



Summary :

The title *Anthologia Palatina* has been given to a collection of 15 books which includes about 3,700 epigrams, which were written from the 6th century to the 10th century A.D. The collection appears to be a typical work of the 10th century, a period characterized by a spirit of encyclopedism. It constitutes an important source for the history of literature and the course of the Greek language, and it preserved many works of Ancient and Byzantine poets and epigram composers.

Date

10th century A.D

Geographical Location

Constantinople

1. General Introduction

The title *Anthologia Palatina* has been given to a collection that consists of 15 books and includes about 3,700 epigrams with over 23,000 verses, which were written from the 6th century to the 10th century A.D. This collection was the result of work of unknown scholars during the [Macedonian Renaissance](#) and constitutes the larger and more important work of its kind. It is preserved in a manuscript with two parts (**codices**). The main part, which includes the first 13 books, is kept today in the Palatina Library of Heidelberg (*Palatinus Vaticanus* gr. 23) and entirely for this, the collection was named the *Anthologia Palatina*.¹ The other part, which preserves the remaining 2 books, is found in Paris (*Parisinus* suppl. gr. 384). According to the commonly accepted point of view, the manuscript dates to the 10th century, probably around 980, though some scholars date it to the 11th century.²

The *Anthologia Palatina* appears to be a typical work of the 10th century, a period characterized by a spirit of encyclopedism. In the same period, the *Souda* Lexicon and Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus's *Excerpta historica Constantiniana* were compiled, and in general emphasis was given to the compilation of former and contemporary knowledge.³ The work constitutes a very important source for the history of literature and the development of the Greek language.

2. The Original Structure of the Work—Constantine Kephalas

The original body of the *Anthologia Palatina* is based on one collection of epigrams (anthology) which Constantine Kephalas had published at the end of the 9th century. Constantine Kephalas, a Byzantine scholar and clergyman who came from a prominent family, lived and was active in the reign of Emperor Leon VI the Wise (886-912) and a bit later. His name has been documented by some columnists and it is reported that in 917 he served as head priest (dean) of the imperial court.⁴

Kephalas' collection, which is not preserved today though its original form can be reconstructed by the *Anthologia Palatina*, consisted of books 3-7, 9-12 and perhaps 13-14.⁵ At the end of the 9th century, he therefore wrote, possibly per order of Leon VI, a collection (anthology) of ancient and Byzantine epigrams, as well as funerary epigrams. He used old anthologies, such as Agathias' *Cycle*⁶ and perhaps the collection of compiler Meleagros of Gadarenos⁷ (100 B.C.). In his collection Kephalas also included a plethora of funerary epigrams, which originated from mainland Greece and Asia Minor, which magistros Gregory of Kampsas of Macedonia had collected on his behalf. Kephalas' collection was also used widely by the *Souda* Lexicon (quotations from 430 epigrams).⁸

3. The Later Additions – The Anthologia Palatina

Around 980 an unknown composer widened Kephalas' anthology and added the present books of the *Anthologia Palatina*: the 1st (epigrams of Christian poets and numerous inscriptions from churches of the of the 4th to the 10th centuries), the 2nd (Christodoros



of Koptos's poem,⁹ “Ἐκφρασις τῶν ἀγαλμάτων τῶν εἰς τὸ δημόσιον γυμνάσιον τοῦ ἐπικαλουμένου Ζευξίππου”), the 8th (funerary epigrams of [Gregory of Nazianzos](#)), evidently the 13th and 14th (epigrams of present and older poets, which generally present many problems), and the 15th. The categorization of poetry in thematic groups is also attributed to this, a fact that often causes confusion regarding the attribution of epigrams to the poet in question, which resulted in enough of the poetry to be characterized as anonymous (masterless).¹⁰

4. The Meaning

Previously it was considered that the *Anthologia Palatina* is comprised of epigrams of Ancient Greek literature. This point of view relied mainly upon the style of the collection. The epigrams can be characterized as demonstrative, satirical, erotic, children's, admonitory, sympotic, arithmetic, enigmatic and others, while entirely missing synaxaria, troparia and other chief ecclesiastical works. It is noteworthy that the words that were used for the making of the anthology did not distinguish between ancient and Christian epigrams, nor did they wound the intended chronological line.

Ancient lyrical poets whose epigrams are in the *Anthologia Palatina* include, for example, [Archilochus](#), [Anacreon](#), [Sappho](#) and [Simonides](#).¹¹ The weight of the collection however, fell upon the epigrams and the poems of eminent poets of the Byzantine era. The Byzantine epigrams do not follow the rules of the traditional ancient type with alternating digital hexametres and pentametres or combined in iambic trimetre. Epigrams of Byzantine poets are included mainly in the 1st, the 8th as well as the 15th book.¹² The last one consists of epigrams of [Arethas of Caesarea](#), [Ignatios the Deacon](#) and [Kometas](#)¹³ and from inscriptions from the [Hippodrome](#). The great value of the *Anthologia Palatina* lies in the fact that it preserved works of poets and epigram composers, such as [Agathias Scholasticus](#), [Damocharis](#), the Macedonian, [Metrodorus](#), [Leo the Philosopher](#) and [Palladas](#), which would have otherwise been lost.

5. The Greek Anthology

The conventionally named *Greek Anthology* consists of the *Anthologia Palatina* and the *Planudea*, which classifies as the 16th book. The subsequent anthology by [Maximos Planoudes](#) (cir. 1260-1310), known as [Planudea](#) (*codex Marc. gr. 481*), added 388 new epigrams.¹⁴ The poems of the *Planudea* usually originate from lost manuscripts of Constantine Kephalas or they are repeated from the *Anthologia Palatina*.

1. The discovery of the codex is due to French Hellenist Claude Saumaise. See Aubreton, R., “La tradition manuscrite des épigrammes de l'Anthologie Palatine”, *Révue des Études Anciennes* 70 (1968), p. 43.

2. The manuscript presents difficulties for the dating. Different characters of writing have been discerned, a fact that attests to the point of view that underwent renovations and supplementations / completions. A. Cameron suggests the date of the manuscript to the 10th century, see Cameron, A., “Michael Psellus and the Date of the Palatine Anthology”, *Greek Roman Byzantine Studies* 11 (1970), pp. 339-350, while R. Auberton believes the more correct date is the 11th century, see Aubreton, R., “La tradition manuscrite des épigrammes de l'Anthologie Palatine”, *Révue des Études Anciennes* 70 (1968), pp. 45-47, and Aubreton, R., “Michel Psellos et l'Anthologie Palatine”, *Antiquité Classique* 38 (1969), pp. 459-462.

3. For this 10th-c. encyclopedic florilegium, the initiative and inspiration of Constantine VII, see Lemerle, P., *Ο πρώτος βυζαντινός ομμανισμός. Σημειώσεις και παρατηρήσεις για την εκπαίδευση και την παιδεία στο Βυζάντιο από τις αρχές ως τον 10ο αιώνα*, Μ. Νυσταζοπούλου-Πελεκίδου (μτφρ.), (Αθήνα 1985), pp. 248-269. For the encyclopaediaism of the 10th century, see as shown, pp. 241-276.

4. Kazhdan, A. (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 2 (New York – Oxford 1991), p. 1.122, see article “Kephalas, Constantine” (A. Kazhdan).

5. Aubreton R., “La tradition manuscrite des épigrammes de l'Anthologie Palatine”, *Révue des Études Anciennes* 70 (1968), p. 66.

6. This work by Agathias is reported in the Souda Lexicon with the title Κύκλος νέων επιγραμμάτων and is dated to 567. See Cameron, A. - Cameron,



A., "The Cycle of Agathias", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 86 (1966), pp. 6-25.

7. Philosopher and poet of epigrams (cir. 135-65 B.C). Compiler of the first anthology of epigrams.

8. Hunger, H., *Βυζαντινή Λογοτεχνία 2: Η λόγια κοσμική γραμματεία των Βυζαντινών* (Αθήνα 1992), p. 439

9. Writer from Thebes of Egypt. He lived and was active during the reign of Anastasios I (491-518). He delivered 416 digital hexameters. Τωμαδάκης, Ν., *Η βυζαντινή Υμνογραφία και Ποίησης. Εισαγωγή εις την βυζαντινήν Φιλολογίαν 2* (Αθήνα 1965) p. 32

10. See Hunger, H., *Βυζαντινή Λογοτεχνία 2: Η λόγια κοσμική γραμματεία των Βυζαντινών* (Αθήνα 1992), pp. 439-440; Kazhdan, A. (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium 2* (New York – Oxford 1991), pp. 872-873, see article "Greek Anthology" (E.M. Jeffreys).

11. Epigram writer and choral poet (356-468).

12. Cameron, A., "Michael Psellus and the Date of the Palatine Anthology", *Greek Roman Byzantine Studies* 11 (1970), p. 349.

13. Grammarian, professor at the School of Magnaura (9th century), specifically on Homer, as it appears from his surviving epigrams of the Anthologia Palatina. Perhaps he took care of publishing Homer in miniscule script.

14. See Hunger, H., *Βυζαντινή Λογοτεχνία 2: Η λόγια κοσμική γραμματεία των Βυζαντινών* (Αθήνα 1992), pp. 457-458; Kazhdan, A. (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium 2* (New York – Oxford 1991), pp. 872-873, see article "Greek Anthology" (E.M. Jeffreys); Aubreton, R., "La tradition manuscrite des épigrammes de l'Anthologie Palatine", *Révue des Études Anciennes* 70 (1968), pp. 32-82. For the Christian poetry of the Greek Anthology, see Bauer, J., "Zu den christlichen Gedichten der Anthologia Graeca", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 10 (1961), pp. 31-37.

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Glossary :

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| | codex Manuscript of papyrus, parchment or paper bound according to the form of a today book. The most common type of book during the medieval period. In the 4th century it replaced the roll thanks to its facilities: the codex could be easily opened to any page, the text could be written on both sides of the sheet and was better perserved. |
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