

KRYSTINA KUBINA

## Manuel Philes and the Asan Family\*

*Two inedited poems and their context in Philes' œuvre  
(including editio princeps)*

*Abstract:* This study gives the editio princeps of two poems by Manuel Philes and looks at the relationship between the poet and the Asan family, which commissioned the poems. The first text is an epitaph for Irene Asanina Komnene Palaiologina, the daughter of Michael VIII Palaiologos. The second poem is an epigram written for a church that Irene's son Isaac commissioned. I argue that both poems were commissioned by Isaac Asan, who donated a church as burial place for his family, where both texts were inscribed. When the two poems are read in the context of others connected with the Asan family, one can prove contact between Philes and three of Irene's sons from at least 1316 to 1332. The literary analysis shows that, in commissioned poetical works, the Byzantines sought individual responses to specific situations and the genre of occasional poetry should not be neglected as an arbitrary mixture of common topoi.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Manuel Philes' name is well-known among Byzantinists and his large *œuvre* has attracted scholarly attention throughout the centuries.<sup>1</sup> However, there is as yet no reliable critical edition or a comprehensive study of his poems.<sup>2</sup> In recent decades, scholars have been especially interested in his epigrams on works of art, investigating what information about Palaiologan art can be found in Philes' works and, more generally, how he uses specific literary techniques.<sup>3</sup> The studies of Braounou-Pietsch, in particular, have changed the way in which Philes is perceived. Krumbacher's opinion of

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<sup>1</sup> G. STICKLER, Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase (*Dissertationen der Universität Wien* 229). Vienna 1992, 56–95 offers an excellent survey of the early modern studies and editions of Philes' work.

<sup>2</sup> The two modern editions usually used for his shorter poems are ed. E. MILLER, Manuelis Philae Carmina ex codicibus Escorialensibus, Florentinis, Parisinis et Vaticanis, 2 vols. Paris 1855–1857 and ed. E. MARTINI, Manuelis Philae Carmina Inedita. Naples 1900. Apart from the editions of Philes' animal poem, his metaphraseis and single pieces, ed. M. GEDEON, Μανουήλ τοῦ Φιλῆ ἱστορικά ποιήματα. *Ekklesiastike aletheia* 3 (1882/83) 215–220, 246–250, 655–659 offers several poems. On the many mistakes especially in Miller's edition cf. STICKLER, Psalmenmetaphrase 75–79 and M. LAUXTERMANN, Critical review of Stickler in *JÖB* 45 (1995) 369–372, especially 370.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. most importantly and with a new edition of many epigrams E. BRAOUNOU-PIETSCH, Beseelte Bilder. Epigramme des Manuel Philes auf bildliche Darstellungen (*Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl., Denkschriften* 416). Vienna 2010. Cf. also EADEM, Die Stummheit des Bildes. Ein Motiv in Epigrammen des Manuel Philes. *JÖB* 57 (2007) 135–148; EADEM, Manuel Philes und die übernatürliche Macht der Epigrammdichtung, in: Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung byzantinischer Epigramme. Akten des internationalen Workshop (Wien, 1.–2. Dezember 2006), ed. W. Hörandner – A. Rhoby (*Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl., Denkschriften* 371). Vienna 2008, 85–92; EADEM, Ein Aspekt der Rezeption der Anthologia Planudea in Epigrammen des Manuel Philes, in: *Imitatio – Aemulatio – Variatio*. Akten des Internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposions zur byzantinischen Sprache und Literatur, ed. A. Rhoby – E. Schiffer (*Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl., Denkschriften* 402 = *Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* 21). Vienna 2010, 217–230 and A.-M. TALBOT, Epigrams in Context. Metrical Inscriptions on Art and Architecture of the Palaiologan Era. *DOP* 53 (1999) 75–90; EADEM, Epigrams of Manuel Philes on the Theotokos tes Peges and its art. *DOP* 48 (1994) 135–165; T. BASEU-BARABAS, Die Speisung des Elias durch den Raben. Ein Epigramm des Manuel Philes als Zeugnis für ein verschollenes Kunstwerk. *JÖB* 43 (1993) 233–240; S. TAKÁCS, Manuel Philes' Meditation on an Icon of the Virgin Mary. *BF* 15 (1990) 277–288; S. KLEMENTA, Vom bequemen Luxusdasein zur vergänglichen Lebenszeit. Die Personifikation des Bios, in: Rom und die Provinzen. Gedenkschrift für Hanns Gabelmann, ed. G. Brands. Mainz 2001, 209–214; N. TETERIATNIKOV,

the poet as “Typus des vielgeschäftigen, dürftigen, aber anspruchsvollen litterarischen Dilettanten”<sup>4</sup> has, however, proved to be long-lasting, and deprecatory judgements such as this can still be found today.<sup>5</sup> Yet, a close reading of Philes’ texts, which is not based on an anachronistic understanding of literature as part of the aesthetics of genius and emotional immediacy, but keeps in mind the specific circumstances of occasional and commissioned poetry, reveals the way in which Philes uses ubiquitous literary *topoi* and patterns in order to create unique texts that serve their specific contexts.

In this paper I shall analyse two poems that Philes wrote for the Asan family – an epitaph for Irene Asanina (*incipit* Ἀἰ δεινέ), and an epigram for her son Isaac Asan, who built a church (*incipit* Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος). These poems form a unit in the manuscript transmission of Philes’ poems and should therefore be studied together. Since these texts have not previously been edited in their entirety, I shall present the *editio princeps* with an English prose translation.

In the main part of my study, I shall first give an overview of the textual tradition of both poems and the historical-critical edition. Then I shall briefly discuss the historical background of these texts. Subsequently, I shall analyse the poems with regard to their language, style and content, in the context of their specific genre. Finally, I shall compare the two poems to other texts that Philes wrote for the Asan family, thereby attempting to establish what specific relationship existed between the poet and the sponsor family.

## 2. THE TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION

### 2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

The epitaph of Irene Asanina (Ἀἰ δεινέ) and the epigram on Isaac Asan’s church (Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος) are transmitted in three manuscripts that are now in the manuscript collections of the Bodleian Library, Oxford (*O*), the British Library, London (*L*), and the Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome (*V*<sub>1</sub>). Additionally, the Asan poem is to be found in a second manuscript held in the Vatican (*V*<sub>2</sub>).

#### 2.1.1 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Roe. 18 (*O*)

Miscellaneous manuscript. 1349, paper, ff. 460 (today in two volumes), 2°. Written by Constantine Sophos<sup>6</sup> in a neat hand in two columns, the texts are distinguished by red rubrics. It once belonged to the church of the Holy Trinity on Chalke island.<sup>7</sup> Manuscript studied *in situ*.

Content: I Manuel Philes, Poem on Plants [ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–20<sup>v</sup>]. II Legal texts [ff. 21<sup>r</sup>–256<sup>v</sup>]. III Physiological and doctrinal texts [ff. 256<sup>r</sup>–313<sup>v</sup>]. IV Epistolography by Basil the Great [ff. 314<sup>r</sup>–435<sup>v</sup>]. V Poetic texts (Manuel Philes, Constantine Manasses, Gregory of Nazianzos, Theodore Prodromos, George Pisides, John Tzetzes) [ff. 436<sup>r</sup>–460<sup>v</sup>].

The dedication of the Chora Monastery in the time of Andronikos II Palaiologos. *Byz* 66 (1996) 188–207; T. ANTONOPOULOU, A Kanon on Saint Nicholas by Manuel Philes. *REB* 62 (2004) 197–213; EADEM, Commenting on a Homily. A poem by Manuel Philes. *Byz* 79 (2009) 25–37; M. BAZZANI, A Poem of Philes to Makarios Chrysokephalos? The Case of Poem Florentinus 58. *BZ* 104 (2011) 55–70; S. BROOKS, Poetry and Female Patronage in Late Byzantine Tomb Decoration. Two epigrams by Manuel Philes. *DOP* 60 (2006) 223–248; I. KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER, Byzantine Icons in Steatite (*BV* 15/1–2). Vienna 1985, 79–85.

<sup>4</sup> K. KRUMBACHER, Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des Oströmischen Reiches (527–1453). 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition with the collaboration of A. EHRHARD and H. GELZER. München 1897, 779. Similarly K. DIETERICH, Geschichte der byzantinischen und neugriechischen Literatur. Leipzig 1902, 56.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. H.-V. BEYER, Über die wahrscheinliche Identität des Autors der ‘Version brève des relations historiques de Georges Pachymérés’ mit Manuel Philes. *Antičnaja drevnost’ i srednie veka* 37 (2006) 269–306, especially 274; TAKÁCS, Virgin Mary 277 and C. TRYPANIS, Medieval and Modern Greek Poetry. Oxford 1951, xxiif.

<sup>6</sup> Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit (= *PLP*), ed. E. TRAPP *et alii*. Vienna 1976–1996, no. 26431.

<sup>7</sup> H. COXE, Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae. Pars Prima Recensionem Codicum Graecorum Continens. Oxford 1853, 471–479.

Αἰ δεινέ is found on ff. 444<sup>v</sup>–445<sup>v</sup>, after the rubric Τοῦ αὐτοῦ and followed by Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος (f. 445<sup>v</sup>) as part of a series of poetic works by Manuel Philes. These include a dialogue between the νοῦς and Philes (ff. 436<sup>r</sup>–444<sup>v</sup>) and several shorter poems (mainly four line stanzas), including some epitaphs to members of the imperial family (ff. 446<sup>r</sup>–450<sup>v</sup>).

### 2.1.2 London, British Library, Ms. Add. 10014 (L)

Miscellaneous manuscript. 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>8</sup>/end of 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>9</sup> paper, ff. 294, 19 × 14 cm. At least nine hands, varying quality of writing, rubrics until f. 55, but not executed after that.<sup>10</sup> Manuscript studied from a digital colour reproduction.<sup>11</sup>

Content: I Theological texts [ff. 3<sup>r</sup>–113<sup>r</sup>]. II Epistolography by John Chrysostom [ff. 114<sup>r</sup>–142<sup>r</sup>]. III Hagiographical and ecclesiastical texts [ff. 143<sup>r</sup>–152<sup>r</sup>]. IV Poetical texts (mainly anonymous) [ff. 153<sup>r</sup>–157<sup>r</sup>]. V Basil of Ceasarea [ff. 157<sup>v</sup>–163<sup>r</sup>]. VI Poetical texts (Michael Psellos, Manuel Philes, Theodore Prodromos, George Pisides) [ff. 163<sup>v</sup>–240<sup>v</sup>]. VII Ecclesiastical texts [ff. 241<sup>r</sup>–286<sup>r</sup>]. VIII Epistolography by Michael Glykas [ff. 287<sup>r</sup>–294<sup>r</sup>].

The Asanina poem is part of a loose collection of poetical texts (ff. 163<sup>r</sup>–240<sup>v</sup>, Αἰ δεινέ ff. 222<sup>v</sup>–223<sup>r</sup>), which also includes some prose works. It does not seem to follow a clear compositional aim. Directly after the epitaph, which has the headline οὐ Φιλῆ (the τ was probably intended to be written in red ink but never executed), the Isaac epigram is written (ff. 223<sup>r</sup>–223<sup>v</sup>).

### 2.1.3 Vatican, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. gr. 633 (V<sub>ρ</sub>)

Miscellaneous manuscript. Mid-14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>12</sup> parchment (ff. 1–63) and paper (ff. 64–165), ff. 165, 15 × 11 cm. The manuscript was not composed as a unit, but seems to be a rather arbitrary collection of single quires. The original order of the leaves has been partly destroyed and some pages are missing.<sup>13</sup> Manuscript studied *in situ*.

Content: I Ecclesiastical texts with focus on texts against heretics (*inter alia* Theodore of Stoudion, John Chrysostom, Ps.-Dionysius Areopagite) [ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–77<sup>r</sup>]. II Poems by Manuel Philes [ff. 80<sup>r</sup>–111<sup>v</sup>]. III Collection of Epistles and Sententiae [ff. 112<sup>r</sup>–122<sup>v</sup>]. IV Ecclesiastical texts (*inter alia* Anastasius Sinaita, John of Damascus, St. Basil, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Stoudion) [ff. 123<sup>r</sup>–165<sup>v</sup>].<sup>14</sup>

Αἰ δεινέ and Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος are included in the collection of Philes' poems (ff. 86<sup>r</sup>–87<sup>v</sup> and 87<sup>v</sup>). The author of the poems is not mentioned in the manuscript. Both poems are fragmentary, which is indicated in the manuscript by blank lines (about ten blank lines on 85<sup>v</sup> before the epitaph, about 2 after the Asan poem). Furthermore, the scribe noted the fragmentariness of the epitaph on f. 85<sup>v</sup> with the *glossa* Λεῖπει ἢ ἀρχὴ τῶν προκειμένων στίχων and there is no cross to mark the end of the text after the Isaac poem as customary after other texts. Αἰ δεινέ starts with v. 41 (Πρὸς τοὺς χύδην...), Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος ends after v. 16 (...ἀρπάζοι κλύδων). The Vatican version of Αἰ δεινέ has been published by Dujčev.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> British Library manuscript catalogue online, Add. ms. 10014, [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_10014](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_10014) retrieved at the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2012.

<sup>9</sup> STICKLER, Psalmenmetaphrase 224.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. BL online catalogue (as note 8).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> STICKLER, Psalmenmetaphrase 236 with regard to the quire in which Philes' poems are found. R. DEVRESSE, *Codices Vaticani Graeci*, vol. 3: Codices 604–866. Vatican 1950, 43 dates the manuscript as a whole to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries depending on the single quires.

<sup>13</sup> DEVRESSE, *Codices Vaticani Graeci* 43–50 and STICKLER, Psalmenmetaphrase 326.

<sup>14</sup> For the identification of the single texts cf. DEVRESSE, *Codices Vaticani Graeci* 43–50.

<sup>15</sup> I. DUJČEV, Una poesia di Manuele File dedicata a Irene Paleologa Asenina. *ZRVI* 8/2 (1964) 91–99.

2.1.4 Vatican, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. gr. 1126 ( $V_2$ )

Poetic manuscript with only Pisides and Philes. Mid-14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>16</sup> parchment, ff. 296, 11.8 × 9.2 cm. Various neat hands. Manuscript studied *in situ*.

Content: I Treatise on metrics [ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–7<sup>v</sup>]. II George Pisides, Poems [8<sup>r</sup>–146<sup>r</sup>]. III Manuel Philes, Poems [ff. 146<sup>v</sup>–296<sup>r</sup>].<sup>17</sup>

The manuscript contains only Ἀσὸν Ἰσαάκιος, as part of a large collection of Philes' poems (ff. 152<sup>r-v</sup>).<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2 AN APPROACH TO THE TEXTUAL HISTORY

The wording of the respective three and four copies of the poems hardly differs at all. There are only a few variants and all of them are easily explicable mistakes or mere orthographical differences. Thus the text was handled with great care, possibly due to the importance of its authenticity and the fame of its author.

$O$  (1349),  $V_1$  and  $V_2$  (both 14<sup>th</sup> century) are the oldest manuscripts, which are quite close in date to both the life of Philes, who died in the 1330s or 1340s,<sup>19</sup> and Irene's death, which must have taken place after 1306. However, the orthography of  $O$  is more standardised than that of  $V_1$ .<sup>20</sup> The two differing readings in Αἰ δεινέ 95 (καὶ  $O$  – ἦ  $V_1$ ) and 96 (ἔχοις  $O$  – ἔχῃς  $V_1$ ) are both grammatically possible. The later manuscript  $L$  (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries), on the other hand, shares all the readings of  $O$  apart from some singular variants: at the beginning of Αἰ δεινέ the initial letter is missing, which can be easily explained – the Α was probably supposed to be written in red ink as a rubric but never executed. The variant πνεύσαντος ( $L$ ) in 53 instead of σπεύσαντος ( $O$ ,  $V_1$ ) is probably a scribal error caused by confusion with the word ἔπνευσε two lines above. πνέων in v. 57 is to be interpreted as a simple misspelling.  $L$  is therefore very close to  $O$  and might even be a direct apograph of it, as Hörandner has already suggested when treating the transmission of Theodore Prodromos' poems.<sup>21</sup>

As to Ἀσὸν Ἰσαάκιος, there is only one important variant, namely τῶν ( $V_2$ ) instead of τὴν ( $O$ ,  $L$ ,  $V_1$ ) in v. 11. This reading is preferable and separates the manuscript from the other three, thus emphasising that the three manuscripts containing both poems belong to a separate branch of the textual tradition.

Overall, the text of the two poems as transmitted in the manuscripts seems to be very close to the original version by Philes, bearing in mind the uniform wording in all copies, the chronological proximity of  $O$ ,  $V_1$  and  $V_2$  and the use of language, metre and style, that fit perfectly well with the rest of Philes' works.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> STICKLER, Psalmenmetaphrase 237.

<sup>17</sup> For the single poems cf. STICKLER, Psalmenmetaphrase 237f.

<sup>18</sup> DUJČEV, Una poesia 94, states that the manuscript contains twelve additional lines of the poem. This is wrong. The putative lines are a poem by Theodore Prodromos (ed. W. HÖRANDNER, Theodoros Prodromos. Historische Gedichte [WBS 11]. Vienna 1974, Nr. 64b). Since the initial and a rubric are missing, at first sight they look as if they belong to the Asan poem. However, this ends with three dots and thus there is no doubt that the scribe considered these texts to be two poems.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. STICKLER, Psalmenmetaphrase 23 and A.-M. TALBOT - A. CUTLER, Philes, Manuel. ODB III 1651.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Αἰ δεινέ 43 (λεόντειος  $O$  – λεόντιος  $V_1$ ), 45 (θαυμάζον  $O$  – θαυμάζων  $V_1$ ), 57 (Αἰτναίους  $O$  – Αἰτνείους  $V_1$ ), 61 (αὐθόμαιμος  $O$  – αὐτόμαιμος  $V_1$ ), 85 (ἠὺτρεπισμένον  $O$  – εὐτρεπισμένον  $V_1$ ), but on the contrary 48 (πατραρίσματα  $O$  – παρατρίμματα  $V_1$ ); Ἀσὸν Ἰσαάκιος 11 (καλιὰν  $O$  – καλλιὰν  $V_1$ ).

<sup>21</sup> HÖRANDNER, Historische Gedichte 154.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. section 5.

## 2.3 EDITORIAL PRACTICE AND POLICY

The historical-critical edition presents the text of all surviving manuscript witnesses of the poems. The printed text follows the wording of the manuscript Oxford, Roe. 18 (*O*), which offers the oldest complete version of both poems and thus serves as *Leithandschrift*. All variants (including orthographical ones) are noted in the footnote apparatus. The wording and orthography of the manuscripts are respected and are not standardised. Abbreviations are dissolved without comment. Only diacritics (accents, breathings and iota subscript) are added, modern punctuation is introduced and proper names are capitalised.<sup>23</sup> There are only rare conjectures, which are marked with <brackets>, even if the conjecture exists as reading in manuscripts other than *O*.

The prose translation aims to support the understanding of the Greek original. Therefore, it reproduces the original as faithfully as possible.

## 3. CRITICAL EDITION AND TRANSLATION

## 3.1 EDITIONS

## 3.1.1 Epitaph for Irene Asanina Komnene Palaiologina

- Αἰ δεινὲ καὶ πάντολμε καὶ φθόρε χρόνε,  
 πῶς εἰς τοσοῦτον ἦλθες, εἶπέ μοι, θράσους,  
 ὡς καὶ τὸ θησαύρισμα τῶν θηλυτέρων  
 καὶ τὸ ξένον καύχημα τῶν βασιλίδων,  
 5 τὴν Ἀσανίαν, τὴν καλήν, τὴν ὀλβίαν  
 τῷ τῆς τελευτῆς, φεῦ, κατακρύψαι σκότῳ;  
 ποῦ γὰρ κατ' αὐτὴν γνωστικὴν εὐρες φύσιν,  
 ἀφ' οὗ τὸ πᾶν ἔβλεψας ἀνθρώπων γένος;  
 ἢ τίνα κόσμον ἄλλον ὡς ταύτην φέρων  
 10 τὸ κοινὸν εὐτύχημα νεκρὸν εἰργάσω;  
 τὸ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τήνδε τοῦ πρώτου γένους,  
 ἐπεὶ βασιλεὺς ὁ σπορευὺς ταύτης μέγας,  
 οὐδέν τι καινόν· τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ τῆς τύχης.  
 τὸ δ' ἐξ ἑαυτῆς ὀλβιῶσαι τὴν φύσιν  
 15 καὶ τῷ γένει ξύμφωνον ἀρμόσαι τρόπον  
 μᾶλλον δὲ δεῖξαι τοῦτον αὐτοῦ βελτίω  
 μόνης ἐκείνης ἔργον – ὦ φρούδων κρότων –  
 ὡς μέχρις αὐτῆς τῶν γυναικῶν τὴν φύσιν  
 τῆς πρωτοφυοῦς εὐρεθῆναι δευτέραν,  
 20 τοῦ γὰρ γένους ἤμειψε τὴν ἀκοσμίαν  
 ταῖς ἐμφύτοις χάρισιν ἠρρενωμένῃ.  
 καὶ ταῖς γυναιξὶ τῆς σιγῆς δεδογμένης  
 μόνης παρ' αὐτῆς ἦν τὸ λαλεῖν σεμνότης·  
 ὃ γὰρ Σολομῶν εἰς τὸ πᾶν ἄρσεν γένος,

<sup>23</sup> These standardizations are made in order to produce a reader-friendly text. On the ongoing discussion on how to deal with Byzantine punctuation and diacritics cf. A. GIANNOULI, Introduction, in: From manuscripts to Books. Vom Codex zur Edition. Proceedings of the International Workshop on Textual Criticism and Editorial Practice for Byzantine Texts (Vienna, 10–11 December 2009), ed. Eadem - E. Schiffrer (*Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl., Denkschriften* 431 = *Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* 29). Vienna 2011, 17–24 and the whole volume.



- 25 τοῦθ' ἦδε σαφῶς εἰς τὸ λοιπὸν ἐκρίθη·  
καὶ Μιχαὴλ ἐκεῖνος ὁ στεφηφόρος  
– εἰπεῖν δὲ ταῦτόν – ὁ γλυκὺς φυτοσπόρος  
Παλαιολόγος ἄγγελος καὶ τὴν φύσιν  
30 συνδεῖ τὸν Ἀσάν τὸν πολὺν τῆ φιλτάτη,  
τὸν τῶν Μυσῶν ἄνακτα, τὸν νοῦν τὸν μέγαν,  
τὸν ἡλίου θάλψαντα τὴν δύσιν <τρόπῳ>·  
οὐκ ἦν γὰρ ἄλλο κῆδος ἢ τοῦτο πρέπον.  
κᾶν τῷδε πολλῶν γίνεται μήτηρ τόκων  
35 μᾶλλον δὲ καλῶν καὶ στρατηγικωτάτων,  
ἢ παῖς Ἀθηνᾶς τῆς σοφῆς μαιευτρίας,  
τίκτει δὲ τῷ γίγαντι καὶ θυγατέρα,  
τοῦ συζύγου Καίσαρος ἄλλο τι κλέος·  
ἦν δ' ἄρα σεμνὴ τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὸν βίον  
καὶ φιλοτιμώτατον ἠτύχει τρόπον·  
40 τὴν ἄφθονον γὰρ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων χύσιν  
πρὸς τοὺς χύδην πένητας ἐξήντλει πρᾶως·  
καὶ βασιλικὴν εἶχεν εὐθύς τὴν φύσιν  
ὡς ἀετιδῆς καὶ λεόντειος τόκος.  
καὶ ταῖς ἐρυγαῖς τῆς μεγαλοφυΐας  
45 τὸ κοινὸν ἐξέπληττε θαυμάζον γένος·  
κάλλος γε μὴν αὐταρκες εἰς κρᾶσιν ξένην  
ἐκ σπαργάνων ἔδειξεν ἢ τρισολβία·  
τὰ γὰρ παρατρίσματα τῆς ἀκοσμίας  
καὶ τὰς ἀπαγεῖς τῶν σοφισμάτων χρίσεις  
50 ἢ βασιλῆς παρήκε ταῖς ἀπλουστέραις.  
ἐπεὶ δέ τις ἔπνευσε τυφῶς ἐν μέσῳ,  
καὶ βασκάνων ἄφυκτος ἐρρῦη κλύδων  
τοῦ συζύγου σπεύσαντος εἰς ἄλλο κράτος,  
τὸν λαμπρὸν ἐξέφηγε κἀνταῦθα τρόπον·  
55 οὐ γὰρ κατεκράτησεν αὐτῆς ὁ φθόνος·  
ἀλλ' ἦν ἀτεχνῶς πύργος ἐστῶς ἀτρέμας  
ἢ πτηνὸν εἰς ἄνθρακας Αἰτναίους πνέον  
ἢ πέτρα δεινῆς ἐγκοπῆς ὑπερτέρα  
καὶ σῶμα χαλκοῦν εἰς μολυβδίνην σφύραν.  
60 ταύτης γε μὴν ἔφριξε τὴν εὐανδρίαν  
ὁ λαμπρὸς αὐθόμαιμος ὁ στεφηφόρος,  
ὃς τήνδε τὴν δρῦν ἐγκρατῶς ἐμαστίγου  
τὸ τοῦ κράτους ὑποπτον αὐτῇ συμφύρων.  
καὶ τῶν πόνων φάρμακον οὐδὲν ἦν τέως  
65 πλὴν τῆς ἀγαθῆς τῶν καλῶν παιδῶν τύχης.  
ἀλλὰ σύ, διδάσκαλε τεχνίτα χρόνε,  
τῶν συκοφαντῶν εὖρες αὐτὴν βελτίω  
τὴν ἐξ ὑπαρχῆς εὐστεφῆ καὶ <κοσμίαν>  
καὶ τοῦ γένους ἔρεισμα καὶ τῆς ἀξίας·  
70 πλὴν ἀλλὰ βαβαὶ τοῦ παραντίκα πάθους  
καὶ τῶν ὄδυρμῶν τῶν σχεδὸν παγκοσμίων·

- κοινὸν γὰρ ἦν ἅπασιν αὐτῆς τὸ κλέος·  
 ἦλιε καὶ γῆ καὶ τελευταῖοι κρότοι,  
 τὸν τῆς ὕλης θύλακον ὡς φῶς ἐξέδου  
 75 λιποῦσα τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ σεμνὰ τῆς τύχης  
 καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτῆς εὐκλεεῖς πάντας τόκους·  
 τῶν γὰρ μοναχῶν τὴν στολὴν τὴν ἐσχάτην  
 ἠγεῖτο σαφῶς ἀρχικὴν ἀλουργίδα.  
 τῶν δὲ τρόπων φέρουσα τὴν εὐκοσμίαν  
 80 παρίσταται νῦν τῶν ψυχῶν τῷ νυμφίῳ  
 τὴν λαμπάδα κρατοῦσα τῆς εὐποΐας  
 καὶ τὸ στέαρ βλύζουσα τῆς εὐσπλαγχνίας,  
 ὡς παρθένος φρόνιμος ἐκ τῶν πρακτέων·  
 καὶ μὴν ἀφυπνοῖ τῆς ῥοῆς τὸ σαρκίον  
 85 πρὸς τὴν ξένην ἔγερσιν ἠὔρεπισμένον.  
 ἄλλος γὰρ ἂν γένοιτο καὶ γῆθεν τόκος,  
 εἴπερ τὸ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἠχήσοι στόμα  
 πρὸς δευτέραν τὰ κῶλα συλλέγον πλάσιν.  
 ἡ κειμένη δὲ καὶ σκιαγραφουμένη  
 90 πρὸς τὴν μόνην ἄμεμπτον ἐνθάδε βλέπει,  
 κἂν τῷ βίῳ γὰρ εἶχεν αὐτὴν προστάτιν  
 καὶ τῶν τόκων φύλακα τῶν τρισολβίων  
 καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν εἰς τὸ μέλλον ἐλπίδων.  
 σὺ δὲ βλέπων, βέλτιστε, σωφρόνως τάδε,  
 95 μὴ κομπάσης χρήμασι καὶ δόξῃ βρύων·  
 μὴ δ' ἐκταραχθῆς, κἂν τὸ πᾶν ἔχοις μόνος.  
 ἀλλ' εἴ τις ἐν σοὶ καὶ λογισμὸς οὐ πρέπων,  
 σύστελλε σαυτὸν πρὸς τὸ νῦν πάθος βλέπων·  
 ἡ γὰρ βασιλὶς Βουλγάρων Ἀσανίνα  
 100 καὶ τῆ σιωπῇ σωφρονίζει τὸν βίον.

*Tit.*] *inscr.* τοῦ αὐτοῦ *O*, οὐ Φιλῆ *L*, Λεῖπει ἢ ἀρχὴ τῶν προκειμένων στίχων *in margine V<sub>1</sub> 1 Aῖ*] ἢ *L 31* τρόπῳ] τρόπου *O, L 41* πρὸς τοὺς χύδην] *inc. V<sub>1</sub> 43* λεόντειος] λεόντιος *V<sub>1</sub> 45* θαυμάζον] θαυμάζων *V<sub>1</sub> 48* παρατρίσματα] παρατρίματα *V<sub>1</sub> 53* σπεύσαντος] πνεύσαντος *L 57* Αἰτναίους] Αἰτνειούς *V<sub>1</sub>* – πνέον] πνέων *L 61* αὐθόμαιμος] αὐτόμαιμος *V<sub>1</sub> 68* κοσμίαν] κοσμίαν *V<sub>1</sub>*, κοσμίας *O, L 85* ἠὔρεπισμένον] εὐτρεπισμένον *V<sub>1</sub> 87* ἠχήσοι] ἠχήσει *V<sub>1</sub> 95* καὶ] ἢ *V<sub>1</sub> 96* ἔχοις] ἔχης *V<sub>1</sub>*

### 3.1.2 Epigram on Isaac Asan's church

- Ἀσὰν Ἰσαάκιος, ἀγχίνους φύσις,  
 ὃς πατράδελφός ἐστι τοῦ στεφηφόρου  
 καὶ μυρίων ὄργανον εὐτυχημάτων,  
 λαμπρύνεται γὰρ καὶ φρενῶν εὐκοσμία  
 5 καὶ τῆ πρὸς ἐχθροὺς τῆς ψυχῆς εὐανδρία  
 κάλλει βρύων σώματος ἐξειργασμένῳ·  
 τοῖς σώμασι μὲν τῆς τρυφῆς τὴν ἐστίαν,  
 ἦν ἢ πέριξ δείκνυσιν ἐκτὸς κομψότης,  
 τοῖς πνεύμασι δὲ τόνδε τὸν θεῖον δόμον,  
 10 ἄτε βραβευτῆς ἀσφαλῆς ἐπιτρέπει

- καὶ τὴν καλιὰν <τῶν> ἑαυτοῦ φιλάτων  
 τῇ πνευματικῇ τῆδε κοσμεῖ παστάδι,  
 μήπως τὸ σεμνὸν τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς ὀλβίας  
 ὁ δυσμενῆς ἐκεῖθεν ὑβρίση κόρος.
- 15 ποῖον γὰρ ἄν, βέλτιστε, τῶν οἰκητόρων  
 ὁ τῆς ὕλης ἄπληστος ἀρπάζοι κλύδων  
 ἄν τῶν ἰλασμῶν εὐτυχῇ τὴν αἰθρίαν;  
 ἐπεὶπερ ἔστιν ἀρραγῆς αὕτη στέγη  
 καὶ μυστικὴ τράπεζα καὶ δόξης θρόνος
- 20 ἀγνός τε νυμφῶν καὶ θεοῦ ζῶντος τόπος,  
 ἐν ᾧπερ αὐτὸς ὁ σφαγεὶς πάντων χάριν  
 ἐλευθέρους τίθησι δεινῶν σφαλμάτων  
 τοὺς κιθαρωδοὺς τῶν μελῶν τῶν ἐνθέων,  
 ἄν ἢ προσευχῇ δραστικῶς ἀνατρέχη.

*Tit.*] *inscr.* τοῦ αὐτοῦ *O*, οὐ αὐτοῦ *L*, εἰς τὸν κύριον Ἰσαάκιον Ἀσάν *V*<sub>2</sub> 1 Ἀσάν] σάν *L* 11 καλιὰν] καλλιὰν *V*<sub>1</sub>, *V*<sub>2</sub> 11 τῶν] τῶν *V*<sub>2</sub>, τὴν *O*, *L*, *V*<sub>1</sub> 16 ἀρπάζοι κλύδων] *V*<sub>1</sub> *abruptitur*

### 3.2 TRANSLATIONS

#### 3.2.1 Epitaph for Irene Asanina Komnene Palaiologina

Ah, terrible and all daring and destructive Time, how did you come to such boldness, tell me, that you conceal the treasure of all women and the marvellous splendour of the queens, Asanina,<sup>24</sup> the beautiful, the blessed one [5], with the darkness, alas, of death? For where did you find a nature as prudent as hers, having seen the whole humankind? Or do you bear another embellishment like her and have you therefore turned the common source of happiness into a corpse [10]?

For it is nothing special that she is of the first kin, because a king is her great father – it is mere chance. But that she herself blesses her nature, and that her harmonious manner is in accord with her kin [15], that, even more, her manner proves to be better than her kin, is alone her work – oh that the applauses are lost! For until her the nature of women was found only second to that of the first created, [Eve,] because she changed the ignominy of her sex [20] and with her inborn graces she showed herself as a man. And although silence is expected from women, from her alone speaking was chastity. For what Solomon was considered to be for the whole male sex, this she clearly was for the other [25]. The famous Michael,<sup>25</sup> the crown wearer (which is the same to say), her sweet father, the Palaiologan, an Angel also with regard to his nature,<sup>26</sup> ties the knot between his beloved daughter and the great Asan,<sup>27</sup> the ruler of the Mysians,<sup>28</sup> the great mind [30], the one who warms the West in the manner of the sun, because there was no other marital connection more appropriate than this. Although she became for him the mother of many and, what is more, of beautiful children, that

<sup>24</sup> Irene Asanina Komnene Palaiologina, \* ca. 1260 † after 1306, daughter of Michael VIII Palaiologos and Theodora Palaiologina, married Ivan III Mytzes Asan in 1278, queen of Bulgaria. *PLP* no. 21359.

<sup>25</sup> Michael VIII Palaiologos, \* 1224 † 1282, emperor of Byzantium 1259–1282. *PLP* no. 21528.

<sup>26</sup> Allusion to one of Michael VIII's names, Ἄγγελος, which uses the etymological potential of the name.

<sup>27</sup> Ivan III Mytzes Asan, \* (?) † 1302, was made emperor of Bulgaria in 1279 by Michael VIII Palaiologos, despot 1284–before 1302. *PLP* no. 1501.

<sup>28</sup> Classicising for Bulgars.



are most fitted for command, the child of Athena, the prudent midwife [35], she bore the giant also a daughter, another glory of her husband, the kaisar.<sup>29</sup>

She was august both in her soul and her life and she was gifted with the most generous character. For the abundant fleet of possessions [40] she poured out gently on the poor all around. Also she simply had a royal nature, since she was an eaglet and lion cub. And she amazed the commoners with the outpourings of magnificence [45]. The thrice-happy one showed from her childhood a self-sufficient beauty of a special temperament. Powders that conceal ugliness and smooth artificial unctions the queen left to simpler women [50]. But when a whirlwind raged in public, and an inescapable billow of slanderers was flowing, when her husband had gone to another state,<sup>30</sup> she showed her vigorous manner also in this situation. For envy did not dominate her at all [55], but she was rather simply a firm tower, or a bird breathing into the charcoals of Mount Etna, or a rock stronger than a fierce blow, and a bronze body below a leaden hammer. He shuddered at her manliness [60], the bright crown wearer of the same blood, who flogged this oak forcefully, implicating her in his suspicions of regime [change].<sup>31</sup> And then there was no remedy for her distress other than the good fortune of her beautiful children [65].

But you, teacher and craftsman Time, you found her stronger than her detractors, her, who was well crowned and decent from the very beginning, and the support of both her kin and dignity.

But, poor me, what a present grief [70] and what lamentations that almost the whole world has in common – because her glory was well-known amongst everybody. Sun and Earth and last thunders! She stripped off her material attire like light, leaving behind the earth and the gifts of fortune [75] and all her famous children, for she considered the last cowl of the monks clearly to be the purple robe, in which she was born. Bearing the decency of manners, she has now come to the bridegroom of the souls [80], holding the torch of beneficence, gushing forth also the wax of grace, like a maiden wise in her deeds. Her fleeting body is asleep, but it is prepared for the marvellous resurrection [85]. For another earthly birth may happen, when the mouth of the trumpet shall sound, bringing together the limbs in a second creation. But the one, who is laying buried and painted with shadows [here], here looks to the only blameless one, [the virgin Mary] [90], for in life, too, she had her as a protector and guardian of her thrice fortunate children and her good hopes for the future.

But you, my dear friend, since you wisely see all this, don't boast about money and don't swell with vanity [95], and don't feel confounded, even though you alone might have everything. Even if some thought in you is not appropriate, restrain yourself and look at this grief: For the queen of the Bulgars, Asanina, disciplines life even in silence [100].

### 3.2.2 Epigram on Isaac Asan's church

Isaac Asan, the astute nature, who is the uncle of the crown wearer,<sup>32</sup> and the instrument of thousands of successes, is adorned by the splendour of his mind and the bravery of his soul towards the enemies [5], while thriving with a perfect bodily beauty. As an unerring judge he grants to the bodies the hearth of luxury, which the external adornment displays all around, and to the spirits this holy church [10]. The shrine of his most beloved ones he decorates with this spiritual bridal chamber, lest hostile insatiety from there offends the sanctity of the blessed soul. For whom of the inhabitants, my

<sup>29</sup> Allusion to her daughter Maria, who was the wife of Roger de Flor, the kaisar.

<sup>30</sup> Allusion to Irene's and John's escape from Bulgaria to Constantinople.

<sup>31</sup> Allusion to Andronikos II, who punished her with house arrest after she had plotted against him.

<sup>32</sup> Isaac Asan, the son of Irene Asanina, and only known person bearing this name in Philes' time, was the uncle of no emperor. However, he was the great-uncle of John V Palaiologos (*PLP* no. 21485). See below section 5.4.

best friend, [15] should the insatiable billow of life offend, if he would enjoy the calmness of prayer? Since this is a solid shelter and a mystic altar and a throne of glory and a holy bridal chamber and a place of the living God [20], in which he, [Christ,] who has been slaughtered on behalf of all, releases the singers of the divine songs from their dreadful sins, when the prayer forcefully soars aloft.

#### 4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

##### 4.1 IRENE ASANINA AND JOHN ASAN III ACCORDING TO THE HISTORIOGRAPHERS

Irene Asanina Komnene Palaiologina (\* c. 1260 † after 1306)<sup>33</sup> was the second child of Michael VIII Palaiologos and Theodora Palaiologina.<sup>34</sup> Both the historians Pachymeres (1242– c. 1310) and Nikephoros Gregoras (c. 1295–1360) report her marriage to John Asan III, king of the Bulgars, which must have taken place in 1278.<sup>35</sup> John Asan was part of the Bulgarian imperial family of the Asanes and son of the tsar Mytzes Asan (reigning 1256–1257). Between 1278 and 1280, the Bulgarian state experienced a period of political insecurity. Pachymeres reports that a certain Ivajlo (*PLP* no. 14690) usurped power and killed the old Bulgarian emperor Constantine Tich (*PLP* no. 27550) in 1277. Michael VIII Palaiologos, fearing a strong Bulgarian emperor as an enemy, decided to marry his daughter Irene to John, as he had promised about 15 years earlier.<sup>36</sup> According to Pachymeres, Michael believed that John's noble birth, together with the Byzantine support that he would receive, would be sufficient to pacify Bulgaria. John was therefore proclaimed emperor and married to Irene in 1278.

After the Byzantines had defeated the troops of Ivajlo and had cleared the way to Trnovo, John and Irene entered the capital of Bulgaria, probably in 1279, where they were welcomed by the inhabitants. However, John's reign was short and nothing is known about his deeds as emperor. A certain Terter (*PLP* no. 27585) wanted to seize power and revolted against John. The latter was frightened by this development and even more so by the fact that Ivajlo had besieged Trnovo and destroyed two of the Byzantine emperor's regiments. Consequently, the imperial couple fled to Constantinople only a few months after John had become emperor of Bulgaria, taking various parts of the state treasury with them. Michael VIII was so enraged by their cowardice that he refused to accept them into the capital for several days. However, he eventually allowed them to enter and accepted Terter as emperor of Bulgaria.

John was then sent to Nogai, a Tatar leader and ally of Michael VIII, with rich presents, as an ambassador seeking Nogai's help against the Bulgarians. Later, in 1284,<sup>37</sup> he was made despot by Andronikos II, after the emperor had recognized Terter as king of the Bulgars and it was agreed that Asan would not seize power in Bulgaria again.<sup>38</sup> Following this, Pachymeres mentions John only once further, when he died during an expedition against the Alans in 1302.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> On Asanina and her family cf. E. TRAPP, Beiträge zur Genealogie der Asanen. *JÖB* 25 (1976) 163–177, especially 166–168. *PLP* no. 21359. For the identification of Asanina, queen of the Bulgars, mentioned in Αἰ θεῖνέ cf. DUJČEV, Una poesia.

<sup>34</sup> *PLP* no. 21359.

<sup>35</sup> Pachymeres, *Historiae* VI, 3–9 and 19 (ed. A. FAILLER, George Pachymeres. *Relations historiques*, 5 vols. [CFHB 24]. Paris 1984–2000) reports the events of the civil war and Irene's and John's marriage (1278–1280) as presented in this paper. On John III Asan cf. *PLP* no. 1501. For the chronology of the passages I follow A. FAILLER, Chronologie et composition dans l'histoire de Georges Pachymérés II. *REB* 39 (1981) 145–249, 234f. See also Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historia* V, 3 (ed. L. SCHOPEN - I. BEKKER *et alii*, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia. Graece et latine*, 3 vols. [CSHB 19]. Bonn 1829–1855), who is, however, writing later and less detailed and therefore only of secondary importance.

<sup>36</sup> F. DÖLGER, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453*, vol. 4. *Regesten von 1282–1341 (Corpus der griechischen Urkunden des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit A, Abt. 1,4)*. Munich 1960, 1916a and Pachymeres, *Historiae* V 5 and VI 4 (II 449–451, 553–555 FAILLER).

<sup>37</sup> DÖLGER, *Regesten* no. 2093 and 2099.

<sup>38</sup> Pachymeres, *Historiae* VII 20 (III 69 FAILLER).

<sup>39</sup> Pachymeres, *Historiae* X 19 (IV 345–347 FAILLER).

Irene and her husband had ten children, seven of which are known by name – Michael, Andronikos, Isaac, Constantine, Theodora, Manuel and Maria.<sup>40</sup> They founded an important and influential aristocratic family, which is well-known in the documents of Constantinople of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> Irene's daughter Maria was married to Roger de Flor (*PLP* no. 24386) in 1303, when he helped the emperor Andronikos II in a campaign against the Ottomans.<sup>42</sup> Irene still lived with her daughter and her son-in-law in 1305, and had a personal assistant called Kanabourios.<sup>43</sup> In the conflicts between Andronikos and the Catalan company under Roger de Flor, she sided with her son-in-law.<sup>44</sup> Together with Kanabourios, Irene is accused of having revolted against the emperor in 1306, because she held him responsible for the death of Roger in 1305, whereupon Andronikos placed her under house arrest in the palace.<sup>45</sup> Following this, she is not mentioned in any historical source.

#### 4.2 IRENE ASANINA IN PHILES' POEMS – BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT

Pachymeres' historiographic account is our main source for the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and therefore forms the background against which one has to read Philes' poems about the Asan family. However, the poems also provide the reader with information that would otherwise be unknown. The second epitaph for Asanina (*incipit* Τῆς βασιλίδος)<sup>46</sup> mentions journeys of Irene to India, Italy and the Scythians (23–25), the latter two journeys probably refer to her contact with Roger de Flor and her husband's contact with the Tatars, although this interpretation remains uncertain. India in this context might refer to Persia,<sup>47</sup> which seems to be a more plausible destination for Irene than India itself, although there is no historical evidence for a journey to Persia either. In Αἱ δεινέ, slanderers are mentioned, most likely in the context of her conspiracy against Andronikos and her house arrest (67). Also, the reader learns that Irene became a nun before her death (77f.), as was customary in Byzantium.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Τῆς βασιλίδος mentions that she died εἰς γῆρας μέσον (42), information that cannot, however, be used to reconstruct her precise age.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.3 ISAAC ASAN

Irene's son Isaac whose date of birth and death are unknown,<sup>50</sup> was *megas dux* before he became *panhypersebastos* on 19 November 1341.<sup>51</sup> The *terminus ante quem* for his death is October 1351.

<sup>40</sup> *PLP* no. 21359 (Irene), 1514 (Michael), 1489 (Andronikos), 1494 (Isaac), 1504 (Constantine), 1531 (Theodora), 1505 (Manuel), 16890 (Maria). TRAPP, *Genealogie* 166–168.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. G. MORAVCSIK, *Byzantinoturcica, Sprachreste der Turkvölker in den byzantinischen Quellen*, 2 vols. (*BBA* 10). Berlin 1958, 75.

<sup>42</sup> Pachymeres, *Historiae* XI 12 (IV 431–433 FAILLER) and Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historia* VII 3 (I 219–224 SCHOPEN) for the chronology cf. ed. J. L. v. DIETEN, Nikephoros Gregoras. *Rhomäische Geschichte*, vol. 1 (*Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur* 4). Stuttgart 1973, 285, note 376.

<sup>43</sup> Pachymeres, *Historiae* XII 16 (IV 353–355 FAILLER). On Kanabourios cf. *PLP* no. 10865.

<sup>44</sup> Pachymeres, *Historiae* XI 12 and XI 24 (IV 431–433, 471–475 FAILLER).

<sup>45</sup> Pachymeres, *Historiae* XIII 30 (IV 697–699 FAILLER).

<sup>46</sup> Ed. GEDEON, *Ἱστορικά ποιήματα*, no. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. STICKLER, *Psalmenmetaphrase* 28.

<sup>48</sup> This might also be alluded to in the second epitaph on Eirene, Τῆς βασιλίδος, 56f., as DUJČEV, *Una poesia* 96 interprets it. However, the verses in question seem to allude more to her taking the burial gown than to the nun's clothes.

<sup>49</sup> DUJČEV, *Una poesia* 98 wrongly suggests that the poem must have been written during the reign of Andronikos II because he is mentioned in the epitaph as στεφνηφόρος (61). Following this interpretation, 1328 is mentioned as *terminus ante quem* for Irene's death in the *PLP*. However, in the passage, which is not included in the Vatican manuscript and which DUJČEV, *Una poesia* 26 therefore could not know, the deceased emperor Michael VIII is also described with this epithet. The adjective therefore gives no information about the dating of the poem because it could be used to describe both living and dead emperors.

<sup>50</sup> *PLP* no. 1494.

<sup>51</sup> Ed. P. SCHREINER, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. 1 (*CFHB* 12.1). Vienna 1975, I 82 and Kantakouzenos, *Historiae* (ed. L. SCHOPEN, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni ex Imperatoris Historiarum Libri* IV. Graece et latine, vol. 2 [*CSHB* 20]. Bonn 1831) II 218.

He was married to Theodora Palaiologina Arachantloun.<sup>52</sup> From his second wife, whose name is unknown, he had the children Andronikos Palaiologos Asan, Michael Asan, Andreas Asan and Irene Philanthropine Asanina.<sup>53</sup>

Politically, he opposed the emperor John VI Kantakouzenos in the civil war (1341–1347).<sup>54</sup> As a diplomat he tried to convince Suleyman, the satrap of Qarasi, to fight against John in 1344/45, but Suleyman refused. He was later made head of state affairs of the faction of John V Palaiologos, replacing Alexios Apokaupos. Philes' epigram proves that he donated a church, but the circumstances and location of this donation remain unknown.

## 5. STYLE AND CONTENT

Αἰ δεινέ is one of the longest epitaphs that have come down to us under the name of Manuel Philes.<sup>55</sup> Both in the epitaph, and in Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος, the classicising Greek, the metre, the use of rhetorical figures and formulae, and the way in which the conventions of the genres are used, are in accordance with the rest of Philes' *œuvre*.<sup>56</sup>

### 5.1 METRE

Αἰ δεινέ and Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος are written in regular dodecasyllabic verses. As to the prosody, the texts perfectly follow the rules of metre in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and in Philes' works.<sup>57</sup> The syllables 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 are always long, the syllables 3, 7 and 11 are always short.<sup>58</sup> The dichrona α, ι and υ are used as required by the metre. Moreover, almost half of the verses have the internal break (Maas's "Binnenschluss") after the 7<sup>th</sup> (B7), and the rest after the 5<sup>th</sup> syllable (B5), which is a rather high percentage of B7, even for Philes.<sup>59</sup> All the verses end paroxytonic according to Byzantine conventions. The internal breaks are also regularly constructed. With one exception (Αἰ δεινέ 5),<sup>60</sup> the internal break after the 5<sup>th</sup> syllable always ends stressed, which reflects Philes' general inclination towards stressed 5<sup>th</sup> syllables in B5, whereas after the 7<sup>th</sup> syllable it usually ends proparoxytonic. The penultimate syllable before B7 is only stressed in eight verses in Αἰ δεινέ and two in Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος.<sup>61</sup> Elisions only occur rarely,<sup>62</sup> and only of prepositions, δέ and once of τοῦτο. Overall, the metrical scheme of both poems is very similar. The high percentage of B7, even by Philes' standards, enhances the close connection between them that is also to be found in the manuscripts.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. A. PAPADOPOULOS, *Versuch einer Genealogie der Palaiologen. 1259–1453*. Munich 1938, 34 (no. 55). *PLP* no. 1229.

<sup>53</sup> *MMI* 313–315. *PLP* no. 1488 (Andronikos), 1512 (Michael), 1528 (Irene).

<sup>54</sup> Kantakouzenos, *Historiae* II 82, 88, 97 (II 507, 544, 599 SCHOPEN).

<sup>55</sup> N. PAPADOGIANNAKIS, *Studien zu den Epitaphien des Manuel Philes*. Herakleion 1984, 50 lists only 7 out of 77 epitaphs, which are longer than 90 verses.

<sup>56</sup> PAPADOGIANNAKIS, *Epitaphien* shows extensively which rhetorical formulae and patterns Philes uses in form and content. I build my linguistic analysis of the two newly edited poems on his study.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. P. MAAS, *Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber*. *BZ* 12 (1903) 278–323, especially 296–299 and PAPADOGIANNAKIS, *Epitaphien* 52.

<sup>58</sup> The only two exceptions are found in proper nouns in Αἰ δεινέ 24 ὁ γὰρ Σολομών and 28 Παλαιολόγος. Names, however, never need to follow the rules of the quantities of syllables (cf. PAPADOGIANNAKIS, *Epitaphien* 52).

<sup>59</sup> In the epitaphs, Philes usually uses about 60% B5 and about 40% B7 (cf. PAPADOGIANNAKIS, *Epitaphien* 54).

<sup>60</sup> In this verse, however, the metrical exception is caused by the use of the proper noun Ἀσανίνα. In Philes' poems this occurs quite frequently (cf. MAAS, *Zwölfsilber* 296) and seems to be a way to stress the importance of names.

<sup>61</sup> Αἰ δεινέ 2, 11, 17, 26, 32, 50, 81, 88; Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος 12, 14.

<sup>62</sup> There are 9 elisions in Αἰ δεινέ 7, 8, 14, 23, 25, 38, 56, 96, 97.



## 5.2 RHETORICAL FORMULAE, FIGURES AND TROPES

In both poems, Philes makes use of several linguistic patterns, which are common in his *œuvre* and which fit the metre, such as the frequent use of μέν, δέ and γάρ in the first half verse, mainly on the third, but also on the second, fourth and fifth syllable.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, he uses certain words in fixed positions of the verse, such as βασιλῆς on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> syllable, which occurs in Αἰ δεινέ 99 (ἡ γὰρ βασιλῆς Βουλγάρων Ἀσανίνα).<sup>64</sup> V. 73 (ἦλιε καὶ γῆ καὶ τελευταῖοι κρότοι), on the other hand, is as a whole a mere formula: In Philes' poems, with the exception of the epitaph on Irene, there are 52 verses starting with ἦλιε, of which 23 start with ἦλιε καὶ γῆ or ἦλιε τῆς γῆς, and still two other occurrences of exactly the same verse as in Αἰ δεινέ.<sup>65</sup> A similar example is 87 (εἶπερ τὸ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἠχήσοι στόμα), which can be found, with very little variation (ὅταν τὸ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἠχήση στόμα), in four other poems by Philes.<sup>66</sup>

If one compares Αἰ δεινέ with the other epitaph to Irene (Τῆς βασιλίδος), Philes' technique of using formulae and linguistic patterns becomes even clearer. First of all, there are specific, single words that are frequently used in the same place in the verse, since they fulfil both the needs of the metre and are part of the usual vocabulary of epitaphs.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, Philes uses certain linguistic patterns, which combine articles, conjunctions, etc. with specific nouns.<sup>68</sup> Last, but not least, the two epitaphs also share one phrase and one verse, namely the above mentioned invocation of the sun and the verse about the last trumpet.<sup>69</sup> The fact that certain phenomena occur not only in both poems, but also in the same verses (cf. verses 15 and 94 in both poems) indicates that the two epitaphs to Asanina are connected not only by content, but also in matters of their literary form.

In its use of tropes and figures, Αἰ δεινέ, which is representative of Philes' epitaphs, is very close to the Asan epigram. Both show the same rhetorical repertoire which Papadogiannakis stresses as most important in all epitaphs.<sup>70</sup> Hyperbata, homoioteleuta and homoioptota, metaphors, rhetorical questions, exclamations and, often combined with them, parentheses, are part of the poet's standard rhetorical devices.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, the most important figures among the tropes are periphrasis (mainly

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Αἰ δεινέ 11, 16, 20, 27, 32, 34, 36, 40, 51, 55, 72, 77, 86, 91, 99, Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος 4, 7, 9, 15, 20 and ΠΑΠΑΔΟΓΙΑΝΝΑΚΗΣ, Epitaphien 63f.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. ΠΑΠΑΔΟΓΙΑΝΝΑΚΗΣ, Epitaphien 64f. A similar phenomenon may be found in 94 with βλέπων on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> syllable.

<sup>65</sup> The verse seems to be an authentic invention of Manuel Philes since, although the invocation of sun and land is a frequent *topos* of Greek literature, no other poet uses this specific wording and metre (cf. *TLG*, online at <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/>, retrieved at 1st June 2012). However, the full verse can be found as an inscription in the parekklesion in the Chora church, Constantinople, in an epitaph to Tornikes (cf. P. UNDERWOOD, *The Kariye Djami*, vol. 1. Historical introduction and description of the mosaics and frescoes [*Bollingen Series 70*]. London 1966, 276f.), which is probably the work of Manuel Philes (cf. TALBOT, *Epigrams* 80 and BROOKS, *Tomb Decoration* 225).

<sup>66</sup> Ed. MILLER F64, 10, P9, 95, P102, 2 and the second epitaph on Irene (ed. GEDEON, *Ἱστορικὰ ποιήματα*, no. 11 [249f.])

<sup>67</sup> The following six words are used: σεμνότης (Αἰ δεινέ [A] 23 – Τῆς βασιλίδος [T] 5), πρακτέων (A83 – T33), κλέος (A37, 72 – T69), τάδε (A94 – T94), τρισολβία (A5, 47, 92 – T55, 63 with grammatical variations) at the end of the verse and θύλακον (A74 – T8) before B7.

<sup>68</sup> At the end of the verse: τῶν θηλυτέρων (A3 – T14), ἤμειψε τὴν ἀκοσμίαν(A)/εὐκοσμίαν (T) (A20 – T56), καὶ τῆς ἀξίας (A)/τὴν ἀξίαν(T) (A69 – T76). At the beginning: καὶ τῷ γένει (A)/τοῦ γένους (T) (A15 – T15), καὶ ταῖς ἐργαῖς (A)/ἐκ τῆς ἐργυγῆς (T) (A44 – T19), ὡς ἀετιδῆς (A43 – T25), τοῦ γὰρ γένους (A)/τὸ γὰρ γένος (T) (A20 – T76). Variations of this technique, in which more than the grammatical form is changed are: τὸ πᾶν ἄρσεν γένος (A)/τὸ πᾶν γένος (T) (A24 – T79) and αἰ ... φθόρε χρόνε (A)/αἰ χρόνε φθόρε (T) (A1 – T46).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. ἦλιε καὶ γῆ (A73 – T4) and εἶπερ τὸ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἠχήσοι στόμα (A)/ὅταν τὸ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἠχήση στόμα (T) (A87 – T99).

<sup>70</sup> ΠΑΠΑΔΟΓΙΑΝΝΑΚΗΣ, Epitaphien 174.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. in Αἰ δεινέ for the homoioteleuton 19f., 22f., 40–43 and 52–55 (the two last examples show an alternating pattern ABAB), homoioptoton 1, 26–28, 33f., 38f., 68f., 81f., 84f., 92f., 97f., metaphor 3f., 6, 10, 28, 31, 35, 43, 51, 56–59, 62, 74, 80, 100, rhetorical questions 1–6, 7f., 9f., exclamations 1, 17, 66, 70, 73, 94, parentheses 13, 17, 27, 70. In Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος hyperbaton 3, 5, 6, homoioteleuton 4f., 15f., 19f., 22f., homoioptoton 1f., 18–20, metaphor 14, 15, 16, 19f., rhetorical question 15–17.



connected to death), comparison and personification.<sup>72</sup> The most frequently occurring syntactical figures are anaphora, parallelism and asyndeton.<sup>73</sup> Overall, in terms of language and style, both poems convey the impression of highly stylised, but rather conventional, texts that fit perfectly into the rest of Philes' *œuvre*.

## 5.2 IRENE ASANINA'S EPITAPH: STRUCTURE AND GENRE

If one takes a closer look at the content of the texts and the images that are used in them, however, one gets a rather different impression, which shows the unique focus and literary presentation of the poems. Generally speaking, *Ἀἰ δεινέ* is an epitaph that follows the usual structure of its genre. It is written in the third person and thus clearly serves a commemorative function.<sup>74</sup> The prooemium (1–10) opens with an invocation to Time asking her why she took Irene away, thereby using well-known motifs of Philes' poems.<sup>75</sup> The main part of the poem, the encomium (11–93), uses various *topoi* to describe Irene, the choice of which shows a unique way to praise her.<sup>76</sup> First, it is surprising that Philes does not mention all the names of the deceased as he usually does. Only the name Irene receives from her husband, Asanina, is mentioned (5 and 99) and this, together with her father's names identify her (26–28), but her first name is not mentioned. Also, apart from the description of her family, there is no further information about her origins. As was customary in the case of women, Irene's husband is praised as well (29–31), despite the fact that his reign was not very successful. Nonetheless, he is described with solar symbolism (31), which was a common device to praise emperors.<sup>77</sup> The reference to the Bulgars as Mysians (30) is peculiar, because in Philes' time the term was used pejoratively.<sup>78</sup> Yet, in this case, the word is merely used for its classicising character, and probably because the three syllables of *Βουλγάρων* would not have suited the metre. Asanina's encomium is rather surprising because it does not focus on the *topoi* of beauty and virtue, as was customary in the case of women, but skips beauty almost entirely.<sup>79</sup> Her virtue, on the other hand, is praised throughout the poem, either through the use of explicit attributes praising her *σεμνότης* or *εὐανδρία*, or through various metaphors.<sup>80</sup> The *leitmotif* in Philes' praise of her virtue is her *γένος*, which is frequently mentioned (8, 11, 20, 24, 45, 69). The poet makes use of the broad semantic potential of the term by using it to refer to the human race, her kin and family, and her gender and sex. Irene is not only presented as the best of all women, but even as better than women, because

<sup>72</sup> *Ἀἰ δεινέ* periphrasis 6, 10, 51, 74, 80, 100, comparison 24f., 74, 76f., personification 1, 66. *Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος* periphrasis 15, comparison 10, personification 14.

<sup>73</sup> *Ἀἰ δεινέ* anaphora 10f., 30f., 57f., 91–93, 95f., 98, 100, parallelism 3f., 24f., 77–80, 81f., 87, asyndeton 5, 30, 61, 66, other figures are alliteration 3, 6, 86 and polysyndeton 1, 73. *Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος* parallelism 7 and 9, 19f., polysyndeton 19f.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. M. LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: texts and contexts*, vol. I (*WBS* 24). Vienna 2003, 223.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. PΑPADOGIANNAKIS, *Epitaphien* 91–96 for rhetorical questions in the prooemium and 149–152 for the invocation of Time. For detailed descriptions of the *topoi* used by Philes in his epitaphs cf. *ibidem* 87–126.

<sup>76</sup> For the conventions of writing encomia in Byzantium cf. T. VILJAAMA, *Studies in Greek encomiastic poetry of the early Byzantine period (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 42.4)*. Helsinki 1968, 13–24.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. LAUXTERMANN, *Poetry* 223.

<sup>78</sup> FAILLER, *Pachymeres* 88, note 1. However, as T. PΑPADOPOULOU, *Οἱ ὄροι ,Μυσιά' και ,Μυσοζ' στις βυζαντινές πηγές της μέσης και ὕστερης περιόδου*, in: *Hypermachos. Studien zu Byzantinistik, Armenologie und Georgistik. Festschrift für Werner Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Stavrakos - A.-K. Wassiliou - M. Krikorian. Wiesbaden 2008, 257–281 has shown, the term *Μυσοί* was commonly associated with the Bulgars in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>79</sup> Only 5 and 46–50 allude directly to her beauty. However, none of the well-known metaphors (such as the woman who is a rose, a pearl, etc.) are used. 48–50 show an example of the *topos* that the praised woman avoided artificial beauty.

<sup>80</sup> For explicit notes on her virtue and splendid manners cf. 15, 23, 38f., 54, 60, 79, 83. Cf. also the variation of the *topos* that women have to be silent, in 22f., where the queen is praised that for her alone, speaking was chastity, and the *σύγκριστις* in 24f., where Irene is compared to Solomon as well as the metaphors in 56–59, e.a.

she transgressed the stains of her sex and became like a man (20f.). Philes here borrows a common motif from hagiographic texts, namely the manliness of holy women, as represented, for example, in the description of cross-dressing as means of moral improvement, because womanliness itself was often seen as a weakness.<sup>81</sup> Her denial of cosmetics is also mentioned (48–50), another feature frequently connected with holy women.<sup>82</sup> This also changes the images employed insofar as Philes does not focus on her womanhood. The only specifically feminine characteristic for which she is praised (apart from the above mentioned allusion to her beauty) is the many and outstanding children she bore (33–37, 65, 92). Special attention is drawn to her daughter Maria, who married Roger de Flor (36f.), who, at the end of his life, became an enemy of the emperor Andronikos II. In the central part of the poem Philes focuses on Irene's behaviour and alludes to the deplorable state of affairs of which she had been part, both during her short reign in Trnovo (51–55) and when she was accused of being involved in a plot against Andronikos II (61–63). Philes describes this event very vividly, stating that Irene was flogged by her brother (62). Again, one might be reminded of saints' lives and the high value placed on martyrdom in Byzantium. By bearing up against this torture, Irene shows a saint-like strength. This religious focus becomes increasingly important in the last part of the poem, which speaks about her death. The narrator tells that she willingly became a nun before her death, valuing the cowl as highly as her royal garments. Asleep, she is supposed to await her union with the spiritual bridegroom, Christ. Furthermore, she is described as a wise maiden, holding a candle, and the poet refers to the parable of the virgins (Matt. 25.1–13). Thus, she is patiently waiting for the resurrection under the guard of the Holy Virgin, whom the painted Asanina in the *arcosolium* beholds (89f.). The praise of Asanina is structured under the categories of good character (11–25), noble family origin (26–28), noble marriage (29–32), praiseworthy children (33–37), noble behaviour, especially in Trnovo and in the context of the conspiracy (38–72), death and resurrection (73–93). It is thus roughly organised in a chronological sequence following the path of her life.

The communication situation in Αἰ δεϊνὲ is complex and the addressees are subtly used both to structure the text and to produce meaning for the epitaph. The long prooemium is entirely addressed to Time (1–10), which is presented almost as personified destruction, which dared to take the embellishment of the world, Irene Asanina, to death. This common metaphor of time as a destroyer<sup>83</sup> immediately gives the death of the praised person universal importance, since Time is accused of boldness in bringing to the queen that which is inevitable for all men (2–6). However, Philes not only uses this common topos to strengthen the praise of Irene, but gives it a sophisticated turn in the second invocation to Time (66–69). The opening lines immediately show the contrast: Αἰ δεϊνὲ καὶ πάντολμε καὶ φθόρε χρόνε (1) shows a completely different aspect of her to ἀλλὰ σύ, διδάσκαλε, τεχνίτα χρόνε (66). The second invocation to Time refers to her as a knowing authority that can distinguish Irene's deeds and motifs from defamation. She therefore also guarantees that, in the future, Irene is going to be praised for her life rather than criticised, thus strengthening the commemorative impact of the poem. By using these two invocations, Philes frames the narrative about Irene's life (11–65) with a contrasting figure stressing both the vanity of all life and the memory that overcomes all defamation. The passage about her death opens with the unspecific exclamation πλὴν ἀλλὰ βαβαί (70), and the

<sup>81</sup> S. CONSTANTINOY, *Female Corporeal Performances. Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 9)*, Uppsala 2005, 90.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem* 104.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. PAPAIOGIANNAKIS, Epitaphien 149. The topos is also widespread in inscribed epigrams, where it usually refers to time, which destroyed buildings that were later rebuilt (cf. A. RHOBY, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken [Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl., Denkschriften 374 = Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 15]*, Vienna 2009, 383f.).

concrete invocation ἦλιε καὶ γῆ καὶ τελευταῖοι κρότοι (73). The latter is a common motif<sup>84</sup> which is used to stress the universality of Irene's death, which should even move the cosmic elements. Finally, the epilogue (94–100) is built rather conventionally around the invocation of the βέλτιστε (94), the reader of the poem and thus the visitor to the tomb.<sup>85</sup> However, it is intriguing that, in contrast to the usual motifs, the epilogue does not contain a demand for the visitor to pray for Asanina, but once again refers to virtue. By asking the reader of the epitaph not to boast of money or swell with splendour, in connection with reminding him of Irene's death, Philes refers back to the queen's own humbleness, which he praised before. Thus, he uses the conventional seeming epilogue to stress once again the specific picture he paints of Irene, which emphasises her secular and religious virtues and her political strength.

The epitaph makes extensive use of ubiquitous linguistic patterns and literary images, but it draws a very specific picture of Irene. One has to bear in mind that all the allusions and figures that Philes uses only make sense if the reader is familiar with Irene's story. Therefore, one must consider that what might, at first glance, seem to be a conventional image can also be an allusion to a very specific event, which we do not understand because of our limited knowledge of the life of the deceased. As has been observed of other poems by Philes,<sup>86</sup> Ἄϊ δεινέ should not be regarded as a rather arbitrary patchwork of run-of-the-mill topoi and motifs, but as a made-to-measure poem, exclusively for Irene, which only works for her specific context.

There are two political statements that may give a hint at the epitaph's date of composition. As mentioned above, Philes stresses the importance of Irene's daughter Maria, who was married to Roger de Flor, who became an enemy of Andronikos II. Furthermore, in 61f., the narrator tells that Andronikos flogged his sister Irene because he thought that she was part of a conspiracy. Neither remark presents Andronikos in a favourable light and hence one might conclude that the poem was probably written after the end of his reign, i.e. after 1328. Thus, 1328 would also be the *terminus post quem* of Irene's death.

#### 5.4 THE EPIGRAM ON ISAAC ASAN'S CHURCH

The poem for Isaac Asan praises him for building or decorating a church or monastery. It is clear that the poem is indeed an epigram from its use of deictic pronouns referring to the church that is described (9 and 12). In the prologue (1–6), Isaac is described as prudent, brave and beautiful. The remark πατράδελφός ἐστι τοῦ στεφηφόρου, claiming that he was the uncle of the emperor, is peculiar. The textual history of the poem enforces that Isaac, son of Irene, is meant. However, he was not the uncle of any emperor. One could understand the line as a reference to John V Palaiologos (1332–1391), whose father's cousin Isaac was.<sup>87</sup> The problem that remains is the unclear dating of Philes' death. John became emperor in 1341, so if he were indeed meant, this would be a tentative argument that Philes only died in the 1340s.<sup>88</sup> However, it cannot be excluded that Philes would have described John as στεφηφόρος from his early childhood, as there is no record of an official corona-

<sup>84</sup> PAPADOGIANNAKIS, Epitaphien 154–156.

<sup>85</sup> DUJČEV, Una poesia 98f. suggests that the person in question (βέλτιστε) is a relative of Irene, who commissioned the work. This is, however, mere speculation and ignores the genre of the poem. As an epitaph, it was intended to be inscribed on the tomb or next to it and the pronoun τάδε stresses that the person must see the verses and, presumably, the tomb in front of him, so that a specific identification of the person does not seem to be intended.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. PIETSCH-BRAOUNOU, Anthologia Planudea 222.

<sup>87</sup> *PLP* no. 21485.

<sup>88</sup> For a discussion of this issue cf. STICKLER, Psalmenmetaphrase 19–23. The *ODB* declares that Philes died in ca. 1345 (TALBOT - CUTLER, Philes, Manuel 1651), which fits into my interpretation of the epigram Ἰσάν Ἰσαάκιος.

tion ceremony and John was the firstborn child and therefore most likely to be the heir to the throne.<sup>89</sup> Either way, the reference to John V implies that the poem was written after 1332. In this line, Isaac is elevated through his connection to the imperial family. Thus, the prologue is used for the general praise of the donor Isaac.

The central part of the poem (7–15) tells the reader that Isaac was the patron of building works at a church. In Kidonopoulos's study on the buildings in Constantinople, he uses the poem as evidence for an otherwise unknown, anonymous church.<sup>90</sup> The poem is not very precise about exactly what Isaac did and at which church, which is not surprising given that the epigram was probably intended to be inscribed on the church itself. Thus, the reader of the poem would have seen the praised object and not have needed a detailed description of it.<sup>91</sup> However, the text mentions that Isaac did something to the outside of the church, presumably the external walls or the narthex as part thereof, which is outside the actual nave (8). It is not clear whether he ordered the church to be erected, rebuilt or merely decorated.<sup>92</sup> In line 9, he is said to have given τὸν θεῖον δόμον to the spirits (of the believers). I take this as evidence that Isaac commissioned not only part of the church decoration, but also the building as a whole. Furthermore, it is likely that the church was part of a monastery, as there is a reference to the singers of godly songs, presumably the cantors (23f.).

Just as in the epitaph for Irene, the epilogue is addressed to the reader, requesting that he prays for the οἰκήτορες (cf. 15) of the church, i.e. the dead buried within it. It is probable that the church was used as the burial place for the Asan family, as the shrine was described as a place τῶν ἑαυτοῦ φιλάτων (11). Brooks takes the use of the word παστάς in a different poem as evidence that Philes alludes to the decoration of an *arcosolium*.<sup>93</sup> As the term also appears in the epigram for Isaac's church (12), the interpretation of the church as burial place becomes even more likely. The final lines are then to be understood as a request for prayer and sung psalms, in order to obtain the salvation of both the buried (15f.) and the singers (23f.).

## 6. PHILES AND THE ASAN FAMILY – HISTORY OF A LITERARY RELATIONSHIP

### 6.1 A BURIAL PLACE FOR THE ASAN FAMILY?

As the close reading of the epigram on Isaac Asan's church reveals, the building that he commissioned was most likely to be the burial place of his family. Since there are two large epitaphs to his mother, Irene Asanina, it is reasonable to assume that she may have been buried in this church and hence the two newly edited poems would have been part of the same building. Thus, it is likely that, in the case of the Asan family, one should assume a setting similar to that of the parekklesion in the Pammakaristos church, where Martha Glabas, wife of the protostrator Michel Doukas Glabas, commissioned both the inscribed epigrams by Manuel Philes and the decoration of the church.<sup>94</sup> Isaac

<sup>89</sup> I would like to thank Ida Toth for discussing the issue with me and for her reference to John.

<sup>90</sup> V. KIDONOPOULOS, *Bauten in Konstantinopel 1204–1328 (Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik 1)*. Wiesbaden 1994, 97.

<sup>91</sup> The same is true for Philes' poems on works of art, cf. TALBOT, *Epigrams* 75.

<sup>92</sup> KIDONOPOULOS, *Bauten* 97 assumes that the church was new built, but there is no proof for this hypothesis. It might equally have been rebuilt.

<sup>93</sup> BROOKS, *Tomb Decoration* 231.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. H. BELTING – C. MANGO – D. MOURIKI, *The mosaics and frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul (DOS 15)*. Washington, D. C. 1978, 19–23 and *passim*. Cf. TALBOT, *Epigrams* 77–79 and on the chronology of the building activities A. EFFENBERGER, *Zur Restaurierungstätigkeit des Michael Dukas Glabas Tarchaneiotes im Pammakaristokloster und zur Bauzeit des Parekklesions. Zograf* 31 (2006–2007) 79–94. On family burial places cf. also C. MANGO, *Sépultures et épitaphes aristocratiques à Byzance*, in: *Epigrafia medievale greca e latina. Ideologia e funzione: Atti del seminario di Erice (12–18 settembre 1991)*, ed. G. Cavallo – C. Mango. Spoleto 1995, 116f.



would thus have acted as the patron for the church and the epigrams. Since the probable *termini post quos* for both poems are relatively close together (1328 and 1332), this interpretation becomes more probable. It is, therefore, of particular interest to analyse the other poems connected with the Asan family and their possible cross-references to the two newly edited epigrams.

## 6.2 THE TWO EPITAPHS FOR IRENE ASANINA

Αἰ δεινὴ was intended to be inscribed near the tomb of Irene, probably in a painted *arcosolium*,<sup>95</sup> as the line ἡ κειμένη δὲ καὶ σκιαγραφουμένη (89), as well as the pronouns ἐνθάδε (90) and τάδε (94), suggests. However, as with all of Philes' epitaphs which are found in manuscripts, there is no inscribed record of the poem.<sup>96</sup> In this case, it is peculiar that two different epitaphs to Irene have come down to us. It has already been demonstrated that they are stylistically related to one another (see above, chapter 5.2); their content, on the other hand, differs greatly.

The focus of Τῆς βασιλίδος, the second epitaph,<sup>97</sup> is very different from that of Αἰ δεινὴ. Whereas, in the latter, Irene's political virtue and her γένος are the pivotal points, the former seems to be a more conventional praise of the woman, her beauty and her virtue. In the prooemium (1–5), the narrator mourns the death of Irene, listing her names and invoking sun, earth and fortune. From the first line (Τῆς βασιλίδος κειμένης Ἀσανίνης), it is clear that the poem belongs to the genre of epitaphs. In the panegyric part, she is first praised for her prudence. As in Αἰ δεινὴ, special attention is drawn to the idea that she, as a woman, was like a man and better than the rest of her sex and, indeed, better than Eve (12–16).<sup>98</sup> Irene is said to be like a man in her nature and to hide the simplicity of women, thus hiding her only stain, namely her sex. She is then praised for her lion-like behaviour, her eloquence and the impression she made upon everybody as thunder for the Byzantines. She is said to have travelled widely among the Indians, Italians and Scythians. It is clear that her journey to the Italians refers to her relationship with her son-in-law, Roger de Flor, and that the journey to the Scythians probably refers to her reign over Bulgaria or to John Asan's contact with the Tatars. However, the reference to the Indians (perhaps referring to the Persians, see above), and therefore to a distant journey, remains unclear because of the lack of extensive biographical information. Philes goes on to praise her marriage with John III Asan and her ten children, each of whom the reader of the epitaph could still see, thus suggesting that, at the time of Irene's death, all of her children were still alive (36f.). He then turns to lament her death, the loss of her beauty and, in an invocation, turns to destructive Time (46). Time is then rebuked for her destruction of a woman so outstanding in both soul and body. The narrator mourns that Irene had to put on the shroud and die, thereby reflecting on the inescapable nature of death (56–67). Because of the vanity of all earthly goods, the only secure fact is that Irene is now lying in the tomb and that she will surely meet her eternal bridegroom, Jesus. The narrator asks which words could bemoan this loss appropriately, now that the graceful branch of the imperial family has passed away. Finally, in the epilogue (94–100), the narrator turns to the viewer asking him to look at the queen and learn good manners from her, as well as to pray for her, so that she will come to life again once the last trumpet shall sound.

<sup>95</sup> For the design of *arcosolia*, cf. MANGO, *Sépultures*. The poem's length would not have been an obstacle to its actual inscription, as there is evidence for even longer inscribed poems, cf. LAUXTERMANN, *Poetry* 32, also TALBOT, *Epigrams* 86.

<sup>96</sup> Unfortunately, we usually know either a literary or an inscribed witness to Philes' epitaphs, but not both (cf. BROOKS, *Tomb Decoration* 225f., for the only exception cf. TALBOT, *Epigrams* 77).

<sup>97</sup> Ed. GEDEON, *Ἱστορικά ποιήματα*, no. 11, 249f.

<sup>98</sup> The wording τοῦ πρωτοφουῶς in Τῆς βασιλίδος, 16, must be either a misreading by the editor or a corrupt reading in the manuscripts. Clearly, the first-born refers to Eve and only a comparison to a woman makes sense. The conjecture to τῆς is enhanced by its parallel in Αἰ δεινὴ, 19.



This epitaph shows a less consistent structure than Αἰ δεινέ. There is no recognisable *leitmotif* in this epitaph like the γένος in the other. Also, there are no allusions to Irene's biography, apart from her journeys, the marriage with John Asan and her children. Rather, the poem is full of topical praise of her gender, beauty and grace, as well as general reflections on the human condition and the debt we owe to death. Similarly, the communication situation is less coherent than in Αἰ δεινέ. In the prologue, earth, sun and the vicissitudes of fortune are addressed (4) without reference to them in other lines. The main part of the epitaph is then addressed to the foreigner visiting the tomb (8 and 36f.). In an exclamation, the narrator turns to destructive Time (46). Finally, the epilogue conventionally addresses the viewer with its plea for prayer. Although the addressees are similar to those of Αἰ δεινέ, their invocation is not used to structure the poem in a sophisticated manner. The second epitaph is, therefore, much more conventional and praises Irene in the same way in which almost every female member of the imperial family could have been praised.

The two epitaphs for Irene are very different approaches to the same task, namely to write an epitaph to the deceased empress. In its more general approach to life, womanhood and death, Τῆς βασιλίδος does not have the specifically political accents of Αἰ δεινέ. There is evidence for tombs that were decorated with multiple epigrams.<sup>99</sup> However, since the content of the two epitaphs does not seem to be complementary, it is unlikely that both epigrams would have been inscribed on Irene's tomb. Thus, the epitaphs are probably a rare example of the poet at work.<sup>100</sup> I assume that the patron only accepted one of the two texts as the inscription for Irene's tomb. It is, however, impossible to determine which poem he chose. Perhaps the manuscript connection between Αἰ δεινέ and Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος can serve as evidence that these two texts were in fact inscribed, but this remains uncertain. Also, one cannot but speculate about their specific context of creation. It is possible that the donor rejected Philes' first epitaph in the first instance, or equally that the tomb decoration was reworked and thus both epitaphs were inscribed there, but at different times.<sup>101</sup>

### 6.3 ANDRONIKOS ASAN, BENEFACTOR OF MANUEL PHILES

The connection between Philes and the Asan family does not end with the presumed decoration of the church commissioned by Isaac Asan. His brother Andronikos was another important benefactor of Philes, in connection with whom five poems are known from the editions of Philes' works. Most important is probably the poem Ἀσάν γεννάδα,<sup>102</sup> a lengthy praise of Andronikos in political verse, bemoaning the fact that he had to leave Constantinople. Andronikos was governor of the Morea from 1316 until 1321, military leader from c. 1316 until c. 1342 and governor of Thessalonica from 1341 until 1343.<sup>103</sup> The poem mentions that Andronikos went ἐπὶ τοὺς φίλους Δωριεῖς καὶ τὰς Λακόνων πόλεις (10). I assume that this remark refers to Andronikos taking office on the Morea, so the poem dates from about 1316. The poem begins by praising Andronikos (1–5) and wishing him good luck and lasting support from the emperor (6–8), because he had been called to the Dorians and Laconians (9–11). This is followed by a description of spring and its positive impact on the world (12–47). Hence, Andronikos is expected to tie in with this optimistic view of the development of the world and his former successes and victories, and to become a marvellous governor (48–71). The fortune of the Dorians is the misfortune of Philes, who, from now on, will be lonesome and unprotected because

<sup>99</sup> MANGO, *Sépultures* 106.

<sup>100</sup> On the importance of such rare examples cf. LAUXTERMANN, *Poetry* 42–44.

<sup>101</sup> A case like this is recorded in BROOKS, *Tomb Decoration*, 229 and *passim*.

<sup>102</sup> Ed. GEDEON, *Ἱστορικὰ ποιήματα*, no. 12, 655f.

<sup>103</sup> *PLP* no. 1489.

his source of philanthropy is disappearing (72–95). Thus, the narrator asks Andronikos to do some good for him from a distance and hopes for a rapid reunion (96–102). In relation to the other poems, it is especially important that, in this text, the relationship between Philes and Andronikos is explicitly discussed. The text is a begging poem that stresses both the benefits and good characteristics of Andronikos (79–81), and the indigence of the poet, who is desperate on account of Andronikos' departure. He even hopes to receive support in spite of the long distance between himself and Andronikos (98f.). Thus, it is clear that, in 1316, Philes had already received benefits from Andronikos, so that, by this time, Philes was in contact with the Asan family and a network of patronage had been established.

There is a second, rather funny, begging poem that Philes addresses to Andronikos (Ὁ παντοδαπός).<sup>104</sup> In this poem, the narrator asks his benefactor to give him a new, fat sheep, because the one he had was always sick, did not bear any meat, and finally died. Calling himself κῶνα μικρὸν φιλοδέσποτον (10), he uses the difference of status between beneficiary and benefactor, and produces a comical effect through exaggeration. The long lamentation about the death of his sheep finally ends in the ironic remark that the narrator is proud of the Sun because she did not hide herself, in spite of all the bad things that happened to his sheep. The poem is an example of an entertaining and witty begging poem that combines a serious plea for support with a funny description.

Furthermore, there are two epigrams on an icon of the Mother of God<sup>105</sup> that had been commissioned by Andronikos, as stated in the last lines (Ἄ μὲν 29f. and Σὲ κληῖρον, 18f.). The two poems deal with the same situation and are texts to accompany the votive offering of an icon on behalf of Helena. Andronikos had a daughter by this name<sup>106</sup> and it is likely that the poem refers to her. In Σὲ κληῖρον the narrator asks the Virgin, after praising her for her support, to accept an icon, decorated with gold, on behalf of Helena, so that she might have a long life trusting in the Virgin (11–17). In Ἄ μὲν the situation has changed and Helena is dead (7–9). Now, the narrator praises the Virgin for caring about him and asks her to intercede on behalf of his deceased relative. The epigrams were probably not written for the creation of the icon itself, but for the creation of the frame, as is the case with most epigrams on icons.<sup>107</sup> This is suggested by the wording in Ἄ μὲν 14f. and Σὲ κληῖρον 12. In both cases, the text serves as a dedicatory epigram that reinforces the prayers within it each time that it is read.<sup>108</sup> These two poems are remarkable because they shed light on the process of the creation of votive epigrams. Here, the situation must have changed, namely that the ill Helena of the first epigram had finally died, and thus a new epigram for the icon was needed. The case is comparable to the two epitaphs for Irene Asanina, which also address the same topic in different manners. But while one can only speculate about the reason for a second version of the epitaph, the two epigrams on the icon clearly result from a changed situation. In both cases, one has to assume that only one of the texts was actually used and inscribed. Nevertheless, both texts found their way into the manuscript tradition.<sup>109</sup> This implies that even though these epigrams were indeed written for specific purposes and material settings, they were also, from the beginning, appreciated as literary works, worth remembering even if they were not used as inscriptions.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Ed. MILLER, F250.

<sup>105</sup> Ed. MILLER, F114 (*incipit* Ἄ μὲν) and F115 (Σὲ κληῖρον).

<sup>106</sup> *PLP* no. 1489.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. TALBOT, Epigrams 90.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. PIETSCH-BRAOUNOU, Übernatürliche Macht 92.

<sup>109</sup> H. MAGUIRE, *Image and Imagination. The Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response*. Toronto 1996, 8f. refers to a similar setting, where eight different epigrams devoted to a silver bowl are transmitted in a collection of epigrams. It is very likely that in this case an author presented different possibilities of a dedicatory epigram to his sponsor and the latter chose the most fitting text.

<sup>110</sup> There is also a third epigram on an icon, Θεὸς μὲν (ed. MILLER, P33), a rather conventional example of a dedicatory epigram and presumably for a different icon, which does not add any information about the connection between the Asan family and Philes.

In summary, Andronikos Asan seems to have been the centre of the relationship between Philes and the Asan family, as five poems that Philes wrote for him survive. If one believes the rhetoric of Ἀσάν γεννάδα, one has to conclude that Andronikos was a very important benefactor of Philes and his ties with the Asan family were rather intense. Also, the length of the poem for Andronikos, and of both epitaphs to Asanina, is rather exceptional in Philes' *œuvre* and enhances the impression that their bonds were, indeed, tight.

#### 6.4 POEMS FOR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ASAN FAMILY

There is a second begging poem, which uses the *topos* that the poet is severely ill and thus needs help from his benefactor.<sup>111</sup> He is called Ἡρακλῆς Ἀσάν (1) and thus his identity remains uncertain. However, Andronikos was called Heracles in the long begging poem (2) and thus it is possible that this text also refers to him. The first person narrator asks Asan to take his illness seriously and tells him that he should beat it as τὸν Οὐζπέκ τὸν σοβαρὸν σατράπην (6). The Mongols under Uzbek, khan of the Golden Horde, attacked Thrace in 1320, 1321 and 1324.<sup>112</sup> Hence, the poem offers evidence that Philes still had contact with the Asan family between 1320 and 1324.

Similar to Θεὸς μὲν (ed. MILLER, P33, cf. note 110) is an epigram on an icon of the Mother of God commissioned by Michael Asan.<sup>113</sup> In this poem, the narrator praises the Virgin for her support, offers an icon, decorated with gold and silver, to her, and asks her to bestow further help upon him. The text is rather conventional, but proves further contact between the Asan family and Philes. Martini suggests as a *terminus ante quem* 1328, the year in which Michael defected to the Serbs and thus no longer lived in Constantinople.<sup>114</sup>

### 7. CONCLUSION

The two newly edited poems enrich our knowledge of Philes' work and, in particular, shed light on his relationship with an important patronage family.

Philes had contact with at least three members of the Asan family, namely the brothers Isaac, Andronikos and Michael. Judging from the number and length of poems connected with Andronikos, it seems that he was the centre of the relationship between Philes and the Asan family. If it is true that Isaac commissioned the epigram Ἀσάν Ἰσαάκιος and the epitaph for Irene for one church in the 1330s, Philes must have had contact with the Asan family from at least 1316 until the 1330s. Philes' poems for this family offer two examples of poems that had to be re-worked. The epigrams for Andronikos on the icon of the Virgin were re-worked because the situation of the donor, and the reason for his donation, had changed, while the epitaphs were re-worked for unknown reasons. It is remarkable that, in both cases, minor changes were not made to an otherwise similar text, but a completely new text was written, which was, as has been examined in the Irene poems, connected to the first version by means of the ideas included and certain linguistic patterns. However, the epitaphs, in particular, show a very different focus. That patrons would have commissioned different texts for the same occasion confirms the observation that the kind of occasional poetry that Philes wrote was not perceived as a mixture of arbitrary conventional *topoi*, but as an individual response to a specific situation. Thus, if the donor did not find a certain text appropriate for his needs, he would have commissioned a revised, or even a completely new version.

<sup>111</sup> Ed. MILLER, F60.

<sup>112</sup> P. JACKSON, *The Mongols and the West 1221–1410 (The medieval world)*. Harlow, Essex 2005, 203.

<sup>113</sup> Ed. MARTINI, no. 35.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. MARTINI 40 and *PLP* no. 1514.

However, this study also reveals the need of a new, accessible and trustworthy edition of Philes' *œuvre*, including a translation into a modern language. At present, it is not easily possible to gain an overview of his complete works. However, the analysis of a limited number of poems already shows that one could gain much knowledge about the Palaiologan patronage system from Philes' works.<sup>115</sup> As has been claimed before,<sup>116</sup> it is desirable to read Philes' texts in thematic groups. One can then understand both the literary merits of a writer of occasional poetry and gain an insight into the literary production of the 14th century. Hence, my study can offer only preliminary thoughts about Philes' patrons and literary techniques, which above all show how important a detailed discussion of his complete works would be.

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<sup>115</sup> P. AGAPITOS, Blemmydes, Laskaris and Philes, in: *Byzantinische Sprachkunst. Studien zur byzantinischen Literatur gewidmet Wolfram Hörandner zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. M. Hinterberger – E. Schiffer (*Byzantisches Archiv* 20). Berlin 2007, 1–19, especially 11 on patronage.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. LAUXTERMANN, Review Stickler 370.