Lyric Addresses to Ancient and New Gods

Mesomedes, *Proems – Hymns – Prayers*

Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris
ad Ethicam REligionemque pertinentia
XLV

Mohr Siebeck

SAPERE

Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris
ad Ethicam REligionemque pertinentia

Schriften der späteren Antike
zu ethischen und religiösen Fragen

Herausgegeben von
Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, Reinhard Feldmeier
und Heinz-Günther Nesselrath

unter der Mitarbeit von
Natalia Pedrique und Andrea Villani

Band XLV

Lyric Addresses to Ancient and New Gods

Mesomedes, *Proems – Hymns – Prayers*

Introduction, Text, Translation and Interpretative Essays by

Richard Gordon, Sara Lanna, Egert Pöhlmann, Oliver Schelske

edited by

Sara Lanna

Mohr Siebeck

The volume was accomplished with the support of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities within the programme of the Union of the German Academies funded by the Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Lower Saxony.

ISBN 978-3-16-154020-2 / eISBN 978-3-16-164378-1
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-164378-1

ISSN 1611-5945 / eISSN 2569-4340 (SAPERE. Scripta antiquitatis posterioris ad ethicam religionemque pertinentia)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at *https://dnb.dnb.de*.

This book was supervised by Heinz-Günther Nesselrath (representing the SAPERE Editors).

Printed in the Netherlands.

SAPERE

Greek and Latin texts of Later Antiquity (1st–4th centuries CE) have for a long time been overshadowed by those dating back to so-called 'classical' times. The first four centuries of our era have, however, produced a cornucopia of works in Greek and Latin dealing with questions of philosophy, ethics, and religion that continue to be relevant even today. The series SAPERE (Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam REligionemque pertinentia, 'Writings of Later Antiquity with Ethical and Religious Themes'), now funded by the German Union of Academies, undertakes the task of making these texts accessible through an innovative combination of edition, translation, and commentary in the form of interpretative essays.

The acronym 'SAPERE' deliberately evokes the various connotations of *sapere*, the Latin verb. In addition to the intellectual dimension – which Kant made the motto of the Enlightenment by translating 'sapere aude' with 'dare to use thy reason' – the notion of 'tasting' should come into play as well. On the one hand, SAPERE makes important source texts available for discussion within various disciplines such as theology and religious studies, philology, philosophy, history, archaeology, and so on; on the other, it also seeks to whet the readers' appetite to 'taste' these texts. Consequently, a thorough scholarly analysis of the texts, which are investigated from the vantage points of different disciplines, complements the presentation of the sources both in the original and in translation. In this way, the importance of these ancient authors for the history of ideas and their relevance to modern debates come clearly into focus, thereby fostering an active engagement with the classical past.

Preface to this Volume

Between the third and the sixth decade of the second century CE (about 120–160) Mesomedes, a Cretan court musician to Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, wrote some short lyric poems, only five of which were known at first. Scholarly interest was long focused mainly on the metric and musical notation accompanying three of these poems, as well as on the scholia and their interpretation. In 1903, K. Horna however found eight new poems (nos. 4–11 Heitsch) in a late thirteenth-century manuscript (Ott. gr. 59). The metrics and style of these poems favour attribution to Mesomedes, because the rhythmic-musical scholia preceding both the old and new poems agree with each other. So now Mesomedes' corpus counts thirteen poems in all (three so-called proems included). This volume presents six of these texts, namely addresses, hymns and prayer to gods, both traditional Greek deities and "new" gods. In addition to a new edition of the Greek texts, a new translation, both in English and in Italian, is presented with a commentary, and a number of essays illuminate these texts and their author's work from different perspectives. Moreover, this volume aims to illustrate characteristic aspects of the distinctive cultural and religious "climate" that developed in the Roman Empire starting from the second century CE.

During my years of research at university I studied Mesomedes and his poems, especially the one entitled *To the swan*, and the hymns *To Physis* and *To Isis*. Thus, my main areas of research have become Imperial Greek Literature, History of Religions and related literary, epigraphic and papyrological documents of the Imperial period. Since the Seminar für Klassische Philologie of the University of Göttingen is, where I did part of my research, I am very grateful to the editors of SAPERE for including a volume on Mesomedes in their series: I express my heartfelt thanks to Heinz-Günther Nesselrath (Professor for Greek Philology, University of Göttingen), for supporting this editorial project with his so mindful checking all the work, and likewise to the other editors of this volume, Reinhard Feldmeier (Professor emeritus for New Testament, University of Göttingen), Rainer Hirsch-Luipold (Professor for New Testament and The History of Ancient Religion, University of Bern).

They have entrusted me with the presentation of Mesomedes and his poems, together with my edition of the text, Italian translation and

the notes on the translation. The English translation of Mesomedes' poems has been entrusted to Richard Gordon (Honorary Professor of the Religions of Antiquity, University of Erfurt), whom I would like to thank, too, for having reviewed my English version of the commentary and a number of paragraphs in the Introduction, as well as for having provided additional items and perspectives to the notes on the translation. He also reviewed the English version of some of the essays of Egert Pöhlmann. His historical-religious specialization is well documented also in his essay.

Important philosophical themes of the Imperial period have been discussed by Oliver Schelske (since 2023 Professor of Classics, University of Leipzig), a knowledgeable expert on these issues.

Egert Pöhlmann (Professor emeritus of Greek Philology, University of Erlangen) is an eminent specialist of long standing on ancient music and especially on Mesomedes' music. I would like to thank him for his significant contributions to this volume: he has provided essays on ancient documents of Greek music, re-opened the lively discussion on possible proposals of attribution of other texts to Mesomedes, and also provided generously some illustrations of Mesomedes' ancient manuscripts.

Together, we have compiled a volume presenting important aspects of Greek literature, music, philosophy and religion of the Imperial period, foregrounding on Mesomedes' poems and their philosophical-religious interest, and thereby shedding new light on both this Greek poet and cultural life in general of second century CE Rome.

Finally, I would like to extend my express thanks to all members of the SAPERE staff for their constructive advice: in particular to Dr. Natalia Pedrique, without whom this volume could not have been published and who has followed the authors and their contributions in the work in progress of the project over many years, and to Dr. Andrea Villani for his useful help; to Dr. Simone Seibert, responsible for the entire editorial process and the compilation of the bibliography. A further proofreading I owe to Prof. Nesselrath. Dr. Natalia Pedrique drew up the general index and Maria Gkamou the source index. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Serena Pirrotta, who (in her own SAPERE days) has initiated this editorial project.

Rome, March 2022 Sara Lanna

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A. Introduction

Introduction

Sara Lanna[1]

Not from the beginning the gods revealed to mortals all things,
but over time, though searching, they are discovering what is the best.
(Xenoph. fr. 20 Gentili / Prato)

But Titan appeared, as an ally
of the swan,
with his fire dart;
…
And the swan came winging
on air, happy.
(Mesom. *Cycn*. 10.13–15, 19–20)

Nous rentrâmes à Alexandrie quelques jours plus tard. Le poète Pancrates organisa pour moi une fête au Musée; on avait réuni dans une salle de musique une collection d'instruments précieux: les vieilles lyres doriennes, plus lourdes et moins compliquées que les nôtres, voisinaient avec les cithares recourbées de la Perse et de l'Égypte, les pipeaux phrygiens aigus comme des voix d'eunuques, et de délicates flûtes indiennes dont j'ignore le nom. Un Éthiopien frappa longuement sur des calebasses africaines. Une femme … joua d'une harpe triangulaire au son triste. Mésomédès de Crète, mon musicien favori, accompagna sur l'orgue hydraulique la récitation de son poème de *La Sphinge*, œuvre inquiétante, sinueuse, fuyante comme le sable au vent. La salle de concerts ouvrait sur une cour intérieure: des nénuphars s'y étalaient sur l'eau d'un bassin, sous les feux presque furieux d'une après-midi d'août finissante.

(M. Yourcenar, *Mémoires d'Hadrien* [Paris 1974] 196)

[1] The sections 1 (The Author and His Historical Context) and 2 (Proems, Hymns. Prayers: The Generic Forms of Mesomedes' Poetry) of this Introduction were translated from Italian into English by Richard Gordon.

1. The Author and His Historical Context

1.1. A Citharodic Poet from Crete

We do not possess much information regarding the lyric poetry of the Imperial period, nor indeed many texts: Greek authors at this time were under the influence of the domination of Rome, even when they were not destined to serve at the court itself. Of ancient musical production still less has survived. Mesomedes is one of a tiny number of Greek authors who form an exception under each head. He was born in Crete around 100 CE, though we know nothing of his life there.[2] He was a lyric poet, author of μέλη,[3] or rather citharodic odes.[4] He was also a performer on the lyre, accompanying his compositions to musical settings; that is, he both sang and played, as was typical for ancient citharodes. We may take it that he was well-known in this mode already in his homeland.

Up to the end of the Archaic period, citharodes performed in the context of musical competitions that took place during religious festivals. They competed against one another for victory, which brought them glory (for which they were honoured by their own cities) and renown (the precondition for winning, derived from other performances). Between the Archaic and the Imperial period, citharodism altered its character in different ways. In its Archaic and Classical form (up to Phrynis) it was not a particularly creative musical form: the citharodic poet merely composed the hymnic proem, while the remainder was taken from Homer or other poets (cf. Ps.-Plut. *De mus*. 6.1, 1133B–C).[5] Thereafter (we do not know exactly when)[6] it became customary for the professional performer at musical competitions to sing selec-

[2] *Suda* μ 668: Μεσομήδης·Κρής, λυρικός, γεγονὼς ἐπὶ τῶν Ἁδριάνου χρόνων, ἀπελεύθερος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα φίλοις, "Mesomedes: lyric poet, a Cretan, born at the time of Hadrian, whose freedman he was and one of his very close friends". Eusebius (ap. Jerome, *Chron*. 284 F.22–24, 202 Helm) put his *floruit* in the CCXXX Olympiad (141–144 CE), i.e. under Antoninus Pius.

[3] Jerome, *Chron*. 284 F.22–24, 202 Helm: *Mesomedes Cretensis citharicorum carminum musicus poeta cognoscitur*; cf. Cassius Dio 77.13.7: (Caracalla) τῷ τε Μεσομήδει τῷ τοὺς κιθαρῳδικοὺς νόμους συγγράψαντι κενοτάφιον ἔχωσε; *Suda* μ 668: λυρικός ... γράφει καὶ ἄλλα διάφορα μέλη, followed by the same phrase from Cassius Dio.

[4] The equivalence also emerges from a comparison between the Greek and Latin sources, and from an epigram of Lucil(l)ius, *AP* 11.133.1, mocking a certain Eutychides, ὁ μελογράφος; cf. Bélis 2003a, 223f.; 1994, 44–46.

[5] The fragment is to be attributed to Heracleides, cf. Ercoles 2008, 130 n. 11, with bibliography relating to other attributions.

[6] Ercoles 2008, 129 and n. 10 with further bibliography. In Heracleides' day the citharodic practice of setting Homer to music and performing at competitions seemed traditional (cf. the passage of Ps.-Plut. already cited).

tions from the Homeric poems or other examples of Greek poetry: "and indeed [sc. Heraclides Ponticus] states that Terpander, as composer of citharodic *nomoi,* set his own poetry and that of Homer to melodies in accordance with the rules of each *nomos*, and then performed them at competitions" (Heracl. Pont. fr. 157 Wehrli). The performance of a musician-poet who was an excellent musician with a fine voice and who could manage a citharodic *nomos*, in which both music and poetry were composed and performed by the same individual, was capable of enthusing an audience as no other Hellenistic art-form could.[7] Once established, this 'new music' would transform the older ritual singing and make of it a spectacular musical event. Already around 442 BCE Pericles had an Odeion especially built at Athens to ensure the optimum acoustics for the art. Given that it was rebuilt after the Sullan sack in 86 BCE, it was clearly still in use then. To our knowledge, similar buildings were erected at Patras, Corinth, Epidaurus, Gortyn on Crete, Taormina in Sicily, and then Pompeii and Aosta in Roman times.[8] The citharodes travelled from city to city, from competition to competition,[9] in search of the glory attained by those whose virtuosity brought victory. By thus ensuring that their name was recorded in the inscribed victor-lists, they won public acclaim. In the Roman period too the poet-musicians, adjusted now to a more restrained musical taste, performed at competitions and in designated venues in cities – theatres, *odeia*, palace halls. The name Mesomedes happens not to survive on inscriptions recording the victors in such competitions.[10] But he must have been extraordinarily good for Hadrian to have chosen him as his favourite.

1.2. First a Slave, then a Freedman at Rome

We do not know when Mesomedes came to Rome, nor whether he arrived there as a free man, or first as a slave and then a freedman of his patron, the emperor Hadrian. Around 115 CE Jewish revolts broke out in Egypt, Cyrenaica and Cyprus. Hadrian was praetorian governor of Syria when Trajan died on August 7, 117 CE. After putting an end to Trajan's Parthian war at the price of abandoning the territory gained, Hadrian entered Rome on June 9, 118. Was it on this occasion, together with the new emperor, that Mesomedes arrived in Rome? If so, assum-

[7] See J. A. F. DELGADO / F. PORDOMINGO, "La actividad poético-musical de época helenística en las Vitae de Plutarco", in: GOSTOLI / FONGONI / BIONDI 2017, 451–474.

[8] Cf. PRIVITERA / PRETAGOSTINI 1997, I 420.

[9] Cf. A. CINALLI, "Storia di 'poeti vaganti' a Delfi: quando il viaggio nasconde un imprevisto", in: GOSTOLI / FONGONI / BIONDI 2017, 385–409.

[10] See p. 56f. below.

ing he was a prisoner of war, we must suppose that he had been taken from Crete, or from some other city in Greece, Egypt or Asia Minor. Under the Empire people could be enslaved either by being made prisoners of war or because they had lost their freedom through debt. If a slave, Mesomedes might however have met Hadrian on one of his early journeys to Greece as emperor – in that case we would have to suppose that he had been enslaved in Greece, possibly for debt. Being captured by pirates or a robber-band might also lead to one's being sold into slavery. Is that what happened to Mesomedes? On the other hand, there do not seem to have been many robbers interested in a musical artiste, albeit one who might be able to teach Greek and music. However that may be, whenever he arrived as a slave in Rome, at the same time as Hadrian, or earlier than 118, or later, the emperor, as a writer, musician, refined aesthete, and an admirer of Greek culture, found himself in sympathy with the Cretan musician – to judge from his style an inspired, self-confident poet, who in his poetry likens himself to a swan who escapes being killed by a 'boorish' goatherd by gaily flying off (*Cycn*. 10.4–5, 19–20). Music and poetry, or perhaps again the cultic inclination, given Hadrian's interests, may have furthered the development of friendship. A slave must have considered himself lucky to be able to make use of his cultural achievements instead of being assigned to other duties; the emperor was surely interested in improving his own artistic attainments or his knowledge of Greek culture by learning from Mesomedes. As a slave Mesomedes was probably required to teach Greek, citharodic art, and literature at court, and not simply to Hadrian, just as the emperor required. At any rate, the two became friends and the emperor freed the slave but retained him at court as a freedman-poet.

We know that at Hadrian's court there were at least two other poets, composers (μελοποιοί) and citharodes, who are known from a number of inscriptions, namely T. Aelius Alcibiades of Nysa[11] and P. Aelius Pompeianus Paion, "poet with many victories".[12] We do not know whether Mesomedes competed in the great panhellenic competitions for poets and citharodes. It was he, and none other, who was Hadrian's friend, to the point that it was he whom Hadrian commissioned to compose the elegy for the emperor's ἐρώμενος Antinous, the ἔπαινος

[11] See STEPHANIS 1988, 40 no. 134; *IK* 11.1, 22 (Nysa, second century CE); also L. ROBERT, *Études épigraphiques et philologiques* (Paris 1938) 45–53.

[12] Cf. STEPHANIS 1988, 350 no.1979; *IK* 11.1, 22.1–6 (Nysa, second century CE); See also FEIN 1994, 118–126; BÉLIS 1994, 50, and 2003a, 224.

εἰς Ἀντίνοον, which has not survived.[13] On the basis of the *Historia Augusta*, we may suppose that, as the court singer, Mesomedes arranged the concerts with which Hadrian, as himself a great lover of poetry and proud of his talents as citharode and singer,[14] liked to enliven his banquets.[15] The *Vita* ascribed to 'Spartianus' claims that Hadrian honoured the *musici* and other artists, playwrights and scholars at court,[16] he was always ready to criticize and even humiliate them *ut doctior*, "as though he thought himself more accomplished".[17] Mesomedes was one of these specialized professional musicians.[18]

1.3 At the Court of Antoninus Pius

Hadrian's successor Antoninus Pius likewise included Mesomedes among his poets.[19] According to an anecdote referring to this period in the Historia Augusta, Antoninus cancelled (*subtraxit*) the salaries paid to a considerable number of hangers-on, and reduced (*inminuit*) that of Mesomedes *lyricus*.[20] We may hazard two hypotheses here: if Antoninus reduced Mesomedes' salary as part of a policy of cutting payments

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[13] See again the *Suda* entry: γράφει οὖν εἰς Ἀντίνοον ἔπαινον. LEBEK 1973 suggested attributing the *Hymn to Antinous* inscribed in *IKourion* 104 to Mesomedes (MITFORD 1971, 197 with n. 1 on p. 198, dating it to 130/131). On the discussion relating to the attribution, see LANNA 2013, 64–67, arguing that it is best to attribute it to a pupil of Mesomedes. But see Egert Pöhlmann's contribution to this volume (p. 247–257), arguing for Mesomedes himself.

[14] On Hadrian's poetry, see BOWIE 2002, 172–185; TURCAN 2008, 141–144, 172–174; cf. too GALIMBERTI 2007, 155–158.

[15] Cf. *Hist. Aug. Hadr*. 26.4: *in convivio tragoedias, comoedias, Atellanas, sambucas, lectores, poetas pro re semper exhibuit*. According to WHITMARSH (2004, 383) nos. 7–13 HEITSCH "look more like sympotic pieces. If Mesomedes was as closely connected with Hadrian as the tradition suggests, these poems may have been performed at the emperor's famous literary symposia, perhaps even on tour with the 'restless emperor'".

[16] *Hist. Aug. Hadr*. 16.8.

[17] *Hist. Aug. Hadr*. 15.10. On Hadrian's relations with contemporary intellectuals, see GALIMBERTI 2007, 168f., 182–184.

[18] Cf. BÉLIS 2003a, 225. On literary figures connected to Hadrian, cf. FEIN 1994, 214–220; TURCAN 2008, 139–141.

[19] Syncellus, *Ecl. Chron*. 662, 428 MOSSHAMMER names Mesomedes, 'poet of citharodic *nomoi*', first among well-known poets under Antoninus Pius. He also names L. Calvenus Taurus, '(who was) a Platonist and from Berytus'. That suggests that Mesomedes really was well-regarded even under Antoninus Pius: Taurus, although virtually nothing of his work survives except references in Gellius, *NA* 12, and citations in later commentators such as Iamblichus and Philoponus, was an eminent Middle Platonist philosopher and head of some sort of Academy in Athens between c. 145–165. I owe these observations to Richard Gordon.

[20] *Hist. Aug. Anton*. 7.7–8: (Antoninus Pius) *salaria multis subtraxit, quos otiosos videbat accipere, dicens nihil esse sordidius, quam si rem publicam is adroderet, qui nihil in eam suo labore conferret. unde etiam Mesomedi lyrico salarium inminuit*.

to those whose work was of no value to the state, the activity of a *musicus* would have been considered of no further use, or its value no longer recognised.[21] Alternatively, the reduction specifically of Mesomedes' salary underscored the gesture and was intended as a warning to the other *otiosi*.[22]

Did this decision alter Mesomedes' relation to the imperial court? We cannot say. However, it seems that he did not die at Rome,[23] since Caracalla, himself likewise a citharode, had a cenotaph built for him, as a 'guide', a 'model', among the composers of citharodic *nomoi*.[24] We do not otherwise hear of Mesomedes as a teacher; but if Caracalla, setting out to learn to play the lyre, paid him homage in this fashion, he evidently did so because he considered him a maestro of the art.[25]

1.4. A Lyric Poet of the Imperial Period

Although we do have a few examples of Greek lyric of the first centuries of the imperial period, we lack accounts of individual authors whose poetry survives. The main authors are writers of prose, first of all Plutarch and Epictetus, and then Aelius Aristides, Lucian, Marcus Aurelius, and the various novelists. Interest in poetry seems to have diminished, and, though it survived in the context of banquets, competitions, religious festivals and rituals, it generally amounted to poems of just a few strophes, apart from Orphic literature (specifically the *Hymns*), *Magical Hymns* and oracular poetry. It is striking that most of what survives is anonymous. The personal voice of the poet seems to have lost any meaningful pedagogic function within the state. In Latin literature, too, the prosperous and vital years of Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius saw no significant blossoming of poetic talent. From Pliny the Younger's correspondence, poetry appears as a refined hobby of the upper class rather than a true vocation. In the age of grand orators and erudition poetry seems to have lost its cultural significance.[26] Against this background, the figure of Mesome-

[21] "Antonin, nettement tourné vers l'archäisme romain, ne pouvait avoir de l'indulgence pour cet affranchi d'Hadrien" (J.-P. CALLU, *Histoire Auguste*, vol. I 1: *Introduction générale. Vies d'Hadrien, Aelius, Antonin* [Paris 1992] 155 n. 76, referring to PIR² M 503: *sine dubio Hadrianus ei salarium concessit, quod ei Antonius Pius imminuit*).

[22] "This etiam shows that the emperor intended to make a spectacular example by punishing one of the most prominent courtiers, without however removing him entirely from his place" (BÉLIS 2003a, 224).

[23] Cf. MUSSO 1998, 35.

[24] See Cassius Dio 77.13.7, cited in n. 3 above.

[25] On Mesomedes' music, see the contribution by Egert Pöhlmann, p. 235–246 below.

[26] B. CONTE / E. PIANEZZOLA, *Lezioni di Letteratua latina. Corso integrato, 3. L'età imperiale* (Milan 2010) 565.

des becomes noteworthy. We are interested in him because he provides us with shards of the Greek – and Latin – lyric experience of his period, alongside Hadrian, the emperor-poet.

The poetry of Mesomedes that we can read today reveals a poet who favoured brief compositions: the longest, no. 8 Heitsch, contains all of 29 lines. The structure too is simple. The genres practised are those of the court and its celebrations: the hymn, above all, and compositions suited to the entertainment of guests at banquets, which combine elements of different genres, and finding a place for discreet flattery of the emperor.

1.5. Mesomedes' Poems

Thirteen poems by Mesomedes survive. Two in the *Greek Anthology* actually bear his name, and are thus certainly by him, namely an ἔκφρασις Σφιγγός, *Description of the Sphinx* (*AP* 14.63)[27] and a poem describing the manufacture of glass (*APlan.* 323).[28] Eleven further poems have been ascribed to him by a succession of scholars, although no manuscript explicitly attributes them to Mesomedes: the invocation *To the Muse* (no. 1 Heitsch, εἰς Μοῦσαν), the hymns *To Helios* (no. 2, ὕμνος εἰς Ἥλιον) and *To Nemesis* (no. 3, ὕμνος εἰς Νέμεσιν), compositions that follow a metrical-musical treatise in several manuscripts; and then eight poems transmitted solely by the codex *Ottobonianus graecus* 59: the hymns εἰς τὴν Φύσιν, *To Nature* (no. 4), εἰς τὴν Ἶσιν, *To Isis* (no. 5), a poem εἰς Ἄδριαν, *To the Adriatic Sea* (no. 6), two poems εἰς ὡρολόγιον, *To a sundial* (nos. 7 and 8), an ἔκφρασις σπόγγου, *Description of a sponge* (no. 9), and two fables, εἰς κύκνον, *To a swan* (no. 10) and εἰς κώνωπα, *To a gnat* (no. 11).

The value of classifying such poems by genre is that it allows the reader better to grasp their significance and compositional aims. However, Mesomedes was adept at introducing variations into the tradition, starting with metre, and then structure, by drawing upon elements derived from different genres. Poem no. 1, as transmitted, consists of two introductory invocations, the first *To the Muse* (1a), the second *To Calliope and Apollo* (1b); poems no. 2–5 are hymns.[29] The metrical composition *To the Adriatic Sea* (no. 6) uses hymnic formulae[30] and ex-

[27] HEITSCH 1963, 31f. (II 12). The title is due to VON WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF 1921, 605.

[28] HEITSCH 1963, 32 (II 13).

[29] These poems are the topic of the present volume, which we will look at in greater detail below.

[30] The introduction (l. 1f.) is in formal terms a hymnic *propositio* (see below "The Hymn: a genre and its development", p. 127–148). The choice of solemnly addressing a

pressions[31] (cf. ll. 1–5, 10–12, 13, 16), but also elements of the προπεμπτικόν;[32] Whitmarsh considers it an *epibatêrion*.[33] Given that in formal terms the poem shares a number of structural elements of a non-cultic hymn, with apostrophe, prayer and a promise to sacrifice, to a personified aspect of nature (in the imperial period we often find abstract entities or objects in nature being personified),[34] I prefer to take it, in generic terms, as a prayer,[35] and for that reason in this volume it will be analyzed together with the poems already mentioned.

Poems 7 and 8 also share some similarities to hymns,[36] although the unusual subject, a sundial, and the descriptive treatment, link it to the ἐκφράσεις (nos. 9 and 13).[37] No doubt the implicit aim of celebrating the emperor (presumably Hadrian) made it necessary to adopt a solemn, rather high-flown tone in treating the objects described – hence the formal outcome.

Poem 9, *Description of a sponge*, 'ein galantes Billett'[38] in apocrota and paroemiaci, consists of a statement of the gift offered (l. 1f.), followed by a description of the object (ll. 3–10) routed through references in myth to the use of sponges in the depths of the sea. Lines 11–12 have a narrative structure; there follows the description of the treatment and uses of the sponge now in reality, which is obtained through the heroic efforts of divers. The finale (ll. 13–15), which completes the exemplifications of the uses of the sponge, alludes to matters erotic, thus revealing the poem's true intention. The result is "a *tour-de-force* lyrical treatment of an unlikely topic".[39] Paul the Silentiary took over several phrases from this poem in two of his epigrams (*AP* 6.65 and 66).[40] In the second of these, the soft stone of the ink-well, porous as a sponge,[41]

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poem to the Adriatic, appealing to the sea as to a divinity, made it necessary to build in elements typical of a hymn, albeit undefined for an entity that is just an expanse of water, by means of the interrogative phrases (see also l. 3).

[31] The expression τὸ πανόλβιον ὕδωρ is interesting in this connection, cf. n. 126 on the translations, p. 114 below. PERNOT (1993, 246) calls the poem a 'hymn', citing the parallels that "font ressortir le caractère hymnique du discours *A la mer Égée*" by Aelius Aristides (*Or.* 44).

[32] See REGENAUER 2016, 283–288.

[33] Cf. WHITMARSH 2004, 381.

[34] See p. 23 below.

[35] See p. 18–39 below.

[36] Cf. HORNA 1928, 31.

[37] See DELATTE 1913, 146–156; HORNA 1928, 21; A. REHM, "Zum V. Hymnos des Mesomedes", *Philologus* 83 (1928) 267–272; WHITMARSH 2004, 381 with n. 21.

[38] HORNA 1928, 19.

[39] HOPKINSON 1994, 80.

[40] Cf. HORNA 1928, 26; BALDINI 1932, 28.

[41] Paul. Silent. *AP* 6.66.4 ~ Mesom. 9.2.

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About the Authors of this Volume

Prof. Dr. Richard Gordon is honorary professor in the Dept. of Religious Studies (Religionsgeschichte der Antike) and Associate Fellow of the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Research at the University of Erfurt, Germany. His wider field concerns the socio-religious history of the Roman Empire, especially now the social history of Graeco-Roman magic.

Recent publications include *Beyond Priesthood: Religious entrepreneurs and innovators in the Roman Empire*, edited with G. PETRIDOU and J. RÜPKE (Berlin 2017); a volume of *Religion, Ritual and Magic* (14.1-3, 2019) on comparative witchcraft narratives, edited with E. EIDINOW; *Choosing Magic: Contexts, objects, meanings. The archaeology of instrumental religion in the Latin West* edited with F. MARCO SIMÓN and M. PIRANOMONTE, from a project in Zaragoza, Spain (Rome 2020); and contributions to C. A. FARAONE and S. TORALLAS TOVAR (eds.), *The Greek and Demotic Magical Handbooks: Libraries, Books and Recipes* (Ann Arbor 2022).

Dr. Sara Lanna graduated at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" in 2007 and in 2011, at the same University, she obtained a PhD in Classical Philology with the thesis *Mesomedes, Hymn to Physis. Introduction, critical text, translation and commentary* (now published in "Quaderni di SemRom", Rome 2013). In 2015 she obtained a postdoctoral fellowship at "La Sapienza" University of Rome, dealing with the cult of Isis and related literary, epigraphic and papyrological evidence in the Imperial period (in press). She is currently teaching Italian, Latin Language and Literature, History and Geography in a high school near Rome.

Select publications: "L'uomo πανάμωμος: dall'ironica astrazione di Simonide alla riflessione sull'evento dell'incarnazione nei padri della chiesa", in: C. BRAIDOTTI / E. DETTORI / E. LANZILLOTTA (eds.), *οὐ πᾶν ἐφήμηρον. Scritti in memoria di Roberto Pretagostini*, vol. I (Rome 2009) 259–274; "'La giustizia utile alla città' e la sapienza del vivere insieme", *Chaos e Kosmos* (http://www.chaosekosmos.it) 1–17 [engl. vers.: "'Useful justice for the city': The wisdom of life together", in: A. AGUILAR / R. PASCUAL (eds.), *Life Together. Science, Philosophy and Theology on the Relational Character of Living Beings* (Rome 2016) 148–158]; "Iside, dea che risolve la crisi. Analisi diacronica esemplificativa dell'epiclesi cultuale della dea: epigrafi, papiri e testi letterari a confronto", in: C. PISANO / E. SANZI (eds.), *Crisis and Religious Identity*: *Classical and Late Antiquity*. *Atti del Convegno internazionale, Santa Maria Capua Vetere, 30 marzo 2015* (Rome 2017) 147–170; "Gli oracoli di Ammone nel Romanzo di Alessandro: osservazioni filologiche e storico-religiose", in: L. M. TISSI / H. SENG / C. O. TOMMASI (eds.), *Stimmen der Götter. Orakel und ihre Rezeption von der Spätantike bis in die frühe Neuzeit*. Bibliotheca Chaldaica 8 (Heidelberg 2020) 125–144.

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Egert Pöhlmann held the chair of Ancient Greek Philology at the Justus Liebig University Giessen (1976–1980) and at the Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen (1980–2001). In 1998 and 2003 he was Visiting Professor at the University of Athens. In 2004 he obtained the title of a Dr. phil h. c. by the University of Athens. In 2005 he was Visiting Professor at the Ionian University of Kerkyra. In 2011 he received the title of a corresponding member of the Academy of Athens. His interests include ancient metrics, ancient music, ancient literature and its afterlife, textual history and criticism, ancient poetry of the stage and ancient theatre buildings.

Select publications: *Denkmäler altgriechischer Musik Übertragung und Erläuterung aller Fragmente und* Fälschungen (Nürnberg 1970); "Charakteristika des römischen Lehrgedichts", *ANRW* I 3 (1973) 813–901; 1994: *Einführung in die Überlieferungsgeschichte und in die Textkritik der antiken Literatur*, vol. I: *Altertum* (Darmstadt 1994); *Studien zur Bühnendichtung und zum Theaterbau der Antike* (Frankfurt et al. 1995); with M. West: *Documents of Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford 2001); with Ch. Gastgeber / P. Klopsch / G. Heldmann: *Einführung in die Überlieferungsgeschichte und in die Textkritik der antiken Literatur*, vol. II: *Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Darmstadt 2003); *Gegenwärtige Vergangenheit. Ausgewählte kleine Schriften*. BzA 262 (Berlin 2009); *Ancient Music in Antiquity and Beyond. Collected Essays (2009–2019)*. BzA 381 (Berlin / Boston 2020).

PD Dr. Oliver Schelske was Lecturer (Akademischer Oberrat) in Classics at the University of Munich (LMU) and member of the editorial boards of Gnomon and Année philologique; since August 2023 he has been professor of Classical Philology/Greek Studies at the University of Leipzig. He specializes in ancient religion and philosophy (esp. Orphism and Platonism) and in ancient historiography. He is especially interested in the relationship between literature and philosophy in Late antiquity. His further research interests include cultural identities and the history of (Classical) scholarship.

Select publications: various articles and books on Orpheus and Orphism in Antiquity (e.g., *Orpheus in der Spätantike*. BzA 296 [Berlin / Boston 2011]; "Orphische Dichtung", in: B. ZIMMERMANN / A. RENGAKOS [eds.], *Handbuch der griechischen Literatur der Antike*, vol. 3.1: *Die pagane Literatur der Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* [Munich 2022] 73–90); on ancient historians (e.g., *Herodotus politicus. Die Historien als literarisches Experiment im Kontext ihrer Zeit* [forthcoming]; "Thucydides as an Educational Text: Max Weber and Winston Churchill", in: Ch. LEE / N. MORLEY [eds.], *A Handbook to the Reception of Thucydides* [New York / Hoboken 2015] 75–90).