

KRYSTINA KUBINA, *Die enkomiastische Dichtung des Manuel Philes. Form und Funktion des literarischen Lobes in der frühen Palaiologenzeit* (Byzantinisches Archiv 38). Berlin – Boston: de Gruyter, 2020. 401 pp. – ISBN: 978-3-11-063549-2 (€ 119.95)

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Rhetorical praise has rarely received a consideration commensurate with its widespread presence in Byzantium. This volume aims at filling the gap in understanding the workings of fourteenth-century Byzantine praise, by focusing on the encomiastic verses of the fourteenth-century author, Manuel Philes, a court writer and diplomat with a prolific literary activity.

The introduction of the study offers a detailed account of Philes' eventful biography. While so far several monographs treated his life and career, KUBINA turns to the exploration of Philes' personality and activity in terms of his influence on other authors. As evidenced by the manuscript tradition and many epigrams on objects, like the famous one placed on the Parekklesion of the Pammakaristos Monastery, Philes was one of the most well-known authors of his time. In the fourteenth century, his poems gained popularity as they can be identified in school lessons that included other model authors like Gregory of Nazianz or Theodore Prodromos. Moreover, Philes' verses have been detected in the manuscripts of other authors as well. Even much later, in the mid-fifteenth-century, in one of his poems, the ecclesiastic writer John Eugenikos made use of Philes' poetry. Because of this popularity discernible across many late Byzantine authors, the number of research studies on individual aspects of his poetry significantly increased over the last years, although no exhaustive study of his poetry exists.

The introduction also appropriately outlines the limits of the corpus of Philes' encomiastic poetry and discusses two key methodological concepts, literary mode and genre. Taking clues from Ludwig Wittgenstein's model of family relations, the author argues that any definition of the boundaries of a genre must consider their inherent fuzziness. Since "purely encomiastic" texts can rarely be found, the author argues, it is essential to rely also on the concept of encomiastic mode as a group-forming structure that highlights common features in different literary genres. In the exploration of

Philes' encomiastic corpus, KUBINA uses as principal analytical tools the close-reading, the scrutiny of the author's poetological statements, as well as the attempts to trace the connections with the realities of the fourteenth-century Byzantium to which the author alluded in his texts.

KUBINA divides her volume into two substantial parts: one dedicated to the so-called *Grammar of Praise* (a term borrowed from Laurent Pernot's work on ancient epideictic rhetoric) and another that discusses the functions and conditions of Philes' praise poetry.

The first part, titled *The Grammar of Praise*, examines the methodological questions surrounding genre. KUBINA rightly remarks that Philes avoided the form of standard prose *enkomia* and that he also adopted a variety of topics and forms of praise. The focus of the chapter then moves to the major forms of epideictic rhetoric which Philes used, including typical forms of *enkomia*, *logoi epitaphioi*, monodies, *epibateria* and *propemptika*. As the author shows, Philes operated frequent modifications in the structure of *enkomia* and often spoke in the first person. In one case, for instance, instead of the expected wishes for the addressee, the poet explicitly asked for a remuneration adequate for his verses. In another poem, he mentioned no deeds of the addressee. As for the dialogic verse *enkomia*, the author remarks that the conversational tone added liveliness of speech (γοργότης), emotionality, and authenticity while also intensifying the authoritative effect of the text. Encomiastic speeches like the *epibateria* and the *propemptika* thus showed the prominence of the speaker's ego. This practice was further underlined by a personal tone emerging from the use of orality and a language of staged closeness. In the funeral texts, KUBINA shows, Philes skillfully combined elements from *epitaphioi logoi*, monodies, and *paramuthetikoï logoi* while also increasing the number of references to ongoing events, which added a touch of realism to his praise.

In addition to texts which placed praise at their core, the encomiastic mode is detectable in other texts without a primary eulogistic goal, like epigrams, epistolary poems, and poems of nature. If the epigrams include only occasional hyperbolic phrases and laudatory epithets for an addressee, in Philes' encomiastic verses and in the poems on animals we see at work features similar to other *enkomia*: the formation and maintenance of the relationship with the addressee, the lack of concrete information about the *laudandus* or *laudanda*, evidence which is often regarded as superfluous, the prominence of the author's self, while hyperbolic praise intensifies the connection between speaker and addressee.

Another major concern in this section is the set of the main motives included in the prescriptive books of epideictic rhetoric: *genos* (*ethnos* and *patris*, family, *progonoi*, *pateres*, name and rank), nature, the body of the addressee, virtues, in particular the cardinal virtues together with other virtues. Connected to them are the deeds (*praxeis*) of the *laudandus* both in times of war and in times of peace. The examination of these motives leads KUBINA to conclude that, in general, Philes practices brevity when dealing with such topics. Also, it appears that Philes favored only selected notions and rhetorical strategies like the assimilation of the addressee's ethnic identity with the state origin, the absence of substantial praises for the city of Constantinople, the praise of the family members and of their offsprings, and the mentioning of ranks as markers of the social status. In terms of virtues, which remain a key focal point in this period as well, Philes adopted a system with few constraints where grace (*charis*), prudence (*phronesis*), and generosity stand out. At the same time, one's deeds (*praxeis*) receive little attention which, according to KUBINA, was because Philes emphasized the encomiastic mode and not the historic background.

The final focal point in this section regards the rhetorical stylistic tools of praise like the figures of similitude. KUBINA identifies issues of (in)comparability, excellence and (un)sayability ((Un-)Vergleichbarkeit, (Un-)Über-trefflichkeit and (Un-)Sagbarkeit) and discusses the comparative figures from Antiquity among which more significance seemed to have had Achilles, Ares, Athena, Demosthenes, Galen, Helena, Heracles, Hermes, Hippocrates, Nereus, Orpheus as ancient figures whereas from the Bible and sacred texts Philes appears to have turned his attention to characters like Adam, Christ, David, Ella, Job, Josef, Moses, Solomon, or Samson. Other comparisons regard animals and the natural world. Antitheses, which appear often in supplications and epitaphs, increased the addressee's figure and to decrease in a calculated way the poet's persona. Figures of contrast, accumulation, and of drawing the audience's attention supplement the stylistic background of Philes' verse praise. Hyperboles are woven in comparisons, metaphors, and contrasts. One specific feature that KUBINA identifies in Philes' poetry was that excessive praise often reflected "unsayability", that is the poet's impossibility to express the addressee's greatness. The figures that draw the audience's attention like exclamations or rhetorical questions, KUBINA concludes, had the effect of increasing affection and strengthened the connection between speaker and addressee.

The second part of the monograph explores the conditions of Philes' en-

comiastic poetry. At the outset, the author notes the predominantly occasional and practical character of Philes' poetry. The focus here is on the functions, production, and reception of Philes' poetry. While many Byzantine texts were judged in terms of a distinct individual function within given circumstances, following K. BÜHLER's and R. JAKOBSON's models that shaped the theory of communication, KUBINA identifies five functions corresponding to several levels of meaning: literary-aesthetic, referential, expressive, social, and persuasive. The first one, the literary-aesthetic, can be perceived in Philes' remarks about the pleasures that he sought to induce with his texts as well as with other typical features of his writing: harmony (εὐρυθμία) and intensity (γοργότης). The referential function that creates a connection between the text and the reality outside the text arises from the concrete pieces of information it conveys and the references to everyday topics like diseases. The expressive function is connected with the speaker's self-fashioning as often Philes introduces traits of his self-portray and describes himself in a variety of ways: as a worthless worm or as a confident courtier. The social function of his texts is tightly connected to their communicative role for Philes aimed at strengthening the relationship with the addressee but also introduced occasional criticism. To this goal, he often made use of oral markers that emphasized the importance of his texts. Finally, the persuasive function links the text to the potential effects on audiences. If in Philes' epigrammatic poems, this function came with maintaining the memory of the addressee, in other cases, the persuasive function emerged more clearly in moral advice.

The last section of the book deals with the production and reception of Philes' works. KUBINA argues that Philes' poetry constituted the climax of a long process that had started already in the eleventh century and had seen authors producing verses for a reward. Within this process poets produced commissioned works, friendly public addresses or petitions for help. As for the motivation and reasons behind Philes' compositions, although never explicitly presented, can be mentioned poems requested by certain wealthy patrons and the self-promotion leading to rewards. In other cases, specific events like one's departure from Constantinople, victories, funeral occasions, or religious festivals represented occasions generating beneficial social connections. We can assume that many of these texts were performed in *theatra* which were hosted either by Emperor Andronikos II himself or by other high-ranking contemporaries like John Kantakouzenos. As a secondary use of Philes' texts, KUBINA identifies their grouping in manuscripts and presence in poetry collections circulating in the fourteenth

and the fifteenth centuries. Thus, through artful variation and adaptation, Philes forged a unique approach to praise in which he avoided concrete information to events while attributing only general features to his addressees. A key observation of this substantial research remains that Philes shunned fully fledged encomia in which he observed the standard order of topics suggested by ancient books of rhetorical rules like the one by Menander Rhetor.

In conclusion, this volume stands as a solid and systematic study that relies on abundant evidence and well-chosen case studies. Perhaps two aspects could have received slightly more attention: first, the connection between rhetorical devices and topics of content, as elements shaping epideictic argumentation; and second, the comparison with other contemporary instances of praise which could help the reader see in a clearer way Philes' particular features. These observations notwithstanding, KUBINA's research on Philes' poetry is highly engaging and unveils rich meanings and hidden goals. By combining ancient analytical tools and modern interpretative frameworks, this study opens fresh paths of research in late Byzantine epideictic rhetoric.

Keywords

Manuel Philes; paraenetic literature