

ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ  
ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ

ΕΡΕΥΝΗΤΙΚΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΗ 2

ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΚΑΖΝΤΑΝ

ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ  
ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑΣ

(650 - 850)

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ΛΗ Φ. ΣΕΡΡΥ - ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑΣ ΑΓΓΕΛΙΔΗ

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE PRINCELY NUN: KASSIA

#### *A. Biography*

Little is known about the life of Kassia (her name was also spelled Kasia, Eikasia or Ikasia).<sup>1</sup> Some chroniclers of the tenth century record that she participated in a bride-show (like Maria, the granddaughter of Philaretos the Merciful, almost two generations earlier) arranged in 830 for the young emperor Theophilos (829-42).<sup>2</sup> The story goes that Theophilos liked Kassia most and was ready to offer her the golden apple (and with it the crown) but her arrogant response made him change his mind. It was Theodora whom he finally chose as empress, whereas the jilted Kassia founded a monastery where she led the "philosophic life".

The extent to which the bride-show in general and the case of Theophilos in particular are the product of legend-making remains a matter of dispute. I. Rochov drew attention to

<sup>1</sup> The basic monographs on Kassia are K. KRUMBACHER, *Kasia*, SBAW, 1897, 305-370 and I. ROCHOV, *Studien zu der Person, den Werken und dem Nachleben der Dichterin Kassia*, Berlin 1967 [BBA 38]; cf. EAD., *Person, Werke und Nachleben der byzantinischen Dichterin Kassia*, *Helikon* 6, 1966, 705-715. After Rochov's book several articles of all-embracing character dealing with Kassia appeared: E. CATAFYGIOTOU TOPPING, *Women Hymnographers in Byzantium*, *Diptycha* 3, 1982-83, 107-110 and EAD., *The Psalmist, St. Luke and Kassia the Nun*, *BS/EB* 9, 1982, 199-210; C. CASSETTI BRACH, *Donne copiste nella leggenda di Bisanzio*, *OChP* 41, 1975, 484-488; Ph. BLACHOPOULOU, *Βιβλιογραφικό δοκίμιο για την Κασ[σ]ία-Κασ[σ]ιανή*, *Byzantinos Domos* 1, 1987, 139-159; T. A. MESCHI, *Žizn' i tvorčestvo vizantijskoj poetessy IX veka Kassii*, *Autoreferat*, Tbilisi 1988 (the entire dissertation was published in Georgian: Tbilisi 1987); nun IGNATIJA, *Cerkovno-pesnotvorčeskie trudy inokini Kassii*, *Bogoslovskie Trudy* 24, 1983, 320-336 (without knowledge of scholarly literature).

<sup>2</sup> The date 830 was established by W. TREADGOLD, *The Problem of the Marriage of the Emperor Theophilus*, *GRBS* 16, 1975, 325-341, rather than 821/2 suggested by E. W. BROOK, *The Marriage of the Emperor Theophilus*, *BZ* 10, 1901, 540-545.

the independent version found in the *Vita of the empress Theodora*,<sup>3</sup> Kassia's victorious rival, describing the same contest from the view-point of the empress' panegyrist; Kassia, however, is not mentioned in the *vita*. To the same effect, E. Lipšic interpreted gnomic poems by Kassia (in which the poet condemned those who bear malice and chastised foolishness) as reflecting her failure at the bride-show.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the golden apple, a folklore symbol of erotic desire, indicates, according to J. Psichari, a legendary etiology for the episode.<sup>5</sup>

The *Patria* of Constantinople is aware that Kassia, the beautiful woman who wrote poetry during the reigns of Theophilos and Michael III, founded a monastery in the capital (Preger, *Scriptores*, 276f.). This information supports at least a part of the story concerning the bride-show, namely that Kassia became, at a certain stage in her life, a nun, although the *Patria* does not say that she became a nun after or as a result of her failed attempt to marry into the imperial family.

Three letters of Theodore of Stoudios (Fatouros, *Theod. Stud. epistulae* 2, nos. 217, 370 and 539) are addressed to Kassia; in the lemmata of two of them she is titled *kandidatissa*. G. Fatouros dates two letters to 816-18 and the third to 821-26. The Kassia of the letters belonged to the higher echelons of society: one of her relations was a *strategos* who had recently died, without having broken off community with the Iconoclasts. Theodore praises not only Kassia's piety and her support of persecuted Iconodule monks, but also the style of her writing which he finds astonishing in a young girl (ep. 370.1-6). Theodore says that Kassia "from childhood became Christ's bride" (ep. 217.10), and her contact with Christ presaged her monastic perfection just as smoke precedes the flame (ep. 370.22-23). If we assume that by 818 the young Kassia was already a nun or novice, her identification with the heroine of the legend of the beauty contest of 830 becomes difficult,<sup>6</sup> but Theodore's language is vague, and it is not impossible that he was speaking about a moral trend rather than a formal step. Rochov, in any event, identifies the addressee of Theodore's missives as the poetess Kassia.

However, Kassia's biography can be established only hypothetically, especially since it depends on her identification with the addressee of the Stoudite's letters. If we assume the historicity of the bride-show tale, Kassia must have been born around 810. She was thus very young when Theodore, ca. 818, praised the high quality of her writing. She belonged

<sup>3</sup> ROCHOV, *Studien*, 14-16; cf. A. MARKOPOULOS, Βίος τῆς αυτοκρατειρας Θεοδώρας (BHG 1731), *Symmeikta* 5, 1983, 259f.

<sup>4</sup> LIPŠIC, *Očerki*, 320f.

<sup>5</sup> J. PSICHARI, Cassia et la pomme d'or, *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences historiques et philologiques*, 1910-11, 5-53. A. LITTLEWOOD, The Symbolism of the Apple in Byzantine Literature, *JÖB* 23, 1974, 47f., assumes, notwithstanding the folklore character of the use of the apple, the possibility of a real bride-show arranged for Theophilos.

<sup>6</sup> This difficulty is clearly formulated by FATOUROS, *Theod. Stud. epistulae* 1, 365\* n. 719. The difficulty remains even if we accept BROOK's (as above, n. 2) date of 821/2.

to the monachophile and Iconophile milieu, even though among her relatives there was at least one high-ranking Iconoclast. Her title of *kandidatissa* remains enigmatic: Rochov thinks that her father was a *kandidatos*, although this title normally designates the wife of a *kandidatos*. Her Iconophile views (rather than her arrogance) surely hampered her marriage with Theophilos. In frustration at the misfortune she had inflicted upon herself, she turned to the life of the nunnery, or possibly she was directed to the convent by command of the angry emperor. If, however, the story of the bride-show is mere legend and the letters of Theodore were sent to another Kassia, the whole biography falls apart. We can be sure only that Kassia lived in the first half of the ninth century and that she was a nun in a Constantinopolitan convent.

### B. Troparion on Mary Magdalene and other liturgical poetry

Ed. with English translation A. TRIPOLITIS, *Kassia: The Legend, the Woman, and her Work*, New York-London 1992

Various hymns and secular poems have survived under Kassia's name. Rochov minutely surveyed her corpus<sup>7</sup> indicating, among other things, how hard it is, in many a case, to tell her genuine works from spurious ones. One example is the *Kanon for Holy Saturday* by Kosmas the Melode. The first four odes of this kanon were previously written by the "noble and wise virgin (nun?) Kassia" according to an oral tradition known to Theodore Prodromos in the twelfth century. According to Prodromos' account, a certain Mark, bishop of Hydrount (Otranto), was commissioned to replace Kassia's *troparia*, since it was considered unsuitable to mix "feminine composition" with the words of Kosmas (PG 133, 1235D-1237A). Prodromos' statement is paralleled and confirmed by the *Chronicle* of Theophanes Continuatus (p. 365.21-24) who narrates that in the days of Leo VI (886-912) "the wisest monk Mark" (defined here not as "bishop of Otranto" but as the *oikonomos* of the monastery of St. Mokios [in Constantinople], evidently the same person) expanded (or restored) the *tetraodion* of Kosmas. G. Schirò considers this information legendary and attributes the entire kanon to Kosmas,<sup>8</sup> whereas Rochov sees in Kassia the original author of the first *tetraodion*. A *Sticheron for Adrian and Natalia* is attributed in some manuscripts to a certain Ephraim of Caria, in others to Kassia; a manuscript (cod. Athous Vatop. 1493)

<sup>7</sup> Besides her monograph cited above, see the survey of additional findings in: I. ROCHOV, Neues zu den Hymnen der Kassia aus Cod. Meteor. Metamorphoseos 291, in J. DUMMER-J. IRMSCHER-K. TREU (eds.), *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Berlin 1981 [TU 125], 495-498.

<sup>8</sup> G. SCHIRÒ, La seconda leggenda di Cassia, *Diptycha* 1, 1979, 303-315.

bears the lemma “Of Ephrem or the nun Ikasia”. Rochov suggests that “Ikasia/Kassia” is the distorted “Caria”, a scribe’s interpretation of the Καρία. The assumption of two different traditions is a more plausible explanation.

One of the most famous poems of Kassia is the *Hymn for Holy Wednesday*, a *troparion* on Mary Magdalene (the hymn was eventually titled *On the harlot*, Mary’s name never being mentioned), republished, translated and ingeniously commented on by A. Dyck.<sup>9</sup> It is not the first time that the “sinful woman” of the Gospel of Luke (7. 37-48), who wet Christ’s feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, appears in Greek poetry: Romanos the Melode devoted to her a *kontakion*. Romanos, as Dyck emphasizes, follows the plot of the Gospel, contrasting Mary with Simon the Pharisee and proclaiming true love higher than formal veneration. Kassia, on the other hand, turns from the sphere of human morals to the metaphysical relation between the sinner and God: the heroine of her hymn cherishes no claim to be better than anybody else (a pharisee, for instance), but in her humbleness she genuflects before the Lord and asks for His forgiveness.

The poem opens with a short, four-line preamble: the woman fallen into many sins brings Christ myrrh (unguents) for burial. The preamble is not a simple statement of this fact: “O Lord,” exclaims the poet as if introducing her heroine, “[here is] the woman fallen in many sins” who in tears brings myrrh. In other words, the author, already in the first lines, is personally involved in Mary’s destiny. In the preamble, we are at the end of the story: Christ is dead, and Mary assists at his burial. Yet at the same time, we are at the beginning of events: the harlot recognized Christ’s divinity (at the banquet of Simon the Pharisee which Kassia has no need to mention, since her audience knew the Gospel) and accepted the function (τάξις, an important Byzantine term designating “office” and, in a broader sense, “order”) of the bearer of myrrh (μυροφόρος), the epithet which became the title of Mary Magdalene (it was used in the early seventh century by Modestos of Jerusalem; cf. PG 86/2, 3276A). Thus the beginning and the end of events merge, time is eliminated, and the poem transcends the realities of the narrated saga.

The rest of the poem is a direct actorial speech, Mary’s words addressed to God. She begins with a dramatic exclamation “Woe’s me! (οἶμοι),” a loan from ancient tragedy frequently employed by hagiographers and hymnographers about to mention some frightful fact or situation. She laments: “A gloomy moonless night, a goad of lewdness, a lust for sin, overwhelms me.” The epithets of darkness, an obvious characteristic of night, are extended in the poem to the sensual desires of the sinful woman. Kassia does not put the finger on the kind of sin (as she avoids indicating Mary by name); fornication is not mentioned expressly, but the metaphors used by the poet, “the goad of lewdness” and “the lust for sin”, are the keys to the heroine’s past. It seems that at this point Kassia turns to the episode of Simon’s banquet: the streams of tears, the kisses, the wiping of feet with the

<sup>9</sup> A. DYCK, On Cassia, Κύριε ἢ ἐν πολλαῖς, *Byzantion* 56, 1986, 63-76. Cf. as well E. CATAFYGIOTOU TOPPING, Kassiane the Nun and the Sinful Woman, *GOTHR* 26, 1981, 201-209.

locks of her hair—all these actions are borrowed from the Gospel, but in the poem they acquire a specific role, they are humble elements of everyday life opposed to the omnipotence of the Supreme Being: “Receive the streams of [my] tears, [Thou] Who siphon the water of the sea up to the clouds”;<sup>10</sup> “Listen to the groans of my heart, Thou, Who lay low the heavens by your ineffable emptiness”;<sup>11</sup> “I shall kiss and wipe Thy immaculate feet,” that is, the feet which could not be dirty, which are above ordinary washing. Thus Kassia continues to characterize the mighty feet: “Eve, as she heard their footfalls in Paradise, hid herself in fear.” In other words, the sinful woman recognizes the incarnate Christ’s divinity. He is then given the attributes, and becomes the incorporeal divinity of Genesis and the Psalms; this is emphasized by the abundant use of biblical, primarily psalmic, vocabulary in Kassia’s *troparion*.

God is omnipotent, the heroine is feeble. Moreover, she is sinful. “Who will be able to measure,” she exclaims, “the number of my vices and the abyss of my crimes?” The peak of repentance is reached, and Kassia slows down (the last two lines are much shorter than the two preceding them) and in utterly prosaic manner presents the final opposition: Mary knows that her vices cannot be measured, but she solicits God Who has immeasurable mercy, “Please, forgive [lit. do not disregard] Thy bondsmaid.”

Dyck stresses correctly that the poem begins on a milder note which then rises sharply with the onset of the actorial speech and continues to ascend until it comes to the climax. The use of rhetorical figures is restrained, and the language is simple. Alliteration is rare and subtle (e.g. ψυχοσόστα σωτήρ μου). Artistic play is contained mainly in contrasts and the double sense of cardinal words. As in Andrew’s *Megas Kanon*—only here in a very condensed form—the individual expectation of salvation becomes extended

<sup>10</sup> Unlike Dyck, we understand νεφέλαις not instrumental (“who use clouds to draw the water”) but as dative of motion to: “in the direction of the clouds.” The reading στημονίζων is preferable. The metaphor seems to be “to draw up or empty liquids (i.e. siphon) from a container with a thread of wool”; cf. PLATO, *Symposium* 175D (the alternate reading διεξάγων is the simplification of an unclear metaphor). *Ps.* 134.7 renders a similar idea: the omnipotent Lord “brings up the mist (νεφέλαις) from the ends of the earth.”

<sup>11</sup> Again the lines need a commentary. Firstly, the verb κάμθητι, “bend”, and the participle κλίνας, “causing to slope,” have in principle similar meanings, but different semantic functions in these lines; they should be translated differently (Dyck renders them through the same verb “to bend”), even though by so doing we lose the play of the original. Secondly, κένωσις is a very important theological concept, and Dyck’s “abasement” and Tripolitis’ “humiliation” would be proper, unless another possibility emerged. The word designates first of all “emptiness”, and Kassia evidently played on its double meaning. The confirmation of our explanation is found in the anonymous drama *Christus Patiens* (vers. 2418-2420) in which Mary Magdalene is said to be the first to have arrived at Christ’s tomb and to have witnessed its κένωσις: by having “emptied” his grave (i.e. by being resurrected), says Kassia, Christ subjugated the heavens. Cf. τάφου κένωσις in PHOTIOS, *Homily XII on Holy Saturday*, ed. B. LAOURDAS, *Φωτίων ὁμιλία*, Thessalonike 1959 [Hellenika. Suppl. 12], 123.14.

to all mankind; the specific vice is blurred, and Mary's cry of the heart is the expression of everyman's psychological suffering: I am a sinner but God is merciful. Unlike Clement, Mary (and Kassia with her) searches for salvation not as a reward for any achievement (least of all, poetic), but in the sincere hope for divine mercy.

The elegance of the poem on Mary Magdalene becomes especially evident when compared with Kassia's huge *Kanon for the Repose of the Dead* which deals with the same theme of forgiveness and salvation. The main idea of the *kanon* is graphically expressed in ode 3 (further on we follow Tripolitis' translation with a few alterations): "My Savior, when the dead in fear and haste run from the graves and from the sound of the trumpet and when Thy fearful angels run to meet them, o Lord, have consideration for the departed and place them in the land of [eternal] life." There is no individual atonement in the *kanon*, despite the use on one occasion of the first person ("In deep sorrow I address Thee"), and the supplicant does not ask for herself but for mankind in the most sweeping generalization: "Savior, overlook Thy slaves' transgressions done in ignorance and knowingly alike." Nor is there in the rest of the *kanon* any further development of the theme: already in the first ode it is stated that God might give eternal life to all mortals and return them to the sinless state of Eden. Similar formulas are repeated throughout the whole text, until in the last ode the poet asks the Giver of Life to grant the dead rest among the saints. The imagery of God the Judge and, in a Byzantine manner, the Treasurer (ταμίας), of His formidable court of justice, and of the mortals trembling before the day of reckoning dominates the *kanon*, but there is no place there for the touching figure of the frail sinner washing the feet of the Savior with her tears and drying them with her locks of hair. In the concluding *theotokion* of the *kanon*, Kassia—if she is the author of the *theotokion* (*theotokia* had a tendency to travel from poet to poet, unless they were "signed" as in Clement's case)—suddenly shifts to another topic and moves to the political situation of the empire: she asks Christ to crown the faithful *basileus* and to destroy with military force and the help of the Theotokos the power of the adversary. We may interpret the power or sovereignty (κράτος) of the adversary as the Caliphate, but who is the faithful *basileus* of the *theotokion*? Could Kassia have given such a title to the Iconoclast Theophilos, the man who rejected her claims to the throne and condemned her to monastic confinement? Or was he possibly the young Michael III, who in theory participated in the most pious restoration of the cult of icons in 843? Or is the *theotokion* nothing more than a formulaic exclamation bearing no concrete significance? As Heinrich Heine put it, a fool can ask more questions than a hundred wizards are able to answer.

A completely different character marks Kassia's hymn (*sticheron*) *On the Birth of Christ* (in Tripolitis, "When Augustus reigned"). The motif of salvation is hardly mentioned (only in stanza 6), whereas the imperial theme is systematically elaborated. The first lines emphasize the idea of a universal kingdom: when Augustus established monarchy upon the earth, the *polyarchia* of men ceased to exist. And again: the cities have come under a single kingdom, and the decree of Caesar held sway over the [entire] population. Political unity

has been accompanied by ideological conformity: the polytheism of idols was abolished, and the nations came to believe in the authority of the single Divinity.

Parallelism between the Heavenly Kingdom and earthly empire (one God, a universal monarchy) is a concept which Theodore of Stoudios would not, probably, have approved of. Theosteriktos, the hagiographer of Niketas of Medikion, quotes Theodore's declaration addressed to Leo V, in which the Stoudite, referring to *Ephes.* 4.11, insisted emphatically that authority over the Church lay with the apostles, prophets, shepherds and teachers, but in no way with the emperors.<sup>12</sup> But Kassia, who in the *kanon For the Repose of the Dead* asked God to crown and to protect the emperor, felt comfortable with such a parallelism. With the parallel established in the introduction to the *sticheron*, the poet turns to the glory of the incarnate God: He Who abased (the term *κένωσις*, however, is absent from the poem) Himself by accepting flesh from a woman, by lying in a manger, by becoming poor is, contrastingly and startlingly, praised by angels, worshipped by the Magi and shepherds, adored as Lord by all creation. He is the Sun of Glory, and the heavens glorified Him in fear (a similar feature to the poem on Mary Magdalene where Christ, having emptied his grave, subjugated the heavens).

The *sticheron On the Annunciation*<sup>13</sup> consists of two parts: the mission of Gabriel and the Good Tidings itself. Another *sticheron On the Annunciation* is authored by a certain John the Monk (*Menaia*, March 25), and a comparison of the two pieces reveals several hallmarks of Kassia's style. The first part of Kassia's poem is bound together by an anaphora. Three times paragraphs begin with the word *ἀπεστάλη*, was sent: the angel Gabriel was sent, the fleshless slave was sent, the heavenly warrior was sent. The incipit of the hymn by John is also "Was sent (he adds: from Heaven)," but there is no anaphora in the poem. *Chairetismos* which consolidates the second part of Kassia's *sticheron* is employed by John as well.

More interesting is another distinction. John's epithets for the Theotokos are banal: "full of grace", "unwed bride". Kassia, however, fills her text with imperial epithets: her Mary is a palace, a throne, a regal seat. Certainly, definitions of other kinds are used as well: "most honored vessel" and "unhewn mountain"; both metaphors stress Mary's role as the receptacle in which the Godhead dwelt bodily. Unlike Kassia, the Monk avoids imperial terminology.

A *sticheron For Eustratios and Companions* (one of two hymns in their honor) is probably the most rhetorical in Kassia's liturgical corpus. The introductory lines form a double numerical metaphor: "The five-stringed lute and five-fold lamp." The metaphor is strengthened by alliteration: *λύραν-λυχνίαν*. Then follows a klimax, a use of synonyms in a symmetrical construction: "Let us honor [the martyrs] for their deeds (in Greek a single

<sup>12</sup> AASS April. I, p. XXV, par. 35. The declaration is repeated in George the Monk 2, 779.20-23.

<sup>13</sup> ROCHOV, *Studien*, 52, no. 39, finds the attribution of the poem to Kassia "recht wahrscheinlich". Her name is attached to the *sticheron* in numerous manuscripts, whereas others indicate an Anatolios as its author.

adverb φερωνύμως), let us praise [them] reverently (εὐσεβῶς).” The main body of the poem is exactly what can be called a “pheronymic” laudation, since Kassia interprets, with the help of rhetorical etymology, the names of the martyrs: Eustratios served (στρατευθείς) under God in the heavenly army (στρατεία) and was well-pleasing to his commander (στρατολογήσαντι); Auxentios increased (ἐπαυξήσας) his talent (reference to *Matth.* 25.20 and 22); Eugenios is the scion of divine nobility (εὐγενείας); Orestes is beautiful (ὠραῖος), dwelling in God’s mountains (ὄρεσιν); Mardarios is a radiant pearl (μαργαρίτης). The entire etymological list is knitted together by a *chairetismos*, which supplements the five-fold group of male saints with the equal-numbered chorus of virgins.

Several poems of Kassia are laudations of saints. Unfortunately, their attribution is usually tentative, and Rochov identifies Kassia as the unquestionable author of only a few of them: several stichera on John the Baptist and one on the apostles Peter and Paul, the latter being anonymous in the printed *Menaia* and ascribed to Andrew of Crete in some manuscripts; two *Hymns on Eustratios and Companions* and a sticheron *On the martyrs Gourias, Samonas and Abibos*. None of these saints is a hero of the Iconodule movement: unlike Clement or Joseph, Kassia is indifferent toward the problems of Iconoclasm, or perhaps reticent after her encounter with the young prince.

Many of Kassia’s hymns are devoted to female saints. Besides the genuine *troparion* on Mary Magdalene, to this group belong several spurious poems: five *stichera* for Christina, stichera for Mary of Egypt, Pelagia, Barbara, Agathe, Thekla, and Eudokia of Heliopolis. We may add to this list Natalia, the heroine of the *sticheron* on the couple Adrian and Natalia, and the five-fold chorus of virgins in a *sticheron* for Eustratios. Since the authorship of Kassia in the majority of cases is no more than possible or likely, conclusions can be only tentative, but it is striking how frequent female saints appear in her poetry (male saints in Kassia’s spurious poems are the prophet Elias, the evangelist Matthew, Theodore the Teron, Symeon the Stylite, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Euthymios the Great). Not only are female saints in Kassia’s work numerically more or less equal to holy men, but their choice is strangely balanced: Mary Magdalene, Mary of Egypt, Pelagia and Eudokia are all former prostitutes. Eudokia is less famous than her three companions, but in the sticheron in her honor “tears [of repentance]” and “harlot” are the key words. It would be taking a bold step indeed to claim on the basis of this evidence that Kassia herself was a former prostitute,<sup>14</sup> but it seems that she was deeply interested in the fate of her erring sisters.

A hypothesis that Kassia authored the *Akathistos Hymn*<sup>15</sup> has no scholarly justification.

<sup>14</sup> DYCK, *On Kassia*, 73f., rightly criticizes the “biographical fallacy”, the tendency to identify the author with the literary subject.

<sup>15</sup> ANDREOPOULOS, ‘Ο Ἀκάθιστος ἕμνος. Σκέψεις περὶ τοῦ συγγραφέως αὐτοῦ, *Ekklesiastikon bema*, 1934, 10-20. See the refutation by S. EUSTRATIADIS, rev. of the book of E. MIONI on Romanos the Melode, *EEBS* 15, 1939, 442-444.

### C. Epigrams and gnomai

Kassia’s *œuvre* includes *gnomai* and epigrams<sup>16</sup> which are classed by several scholars as secular poetry. The gnomological genre, that is, the genre of maxims or sayings-admonitions, sometimes growing into elaborate fables, was very popular in late antiquity, maxims being formulated primarily in prose (Stobaios in the fourth-fifth centuries was a representative of this genre). It influenced the Christian *florilegia* and the so-called *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the ethical and theological sayings attributed to famous hermits, and itself gradually lost its secular character. The distinction between *florilegia* and *gnomologia* is conventional, the name of *florilegium* being preserved primarily for the collections of biblical and patristic passages, whereas the term *gnomai* (maxims) is applied to the works of a predominantly secular nature. Numerous gnomological collections were produced in Byzantium: they are mostly anonymous or pseudonymous (the names of Maximos [the Confessor] and Antony are arbitrarily attached to some of them), and their dating usually remains uncertain.<sup>17</sup>

Kassia’s sayings are in verse (mostly iambic trimeter),<sup>18</sup> though written without proper attention to prosody and meter. They are usually short, consisting of one or two lines (*gnomai* proper), rarely longer (epigrams) as, for instance, the disparaging poem on the Armenians.<sup>19</sup> In their content, they present moral admonitions, quite trivial in nature, though direct borrowings from her predecessors are few. Thus the three-line epigram *On Destiny*, carrying man along willy-nilly (Tripolitis, p. 130.16-18), an epigram built on the somewhat excessive use of paronomasia (the noun φέρον and verb φέρον are repeated nine times), imitates a distich by Palladas (*Anthologia Palatina* X.73).<sup>20</sup> The *gnomai* are

<sup>16</sup> Besides collections known to KRUMBACHER (as above, n. 1), B. A. MYSTAKIDES, *Κασσία-Κασσιανή*, *Orthodoxia* 1, 1926, 247-251, 314-319, published *gnomai* of a different version. See on Kassia’s maxims and epigrams, E. LIPŠIĆ, *K voprosu o svetskih teženijah v vizantijskoj kul’ture IX v. (Kasija)*, *VizVrem* 4, 1951, 135-148; M. LAUXTERMANN, *The Byzantine Epigram in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, Amsterdam 1994, 107-127.

<sup>17</sup> C. WACHSMUTH, *Studien zu den griechischen Florilegien*, Berlin 1882, repr. Amsterdam 1971; J. GLETTNER, *Die Progymnasmata des Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos*, *BZ* 33, 1933, 262-264; M. RICHARD, *Florilèges spirituels grecs*, *DSp* 5, fasc. 33-34, col. 475-510, repr. as *Florilèges grecs* in ID., *Opera minora* I, Turnhout-Louvain 1976, no. 1; D. GUTAS, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation: a Study of the Graeco-Arabic Gnomologia*, New Haven 1975, 9-35. Cf. as well P. ODORICO, *Lo Gnomologium Byzantinum e la recensione del Cod. Bibl. Nat. Athen. 1070*, *RSBS* 2, 1982, 41-70; J. F. KINDSTRAND, *Gnomologium Byzantinum and Codex Clarkianus II*, *Byzantion* 60, 1990, 164-182.

<sup>18</sup> P. MAAS, *Metrisches zu den Sentenzen der Kassia*, *BZ* 10, 1901, 54-59.

<sup>19</sup> Ed. C. A. TRYPANIS, *Medieval and Modern Greek Poetry*, Oxford 1951, 43, no. 6.

<sup>20</sup> G. LUCK, *Palladas—Christian or Pagan?*, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63, 1958, 470, n. 71.