

The *patria* of Claudianus (*FGrHist* 282)

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THE SIXTEEN BOOKS of the *Greek Anthology* ascribe seven epigrams to a poet named Claudianus: the most evident feature of these compositions is their extremely varied nature. Indeed, this corpus contains two Christian texts (1.19–20), a hymn to Apollo (5.86), an erotic satire (9.139), a comic sketch (9.140), and two *jeux littéraires* on a crystal ball full of water (9.753–754). A scholion to the first epigram presents the poet who wrote it:¹

οὔτος ὁ Κλαυδιανός ἐστὶν ὁ γράψας τὰ Πάτρια Θαρσοῦ, Ἄνα-
ζάρβου, Βηρύτου, Νικαίας.

This Claudianus is the one who wrote the *patria* of Tarsus, Anazarbus, Berytus, and Nicaea.

According to the scholiast, the author of the epigrams wrote about the antiquities of four cities of the Greek East. The word *πάτρια* (literally “ancestral customs”) has a technical meaning. From the third century A.D. onwards it had been used to name a particular kind of text presenting the origins of cities and their most attractive monuments.² The beginnings of these literary products went back to the earlier local historiography,

¹ Schol. *Anth.Gr.* 1.19 = *FGrHist* 282 T 1. The text is from the critical edition of Jacoby. The English version, like all following translations, is mine. The Greek Κλαυδιανός is regularly translated here as ‘Claudianus’, with the one exception of the poet Claudius Claudianus (= ‘Claudian’, according to the scholarly *consuetudo*).

² See G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire. Études sur le recueil des Patria* (Paris 1984) 10; A. Cameron, *Wandering Poets and Other Essays on Late Greek Literature and Philosophy* (Oxford 2015) 19–22.

in particular to the *ktiseis* of the Hellenistic and Roman age.³ According to the testimonia they were often in verse (cf. *Suda* Σ 877 etc.), and could reach a huge length: the *Patria of Thessalonica* of Christodorus, for instance, consisted of twenty-five books (*Suda* X 525 = *FGrHist* 1084 T 1). The diffusion of these works in the eastern empire is attested by a passage of Simplicius: in his commentary to the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus (*In Ench.* 48: p.414 Hadot), the philosopher presents the composing of *πάτρια πόλεων* as one of the main activities of the poets. Although none of these texts has survived, that the later tradition mentions them demonstrates the importance they had in Late Roman society.

According to the scholion on the *Anthology*, Claudianus belongs to this tradition. The identification of this author and the interpretation of the works attributed to him are the aims of this analysis. The first section is dedicated to examination of the epigrams (§1): if the author of *patria* corresponds to the epigrammatist of the *Greek Anthology*, in order to identify the former it is necessary to know who the latter is. The second section deals with the hypothetical identification of Claudianus with the Latin poet Claudian, proposed by Alan Cameron (§2).⁴ The alternative hypothesis of Paweł Janiszewski is the object of §3,

³ Cf. Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 165–166.

⁴ The interpretation of Cameron is in his 1970 monograph. In his 2015 volume of collected studies, he implicitly dissociates himself from this hypothesis, but does not explain further: “a certain Claudian (probably not the famous Claudian) likewise wrote a number of *Patria* (now lost), on Tarsus, Anazarbus, Berytus, and Nicaea ... It was long ago conjectured that the detailed section on the foundation of Berytus in Nonnus (*Dion.* 41.14–398) derives from Claudian’s poem on the subject, and Nonnus’s equally detailed accounts of the foundation of Nicaea (15.169–16.405) and Tyre (40.298–580) were presumably based on *Patria* by some unknown predecessor” (*Wandering Poets* 19–20). In spite of Cameron’s change of mind, his original proposal remains a plausible hypothesis and a valid model: cf. A. Kaldellis, “Claudian (282),” *Brill’s New Jacoby* (2011). For this reason, the article presents and discusses it along with the interpretations of Janiszewski and Jacoby.

which analyses the relationship between the author of the *patria* and the philosopher described by Eunapius of Sardis. The proposal of Felix Jacoby, who links the author in the scholion to a namesake quoted by Evagrius Scholasticus, is discussed in §4. After examination of these interpretations, a historic contextualization (§5) introduces some concluding remarks (§6). I shall argue that the epigrams of the *Anthology* were written by two authors, namely the famous Claudian and a later namesake living under the reign of Theodosius II; and that the latter wrote the *patria* listed by the scholion.

1. The first possible candidate for authorship of the epigrams is the poet Claudian. Born ca. 370 in Egypt, he came to Rome around 394. Shortly afterwards (around 396), he became court poet under the son of Theodosius the Great, Honorius, and his omnipotent regent Stilicho. He wrote for them a series of panegyrics and other poems and thus gained the prestigious title of *vir clarissimus*. He apparently died around 404.⁵

Linking the epigrams of the *Anthology* to the production of Claudian is an attractive hypothesis. The poet spent some years in the East before coming to Rome and reportedly wrote also in Greek: the epigrams could be part of his Greek production, along with the famous *Gigantomachia*.⁶ Moreover, there is a strong thematic affinity between epigrams 9.753–754 and

⁵ The bibliography on Claudian is endless. For an introduction to the poet and to his cultural context see the studies of Alan Cameron: *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford 1970); “Claudian Revisited,” in F. E. Consolino (ed.), *Letteratura e propaganda nell’occidente Latino da Augusto ai regni Romanobarbarici* (Rome 2000) 127–144. See also A. Döpp, *Zeitgeschichte in Dichtungen Claudians* (Wiesbaden 1980); W. W. Ehlers et al. (eds.), *Aetas Claudiana* (Munich/Leipzig 2004); B. Mulligan, “The Poet from Egypt? Reconsidering Claudian’s Eastern Origin,” *Philologus* 151 (2007) 285–310; M.-F. Guipponi-Gineste, *Claudian: poète du monde à la cour d’Occident* (Paris 2010).

⁶ Cf. Cameron, *Claudian* 6–7. For further information about the Greek *Gigantomachia* (and its Latin *doppio*) see Cameron 467–469; C. Ware, *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition* (Cambridge 2012) 130–135.

Claudian's *carmina* 33–39.⁷ The Greek poems describe a crystal ball full of water and the same subject is presented by the Latin texts. As Cameron writes, “the chances of two different poets called Claudian independently deciding to write a series of epigrams on a hollow crystal ball with water inside must be remote.”⁸ A similar affinity with Claudian's poetry is shown by epigrams 5.86 and 9.140.⁹

Nevertheless, this attribution has problems. The first is the Christian character of epigrams 1.19–22. That seems to contradict what Augustine (*De civ. D.* 5.26) and Orosius (7.35.21) report of Claudian, namely that he was a *pervicacissimus* pagan. To solve the problem, Janiszewski argues that “Claudius Claudianus was, in fact, a Christian, but wrote poetry that was ‘pagan’ in form.”¹⁰ Such an interpretation is not necessary: the contradiction between a pagan identity and a series of Christian texts is not as problematic as it can seem; a poet could write Christian compositions to satisfy a Christian court, although he was *a Christi nomine alienus*.¹¹ Moreover, the discussion about the religion of Claudian (and the testimonies of Augustine and Orosius) is still open.¹² In conclusion, the Christian nature of the epigrams does not constitute a problem.

A second obstacle is revealed by a stylistic analysis of the poems. In the epigrams of Claudianus, the variety of contents

⁷ See M. L. Ricci, *Claudio. Carmina minora* (Bari 2001) 240–253.

⁸ *Wandering Poets* 12–13.

⁹ See H. Hofmann, “Claudius Claudianus [2],” *New Pauly Online* (2006).

¹⁰ P. Janiszewski, *The Missing Link. Greek Pagan Historiography in the Second Half of the Third Century and in the Fourth Century* (Warsaw 2006) 306.

¹¹ Cf. Ricci, *Claudio* 234. Another Christian text is included in the corpus of Claudian's Latin poems (*Carm. min.* 32). Cf. J. L. Sebesta, “Claudian's Credo. The *De Salvatore*,” *CB* 56 (1980) 33–36; N. Hömke, “Schöpfer im Bauch. Die Darstellung des Göttlichen in Claudians Hymnus ‘De Salvatore’,” *Hermes* 143 (2015) 208–228.

¹² Cameron, *Claudian* 189–227; Döpp, *Zeitgeschichte* 24–41; Sebesta, *CB* 56 (1980) 33–36; J. Vanderspoel, “Claudian, Christ and the Cult of Saints,” *CQ* 36 (1986) 244–255.

goes along with a great diversity of styles. In particular, the verses of the Christian texts and epigram 9.139 show a strong influence of Nonnus' poetry, absent in the other poems.¹³ Since the activity of Nonnus is commonly dated to the first decades of the fifth century,¹⁴ the composition of these texts has to be placed thereafter, when Claudian was dead.

To solve the impasse, the poems in the *Anthology* have to be attributed to two different authors: on the one hand, to Claudian, who wrote 5.86, 9.140, 753, 754; on the other, to a later namesake—either a contemporary or a disciple of Nonnus—who *floruit* in the mid-fifth century and wrote 1.19–20 and 9.139. As Cameron notes, such a confusion between two different namesakes is not surprising: “homonymous poets are frequently confused in the ascriptions and lemmata of the *Anthology*.”¹⁵ With which of these two should we identify the author of the *patria*? The scholion of the lemmatist is linked to epigram 1.19: strictly speaking, then, it refers to the second, the namesake rather than Claudian.

2. According to Cameron, the author of the scholion made a mistake. Since he wrote in the tenth century, it was almost impossible for him to distinguish the post-Nonnian epigrams from the others. He knew a Claudian as author of *patria* and cited him at the first opportunity he found: the reference to the *patria* is attached to “the very first occurrence in the *Anthology* of a poem ascribed to a Claudian.”¹⁶ However, the Christian epigrammatist of 1.19 is not the author of *patria* cited by the scholion: this was the Latin poet Claudian. To sustain his hypothesis, Cameron turns to Nonnus.

¹³ *Anth.Gr.* 1.19 is likely a cento of Nonnus' phrases; the epic poet also influenced the vocabulary and the metrical structure of the other two texts: cf. Cameron, *Claudian* 7–8, 12.

¹⁴ See S. Fornaro, “Nonnus,” *New Pauly Online* (2006); L. Miguélez-Cavero, *Poems in Context. Greek Poetry in the Egyptian Thebaid* (Berlin 2008) 15–25, esp. 17–18.

¹⁵ *Claudian* 7–8.

¹⁶ *Claudian* 8.

In his *Dionysiaca*, Nonnus alludes to many legends of foundations: given the great diffusion of *patria* during the fourth and fifth centuries, it was easy for him to draw on this literature. As Cameron points out, “two of the longest Πάτρια that he works into his poem are those of Berytus and Nicaea—two of the four attested by the Palatine lemma.”¹⁷ The former is at 41.51–427, the latter at 15.169–16.405. The digression on Berytus, in particular, contains also two allusions to Tarsus, the first city listed by the lemma (41.85, 357). Thus three of the four *patria* attributed to Claudianus are present in the poem of Nonnus: Cameron’s conclusion is that Nonnus was familiar with the works of Claudianus and used them to write the *Dionysiaca*.

The idea of a lost Πάτρια Νικαίας behind the long account of Nonnus had been discussed by Rudolf Keydell and by Gennaro D’Ippolito, but Cameron was the first to link this hypothesis to our scholion.¹⁸ As for the passage on Berytus, Cameron notes that it contains two distinct versions: the traditional view, which attributes the foundation of Beirut to Cronos (41.51–154), and a more recent one (ὀπλοτέρη ... φάτις) linking the origin of the city to Aphrodite (155–427). This latter account has a good chance of coming from Claudianus’ work. Since Nonnus used the *patria* of Nicaea and Berytus, it is not possible to attribute the authorship of these works to a poet living after him: the scholion must refer to someone else.¹⁹ Cameron proposes to identify him with the Claudian who wrote for Honorius and Stilicho. As already said, he was born in Egypt, and reached Italy in his twenties. According to Cameron, the composition of the four *patria* took place in the obscure years between his departure from Alexandria and his arrival at Rome.²⁰ Nothing is known about this

¹⁷ *Claudian* 9.

¹⁸ R. Keydell, “Zur Komposition der Bücher 13–40 der Dionysiaka des Nonnos,” *Hermes* 62 (1927) 393–434, at 400; G. D’Ippolito, *Studi Nonniani* (Palermo 1964) 90.

¹⁹ *Claudian* 8–11.

²⁰ *Claudian* 25–27.

period. However, since some passages of Claudian's panegyrics reveal a direct knowledge of Constantinople, it is possible to suppose that he visited the capital of the eastern empire before going to the West.²¹ The cities mentioned by the scholion "are all nicely placed on a leisurely route from Alexandria to Constantinople."²² Thus Claudian supposedly visited Berytus, Anazarbus, Tarsus, and Nicaea on his way to the eastern capital and composed *patria* for each of them.

Cameron's interpretation can be disputed. First, Nonnus' two superficial references to Tarsus are not sufficient to confirm that he used a *patria* of the city. Both of them focus on the great antiquity of Tarsus, but cite it with other famous instances (Thebes, Sardis, the Cretan Arcadia). No particular attention is given to the city, which is vaguely presented as *τερψίμβροτος* (*Dion.* 41.85) and *ἀειδομένη πρωτόπολις* (357): nothing suggests a specific work describing Tarsus' origins.²³ Second, it is hazardous to link the digressions of Nonnus to the *patria* of Claudianus merely because the latter are the only known texts describing Berytus and Nicaea. The sources of the Dionysian passages could have been different: Bernard Gerlaud, for instance, rightly mentions the epic *Heroic Theogamies* (Ἡρωϊκὰὶ Θεογαμίαι) of Pisander of Laranda, written during the reign of Severus Alexander.²⁴ Furthermore, it is possible to

²¹ Cf. G. Kelly, "Claudian and Constantinople," in L. Grig and G. Kelly (eds.), *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2012) 241–264.

²² *Claudian* 26.

²³ Cameron himself is aware of this. He adds: "of course, it may be that he just took over the references to Tarsus from his source for Berytus; but this possibility, too, has attractive implications. For if the Πάτρια Βηρύτου on which Nonnus drew was written by a man who had also written a Πάτρια Ταρσοῦ, then one might have expected the legend of Tarsus to be used therein as a yardstick" (*Claudian* 10). Such a notice could be shared if the Cilician city were the only urban center cited with Berytus in the two passages. *Rebus sic stantibus*, nothing impedes the author of the *patria* from writing about Sardis or Thebes as well.

²⁴ B. Gerlaud, *Nonnos de Panopolis. Les Dionysiaques* VI (Paris 1994) 49. See

hypothesize the existence of other authors, whose works have gone lost.²⁵ In conclusion, the hypothesis that Nonnus used Claudianus' *patria* is not secure enough to prove that their author worked before Nonnus.

Two other notes are necessary. As Janiszewski rightly points out, there is no necessary identity between the physical location of an author and the place he describes: a *patria* of Tarsus could have been written outside of Cilicia.²⁶ Finally, how many possibilities had a Byzantine scholiast of the tenth century to know a poet who had worked mainly in the Latin West?

also Miguélez-Cavero, *Poems in Context* 19–23. In analyzing the connections between Nonnus and Claudian, Cameron adds: “it is surely very striking that Nonnus should have been familiar with the subject-matter of three out of the four Πάτρια attested by the Palatine lemma. By contrast, of the six Πάτρια written by Christodorus ..., Nonnus does not allude to a single one. It may be just that Dionysus had never had anything to do with any of these cities—or it may be that, when Nonnus wrote, the appropriate legends had not been sifted and written up into regular Πάτρια” (*Claudian* 10). Thus the absence of a specific *patria* would explain the exclusion of some cities from Nonnus' epic—as if a *patria* were the only document Nonnus could resort to. As the mention of Peisander has shown, the situation is different. Material on cities such as Thessalonica or Miletus could be found in other literary sources: if they are not inserted in Nonnus' epic, it probably reveals their irrelevance in the myths of Dionysus, rather than Nonnus' lack of documents. Moreover, Constantinople, the object of one of Christodorus' *patria*, is not absent from the *Dionysiaca*: cf. P. Chuvin, *Mythologie et géographie dionysiaques* (Clermont-Ferrand 1991) 23–26.

²⁵ After the reference to Christodorus, Cameron writes: “the obvious inference is that the Claudian who wrote the Πάτρια ... wrote before Nonnus and was used by him. It would be much less plausible to suppose that he was inspired to write his Πάτρια by a reading of Nonnus, for, considerations of general probability aside, we should still be left with the problem of Nonnus' sources, and have to postulate a second series of Πάτρια on the same cities written before Nonnus” (*Claudian* 10). The possibility that Nonnus did not use *patria* to write his poem remains. The “problem of Nonnus' sources” can therefore be put aside. Moreover, Cameron does not consider the possibility that the author of *patria* was independent of Nonnus. A connection between the two poets is not compulsory. Different authors could write on similar subjects without having contact.

²⁶ Janiszewski, *Missing Link* 309.

3. An alternative to Cameron's interpretation is the proposal of Janiszewski.²⁷ In his study on the lost histories of the third and fourth centuries, he agrees with Cameron on the distinction to be made between the Christian epigrammatist and the author of *patria*. However, he does not identify the latter with Claudian, but with third namesake. His analysis begins with the *Suda* entry on the Latin poet (K 1707):

Κλαυδιανός, Ἀλεξανδρεύς, ἐποποιὸς νεώτερος· γέγονεν ἐπὶ τῶν χρόνων Ἀρκαδίου καὶ Ὀνωρίου τῶν βασιλέων.

Claudian, of Alexandria, younger epic poet: he lived during the time of the emperors Arcadius and Honorius.

The passage presents Claudian as an ἐποποιὸς νεώτερος. Janiszewski notes that the comparative is usually used by the lexicon to distinguish someone from an earlier namesake.²⁸ Since, however, no other poet with the same name is cited along with Claudian, Janiszewski proposes to identify him with a Claudianus mentioned twice by Eunapius of Sardis. One reference is in the life of Maximus of Ephesus:²⁹

ἦν μὲν οὖν τῶν εὖ γεγονότων, καὶ πλοῦτος ἀδρότερος ὑπὴν αὐτῷ, ἀδελφοὺς δὲ εἶχε γνησίους, οὓς ἐκώλυεν εἶναι πρώτους αὐτὸς ὢν, Κλαυδιανόν τε τὸν καταλαβόντα τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν κάκει παιδεύσαντα, καὶ Νυμφιδιανὸν τὸν ἐν Σμύρῃ περιφανῶς σοφιστεύσαντα.

He came from a noble family and possessed great wealth. He had two legitimate brothers whom he impeded from reaching the highest position only because he held it himself: Claudianus,

²⁷ Janiszewski, *Missing Link* 304–312.

²⁸ He lists two examples (*Missing Link* 310): Apsines of Gadara and Apsines of Athens (A 4735/4736), Ephorus of Cyme and a 'younger' historian of the same name (E 3952/3). Other examples are offered by the couples A 1986/1987, 2734/5, 4682/3; I 52/3; K 22/3; Λ 569/70; M 228/9; O 220/1; Π 183/4, 248/9, 1889/90; Σ 851/2; T 1184/5; Φ 327/8/9.

²⁹ *VS* 7.1.4, ed. Goulet. For further information see "Maximus of Ephesus 21," *PLRE* I 583–584; R. Goulet, *Eunape de Sardes. Vies de Philosophes et de Sophistes* I (Paris 2014) 548–550.

who settled in Alexandria and taught there, and Nymphidianus, who acquired great fame as a sophist in Smyrna.

The other is in the life of Nymphidianus of Smyrna:³⁰

Νυμφιδιανὸς δὲ ἦν μὲν ἐκ Σμύρνης, Μάξιμος δὲ ἦν ὁ φιλόσοφος ἀδελφὸς αὐτῷ, καὶ Κλαυδιανὸς ἕτερος, φιλοσοφῶν καὶ αὐτὸς ἄριστα.

Nymphidianus was from Smyrna. The philosopher Maximus was one of his brothers; another was Claudianus, himself an eminent philosopher.

This Claudianus is presented as an excellent philosopher who lived in Alexandria in the mid-fourth century. He had two brothers: the philosopher Maximus, very close to the emperor Julian, and the sophist Nymphidianus, the head of a school of rhetoric in Smyrna.³¹ According to Janiszewski, this philosopher corresponds to the author mentioned by the scholion: “he meets all the requirements to be the author of Πάτρια Θαρσοῦ, Πάτρια Ἀναζάρβου, Πάτρια Βηρύτου, Πάτρια Νικαίας.”³²

Such confidence can be called into question. Although the identification of the philosopher Claudianus with the implied earlier namesake of Claudian is not impossible, it is also artificial. Other namesakes lived before the Latin author: for the fourth century, although one could look earlier still, the *Suda* could refer to a military prefect of Egypt,³³ or to one of the friends of Libanius.³⁴ Moreover, it would be difficult to consider the writer of four *patria* a philosopher: that genre was matter for professional poets, not for professors of philosophy.³⁵

4. There is in fact a better candidate for the patriographer Claudianus: a poet who flourished under Theodosius II. In the

³⁰ *VS* 18.1.1. For further information see “Nymphidianus,” *PLRE* I 636.

³¹ According to some scholars, he could be the father or the grandfather of the ‘younger’ Claudian: see “Claudianus 2,” *PLRE* I 207.

³² *Missing Link* 311.

³³ “Claudianus 5,” *PLRE* I 207.

³⁴ *Ep.* 1437.

³⁵ Cf. Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 1–35.

first book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Evagrius Scholasticus briefly presents the foreign policy of the emperor. At the end of the summary, he adds:³⁶

τότε φασὶ καὶ Κλαυδιανὸν καὶ Κῦρον τοὺς ποιητὰς ἀναδειχθῆναι, Κῦρον δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὸν μέγιστον τῶν ὑπάρχων ἀναβῆναι θρόνον, ὃν ὑπαρχον τῆς αὐλῆς οἱ πρὸ ἡμῶν κεκλήκασι, καὶ τῶν ἐσπερίων ἐξηγήσασθαι δυνάμεων, Καρχηδόνοϛ ὑπὸ Βανδύλων κρατηθείσης Γιζερίχου τε τῶν βαρβάρων ἡγουμένου.

Then, they say, both poets Claudian and Cyrus were conspicuous: Cyrus even ascended to the highest seat of the prefects, which our predecessors have called the prefect of the court, and commanded the western forces when the Vandals conquered Carthage and Geiseric was the head of the barbarians.

Along with the poet Cyrus of Panopolis,³⁷ Evagrius names a Claudianus who can be identified neither with the Latin poet (who died ca. 404, whereas Theodosius became emperor in 408), nor with the Alexandrian philosopher (who lived in the preceding century).

Felix Jacoby considers this passage to be a testimony on the author of *patria*: he presents it along with the scholion of the *Anthology*, and uses it to date Claudianus to the first half of the fifth century.³⁸ This interpretation was supported by Wolfgang Schmid,³⁹ but, as already noted, not by Cameron, according to whom Evagrius' text refers to Claudian. Evagrius links the poet to Cyrus without further clarification; this "suggests that he was writing of a famous poet" who did not need any introduction. Who was more famous than Claudian, the court poet of Honorius for almost ten years? Cameron explains the wrong

³⁶ *HE* 1.19.17–22 (ed. Bizet) = *FGrHist* 282 T 2.

³⁷ For further information about Cyrus see D. J. Constantelos, "Kyros Panopolites, Rebuilder of Constantinople," *GRBS* 12 (1971) 451–464; Miguélez-Cavero, *Poems in Context* 29–31; P. W. Van den Horst, "Cyrus: A Forgotten Poet," *G&R* 59 (2012) 193–201; Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 37–64.

³⁸ Jacoby ad *FGrHist* 282 (p.366). Karl Müller did not include Claudianus in *FHG*.

³⁹ W. Schmid, "Claudianus II," *RAC* 3 (1957) 168–169.

dating to the reign of Theodosius as a mistake of Evagrius: he wrote two centuries later and showed his uncertainty about chronology through the vague φασί, “they say.”⁴⁰

In order to assess Cameron’s critics, the presentation of Claudianus and Cyrus needs to be understood in its context in Evagrius. Before introducing the two poets, Evagrius writes (*HE* 1.19.13–16):

ἄπερ ἱστόρηται μὲν καὶ ἄλλοις, ἐπιτέμνεται δὲ εὖ μάλα κομψῶς
καὶ Εὐσταθίῳ τῷ ἐξ Ἐπιφανείας τῷ Σύρῳ, ὃς καὶ τὴν ἄλωσιν
Ἀμίδης συνεγράψατο.

These things have been narrated by others, but have been abbreviated with great elegance by Eustathius the Syrian from Epiphaneia, who narrated also the capture of Amida.

This passage refers to authors who have described the imperial policy of Theodosius II. The φασί of 1.19.17 can be linked to them, namely to Eustathius of Epiphaneia and the sources he summarized.⁴¹ Given how important Cyrus’ position was between 439 and 441 (when he was prefect of Constantinople and of the East), the fact that works describing the policy of those years mention him is not difficult to explain. Claudianus supposedly was named with him because of the poetic profession they shared. I would not attribute the limited information in our passage to the great fame of Claudian: Cyrus was a great and famous author as well (above all in the Greek East),⁴² but Evagrius gives a lot of information about him. The scanty mention of Claudianus probably reflects the original imbalance in Evagrius’ sources.

As regards Evagrius’ uncertainty (which should justify the anachronistic citation of Claudian), there is something to add. According to Michael Whitby, Evagrius’ “vague awareness of

⁴⁰ Cameron, *Claudian* 8.

⁴¹ For an introduction to Eustathius see C. Marksches, “Eustathius [8],” *New Pauly Online* (2006).

⁴² Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 37–40.

fifth-century affairs”⁴³ is shown “by his description of the prominent Christians, Isidore and Synesius (i.15), and the poets, Claudian and Cyrus (i.19), of whom only the last in fact flourished during the period covered by the *History*.”⁴⁴ In order to verify that, it is necessary to quote Evagrius’ text (1.15):

ἐπὶ τῆς αὐτῆς διέπρεπε βασιλείας καὶ Ἰσίδωρος, οὗ κλέος εὐρὸν κατὰ τὴν ποίησιν, ἔργῳ τε καὶ λόγῳ παρὰ πᾶσι διαβόητος· ὃς οὕτω μὲν τὴν σάρκα τοῖς πόνοις ἐξέτηξεν, οὕτω δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς ἀναγωγικοῖς ἐπίανε λόγοις, ὡς ἀγγελικὸν ἐπὶ γῆς μετελθεῖν βίον, στήλην τε ζῶσαν διὰ παντὸς εἶναι βίου τε μοναδικοῦ καὶ τῆς εἰς θεὸν θεωρίας. γέγραπται δ’ οὖν αὐτῷ πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἕτερα πάσης ὠφελείας ἔμπλεα· γέγραπται δὲ καὶ πρὸς Κύριλλον τὸν ἀοίδιμον, ἐξ ὧν μάλιστα δείκνυται τοῦ θεσπεσίου συνακμάσαι τοῖς χρόνοις. ταῦτά μοι κομψῶς ὡς δυνατὸν πονουμένῳ, φέρε καὶ Συνέσιος ὁ Κυρηναῖος εἰς μέσον ἠκέτω τῇ οἰκείᾳ μνήμῃ κοσμήσων τὴν διάλεξιν. οὗτος ὁ Συνέσιος ἦν μὲν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα λόγιος, φιλοσοφίαν δὲ οὕτως ἐς τὸ ἀκρότατον ἐξήσκησεν ὡς καὶ παρὰ Χριστιανῶν θαυμασθῆναι τῶν μὴ προσπαθείᾳ ἢ ἀντιπαθείᾳ κρινόντων τὰ ὀρώμενα. πείθουσι δ’ οὖν αὐτὸν τῆς σωτηριώδους παλιγγενεσίας ἀξιοθῆναι καὶ τὸν ζυγὸν τῆς ἱερωσύνης ὑπελθεῖν, οὕτω τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀναστάσεως παραδεχόμενον οὐδὲ δοξάζειν ἐθέλοντα, εὐθυβόλως εὖ μάλα στοχασάμενοι ὡς ταῖς ἄλλαις τάνδρὸς ἀρεταῖς ἔψεται καὶ ταῦτα, τῆς θείας χάριτος μηδὲν ἐλλειπὲς ἔχειν ἀνεχομένης· καὶ οὐκ ἐμεύσθησαν τῆς ἐλπίδος. οἷος γὰρ καὶ ὅσος γέγονε, τεκμηριοῦσι μὲν αἱ κομψῶς αὐτῷ καὶ λογίως μετὰ τὴν ἱερωσύνην πεποιημένοι ἐπιστολαί, ὅ τε πρὸς αὐτὸν Θεοδοσίον προσφωνητικὸς λόγος, καὶ ὅσα τῶν ἐκείνου χρηστῶν φέρεται πόνων.

In the same reign Isidore was conspicuous too: as a poet would say, his glory spread and he was universally celebrated by deed and word. To such an extent he wasted his flesh by penance and fed his soul with the divine teachings, that the angelic life he lived on earth became a living monument to the monastic life and the contemplation of God. He has written a lot of various

⁴³ M. Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool 2000) 47 n.169.

⁴⁴ Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History* XXXII.

works, which are full of every usefulness. He has written also against the famous Cyril: these writings reveal that he was a contemporary of the divine man. Since I try to make my account as pleasant as possible, let me introduce on the scene Synesius of Cyrene: indeed, his memory embellishes the narrative. This Synesius was, in every respect, an erudite man, but excelled at philosophy so much that he was admired even by the Christians, who do not judge what they see by favor or aversion. They accordingly persuaded him to receive baptism and to take upon himself the yoke of the priesthood, even if he was not yet believing the doctrine of the resurrection or wishing to believe. They rightly guessed that this would follow the other virtues of the man, since the divine grace refuses to leave anything uncompleted. Their hope was not disappointed. Indeed, the letters he elegantly and learnedly composed after the priesthood, the speech addressed to Theodosius himself, and those of his worthy labors that are in circulation witness his nature and greatness.

As the passage reveals, the two Christians are cited without any reference to intermediary sources, whereas Claudianus and Cyrus in 1.19 are introduced in a quotation. This demonstrates that the two pairs of authors are not linked to each other. In other words, if Isidore and Synesius were out of place in the reign of Theodosius, it would not mean that Cyrus and Claudianus were likewise. Deducing the displacement of Claudianus from that of Isidore and Synesius is methodologically incorrect.

Furthermore, analysis of the two Christians shows that the only one in the list who is misdated is Synesius of Cyrene. He lived between 370 and 413, too early to spend many years under the reign of Theodosius. A hypothetical reason for this wrong insertion is revealed by Evagrius: in listing the works of the bishop, he also mentions a speech addressed to Theodosius (ὁ τε πρὸς αὐτὸν Θεοδοσίον προσφωνητικὸς λόγος). This λόγος supposedly corresponds to the extant speech εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα περὶ βασιλείας (*To the Emperor on Kingship*), composed between 397 and 400 and delivered, during an embassy, before Arcadius.⁴⁵ In spite of the true addressee, “two extant man-

⁴⁵ For a general introduction see J. Lamoureux and N. Aujoulat, *Synésios*

uscripts do [...] name the addressee as Theodosius, and a *lemma* specifies that this was Theodosius I. Evagrius presumably believed that it was addressed to Theodosius II.”⁴⁶

The other Christian named with Synesius is Isidore of Pelusium, abbot of a monastery near the Delta between 400 and 440.⁴⁷ Since Theodosius ruled from 408 to 450, why should the two not be considered contemporaries? They shared at least thirty-three years. Evagrius himself notes that the abbot wrote against the patriarch Cyril of Alexandria, whose connections with the court of Theodosius are well attested.⁴⁸

In conclusion, the inaccuracy of Evagrius on the reign of Theodosius II is not very great: out of a list of four persons, just one is surely wrong, and we can explain why this is the case. Concerning Claudianus, the only obstacle to accepting him in the list is the identification with the poet Claudian proposed by Cameron. As we have seen, that need not be the case. Claudianus could be a different author, contemporary with Theodosius, and all the difficulties would disappear. Accordingly, the hypothesis of Jacoby should be accepted. Dating Claudianus to the fifth century would permit us to consider him the author of the epigrams of the *Anthology*. In other words, it would confirm what the lemmatist wrote. But there is more. As I shall argue, given the features of the period and the urban development of the Roman East, the idea of an author writing *patria* of Tarsus, Anazarbus, Berytus, and Nicaea in the reign of Theodosius II is particularly tempting.

5. The cultural life of the reign of Theodosius II has often been neglected. The church historians presented the court and the

de Cyrène V (Paris 2008) 1–82.

⁴⁶ Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History* 42 n.151.

⁴⁷ For further information see P. Evieux, *Isidore de Péluse* (Paris 1995).

⁴⁸ Note e.g. the management of the Nestorian controversy: N. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London/New York 2000) 31–58; F. Miller, *A Greek Roman Empire. Power and Belief under Theodosius II* (Berkeley 2006) 149–167.

family of the emperor as a “quasi-monastic institution”⁴⁹ and that image has been accepted by many scholars.⁵⁰ But things were quite different. As Arnaldo Momigliano notes, the court of the emperor was “one of the most impressive intellectual circles of the ancient world.”⁵¹ His view is echoed by Cameron himself: “the age of Theodosius II was the first for many centuries in which literature had either received or looked for encouragement at court on large scale.”⁵² Such a great literary development is not due only to the ‘classicizing’ attitude of Theodosius’ wife Eudocia, as some scholars assumed in the past:⁵³ instead, it is the result of a longer process, starting already with Theodosius the Great and his son Arcadius, under whose reigns Constantinople became the real center of the Roman East.⁵⁴ Theodosius II carried on with the process: the foundation of the *Pandidakterion* in 425 is a good example.⁵⁵ Thanks to the great number of grammarians, rhetoricians, and poets who came to Constantinople between the late fourth and the early fifth century, the imperial city could soon boast supremacy over Alexandria and Athens, the greatest cultural centers of the eastern empire.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ P. Van Nuffelen, “Olympiodorus of Thebes and Eastern Triumphalism,” in G. Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II. Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2013) 130–152, at 136.

⁵⁰ Cf. G. Kelly, “Rethinking Theodosius,” in *Theodosius II* 3–64, esp. 3–6, 42–64.

⁵¹ *Quinto contributo alla storia degli studi classici* (Rome 1975) 85.

⁵² *Wandering Poets* 65.

⁵³ Cf. Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 301 n.91.

⁵⁴ Cf. L. Grig and G. Kelly, “From Rome to Constantinople,” in *Two Romes* 3–30, at 17.

⁵⁵ For a panoramic overview of Greek literature between the end of the fourth century and the first half of the sixth see M. Whitby, “Writing in Greek: Classicism and Compilation, Interaction and Transformation,” in *Theodosius II* 195–218.

⁵⁶ Cf. P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004) 2–3.

This vibrant cultural context makes the connection of our four *patria* with these years quite attractive. Following Cameron, one could object that the reign of Theodosius was not eminent for its poetry.⁵⁷ However, the absence of testimonies does not signify the absence of authors: this is particularly true for the age of Theodosius, the literary life of which is not well documented. In describing the cultural context of fifth-century Panopolis, Cameron alludes to “dozens of lesser Panopolitans, unknown to us [...], travelling from city to city in the search for fame and fortune.”⁵⁸ Two of these obscure poets are the panegyrist Aurelius Harpocraton, who was in the imperial *comitatus*, and his nephew Apollon, known only from the testimony of papyri.⁵⁹ Other poets flourished in the age of Theodosius: the already noted Cyrus, famous poet and powerful member of the court; the empress Eudocia, who wrote an epic on the Persian campaigns, a Homeric cento, a paraphrase of Daniel and Zechariah, and a poem on Saint Cyprian;⁶⁰ the historian Olympiodorus, who presented himself as a “professional poet”;⁶¹ finally, Eusebius Scholasticus and Ammonius, authors of two epics on the revolt of Gainas.⁶² Maybe the age of Theodosius was not as full of poets as the later reigns of Zeno and Anastasius, but this does not mean that an author of *patria* could not have found a place there.

The subject of the *patria* gives further elements to reconstruct the context and the activity of Claudianus. The choice of the cities is meaningful. During the reign of Theodosius all four

⁵⁷ A. Cameron, “The Empress and the Poet: Paganism and Politics at the Court of Theodosius II,” *JCS* 27 (1982) 217–290, at 281–282.

⁵⁸ Cameron, *JCS* 27 (1982) 218.

⁵⁹ *P. Ammon* I, esp. 6, 7, 13. Cf. Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 3; Miguélez-Cavero, *Poems in Context* 6, 83.

⁶⁰ Cf. P. Van Deun, “The Poetical Writings of the Empress Eudocia: An Evaluation,” in J. Den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (eds.), *Early Christian Poetry* (Leiden 1993) 273–282.

⁶¹ Phot. *Bibl.* 80: ποιητής, ὡς αὐτός φησι, τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα.

⁶² Soc. *HE* 6.6.35–37.

were affected by imperial policy. The reform of the provinces that the emperor launched in 408 made Tarsus and Anazarbus the capitals of Cilicia Prima and Cilicia Secunda,⁶³ and the latter city was seat of two councils, in 431 and 435. Between 448 and 450, Berytus obtained the official title of *μητρόπολις*.⁶⁴ The movements of the court between Constantinople and Ancyra, where Theodosius (like his father Arcadius) used to spend the summer, provided great wealth to Nicaea: the city was indeed situated midway between the two residences and the emperor was often there.⁶⁵ The writing of *patria* could reflect these changes. The texts reveal a heightened interest in the antiquities of these four eastern cities: this renewed attention can be related to their present prestige. The reign of Theodosius and its administrative reforms offer an excellent background to this need.⁶⁶

6. What emerges from the analysis of the testimonies concerning Claudianus is the portrait of a typical exponent of fifth-century culture: a Greek *poète de circonstance*, active in the eastern empire. Like other poets of the period, he made a literary career composing poetry for public occasions, offering his services to the cities, the aristocrats, and the imperial officials.⁶⁷ He devoted his *patria* to four cities involved in the movements and the reforms of the imperial court between 408 and 450. These works can be taken as outcomes of the new political role of Tarsus, Anazarbus, and Berytus, and the economic and social boom of Nicaea. He achieved such a great success that he was compared to the powerful and famous poet Cyrus, protégé of the empress Eudocia and counselor of Theodosius

⁶³ M. H. Sayar, "Anazarbos," *Neue Pauly* 1 (1996) 675–676.

⁶⁴ L. Jones Hall, *Roman Berytus* (London/New York 2004) 107–108.

⁶⁵ C. Foss, *Nicaea. A Byzantine Capital and its Praises* (Brookline 1996) 12.

⁶⁶ The connection between the urbanistic evolution of the eastern empire and the late antique production of *patria* can be proved by other examples. I will expand on this topic elsewhere.

⁶⁷ Cf. Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 15–21.

II. This made Evagrius Scholasticus quote him as one of the most famous poets of the Theodosian age. In spite of his success, his poems are lost, suffering the same fate as other *patria*. Given the local focus of these compositions, their loss is not surprising.⁶⁸ However, some of his epigrams have survived in the *Greek Anthology*.⁶⁹ The knowledge of the *patria* came—somehow—to the lemmatist of the *Anthology*. He quoted them in his scholion and permitted modern scholars to (re)discover a lost voice of the Theodosian age.⁷⁰

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⁶⁸ Cf. Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 165–166.

⁶⁹ If the ‘Nonnian’ epigrams are of the poet quoted by Evagrius, that supplies a new *terminus ante quem* for the poems of Nonnus, namely the reign of Theodosius II (408–450).

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