

The Works and Days of Hesychios the Illoustrios of Miletos

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THERE WAS A TIME when the problems surrounding the works of Hesychios of Miletos¹ could engage even the attention of the young Friedrich Nietzsche, involved as he was in *Quellenforschung* regarding the ancient and Byzantine biographical notices.² Yet despite the 1851 publication by K. Müller of Hesychios' fragments, no one has yet examined the sum of the evidence regarding his life and work. One may even notice a retrenchment since the nineteenth century: K. Krumbacher's entry on Hesychios among the Byzantine historians (1897) finds no counterpart in H. Hunger's updated survey of Byzantine scholarship (1978).³ Yet Hesychios does appear with some frequency in modern discussions, sometimes as a pagan, other times as a Christian, sometimes placed under Anastasios, other times under Justin II and Maurice. It is time to remedy this neglect, for the figure that emerges is in fact highly interesting and we owe to him more than most historians realize. The primary goal of this paper will be to examine all our evidence for the life and works of Hesychios and draw some preliminary conclusions regarding their dates and contents. At the end we will return to the (largely independent) question of Hesychios'

¹ This article attempts to lay the groundwork for a complete translation and historical commentary on the fragments of Hesychios to be published in *Brill's New Jacoby* (Ian Worthington, ed.). The interested reader should also consult the chapter on Hesychios in W. Treadgold's forthcoming study *The Lives and Works of the Early Byzantine Historians*, whose conclusions differ from mine on important points.

² F. W. Nietzsche, *Gesammelte Werke* I (Munich 1922) 367–391 (“De Laertio et Hesychio”).

³ K. Müller, *FHG* IV 143–177; K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (527–1453)*² (Munich 1897) I 323–325; H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich 1978).

religion and find a place for him in the literary world of the sixth century.

Our basic information is in Photios' *Bibliothēke* and the *Souda*.⁴ According to Photios, Hesychios the Illoustrios' world-history (*kosmikē historia*) was entitled *A Roman and General History* ("general" is *pantodapē*); the "title" itself (i.e., probably the opening statement) included the additional information that he was from the city of Miletos and that his parents were named Hesychios and Philosophia. The latter name appears to be unique, but there is no reason to emend it to Sophia, as some have attempted to do.⁵ It suggests that Hesychios' mother had some education, as was the case among pagan Neoplatonic circles in late antiquity,⁶ though it cannot be ruled out that the name was given with a Christian sense. The *Souda* adds that Hesychios' homonymous father was a lawyer (*dikēgoros*) and gives his work the title *Chronikē Historia*, though there is no way to know whether this is a precise title or merely a description (Photios appears to be citing the title). The *History*, then, was divided into six sections, which, the *Souda* tells us, Hesychios called "spans" or "intervals" (*diastēmata*). The first span began with Belos, king of the Assyrians (and presumably founder of their kingdom), and ended with the Trojan War; the second went from the fall of Troy to the founding of Rome; the third covered the kings of Rome; the fourth covered the Republic down to Caesar; the fifth covered the empire down to the foundation of Constantinople; and the sixth went from Constantine to the death of Anastasios in 518, an emperor whom Hesychios praised for gentleness. Photios, who liked Hesychios' style as a writer, objected to this praise, perhaps because in his mind Anastasios was tainted with heresy. Elsewhere Photios adds that the history of Diodoros of Sicily was much more

⁴ *Bibl.* 69 (I 101–102 Henry); *Souda* H 611 s.v. Hesychios Milesios (II 594 Adler).

⁵ See *FHG* IV 143. She is listed as Philosophia in *PLRE* II 878.

⁶ M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, "L'arrière-plan scolaire de la *Vie de Plotin*," in L. Brisson et al. (eds.), *Porphyre: La Vie de Plotin* II (Paris 1992) 229–327, at 239–240; D. J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2003) 47, 49, 83–86.

detailed than that of Hesychios.⁷

In his entry on Hesychios, Photios goes on to add that he had also read a work by the same author that covered the reign of Justin and a portion of that of Justinian (the exact number of years is not specified); this work seems to have paid particular attention to the manner of their accessions. Hesychios stopped working on this project when his son Ioannes died and he lost all interest in writing. Presumably, Photios could have known this only if Hesychios himself stated it, perhaps at the very end, so we may treat this information about Ioannes as a fragment of the work, in fact the only one that we possess. We do not know whether this second history was intended as a supplement to the universal one, a seventh *diastêma* in that case. Photios treats it as a separate composition.

The *Souda* states that Hesychios *lived* during the reign of Anastasios. This may be little more than an inference from the fact that his history ended with that emperor's death. But, given that he then went on to write about the accessions of Justin and Justinian, it is possible that the *diastêma* covering the period down to the death of Anastasios was finished shortly after 518 and that Hesychios then decided to continue narrating contemporary events, until his son's death cut him short. This means that a considerable portion of his life should be placed under the reign of Anastasios, whom we know he praised and at whose court he may have resided for a decade (see below). On the other hand, from the information presented so far, it is equally possible that Hesychios lived long after the reign of Anastasios and was therefore not recording contemporary history when his son died. Even the reign of Justinian may have been in his past. This appears, however, not to have been the case, as a passage from his *Patria of Constantinople*, a text that we will discuss in detail below, seems to have been read by the bureaucrat and antiquarian Ioannes Lydos, who was writing his book *On the Months* ca. 540.⁸ The connection between the

⁷ *Bibl.* 70 (I 103 Henry).

⁸ *Men.* 1.12, ed. R. Wünsch, *Ioannis Laurentii Lydi Liber de Mensibus* (Leipzig 1898) 7, with Hesychios, *Patria of Constantinople* 37 (for editions, see below), on the baths that Septimius Severus built in Byzantium. For the dates of

two men will bear further discussion; for now, let us note only that it reinforces the *Souda*'s claim that Hesychios lived for the most part in the days of Anastasios.

We come now to the third and best known of Hesychios' works, the one with which modern investigations have been almost exclusively concerned. According to the *Souda*, he wrote an *Onomatologos* or *Table of Eminent Writers*, "of which the present book is an epitome." Opinions have differed as to whether the "present book" is the *Souda* itself or an epitome of the *Onomatologos* used by the *Souda*'s compilers, which raises further and crucial questions about the relationship between the *Onomatologos* and the biographical entries on ancient writers in both the *Souda* and Photios (see below). Equally provocative, though not yet as controversial as it ought to be, is the *Souda*'s claim that in this work Hesychios "fails to mention any of the teachers of the Church, thereby giving rise to the suspicion that he was not a Christian but rather one who sailed back to the waters of Hellenic vanity."⁹ This has so far been the sole basis for labeling Hesychios a pagan historian, though, as we shall see, the conclusion may be sound for additional reasons.

Those are all the works of Hesychios listed by Photios and the *Souda*, which leaves us with the only text that has actually survived. The *Patria of Constantinople* attributed to Hesychios the Illoustrios is about ten full Teubner-pages long (eighteen with the apparatus). Two editions are currently in use: T. Preger's (1901) is complete and introduces his two-volume edition of the *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, otherwise known collectively as the city's *Patria*, while F. Jacoby's (1950) is slightly better in its reading of certain passages but omits the final sections on Constantine along with a few of the first sentences (the latter probably in the mistaken belief that they referred to

Lydos' works, see M. Maas, *John Lydus and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian* (London/New York 1992) 10.

⁹ εἰς δὲ τὸν Πίνακα τῶν ἐν παιδείᾳ λαμπάντων ἐκκλησιαστικῶν διδασκάλων οὐδενὸς μνημονεύει· ὡς ἐκ τούτου ὑπόνοιαν παρέχειν μὴ εἶναι αὐτὸν Χριστιανόν, ἀλλὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς ματαιοπονίας ἀνάπλεων.

Elder Rome and not Byzantion).¹⁰ This text records legendary information about the foundation of Byzantion, especially about Byzas, emphasizing the aetiology of place-names and the sacred topography of the pagan city. Moving with astonishing ease between legend and fact, it recounts some of the events of the city's classical and Roman history, such as its siege by Philip of Macedonia and its capture by Septimius Severus, though always with an eye on aetiology and topography. Given that it begins by announcing that 362 years had elapsed between the battle of Actium and the foundation of Constantinople, and the fact that its survey of the early history of Byzantion leads up to the arrival of Constantine, it seems reasonable to conclude that this text is in fact a fragment of Hesychios' *Roman and General History*, either from the end of the fifth *diastêma* (from Caesar to the foundation of Constantinople) or the beginning of the sixth and final one (from Constantine to the death of Anastasios).¹¹ We will consider below the possibility that this fragment is an abridgment of the original text.

The attribution of this brief text to Hesychios, and to his *Roman and General History* in particular, is reinforced by the few (three) other surviving fragments of the *History* found in later Byzantine texts and collected by K. Müller. These place a similar emphasis on aetiology and are consistently false and even preposterous as credible explanations (at least for modern historians).¹²

We will now attempt to reconstruct the contents and shape of Hesychios' works and, wherever possible, to situate them within the spectrum of sixth-century literary culture, with special emphasis on their possible religious and political biases. Finally, we will present some archaeological evidence that has not been brought to bear on our understanding of this elusive figure.

Let us begin with the *Onomatologos*.¹³ This text is the bone of

¹⁰ T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* I (Leipzig 1901) 1–18; Jacoby, *FGrHist* 390.

¹¹ So G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: études sur le recueil des "Patria"* (Paris 1984) 24.

¹² For these other fragments, see *FHG* IV 145–146, 154–155 (fr.1–3).

¹³ Text: Müller, *FHG* IV 155–177 (fr.7).

contention in the few studies that have ever been devoted to Hesychios, all by German scholars of the nineteenth century. What is at stake, after all, is nothing less than the origin and worth of the biographical information on dozens of ancient writers that is found in the *Souda* and other less-known Byzantine sources. J. Flach made an ambitious and premature attempt to reconstruct Hesychios' original text on the assumption that it was the ultimate source of *all* such information.¹⁴ But this effort was quickly and rightly judged a failure. First, there is no reason to postulate a single source. *Onomatologoi* were written before Hesychios and he probably drew upon them.¹⁵ Second, later versions of these biographical texts reflect centuries of abridgment and combination of such Byzantine scholarly aids,¹⁶ and there is no way to isolate original Hesychian material in them. In fact it seems that they came to be ascribed to him almost generically. Third, the *Souda* states explicitly that the *Onomatologos* lacked entries for Christian authors, but Flach included these as well on the assumption that Hesychios was, after all, a Christian. Fourth, the entries in question extend past Hesychios' lifetime. Can the entry on Prokopios, who published in the 550s, be his? or that on Agathias, who died ca. 580? Surely later authors must be excluded. No matter how long a life we grant to Hesychios, *some* entries will inevitably remain that will have to be ascribed to another source, and, if some, why not more?¹⁷ For all we know, the *Onomatologos* covered only the classical period; this is unlikely, but not impossible given what we know. We should also note that the attempt to reconstruct the *Onomatologos* gave rise to the belief that he lived until at least 582, in order to accommodate his authorship of the entry on Agathias; this conclusion, long

¹⁴ Esp. J. Flach, *Hesychii Milesii Onomatologi quae supersunt* (Leipzig 1882).

¹⁵ For the tradition, see J. Schamp, *Photios historien des lettres: La Bibliothèque et ses notices biographiques* (Paris 1987) 17–26, 68.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Flach, *Hesychii Milesii qui fertur de viris illustribus librum* (Leipzig 1880).

¹⁷ See A. Daub, *Studien zu den Biographika des Suidas* (Freiburg/Tübingen 1882) 151–152; for the rejection of Flach's attempt, see also Krumbacher, *Geschichte* I 324–325.

separated from its tenuous basis, has unfortunately been reproduced in modern reference works.¹⁸

This is not the place for a comprehensive discussion of the biographical notices in the Byzantine tradition, and in the *Souda* in particular. It has not even been resolved yet what the latter text means when it says in its entry on Hesychios that “the present book” is an epitome of the *Onomatologos*: is that book the *Souda* itself or has this statement simply been copied from a prior epitome of Hesychios that the *Souda* used as a source? Both views have proponents.¹⁹ This question will have to be addressed far more systematically than can be attempted here if the original shape and contents of the *Onomatologos* are to be determined. In my view it is unlikely that the authors of the *Souda* would refer to their encyclopedia as a mere epitome of Hesychios. The following, at any rate, is certain: they had at their disposal more biographical entries than would have been in the original *Onomatologos*, including both Christian and later (post ca. 550) authors. Where they obtained these additional entries is unclear. The Greek translation of Jerome’s *De viris illustribus*, ascribed to a certain Sophronios, may partly account for the Christian entries.²⁰

In his 1895 study of this question, G. Wentzel called attention to a brief *vita* of Gregory of Nazianzos published a century earlier in a Moscow edition of two of his orations from a ninth- or tenth-century manuscript.²¹ At first sight the *vita* consists of only a few selected sentences quoted verbatim from the *Souda* entry on Gregory, with the significant addition of this introductory comment: “The following information regarding the great Gregory is provided by Hesychios Illoustrios, who out-

¹⁸ E.g., B. Baldwin’s entry in the *ODB* (1991) 924; A. Karpozelos, *Byzantinoi istorikoi kai chronographoi I* (Athens 1997) 535.

¹⁹ For the so-called Epitome of Hesychios, see W. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington 1980) 31–32 and passim; contra, Schamp, *Photios* 53ff. and passim, both citing previous scholarship. The debate is at least a century old: H. Schultz, “Hesychios 10,” *RE* 8 (1913) 1322–1327.

²⁰ Treadgold, *Nature* 53ff.

²¹ G. Wentzel, *Die griechische Übersetzung der viri inlustres des Hieronymus* (Texte und Untersuchungen 13.3 [Leipzig 1895]) 4ff.

lined the lives of all the wise men.” Wentzel reasonably concluded that the author of this notice was using an epitome of Hesychios similar to that used by the editors of the *Souda*, an epitome that, unlike the *Onomatologos* itself, included entries on Christian authors. This epitome apparently still bore the name of Hesychios, which, as we saw, may have become virtually generic for this class of reference-book.²²

Before concluding our discussion of the *Onomatologos*, one more impressive achievement of nineteenth-century German *Wissenschaft* must be mentioned. It was noticed that when the *Souda* offers entries on two or more homonymous authors, they are almost always listed in the same order: poets, philosophers, historians, orators, grammarians or medical writers (the two are never found together, so their relative order cannot be determined), and finally specialists in various other fields. A plausible explanation for this oddity is that the *Souda*, or its source, converted into alphabetical order a series that had originally been arranged by literary category.²³

To conclude our discussion of the *Onomatologos*, we must ask what it means that Hesychios did not include any Christian authors. The editors of the *Souda*, or of the epitome, suspected on this basis that he was not a Christian, and I am inclined to agree. To be sure, recent scholarship has rightly recognized that many Christians were actively engaged in the reproduction, consumption, and promotion of classical culture, often

²² I am not persuaded by Schamp’s attempt (*Photios* 52–68) to disprove the existence of an epitome of Hesychios, a “phantom” text that he nevertheless invokes repeatedly throughout his study. He claims that when the author of Gregory’s *vita* refers to Hesychios as the one who “outlined the lives of all the wise men,” he does not mean that his information was in fact taken from that work, only that Hesychios wrote it. Schamp therefore suggests (57) that the author of the *vita* took the information from Hesychios’ *History*. This is special pleading at best. Besides, if the *History* had such material on Gregory as this, the authors of the *Souda* (or of the epitome) would certainly not have questioned Hesychios’ faith. Schamp himself argues that the information about him and his works in the *Souda* is independent of Photios. (The existence of an epitome does not necessarily affect Schamp’s conclusions regarding *Photios*’ sources, the main object of his inquiry.)

²³ See Wentzel, *Die griechische Übersetzung* 57–63, for the details of this theory.

enthusiastically so and for the most part without calling their faith into question. This, however, has been taken to extremes. Many scholars today tend to assume that the sixth century was—or was becoming—a “monolithically Christian” society.²⁴ The suspicions of later Byzantine commentators such as Photios or the *Souda* about various figures of that period are brushed away as uninformed.²⁵ But what kind of a Christian is it who writes a *Table of Eminent Writers* and fails to mention any Christian authors, of which there was no lack by the sixth century? In fact, for all its interest in Christian classicism, recent scholarship has failed to find a single securely attested Christian who systematically (and therefore deliberately) avoided all reference to his faith and fellow-Christians, and understandably so. Moreover, I have argued elsewhere that many of the “classifying” authors of the sixth-century, including Prokopios, Ioannes Lydos, and Agathias, were in fact not believing Christians, regardless of how they may have presented themselves in public for reasons of prudence, and to them must be added many anti-Christian Platonists and other pagans.²⁶ The *Souda*’s doubts about Hesychios’ faith stand; in fact, when we turn to his other works, we find them strongly confirmed.

Let us look, then, at his *Roman and General History*. To date there has been no systematic attempt to determine its scope and purpose. However, in their passing comments, scholars committed to a view of sixth-century society as monolithically Christian have treated it as yet another Christian world-chronicle. Yet when we take a closer look, the opposite seems rather to be the case. In order to force the *History* into the mold of, say, Ioannes Malalas’ *Chronicle*, we have to take liberties with the evidence and assign a fragment to the work that does not

²⁴ J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford/New York 2001) 225. Many similar statements can be quoted, all from prominent historians of the period.

²⁵ E.g., Maas, *John Lydos* 3–4.

²⁶ A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia 2004); “The Religion of Ioannes Lydos,” *Phoenix* 57 (2003) 300–316; “The Historical and Religious Views of Agathias: A Reinterpretation,” *Byzantion* 69 (1999) 206–252.

seem to belong to it. This happens throughout the volume of studies on Malalas produced by E. Jeffreys with B. Croke and R. Scott, whose importance for the study of Malalas and the Christian chronographical tradition can hardly be overestimated. However, the occasional references therein to Hesychios are not based on the kind of systematic examination of the evidence regarding his work that is attempted here; admittedly, Hesychios is marginal at best to the central concerns of that very useful volume.²⁷

For example, what we know about the *History* is that it began with Belos, king of the Assyrians, and not with the Creation and Adam as did all Christian works of this kind. The importance of this choice should not be underestimated, for it seems to reflect a deliberate, indeed unique for its time, rejection of a biblical view of ancient history. Perhaps, then, we might read a polemic intent, however tactfully expressed, into Hesychios' claim, reported by Photios, that his *History* will serve the interests of truth (*alêtheia*).²⁸ We need not imagine anything as openly hostile as Kelsos' *Alêthês Logos* (to which Origen replied in the third century), for otherwise Photios would no doubt have commented on it, but subtle silences can do a lot too. If, then, in contrast to pagan chronography, "for Christians historical time came to mean the whole of time,"²⁹ then Hesychios was no Christian chronographer. To correct for this, A. Moffatt has resorted to desperate measures: "one may speculate whether the early folios of Photios' copy of the text were lost."³⁰ But Photios explicitly states that the work began with Belos and knows quite a bit about its title, which refutes Moffatt's speculation.

Why Belos? *Bel* means "lord" in Akkadian and hence stood for Marduk, the chief god of Babylon. Hesychios could have found references in Greek literature to Bel as a god, in, say,

²⁷ E. Jeffreys, with B. Croke and R. Scott (eds.), *Studies in John Malalas* (Byzantina Australiensia 6 [Sydney 1990]).

²⁸ *Bibl.* 69 (I 101 Henry).

²⁹ B. Croke, *Count Marcellinus and His Chronicle* (Oxford 2001) 152.

³⁰ A. Moffatt, "A Record of Public Buildings and Monuments," in Jeffreys, *Studies* 87–109, at 96.

Herodotos, the Septuagint, and Josephos (following Berossos), but these were few and not especially prominent. More common, at least among the sources that he probably used, was a Euhemerized version that made him the founder of the kingdom of the Assyrians, succeeded by the more famous Ninus, the founder of Nineveh. (In fact, Euhemerus himself had given Belos a prominent place in his effort to uncover the mortal origins of the gods, whatever may have been his broader philosophical or religious goal.) Belos is not always the very first ruler of Assyria and in some versions he goes to Egypt, but on the whole he held the position Hesychios ascribes to him.³¹ Christian chronography largely accepted Belos as the first king of the Assyrians; in Malalas we find a mix of traditions about him, or rather about various figures of that name.³² Of course, none of this *explains* why Hesychios begins with Belos, nor, indeed, is it possible to fully explain this choice at all given the state of our evidence. All we can do is point to a fact which indicates that this choice was not entirely arbitrary and that it probably represented a deliberate rejection of the Christian chronographic tradition. For we know that one of the main sources used by Africanus and Eusebios and others before them was Kastor of Rhodes (*FGrHist* 250), who lived in the first century B.C. and began his epitome of world-history with King Belos of the Assyrians. Hesychios, then, at least had precedent. But the choice of Belos may have been significant for the pagan and Roman slant of his *History*, for Belos, in many traditions, was the son of Io and Io, as Hesychios insists in the *Patria* (6–9), was the grandmother of Byzas, the founder of Byzantion. It was perhaps a pagan mythological background that determined these choices.

³¹ God: Hdt. 1.181, 3.158; Isaiah 46:1; Joseph. *AJ* 8.13.1, 10.11.1. Historical figure: Diod. 1.28.1, cf. Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.4, 3.1.1, Ov. *Met.* 4.213; Curt. Ruf. *Alex.* 3.3. For Euhemerus, see B. Garstad, “Belus in the Sacred History of Euhemerus,” *CP* 99 (2004) 246–257, who cites an exhaustive array of classical sources on this figure.

³² Mal. *Chro.* 1.10, 1.12, 2.8. See E. Jeffreys, “Chronological Structures in the Chronicles,” in Jeffreys, *Studies* 111–166, at 132; W. Adler and P. Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* (Oxford/New York 2002) 136 and n.3.

We cannot know how Hesychios dealt with ancient Near Eastern history. The rest of his work, however, seems to have a thoroughly *Roman* orientation, certainly “spans” 3 through 6, which are defined by events in Roman history (whence the title of the book), and possibly even span 2, which covers the period from the Trojan War to the foundation of Rome. For all we know, this could have been the story of Rome from Aeneas to Romulus (cf. book 1 of Livy). The *Souda* entry mentions first that the *History* is about the deeds of the Roman emperors and then that it discusses the foreign dynasties. It is therefore significant that the break between spans 4 and 5 occurs with the establishment of the monarchy by Julius Caesar, not with Augustus and hence not with the birth of Jesus Christ. Photios here gives a fairly precise date: it was in Olympiad 182, i.e., in the period between 52 and 49 B.C., namely the crossing of the Rubicon. Therefore, the most important historical event in the Christian worldview does not even merit a transition of books, assuming that it was mentioned at all. Malalas, by contrast, ends a book (9) with Augustus and begins the next with the Incarnation. So despite general similarities in the division of the material, it is misleading to say that Hesychios “may have had most in common with Malalas among his contemporaries.”³³ Quite the contrary, he seems to have carefully avoided highlighting the two key moments in the Christian history of the world, namely its Creation and its Salvation.

The contributors to the Malalas volume do not mention the suspicion of the editors of the *Souda* that Hesychios was not a Christian. This is unfortunate because Byzantine scholars rarely expressed such judgments when personal rivalries were not at stake; we ought at least to listen to them. On the other hand, the same contributors uncritically attribute to his *History* a fragment of what appears to be a sermon by a certain Hesychios on the date of Christ’s birth. But there is no reason to believe that this piece has anything to do with our Hesychios. It claims to come from a work on the topic of Christ’s birth, on

³³ R. Scott, “Malalas and His Contemporaries,” in Jeffreys, *Studies* 67–85, at 69; also B. Croke, “The Early Development of Byzantine Chronicles,” 27–38, at 35–36; Moffat 96 n.2.

which he did not write; the name was very common in this period, even in the Church, and our Hesychios is always called the Illoustrios (though not in this fragment); and the computations in the fragment are based on the date of Creation and of other biblical figures such as Adam. The passage would therefore not have made sense in the *History*, which did not have a biblical chronological frame and did not begin with Adam or the Creation. The tenor of the fragment is theological, unlike the playful pagan aetiologies of our author, and the style of writing is, in my opinion, quite different. Moreover, the contributors to the Malalas volume are unsure whether this fragment came from Hesychios' *History* or from his sermons, which implies that they believe him to have been a priest. This surely reflects the absence of a careful examination of all the evidence regarding the Hesychioi in question.³⁴

In short, Hesychios' *History* was, at least to a limited degree, "oriental." It certainly was "Roman"—in fact we may call it Romanocentric. But nothing suggests that we should call it Christian.³⁵ We would do well to detach it from comparisons to Malalas and bring it within the orbit of such non-Christians as Prokopios and Ioannes Lydos. As we saw, the latter relied to some degree on the *History* in his own treatise *On the Months* (now surviving only in abridged fragments). It is worth noting that at the beginning of his other antiquarian treatise, *On the Magistracies of the Roman State*, completed in the 550s, Lydos divides Roman history into the same "spans" as Hesychios:

³⁴ The fragment was published in L. Dindorf, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia* (Bonn 1831) lii–liii, and *Chronicon Paschale* II (Bonn 1832) 116–117 (in a section called "Selecta ad illustrationem Chronici Paschalis"). In *Studies* it is ascribed to Hesychios by Croke (36), Scott (69), and Jeffreys (116, and "Malalas in Greek," 245–268, at 255), following E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' Use of the Past," in G. Clarke (ed.), *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (Rushcutters Bay 1990) 121–146, at 124–125. For the computations in the fragment, see H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie* II (Leipzig 1885) 131–132. Previous opinion as to the authorship of this piece varied: Müller, *FHG*, omitted it from his chapter on Hesychios (if he was aware of it); Krumbacher, *Geschichte* 325, was willing to admit it, to which Schultz, *RE* 8 (1913) 1322–1323, rightly objected.

³⁵ The three aspects are given equal weight by Dagron, *Constantinople* 24, though he cannot document the third.

from Aeneas (i.e. the Trojan War) to the founding of Rome; the kings; the consuls; from Caesar to Constantine; and from Constantine “to the death of the upright Anastasios.”³⁶ Now, most of these breaks were traditional, though one could have used Augustus instead of Caesar. But why did Lydos, writing some twenty years into the reign of Justinian, end his computation with the death of Anastasios? Why not that of Justin? An Hesychian schema would explain this oddity, though Lydos certainly used other sources as well, especially for earlier periods. Moreover, he calculates 1746 years from Aeneas, whereas Photios gives 1190 years as the entire period covered by Hesychios’ *History*, from Belos to the death of Anastasios. Yet both figures are problematic. As for the first, Lydos seems not to have done his math;³⁷ as for the second, either Photios is in error or Hesychios was the sloppiest ancient historian, for 1190 years would place Belos the Assyrian in 672 B.C., and Belos was supposed to have lived before the Trojan War.

Obviously, we do not want to press the relationship with Lydos too far. Still, it offers an interesting alternative to the comparison of all chronographers with Malalas and calls into question current views of sixth-century society as monolithically Christian. Lydos and Hesychios were exact contemporaries, antiquarians from the western coast of Asia Minor with a deep interest in the Roman tradition and, as we shall see, in pagan rituals and oracles. They reveal not a trace of interest in Christianity, an omission that must have been significant in the sixth century. Praise of Anastasios is another feature that Prokopios, Lydos, and Hesychios have in common and may have been an indirect way of expressing hostility to Justinian’s regime on *political* grounds.³⁸ Christian chronog-

³⁶ *Mag.* 1.2, ed. and transl. A. C. Bandy, *Ioannes Lydos: On Powers or The Magistracies of the Roman State* (Philadelphia 1983) 10–11. For the friendship of Lydos and Prokopios, see A. Kaldellis, “Identifying Dissident Circles in Sixth-Century Byzantium: The Friendship of Prokopios and Ioannes Lydos,” *Florilegium* 21 (2004) 1–17.

³⁷ See Bandy’s introduction, *Ioannes Lydos* xxxiii–xxxiv.

³⁸ For the rhetorical deployment of Anastasios by these authors, see Kaldellis, *Florilegium* 21 (2004) 11–12, *Procopius* 97–98, 160. For Lydos’

raphers who reflected Justinian's propaganda, such as Marcellinus Comes, were, by contrast, hostile to Anastasios, ostensibly on *religious* grounds.³⁹

The conclusions that we have formulated so far regarding the purpose and religious affiliation of Hesychios' *History* are fully supported by the one extended fragment of the work that we possess, the so-called *Patria of Constantinople*. Before discussing its contents, we should note that this fragment is possibly an abridgment of Hesychios' original text. We cannot, however, be entirely certain of this or know the extent to which it has been abridged. Photios, as we saw, noted that Hesychios was much less detailed than Diodoros. What militates *against* the likelihood of abridgment is the fact that the fragment preserves entries and information regarding each of the seven *strategoï* of ancient Byzantium, even though Hesychios clearly had very little to say about some of them. The epitomator must, then, have grasped the symbolic significance of this number (see below) and made an effort to reproduce it in his abridgment. But we cannot simply dismiss this possibility.

The text that we possess survives in one manuscript of the tenth century, the *Palatinus (Heidelbergae)* 398, so the extract must in any case have taken place before then. Also, the entirety of this fragment was copied into an anonymous *vita* of the emperor Constantine which dates between the end of the ninth and the eleventh centuries (though with significant additions that we will discuss presently).⁴⁰ That could push the date for the extract even further back; indeed, it is likely that the latter was in circulation even as Photios was reading the complete original text of the *History*.

The *Patria* certainly does not inspire confidence in Hesychios'

politics, see A. Kaldellis, "Republican Theory and Political Dissidence in Ioannes Lydos," *BMGS* 29 (2005) forthcoming.

³⁹ Croke, *Count Marcellinus* 96, 98, 107, 128–133, 176–177.

⁴⁰ The relevant portions of the text are in H. G. Opitz, "Die vita Constantini des Codex Angelicus 22," *Byzantion* 9 (1934) 535–593, at 568–576. For the *vita* in general, see S. N. C. Lieu and D. Monserrat, *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Byzantine Views. A Sourcebook* (London/New York 1996) 103–104.

scholarly skills. It jumps from the days of legend to Philip of Macedonia without pause and contains little more than fanciful aetiological and mythical tales. But our aim is to understand, not merely to criticize. When we set our scholarly standards aside and read this work as literature, we realize that it is in fact a very subtle text that inscribes upon the history of ancient Byzantium an ideology that is at once both Roman and pagan.

The Roman dimension has long been appreciated.⁴¹ The history of (Elder) Rome is subtly reinscribed upon the history of ancient Byzantium, the city destined to take its place as New Rome. To the instances that have already been discovered, more can be added: Byzantium is said to have experienced tyrants and kings and aristocracies and democracies (1, 35), though hardly any of these regimes are actually documented in the *Patria* as we have them; Byzas and Strombos are both brothers and enemies like Romulus and Remus (20); Byzas builds the walls of his city with the assistance of Poseidon and Apollo, who, the reader may recall, built the walls of Troy, Rome's ancestor city (12; cf. *Il.* 7.452); the seven *strategoî* of Byzantium mirror the seven kings of Rome; Byzantium is saved during a siege by howling dogs just as Rome was saved by geese from the Gauls (27); and Byzantium accepts foreign leaders and sometimes their people as well (23, 28, 32), incorporating them into the populace. This promotion of the Roman credentials of Byzantium may have come at the expense of Elder Rome. In the first paragraph, Hesychios announces that Constantine founded New Rome when its Elder counterpart had "reached its limit" (1). It is not clear what this means exactly, but it clearly justifies *translatio*.⁴² It might also be possible and legitimate to detect more specifically Constantinopolitan signs in the history of Byzantium. Dagron has argued that

⁴¹ For a partial list of parallels, see R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*² (Paris 1964) 11; Dagron, *Constantinople* 26.

⁴² I do not think that Dagron's apocalyptic comparisons are especially relevant: *Constantinople* 324–325. See rather S. Calderone, "Costantinopoli: la 'seconda Roma'," in A. Momigliano and A. Schiavone (eds.), *Storia di Roma* III.1 (Turin 1993) 723–749, at 746, referring it to temporal cycles.

both Byzas and Severus foreshadow Constantine's foundation of New Rome.⁴³ To this we might add other details such as that the walls built by Byzas were "greater than any words can relate" (12), like those of Constantinople after the fifth century, and that, in a crisis, it was the *demoi* who were called out to arms, not the *demos*, as would have been the case in an ancient city (27).⁴⁴

The second, pagan, aspect of the *Patria* has not received attention. But it is likewise clear that the pervasive paganism of the text, manifested in the actions of gods (presented mostly as fact, not legend), oracles, sacrifices, omens, miracles, and magic (even Apollonios of Tyana makes a guest-appearance), attempts to reinscribe not merely the history of New Rome but its very topography upon a matrix of pagan symbolism. This is especially evident in the chapters on Byzas' religious foundations (15–16), which are mapped out on the sixth-century topography of the city, while that on Severus' foundations (37) points toward the Constantinian foundation. It has been suggested that one of the "miracles" associated with Byzas rewrites a Christian story associated with that foundation,⁴⁵ thereby perhaps neutralizing it. The fact that not a single word is said about Christianity in connection with Constantine strengthens the argument for a pagan reading of the text. Hesychios is pro-Constantine, but his was a Constantine who built "sacred temples" (39), including two shrines to Pallas, and placed a statue of Zeus outside the Senate house (41). He is praised because he fulfilled the Roman destiny of Byzantium, foretold in Pythian oracles and such. And whatever might be said about Hesychios' scholarly skills, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the foundation of Constantinople was in fact primarily an act of Roman imperialism and not the establishment of a "Christian capital," whatever that may have meant in the early fourth century. Even in the sixth-century, then, there was room

⁴³ Dagron, *Constantinople* ch. 2.

⁴⁴ For the military function of the *demoi*, see Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford 1976) ch. 5, who takes a skeptical approach. But we are not dealing with history here.

⁴⁵ Dagron, *Constantinople* 68.

for a pagan Constantine.⁴⁶

So glaring and troubling was this omission of Christianity from the *Patria's* account of Constantine that the author of the later *vita* of that imperial saint, mentioned above, felt that he had to supplement Hesychios' information. After the mention of the porphyry column, he inserted a passage on the holy relics that were associated with it. He goes on to mention the Palladion, but questions both the veracity of the stories about it and the sanity of those who believe in such nonsense. Then, after Hesychios' reference to the statue of Zeus and the shrines of Pallas, he adds that Constantine built many churches, specifying to whom they were dedicated. At that point he returns to Hesychios' concluding sentence. The author of the *vita* has also removed some of Hesychios' explicitly mythological discussions, e.g. the myth of Io and the descent of Byzas from her daughter Keroessa and Poseidon. This is what the *Patria* would have looked like had it been written by a Christian to begin with. The editors of the *Souda* may not have been alone in their suspicions about Hesychios, though they seemed to be relying here only upon the *Onomatologos*.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ For the religious aspects of the foundation of Constantinople, including the pagan temples that Constantine established, see G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris 1974) ch. 13, who finds little reliable evidence that Constantine built any churches. The one that he is willing to allow, the Holy Apostles, is reduced to a mausoleum by C. Mango, *Le développement urbain de Constantinople (IV^e–VII^e siècles)* (Paris 1990) 35. Dagron (373–374) identifies Hesychios' "shrines of Pallas" with the temples to Rhea and Tyche mentioned by Zosimos. S. Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge 2004) 149, translates *hidrymata* as "statues" rather than shrines, but Hesychios has just used *agalma* for Zeus: why would he differentiate them? For the statue of Zeus, at any rate, see Bassett 151–152. In her introductory chapters, Bassett also argues for a primarily political view of the foundation. For both pagan and Christian Constantines, see Lieu and Monserrat, *From Constantine*.

⁴⁷ For the relevant passages in the *vita*, see Opitz, *Byzantion* 9 (1934) 575–576. The additions are also noted in Preger's edition of Hesychios. They had originally been discussed by P. F. de' Cavalieri, "Di un frammento di una vita di Costantino, nel codice greco 22 della biblioteca Angelica," *Studi e documenti di storia e diritto* 18 (1897) 89–131, at 100–104. For the Palladion, see C. Ando, "The Palladium and the Pentateuch: Towards a Sacred

As matters stand, that is about all that we can say about Hesychios on the basis of the meager textual evidence that has survived. This reconstruction has added a coherent and not insignificant persona to our picture of sixth-century literary life. The cultural landscape of that era may have to be redrawn to accommodate a wider circle of non-Christian historians, antiquarians, and philosophers than was previously imagined.

But that said, we must now complicate our picture of Hesychios considerably. Excavations at his home-town Miletos at the turn of the twentieth century revealed a set of three inscriptions from the fifth to sixth centuries honoring an Hesychios, son of Hesychios, for his local benefactions. Specifically, he is said in the first inscription to have been a resident at the capital, brilliant among the orators in the office of the prefect, and to have obtained from the emperor the resources with which to restore the baths (of Faustina, near which the inscriptions were found). The second inscription is very fragmentary, but implies that he reached extreme old age. The third, on the base of a statue in his honor, is punctuated by crosses and lists his benefactions: a pillar with an image of the emperor, the baths of Faustina, a vast temple, and an abundant water-supply for the baths. The commentary in the excavation reports suggested that this Hesychios may well have been our historian or, at any rate, from the same family. Later scholars have been divided on this question, though none have brought the inscriptions to bear on the interpretation of the fragments of his literary works.⁴⁸

Topography of the Later Roman Empire," *Phoenix* 55 (2001) 369–410, at 397ff.

⁴⁸ For the inscriptions and commentary (by A. Rehm), see A. von Gerkan and F. Krischen, *Milet I.9 Thermen und Palaestren* (Berlin 1928) 168–171 (nos. 341–343); for translations and detailed epigraphic and literary commentaries, see P. Herrmann, *Inchriften von Milet VI.1* (Berlin/New York 1997) 213–214; and S. Busch, *Versus balnearum: Die antike Dichtung über Bäder und Baden im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1999) 178–185. *PLRE* I 429 (Hesychius 3) does not accept the identification; C. Foss, *Byzantine Cities of Western Asia Minor* (diss. Harvard 1972) 292–293 and 481 n.42, does. For the archaeological and historical context of late-antique Miletos, see C. Foss, "Archaeology and the 'Twenty Cities' of Byzantine Asia," *AJA* 81 (1977) 469–486, at 477–479.

Now, most of this Hesychios' benefactions were entirely secular. But the third inscription mentions a vast temple, which is almost certainly a church. This seems to conflict with the picture of the thoroughly non-Christian scholar that we have thus far presented. It would be easy to say, then, that this is simply another Hesychios, son of Hesychios, from Miletos. It was a common name; this may have been our historian's father, or someone else in the family, or a man from another century altogether. But let us accept the identification for the sake of argument. Can it undermine the conclusions drawn from the reading of his texts? What is at stake, perhaps, is the autonomy of intellectual life, without respect for which we will never be able to write the intellectual history of this period. At present, social determinism prevails, despite much talk about the complexity and richness of late-antique religious life. Any form of "social" association with Christianity instantly brands one a "Christian." Building a church, naming your son Ioannes (which our Hesychios did), attending a Church Council, dedicating a literary work to a bishop, or writing a Christian poem, are taken to be decisive, no matter what texts might suggest. The reverse, by contrast, does not obtain: in current studies, Christians may freely associate with pagan culture without any prejudice to their faith. Like the Platonist bishop of Kyrene Synesios, they may even refuse to believe in key Christian doctrines or, like the bishop of Ilion Pegasios, "jump ship under Julian and accept one of the emperor's new priestoods," and still the fundamental integrity of their faith finds defenders.⁴⁹ They may take omens, perform sacrifices, and practice magic without compromising their "essential Christianity." There is nothing intrinsically wrong about this line of argument, but it should not be used as a double-standard, i.e. to save Christians from their pagan entanglements. Many archaeologists are careful to avoid such traps.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore 2000) 405–406.

⁵⁰ See e.g. E. Ribak, "Artefacts as Indicators of Religious Belief in Byzantine Palestine," in K. Dark (ed.), *Secular Buildings and the Archaeology of Everyday Life in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 2004) 123–132, at 123.

What has been lost from the discussion is the understanding that “religion” is not a monolithic identity that determines every aspect of a person’s life. Christians may be believing, or merely practicing, or indifferent. One may believe in none of the doctrines, but still behave as a Christian for reasons of prudence, social ambition, or casual conformity, and this is to say nothing of all those who simply did not care or were confused or convinced agnostics or frightened into conformity. There is no greater contradiction in a thoroughly non-Christian historian in the early sixth century building a church in order to beautify his native city and be honored by it in return than there is in a doctrinaire communist in, say, modern Greece leading a multinational corporation and—why not?—building churches in his native village for much the same reasons as he would have in late antiquity. We do not know our Hesychios well enough that we can decide such matters for him.

Nor would he have been alone in that age of convulsions and contradictions. In mid-fourth century Rome, the pagan noble Lampadius, “in order to show his generosity and his contempt of the mob [at the games], summoned some beggars from the Vatican and presented them with valuable gifts,” imitating in this gesture his Christian colleagues and temporarily exploiting a well-known Christian clientele.⁵¹ Even Quintus Aurelius Symmachus sought asylum in a church after the fall of the emperor Maximus and was rescued by the Novatian bishop of Rome.⁵² The pagan poets Claudian (early fifth century) and Agathias (sixth) wrote occasional verses on Christian topics.⁵³ The early-fifth-century pagan historian Olympiodoros dedicated his work to Theodosios II, certainly by praising his vir-

⁵¹ Amm. Marc. 27.3.6 (transl. Rolfe). For the incident, see also J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 2000) 290–291. For Lampadius, see *PLRE* I 978–980.

⁵² Socr. *Hist. Eccl.* 5.14; see *PLRE* I 868.

⁵³ Claudian: Alan Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford 1970) ch. 7; Liebeschuetz, *Decline* 321 n.18. For the poetry of Agathias, see R. C. McCail, “The Erotic and Ascetic Poetry of Agathias Scholasticus,” *Byzantion* 41 (1971) 205–267; for his religious thought, see Kaldellis, *Byzantion* 69 (1999) 206–252.

tues in the preface and possibly even his piety.⁵⁴ Pagan officials continued to serve Christian emperors down to the reign of Justinian; surely they must have had to “act Christian” or play along on many occasions. The praetorian prefect Phokas, who led the work on the construction of Hagia Sophia in 532 and gave money to churches for the ransom of prisoners, was widely suspected of being a pagan and committed suicide the second time he was accused. He was highly admired by the pagan Platonist Ioannes Lydos, his former employee.⁵⁵ For that matter, we may as well mention the early-fourth-century emperors Maxentius and Licinius who patronized the Christians within their realms and probably subsidized them to an extent, despite being cast as persecutors after their defeat by Constantine, to say nothing of Julian, who pretended to be a Christian for years and even attended services and probably Councils as a Caesar in Gaul.

To understand many of the authors of this period—in fact many of the key authors—we must defend the autonomy of their writings against the encroachments of their social and political context. We must allow for the possibility that their thoughts and writings were not determined by their historical period (as *we* understand it), by their cities or families, or by the requirements of their social or professional positions. Belief must be provisionally isolated from practice (and vice versa), and philology must have something to say in the construction of intellectual biography. For example, we should not fix the

⁵⁴ *PLRE* II 798–799; J. F. Matthews, “Olympiodorus of Thebes and the History of the West (A.D. 407–425),” *JRS* 60 (1970) 79–97; W. Treadgold, “The Diplomatic Career and Historical Work of Olympiodorus of Thebes,” *International History Review* 26 (2004) 709–733. For piety as the chief virtue of the regime, see K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 1982) 50–51, 79, 90–95. Already in 326, Nikagoras, *dadouchos* of the Eleusinian mysteries and a Platonist, undertook missions on behalf “of the most pious emperor Constantine” and gave thanks both to him and “to the gods.” See G. Fowden, “Nikagoras of Athens and the Lateran Obelisk,” *JHS* 107 (1987) 51–57; Bassett, *Urban Image* 43.

⁵⁵ *PLRE* II 881–882; see also Maas, *John Lydos* 78–82; Kaldellis, *Phoenix* 57 (2003) 304.

faith of late-antique men and women on the basis of their names, especially when we have texts through which we may glimpse something of their minds. To be sure, Hesychios survives in such a fragmented state that any reconstruction is bound to be conjectural. But if the reading proposed here is correct, we should revise our understanding of the vitality and extent of non-Christian literary culture under Justinian. Networks extended across the empire focusing mostly on the capital and the old centers of Hellenic culture: Athens, western Asia Minor, and Alexandria. Hesychios' interest in oracles and Roman antiquarianism linked him to Lydos and Zosimos, the latter a strongly anti-Christian and probably exactly contemporary historian who, though he hated Constantine, still felt compelled to look for oracles that had predicted the greatness and prosperity of Constantinople.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, we will never be able to reconstruct the personal relationships among these idiosyncratic men, if indeed there were any. But perhaps it may be possible one day to map the topography and write the history of these last representatives of the doomed pagan culture of the Greco-Roman world.

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⁵⁶Zos. 2.36–37, cf. 5.24; Lyd. *Mens.* 4.2. See Calderone, in Momigliano, *Storia* 731.