-6). In a letter to a patriarch (ep. 88),⁸⁴ he describes the difficult task of collecting and correcting old books; the work was performed by a team, the members of which had to copy the originals, while our Anonymous was entrusted with the supervision of the whole project.

The Anonymous experienced the impact of Photios not only in terminology but also in style, which is abstract, and lacks the vivid scenes we could observe in the letters of some tenth-century epistolographers, such as Niketas Paphlagon, Alexander of Nicaea or Theodore of Nicaea.

The letter to the monk (and scribe?) Ephraem (ep. 64, tr. Steiner, 44) is particularly abstract. Here, the author deals with two traditional themes: the love of his friend (Ephraem) and the letters themselves. "I received your golden letter," he begins, and uses the words γράφειν, γραφή and γράμμα five more times; the writer reaches the highpoint of the topic when he announces that he "was honored with your sweet communication." His love of Ephraem is expressed not in acts but in piling up words such as πόθος, φιλία, ἀγάπη. The only "event" touched upon in the letter is a customary epistolographic ingredient: the Anonymous had received a gift, a bedcover no less, to be used every night.

The letter to Leo of Sardis (ep. 85) begins with a long preface, in which he meditates on the process of cognizance that requires seeing and hearing, the eyes and communication by speech. This quasi-gnoseological introduction is unexpectedly rounded off by a moral conclusion: seeing and hearing enabled the author to develop love of the few. At this point he departs from the preface and moves to the main theme: his pure and selfless love for his correspondent. Like the letter to Ephraem, this missive is permeated by words designating love: πόθος (in a developed form, the πόθος of the heart, l. 18-19), ἀγάπη (in a developed form, the spark of ἀγάπη, l. 22-23) and its derivatives, ἔρω, φιλεῖν. And like the letter to Ephraem, it is devoid of fact, unless we attempt to give such status to the expression of gratitude for an audience. The quest for recherché wording (such as καλὸν ἐκκαλεῖται followed by τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ κλήσιν, — l. 20-21) becomes an end in itself, contrasting curiously with the practicality of the writer's regular demands and complaints.

Rhetorical structure is obvious in the letter to the *protospatharios* Eustathios (ep. 76). The text is blocked within a "frame," the epilogue repeating not only the ideas but also the

⁸⁴ On the text of this letter, see A. MARKOPOULOS, La critique des textes au Xe siècle. Le témoignage du 'Professeur anonyme,' *JÖB* 32/4, 1981, 31-37.

expressions of the preamble. For instance ἀφορμὴν εὐεργεσίας (l. 4) is doubled by ἀφορμὰς ἐπιστολῶν (l. 39-40). The Anonymous begins the letter with a *gradatio*: “You listened; having listened, accorded; the accord is not a hindrance (ἤκουσας ἀκούσας κατένευσας τὸ κωλύον γὰρ οὐκ ἦν τὴν κατένευσιν).” Two themes dominate the epistle. First, the [unnamed] man for whom the Anonymous is interceding is old: the author constantly repeats the word γέρων, once even παλαιὸς γέρων (l. 36), and derivatives, including Tithonus γῆρας (l. 16), πρεσβύτης and derivatives, and mentions the swan’s song (l. 12-13) and on-coming interment (l. 16). The second theme is that of reward, introduced by the name applied to the suppliant, Chryses (“Golden”), that is accompanied by a number of synonyms: ransom, *roga*, *misthos*, donation. The highpoint of this theme is an ancient maxim: “Phoebus has never prophesied without [taking] copper” (l. 33; the teacher is fond of this saying and employs it in another letter [ep. 9.24]). Nothing happens during the course of the letter, no scene is described nor request formulated; humble reality is smothered by the towering weight of rhetorical verbosity, from which it can only be retrieved by a mental exertion. But despite his rhetorical and abstract phraseology the Anonymous was able to express sincere sentiments in an original way. A letter to the monk Ephraem (ep. 12) develops an unusual aspect of the traditional theme of friendship. The friends separated. We do not know the reasons that urged Ephraem to leave. Steiner hypothesized that his departure was caused by *Meinungsverschiedenheiten*, but the Anonymous author says that Ephraem fled from the troubles (λυπηρά) of life; usually cohabitation of lovers creates pleasure, but it can bring troubles as well; in such a case it is better to sever relations than to stay together (l. 5-7). “Health is better than disease,” continues the epistolographer, “and painful cohabitation differs little from disease” (l. 11-12). The separated lovers can communicate through letters, or simply keep their invisible union (l. 15-16). The letter is full of sorrow and, much fresher than usual, complains about people who do not answer letters or do not visit with their friends.

The Anonymous author’s style is abstract, the language difficult. His main concern is the *phrasis*, vocabulary, and *syntheke*, rhetorical figures. He does not describe naturalistic scenes or human characters. There are some exceptions, however. The letter to Alexander of Nicaea (ep. 69, tr. by Steiner, 196f.) is probably the least abstract in the collection. The Anonymous was aware of the tastes of his correspondent and tried to adapt his own style to Alexander’s manner. But even in this letter the tendency to eliminate reality is obvious. First of all, 19 of 50 lines are allotted to two preambles. In the first of them, the Anonymous deliberates on his hesitation to send the message. The end of this section is clearly marked by the concluding formula: “Now the letter begins” (l. 9-10). But what actually begins is the second preamble, in which the writer dwells, in general terms, on children’s aversion to studies and the fathers’ obligation to instruct them. Only after this does he turn to the subject of his epistle: two boys in his school neglected the classroom and preferred quails and partridges (l. 18-19; below, the writer says that they traded birds, l. 29); their father failed to show his anger, the boys did not confess their error; finally they vanished and their

classmates wondered whether they went to Alexander or to Mount Olympos. Yet the lazy boys are more than stereotypes, as well as their indifferent father who simply passed by, failing to show anger either in words or in acts. He only uttered an enigmatic phrase, “Such is your school?” and departed.

The setting is practically non-existent, the action taking place in a topographical void. But again some exceptions can be noted. In a letter to a certain John (ep. 49, tr. Steiner, p. 47f.), the Anonymous author tries to dissuade his correspondent from going to Paphlagonia. John is deceived by the clean air of the region, by the beautiful spring, by the pure water, by cool and healthy locations (l. 9-12). The description is abstract, but in any event it is an attempt to present a coherent setting, evidently drafted in contradistinction to the overpopulated Constantinople.

Indifference to food was a topos of Byzantine ascetic literature. The Anonymous occasionally speaks of food, but sometimes his words about meals sound strange. The *sakellarios* Leo thought to satisfy him with a cheap dish. The writer protests, saying that he is accustomed to eating sumptuous fish, anchovies, sardines and smoked fish (ep. 24.3-6), and that he deserves a broader diet.

While indifferent toward visual scenes, descriptions and narration, the Anonymous Teacher is inclined to enliven his text with what we can term “microscenes”: ancient proverbs and maxims. Sometimes he emphasizes the insertion with parenthetical clauses, such as παρομιῶδες (ep. 17.20), παρομία (ep. 19.3, 30.120, 47.22), τὸ τοῦ λόγου (ep. 30.14, 47.16-17, 92.14), τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον (ep. 30.26, 43.44-45, 71.4-5, 109.12); in other cases, he just quotes a saying, such as “Do not teach the eagle to fly, the dolphin to swim” (ep. 29.2).

What is most significant in the correspondence is the self-portrait of the author, which is drawn for us unconsciously. He is a man of difficult temperament, rambunctious, suspicious and ever-complaining, tending to feel that others discriminate against him. He is oversensitive to criticism from his colleagues, let alone his students, and quick to find insult in each casual comment. He felt a strong need for friendly understanding but was afraid of friendship and expected to be betrayed by those close to him. He curried favor with a few magnates who were golden-hearted enough to put up with him, was rude and arrogant to his students, but at the same time he was a hard-working *literatus*, infatuated with books, and proud of his intelligent vocation.