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A Comment on a John Geometres' Poem

The epigram “Εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ πατέρα” by John Geometres is considered a lyrical sepulchral poetic masterpiece, since it densely captures the poet’s emotional state within 11 lines. The particular epigram has already been known from J. A. Cramer’s publication.¹

The poem² is developed in four sections with three of the latter corresponding to three individual scenes whose closure takes place in three lines each.

Section A: The father’s illness and his eventual death

Ὅς καὶ νοσοῦντα χερσὶν ἠγκαλιζόμεν
ὅς καὶ θανόντα, σὰς περιστείλας κόρας,
ἔλουσα λουτροῖς ἐσχάτοις,³ τὰ θρέπτρά⁴ σοι.

Section B: Transportation and burial in his homeland

καὶ φόρτον ἡδὺν μῆνα βαστάσας ὅλον
μακρᾶς σε γῆς⁵ ἦνεγκα μυρίοις πόνοις
καὶ συζύγῳ δέδωκα καὶ τῇ πατρίδι

1 See J. A. Cramer, *Anecdota graeca e codd. Paris.*, vol. IV, Oxonii, 1841 (repr. Hildesheim 1967), 329. Migne, PG 106, col. 962. For the biography of John Geometres, see M. D. Lauxtermann, John Geometres – Poet and Soldier, *Byzantion* 68 (1998) 356–380. See, also, Em.-Marl. van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre, poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques (Edition, traduction, commentaire)*, Leiden-Boston 2008, 3–19. See also G. Soyter, *Byzantinische Dichtung. Ausgewählte Texte mit Einleitung, kritischem Apparat und Kommentar*, Heidelberg 1930, 24–25 and 63. F. Scheidweiler, Studien zu Johannes Geometres, *BZ* 45 (1952) 306–307. M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts*, vol. I, Wien 2003, 220–221.

2 See also the translation of the poem into the English language, M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, (n. 1), 220. Text and translation of the poem into New Greek, see G. Varthalites, *Ιωάννη Γεωμέτρη, Ο τρομερός τον νου μου ο έρωτας τυφλώνει. Επιλογή ποιημάτων*, Athens 2012, 54–55.

3 For the care of the dead body in the byzantine society, see Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινών Βίος και Πολιτισμός*, vol. IV, Athens 1948, 148ff. Dem. Tzerpos, Το νεκρικό λείψανο και η επιτάφια φροντίδα του, in: *Νεκρώσιμα Τελετουργικά. Εισηγήσεις-πορίσματα Ιερατικού Συνεδρίου της Ιεράς Μητροπόλεως Δράμας, έτους 2001*, Drama 2001, 187–234, where also the recent bibliography (pp. 235–240).

4 See F. Scheidweiler (n. 1), 306, l.5. Cf. Τὰ θρεπτά = τροφεΐα, τροφῶν ἀμοιβαί, G. Soyter (n. 1), 63.4.2.

5 See G. Soyter (n. 1), 63.4.5. The verses:

αἶαν ἐπῆλθον ὅλην, Ἀσιάτιδα δ’ ὕστατα ἔσχον,
πόρρω συγγενέων, τῇλε φίλης ἀλόχου,

that are referring to another poem *Εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ πατέρα* (see Em.-Marl. van Opstall [n. 1], 128, no 15, v. 3), as also the verse: