

Preface

The recent discovery and publication of large papyri containing poems by Sappho, sparked off a large-scale interest, which gave birth to an extensive production of scholarly treatises on the poetry of the archaic poets of Lesbos. To this wider dialogue I have also contributed with a number of articles, fourteen of which are included in the present volume. Some of them have already been published in classical journals, others not.

I have to admit that, in spite of their appealing object, my articles do not refrain from my usual positivistic policy. It has been my conscious effort to avoid wide-ranging ventures and to restrict myself to concrete observations which help in constructing a stable text. When this necessary stability is established, the field is then open to broader interpretations. Especially in the case of papyri, the blind acceptance of the *editio princeps*, a common practice in our scholarship, proves hazardous. I attempted, at the expense of time and leisure, never to start a papyrus investigation taking the original reading for granted. On the other hand, I realize that, by discussing in detail exiguous observations such as the shape of particular letters, I often end up in making the approach to the articles a laborious and boring enterprise. I only hope to be forgiven by the reader. Yet, I know that too often a slight trace that establishes even a single letter, may unexpectedly lead to a great profit in the sense of the text examined.

Some articles appear moving in much the same spheres: the first three around the old age of Sappho in connection with the topic of the poetic survival, the last three around the worship of the so-called 'Lesbian Triad'. The articles in each group are products of a research sequence in progress with successively proposed solutions, and so both some contradictions and some repetitions were inevitable. No doubt, it might be possible for two or three articles to be merged in one, at the cost, however, of the fascination of continuous creation.

Another deficiency is related to the subjective circumstances in composing some of the articles. Age and the accompanying health conditions may have occasionally impeded me to peruse and examine at length the relevant bibliography. In addition, the economic environment, in a time of financial collapse of my country, brought about a sudden suspension of every acquisition whether of books or periodicals in our libraries, even of access to the scholarly digital libraries. It was thanks to my younger colleagues, who resorted to inventive techniques for gaining access to alternative sources, that I managed to somehow replace these deficiencies.

I close the account of my shortcomings with a natural grievance. The latest boom in Sapphic and Alcaic research made its appearance during my advanced

years and frail health. So, I have been unable to confirm some of my findings with a visit to Lesbos and was forced to depend on indirect sources for the contentious spots I am describing. Still greater is, however, my complaint for not being able to convince younger scholars to take on the task. I only hope that, whenever the necessary investigation will be carried out, my proposals won't be recorded as mere illusions.

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