

SYLVAIN DESTEPHEN

## The Funerary Epigraphic Landscape of Late Antique *Asia Minor*

### Introduction

The creation of burial spaces is consubstantial to humankind, but in Antiquity inscribing texts associated to tombs was a common practice only in the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> Production of epitaphs steadily increased in the Greek world from the classical period onwards and spread across the Roman Empire. Half a million Greek and Latin inscriptions, mainly epitaphs, attest to a cultural phenomenon of great chronological and geographical dimensions. In the regions under Roman rule, the epigraphic habit became a characteristic of the middle and upper classes, who were concerned with perpetuating the remembrance and descentance of the dead. Even though funerary inscriptions were sometimes modest, the ‘materiality of mourning’ rarely expressed a lower social position.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the great majority of the Roman world’s population, who were poor and illiterate, were buried without epitaphs. Consequently, the distribution and numbers of funerary inscriptions can be deceptive, since they show an epigraphic practice which was geographically widespread, but socially more limited. Inscriptions were clearly present in public space in the form of official texts inscribed on behalf of rulers, but they were much more present in private space with a huge number of funerary inscriptions that far exceeded all other categories of inscriptions. For instance, according to an inventory made at the beginning of the last century, epitaphs represented about two-thirds of the Hellenistic and Roman inscriptions of *Kyzikos* on the Propontis.<sup>3</sup> This flourishing Greek city is exemplary in the constant dominance of funerary inscriptions but, of course, this imbalance is not specific to Greek epigraphy nor limited to *Asia Minor*. The present study will focus on Greek funerary inscriptions of Late Antique *Asia Minor* in the period of sustained epigraphic production from the 3rd until the mid-6th c. AD. Indeed, *Asia Minor* is the region of the Roman East where inscribing texts remained vigorous for the longest period. Epigraphic resilience gives

- 1 For having emended this paper I want to express my gratitude towards Michael Featherstone and Stephen Mitchell.
- 2 NEWBY/TOULSON 2019.
- 3 HASLUCK 1910, 263–295; HABICHT 2014; more broadly MITCHELL 2017a, 276f. Sadly, the epigraphic corpus of *Kyzikos* is still incomplete, and one relies upon the volumes edited by Elmar Schwertheim (I. *Kyzikos*; I. *Miletupolis*). An updating, comprehensive edition of the inscriptions of *Kyzikos* is greatly needed and waited. See already comments and corrections of ROBERT/ROBERT 1980, 432–442.

evidence of social stability and provides a unique opportunity to examine the evolution of epitaphs on the basis of extensive documentation. After a brief examination of the main characteristics of funerary inscriptions in Late Antique *Asia Minor*, the paper will examine changes in the decoration and text of epitaphs which document religious and funerary transformations in later Roman society.

### Changes in *Asia Minor's* Late Antique Epigraphy

Dominance of funerary epigraphy was reinforced in Late Antiquity as the Roman epigraphic habit underwent a number of major alterations. It is unnecessary to repeat the topic of a previous paper presented at the 49th symposium of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies held in Oxford in March 2016, and I shall limit myself to briefly recalling the main conclusions of this research devoted to a phenomenon that I have called the process of 'Byzantinisation' of Late Antique epigraphy.<sup>4</sup> The evolution can be characterised by five major features that explain why funerary inscriptions represented a huge part of the epigraphic production in Late Antiquity. The first major feature is a global, irreversible and definitive decrease of the inscriptions produced in the later Roman Empire compared to the previous period. Examination of the corpus of inscriptions of any part of *Asia Minor* reveals a dramatic decrease in epigraphic production. Every city was affected, even the largest cities of *Ionia* and *Caria* such as *Ephesos*, *Smyrna*, *Miletos* and *Aphrodisias* (Fig. 1). The number of inscriptions produced from the 4th to the 7th c. AD was modest compared to the texts inscribed during the Hellenistic and above all Roman period. The latter can be truly regarded as the epigraphic golden age of *Asia Minor* and spanned the 1st to the 3rd c. AD.<sup>5</sup> Generally speaking, whatever the region or city under scrutiny, inscriptions produced in Late Antiquity represent only 5 to 10 % of all texts inscribed in Antiquity: the decrease was therefore steep and impressive.<sup>6</sup>

The spectacular and definitive decline of inscriptions was not limited to *Asia Minor*, far from it. In a previous paper published in 2011, I studied the geographical and chronological distribution of Latin and Greek inscriptions in the Central Balkans, that is, from the Adriatic and Thrace to the Danube Valley and Higher Macedonia.<sup>7</sup> According to a careful examination of local corpora of inscriptions

4 DESTEPHEN 2020.

5 In *Ephesos*, among 2590 Greek and Latin inscriptions, 210 were inscribed in Late Antiquity; in *Smyrna*, 45 out of 905 inscriptions belong to the same period; in *Miletos*, 65 out of 1580; in *Aphrodisias*, 254 out of 1703. Counting are based upon I. Aphrodisias Late Ant.; I. Ephesos; I. Milet; I. Smyrna.

6 Many more figures and examples are provided by MITCHELL 2017a, 273–275.

7 DESTEPHEN 2011. See also the remarkable, pioneering survey of GEROV 1980; for archaeological evidence of Late Antique tombs (including some inscriptions) see the contribution VALEVA in this volume.

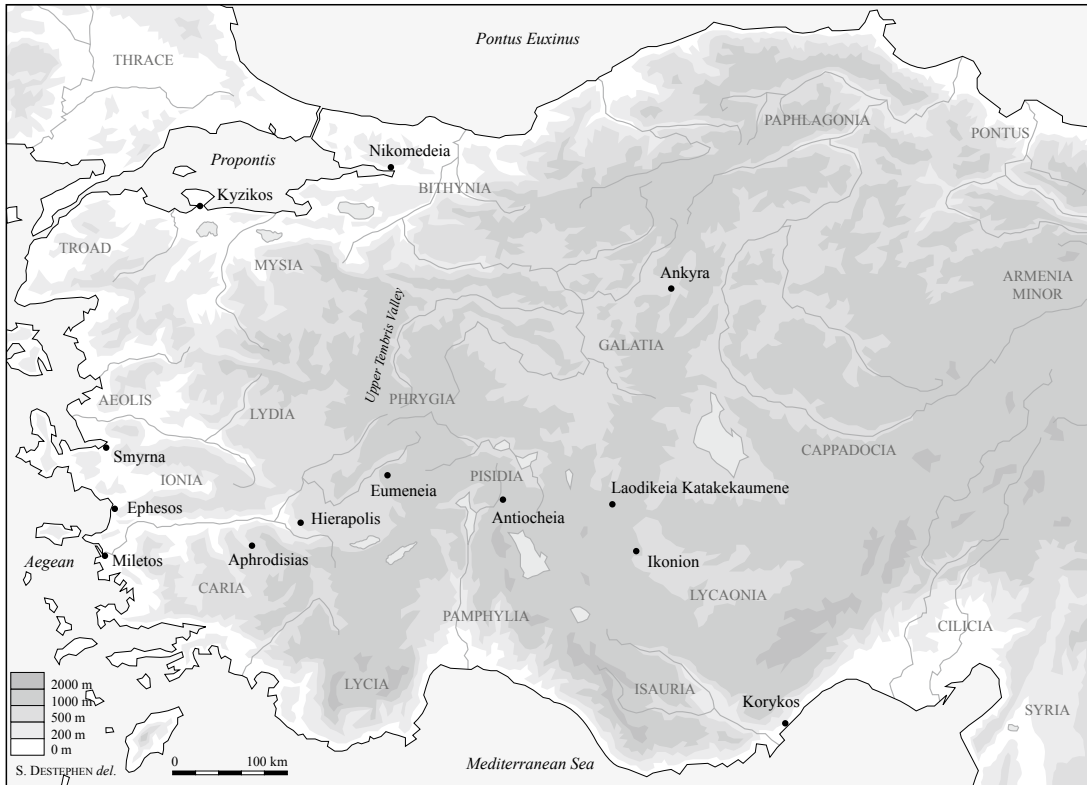


Fig. 1: Map of *Asia Minor*.

and main epigraphic and archaeological journals, I was able to count and locate some 1600 Latin inscriptions and about 3300 Greek texts inscribed on stone from the time of Augustus, who definitively seized personal power in 27 BC, to the Severan dynasty, which ended in 235 AD. For the Late Antique period in the same region, I counted about 135 Latin inscriptions and some 500 Greek inscriptions: Latin epigraphic production was diminished to a twelfth and Greek to a sixth in volume. This striking difference can be explained by the scale and location of the barbarian invasions, which primarily plagued Latin-speaking Danubian provinces, whilst Greek-speaking regions were relatively less affected though by no means spared.<sup>8</sup> If the considerable drop in epigraphic production in the Balkans can be explained by insecurity, on the other hand, *Asia Minor* also experienced a significant plunge in the number of inscriptions, even though it was less affected by attack and sacking by rampaging barbarians. Since the political and military situation will not suffice to explain the general decline of the Roman epigraphic habit, we must look for other explanations.

<sup>8</sup> The political and military situation of the Balkans in Late Antiquity has been investigated by BAVANT 2004, 320–341; SARANTIS 2016.

It is worth noting that in Late Antiquity inscriptions became rarer in the Central Balkans and increasingly expressed the position and view of privileged citizens. This phenomenon is perceptible across the Roman Empire and evidenced in *Asia Minor*. I shall call this second feature the ‘elitisation’ of Late Antique epigraphy. We have seen in the introduction of this paper that inscribing inscriptions, even funerary, remained a social and cultural practice limited to the socially and culturally privileged part of the Graeco-Roman population in *Asia Minor*. In Late Antiquity, epigraphic decrease affected the upper classes to a lesser degree, since they became proportionally more conspicuous. Public and private inscriptions displayed municipal elites, officials of the Roman State, which was more bureaucratic than previously, and membership in the senatorial order that had increased. Elitisation of Late Antique inscriptions also took on a spatial dimension as epigraphic production tended to be concentrated in some urban centres where the civil elite lived and remained attached to the social practice of epigraphy. The third characteristic of Late Antique inscriptions is directly related to the process of elitisation: a strong and distinctive inclination to epigrams. I shall call this phenomenon the ‘metrification’ of Late Antique epigraphy. The later Roman ruling class had versified honorary and funerary inscriptions commissioned with an unprecedented passion. Poetry on stone was an important cultural marker that reflected the Late Antique elite’s strong attachment, at least in form, to classical literature.<sup>9</sup> However, it should be noted that versified inscriptions were rare compared to the great amount of prose inscriptions.

Christianisation and standardisation are the last two main characteristics of Late Antique epigraphy and had a direct influence on the funerary epigraphy treated in this study. *Asia Minor* shares with the city of Rome the particularity of preserving the largest corpus of early Christian inscriptions. Here, ‘early Christian’ refers precisely to the period before the Roman State legalised Christianity. I have counted in *Asia Minor* about 280 inscriptions prior to the emperor Constantine, to which Norbert Zimmermann has added a dozen more in *Ephesos*, Roger Bagnall three or four in *Smyrna*, and Peter Thonemann half a dozen in *Phrygia*.<sup>10</sup> The quantity of early Christian inscriptions, almost all epitaphs, proves the precociousness and extent of the process of Christianisation in *Asia Minor*. Due to this unusual religious context, it is hardly surprising to note, from Constantine’s rule onwards, a remarkable expansion of Christian inscriptions with a strong presence of Christian clergy. This is a collateral aspect of the elitisation of Late Antique epigraphy. The final characteristic of inscriptions of Late Antiquity is an increasing standardisation, although this term is not quite satisfactory. Whilst there was a large array and great

<sup>9</sup> DESTEPHEN 2020, 25–28.

<sup>10</sup> DESTEPHEN 2010a; ZIMMERMANN 2011, 402–404; ZIMMERMANN 2016, 751–753; BAGNALL et al. 2016, 45–47; MAMA XI nos 37, 41, 44, 82, 139, 150, 164 (nos 17, 40, 165, 177 and 181 may be early Christian or Jewish inscriptions). See also TABBERNEE 2013, 287–301; MITCHELL 2014.

diversity of Hellenistic and early Roman inscriptions – even though we have seen that epitaphs already represented the bulk of the epigraphic production in these periods – epigraphic diversity considerably decreased during the last centuries of Antiquity in favour of epitaphs. Imperial, municipal and public inscriptions diminished considerably, except in a few metropolises such as *Ephesos* in *Ionia*, *Aphrodisias* in *Caria* or *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia*.<sup>11</sup> In most cities, epitaphs represent more than 90 % of the preserved Late Antique inscriptions. In other words, studying inscriptions of Late Antiquity mainly involves dealing with funerary inscriptions. Obviously, epitaphs were not the longest, most sophisticated nor decorative texts on stone, but they formed the epigraphic landscape that surrounded the men and women of Late Antiquity in *Asia Minor*.

## Religious Perspectives

First of all, we must recall that followers of traditional cults (i.e. the pagan religion according to the Christian phraseology in Latin) did not express religious beliefs on epitaphs or did so occasionally with the words θεοῖς καταχθονίοις, which are the Greek equivalent of the Latin words *dis manibus* (*sacrum*), ‘consecrated to the gods Manes’. This epigraphic formula was exceptionally widespread in the Latin-speaking provinces and in the Greek-speaking provinces close to the Latin world, but it was quite exceptional in *Asia Minor*. Consequently, ordinary epitaphs of *Asia Minor* had no religious flavour at all. As everyone was faithful to the traditional cults, it was pointless to mention this on tombstones. In this regard, Christians were different from the rest of their neighbours, whom they considered to be ‘Hellenes’ in the Greek-speaking half of the Roman world. Religious affiliation was discreetly manifested on epitaphs by particular formulas, symbols or names which had become blatantly Christian in the Constantinian period and even more so from the Theodosian dynasty onwards. Before this, the assertion of a conspicuous Christian identity appeared only on some epitaphs in *Phrygia* (Upper Tembris Valley and region of *Eumenia*) and *Lycaonia* (region of *Ikonion*) at the end of the 2nd and during the 3rd c. AD. The increase of such epitaphs would provide compelling evidence that the new religion rapidly expanded in these regions before the Roman State authorised it.<sup>12</sup> However, openly Christian inscriptions, which some historians called ‘phanerochristian’ inscriptions, remained rare before Constantine’s reign, except in *Phrygia* and *Lycaonia*.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, in the rest of the Roman world (Rome and its suburbs excepted), the confessionalisation of Christian gravestones was an

11 See FEISSEL 1999; ROUECHÉ 1989; ROUECHÉ 2009; RITTI 2017.

12 MITCHELL 1993, 58–62.

13 GIBSON 1978; CHIRICAT 2013. Adjective “phanerochristian” was coined by CALDER 1922–1923, and more recently reused by several scholars, for instance MCKECHNIE 1999, 439. However, the term seems to have little success in epigraphic and historical scholarship.

epigraphic phenomenon that appeared mainly in the 4th c. AD and became widespread only in the 5th to 6th c. AD.

For all these reasons, the study of the Christianisation process of funerary epigraphy in *Asia Minor* requires one to seek reliable chronological clues, an arduous task. Already before Constantine, funerary inscriptions in *Asia Minor* rarely used provincial eras and Roman and Macedonian calendars were often ignored. Therefore, the precise dating of an epitaph is in most cases impossible. In Late Antiquity, time reckoning in inscriptions according to the system established by the emperor Diocletian spread progressively, especially from Justinian's reign onwards, most in public inscriptions, though not exclusively.<sup>14</sup> In the case of epitaphs, dating relies upon more uncertain criteria: palaeography remains a useful but risky method due to distinct and diachronic epigraphic traditions which coexisted and endured in *Asia Minor*. *Nomina gentilicia* are more interesting, as they disappeared after the 4th c. AD with the exception of the *nomen gentilicium* Flavius, which was related to the Roman ruling class from Constantine until the end of the early Byzantine period.<sup>15</sup> As the funerary formula *μνήμης χάριν*, 'in remembrance', predated Christianity and was usually associated with the deceased who bore a *nomen gentilicium*, it is hazardous to date an epitaph with this formula after the 4th c. AD.

The presence of *μνήμης χάριν* on Christian tombstones shows the persistence of a non-denominational formulaic language in early Christian epigraphy, although the letter *chi* of *χάριν* could sometimes be replaced by a discreet cross in some Christian communities of southern *Lycaonia*.<sup>16</sup> As conversion to Christianity was spreading, a more distinctive religious phraseology developed on epitaphs in *Asia Minor* as in the rest of the Later Roman Empire. This is the case of the expression *ἐνθάδε κεῖται*, which enunciated Christian belief in carnal resurrection and eternal salvation from the 3rd c. AD onwards. Even though the same formula had already appeared here and there on pagan epitaphs, it became common in the 4th and 5th c. AD after the triumph of Christianity over traditional cults in Greek-speaking areas.<sup>17</sup> Both the standardisation and Christianisation of epitaphs, first limited and then generalised, also propelled the use of votive *formulae* addressed to divine or holy persons of Christianity (*Κύριε, Χριστέ, Θεοτόκε*, etc. *βοήθει*). Whilst early funerary *formulae* were neutral with regard to religion, these new votive *formulae* indicated the progressive and profound Christianisation of Late Antique epitaphs and the society which produced them. Using Christian funerary and votive *formulae* became flagrant from the Theodosian dynasty onwards.

However, the full standardisation of the funerary landscape was never achieved, as some Christian epitaphs were highlighted by several distinctive ele-

14 FEISSEL 1992, 394f.; FEISSEL 1995, 375–379.

15 KEENAN 1973; BAGNALL/CAMERON/SCHWARTZ 1987, 36–40; CAMERON 1988; SALWAY 1994, 137–140; BLANCO-PÉREZ 2016.

16 BREYTENBACH/ZIMMERMANN 2018, 18–20.

17 CARLETTI 2008, 139f.

ments: an elaborate decoration, a sophisticated language and biblical quotations. Elegant carved ornaments clearly indicated funeral expense, but it is worth noting that the fine early Christian door- or portico-shaped stelae found in *Phrygia* and *Lycaonia* disappeared as early as the fourth century.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, ornamentation was greatly reduced during the 5th and 6th c. AD to the point that even the *tabula ansata*, so common in the High Empire, became rare at the end of Antiquity. On the other hand, crosses of all shapes, especially Latin crosses, gradually spread throughout Christian epitaphs. First discreetly in the 3rd to 4th c. AD, and mostly limited to a single design on epitaphs, crosses progressively surfaced in every sort of inscription. As we have seen in epigraphic votive *formulae*, propagation of crosses also evidenced the full conversion of Late Antique society to Christianity. However, it was only from the 5th to 6th c. AD onwards that crosses multiplied on inscriptions, funerary and non-funerary alike, to the point that crosses preceded and ended texts and adorned names of divine, holy and even living or dead persons.<sup>19</sup> The systematic carving of crosses also manifested the increasing uniformity of Christian epigraphy.

Obviously, conversion of Late Antique society to Christianity did not suppress social and cultural distinctions which continued to appear on funerary monuments through the conspicuous selection of prestigious literary and scriptural references. We have already noted the abundant flowering of epigrams in Late Antiquity. The process of 'metrification' of Late Antique epigraphy reveals a claim to classical culture that manifested itself in using a poetic language borrowed from Homer with varying degrees of talent and inspiration. Versified epitaphs, either Christian or pagan, honorary or funerary, clearly belonged to a cultural and social elite. The four-volume corpus lavishly edited by Reinhold Merkelbach and Josef Stauber has shown how appreciated epigrams were among civil and religious elites alike: the upper class of Late Antique society and Church displayed and shared their delight in epigrams. The 250 or so Late Antique epigrams collected by R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber in *Asia Minor* are concentrated in provincial capitals where local aristocracy was settled and provide further evidence of epigraphic elitisation in Late Antiquity. However, epigrams became relatively rare after the 5th c. AD and quite exceptional after Justinian's demise.<sup>20</sup>

A final mark of distinction in Late Antique epigraphy was a conspicuous biblical culture displayed on stone. Antonio Felle edited in 2006 a fine corpus of inscriptions with biblical quotations that gives us a precise idea of the importance of the Bible

18 In-depth study of WAELKENS 1986; more recently LOCHMANN 2003; KELP 2013.

19 On early Christian inscriptions see DESTEPHEN 2010a, 165f. with the previous bibliography; on early Byzantine inscriptions, an overview had been provided by DESTEPHEN 2020, 23f.

20 SGO I–IV. On the relations between Late Antique epigrams and society, see AGOSTI 2006–2007; AGOSTI 2010. Regional overviews in THONEMANN 2014; SIRONEN 2017; ZIMMERMANN 2019.

in funerary epigraphy of *Asia Minor* as well as of the rest of the Roman world. Just as picking Homeric words or verses was reserved for a narrow socio-cultural elite, so biblical references appeared only on a small number of Christian epitaphs.<sup>21</sup> As biblical quotations were generally limited and strongly stereotyped, they were a kind of scriptural cliché and proved that the funerary standardisation affected all social strata, including the ecclesiastical hierarchy. However, the form, decoration and language of epitaphs specified the connection between the Late Antique funerary landscape and the social position of the dead.

## Funerary Perspectives

We have seen that funerary inscriptions, as all types of inscriptions, became far less numerous in Late Antiquity, but they represent the bulk of Late Antique inscriptions since the epigraphic plunge primarily affected public inscriptions. Unsurprisingly, this is also the situation in central Anatolia where the low density of population, at least until the mid-20th century, permitted the preservation of inscriptions in large numbers. By contrast, in densely populated areas on the Mediterranean coast, ancient epitaphs often disappeared because they were reused as building materials by urban and rural populations. Similarly, Late Antique epitaphs are now rare in large cities with a long history, such as *Smyrna* in *Ionia* or *Nikomedeia* in *Bithynia*.<sup>22</sup> Even in inland areas, especially if they were fertile, pervasive human presence and economic development have obliterated much of the funerary heritage of the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine periods. In Late Antiquity, in accordance with the long Graeco-Roman funerary tradition, burials were often situated on the outskirts of urban centres. As remoteness caused poor surveillance and encouraged theft, threats of fines and curses were repeatedly and ineffectively uttered against grave robbers until the 4th c. AD.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the small size and square shape of tombstones contributed to their displacement and destruction if necessary. For instance, in *Aphrodisias* of *Caria*, the ancient necropoleis that surrounded the city were turned into fields and vineyards. Tombstones were probably removed to facilitate agricultural work and reused as ready-made materials for utility buildings or dwellings. Nevertheless, the maintenance or elimination of ancient necropoleis can only be explained by local circumstances and does not reflect any overall phenomenon of systematic destruction or the epigraphic heritage. Therefore, the preservation or disappearance of epitaphs, sarcophagi and tombs reflects random situations.

21 FELLE 2006, 198–233.

22 Several essays dealing with ancient necropoleis and burial places of *Asia Minor* have been collected by BRANDT et al. 2017.

23 E.g. RITTI 2004, 539–548; HARTER-UIBOPUU 2014.



Consequently, most Late Antique epitaphs of *Asia Minor* are primarily found in regions that were abandoned, isolated or neglected in later Byzantine and Ottoman times. However, as the population has continued increasing in Anatolia since the second half of the 20th c., formerly preserved archaeological areas are now endangered by demographic growth and economic development. For instance, Antiocheia in *Pisidia* possessed an impressive archaeological and epigraphic heritage in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as evidenced by the notebooks of the epigraphist and biblical scholar William M. Ramsay (1851–1939).<sup>24</sup> But a great many of the inscriptions known to W. Ramsay are disappeared for good when one compares his notebooks with the corpus of inscriptions of *Antiocheia* in *Pisidia* published at the beginning of the 21st c.<sup>25</sup>

Thanks to the tireless and patient work of several generations of scholars, the scientific community has at its disposal thousands of Late Antique funerary inscriptions in *Asia Minor*. However, despite the high number of surviving epigraphic documents, Late Antique epitaphs give us just as distorted a picture of the Roman society as do the Hellenistic and Early Roman epitaphs. Though the process of elitisation is still evident on tombstones, the overall decrease in epigraphic production has made this more difficult in public inscriptions. Although epitaphs are modest monuments, and very modest indeed when made of tiles or fragments of stone, they were architectural and epigraphic expressions of relatively favoured social strata. In Anatolia, individuals known by Late Antique epitaphs belonged to the middle and upper classes of civic magistrates, landowners, soldiers, craftsmen and shopkeepers. However, the Anatolian municipal notability was modest compared to the glittering elite of the major urban centres of *Asia Minor*. It is no surprise that we find very few members of the senatorial order on epitaphs in the small cities of Late Antique Anatolia.<sup>26</sup>

Shall we assume that most of the dead known by epitaphs in small Anatolian cities belonged to the Late Antique middle or lower class? On the one hand, middle class is a rather anachronistic social category for Late Antiquity, and we should preferably speak of a local elite. On the other hand, we have seen that humble people, who were demographically dominant in Antiquity, are almost invisible on epitaphs. Moreover, in spite of its amplification in the 4th to 6th c. AD, the senatorial order was too small to be considered the only component of the upper class. This notion needs to be extended to all categories that locally exercised a socio-economic, political or cultural dominance. The high proportion of Christian clerics evidenced by inscriptions provides a relevant prosopographic clue which demonstrates that individuals known by Late Antique epitaphs mostly belonged to the local elite. The

24 RAMSAY 1916; RAMSAY 1918; RAMSAY 1924; RAMSAY 1926 (*inter alia*). See also CALDER 1912; ROBINSON 1925.

25 I. Antioche Pisidie Ramsay.

26 See the recent prosopographical, in-depth study of BEGASS 2018 on the eastern senatorial order in Late Antiquity.

*Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae* database, hosted by the Humboldt University in Berlin and part of the TOPOI project directed by Cilliers Breytenbach, is now available.<sup>27</sup> According to the database, which has been put online with an open access for several years now, about 10 % of some 4100 Late Antique inscriptions of *Phrygia* and *Lycaonia* refer to members of the Christian clergy. In the large Late Antique necropoleis of *Korykos* in *Cilicia*, 15 % of the Christian epitaphs were those of clerics.<sup>28</sup> In *Laodikeia Katakekaumene*, in the Eastern part of the province of *Pisidia*, 37 out of 99 Late Antique epitaphs name clerics, monks or nuns. In the most recent epigraphic corpus of *Ankyra* in *Galatia*, 10 % out of some 150 Late Antique and early Byzantine tombstones mention clerics. This social and religious peculiarity was not strictly related to any precociousness of Christianisation or density of episcopal sees in *Asia Minor*, for clerics are also overrepresented in Late Antique inscriptions of the Balkans and in many other regions of the Mediterranean.<sup>29</sup>

Compared to the early Roman period, the Late Antique epigraphic landscape was narrower, less varied, deeply religious and dominated by clerics. The fact that this religious elite was also a cultural elite is evidenced by the relatively high proportion of clerics' epitaphs with poetic allusions or quotations. The predilection for funerary epigrams was not exclusively limited to pagans or the Christian laity. Members of the Church, men and women alike, appeared in verse inscriptions imitating Homer or some more recent and fashionable poets.<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that poetic epitaphs are associated with higher grades of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, i.e. priests and deacons, though not bishops, and date mostly from early Late Antiquity.<sup>31</sup> Epitaphs of the highest clergy underwent a process of simplification which explains the increasing use of prose. Biblical quotations provide another epigraphic indication of a privileged cultural milieu, and obviously they are more present in epitaphs of clerics than those of laymen. Unlike versified epitaphs, which became rarer, biblical references multiplied on stone. Out of about 90 Late Antique inscriptions in *Asia Minor* with biblical quotations recorded by A. Felle, only a dozen were inscribed in the 4th to 5th c. AD. However, it should be noted that nearly half of the 90 inscriptions listed by A. Felle are undated.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, inscriptions with scriptural quotations were mainly related to places of worship, and clerics preferred prosaic epitaphs. The decoration of tombstones followed the same evolution

27 OGEREAU/HUTTNER 2019.

28 On *Korykos'* necropoleis see MACHATSCHEK 1967, 21–26; see also the contribution by CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.

29 See <http://repository.edition-topoi.org/collection/ICG> (06.06.2020) for *Phrygia* and *Lycaonia*; MAMA III for *Korykos*; MAMA I for *Laodikeia Katakekaumene (Pisidia)*; MITCHELL/FRENCH 2019, 123–246 for *Ankyra*; DESTEPHEN 2011, 140f. for the Balkans. For similar evidence from the Western Mediterranean see the contributions ARDELEANU, MERTEN, NUZZO and OSNABRÜGGE in this volume.

30 ZIMMERMANN 2019.

31 DESTEPHEN 2008, 293.

32 FELLE 2006, nos 118–138, 150–153, 417–469, 479–502.

towards greater plainness. In the age of Justinian, or perhaps as early as the Theodosian period, the epitaphs of clerics no longer differed from those of laymen: henceforth simplicity, brevity and repetitiveness prevailed.

However, epigraphic standardisation did not express any social levelling, and the Roman society was as strongly hierarchical in Late Antiquity as during the High Empire. Late Antique epitaphs, albeit simple and concise, remained visual and material expressions of respectability. For instance, in the necropoleis of *Korykos*, where some 600 Late Antique epitaphs have been preserved, this would represent some 3 % of the total population living in the city according to Sabine Hübner's hypothetical calculations, craftsmen and shopkeepers comprising the local socially dominant group.<sup>33</sup> There were of course also many clerics, since they played a key role in the Christianisation process of *Asia Minor*. In the time of Justinian, mass conversion was already completed and led to an unprecedented religious unity of population throughout the Mediterranean. In the field of funerary epigraphy, the 5th to 6th c. AD were characterised by simplification of decoration, disappearance of Homeric language, brevity of form, rise of abbreviations and use of crosses. It should be noted that the frequent use of crosses on tombstones was precocious in the early evangelised regions, such as the Anatolian plateau. In *Laodikeia (Phrygia)*, where most Christian epitaphs date from the 4th c. AD, 60 % already bore a cross. In the Late Antique necropoleis of *Korykos*, which yielded epitaphs mainly from the 5th to 6th c. AD, the proportion of funerary monuments with crosses reaches 85 %.<sup>34</sup> Epigraphic standardisation would appear formally to reduce social differences; but in fact, inscribing a stela, even a small, modest, repetitive one, remained a socially selective habit in Late Antiquity.

## Conclusion

In *Asia Minor*, Christianisation appears to be *the* characteristic of Late Antique society's evolution, although some scholars seek to reduce the scope of it by invoking other phenomena regarded as more important, such as the barbarian invasions or the militarisation and bureaucratisation of the later Roman State. More recently, climatic and epidemiological disasters have become more fashionable due to their thunderous contemporary resonance. However, in the field of funerary epigraphy, one has to admit that Christianity exerted a strong and undeniable influence on epitaphs: onomastics, biblical quotations and the representation of crosses give evidence of the complete religious conversion of the population of *Asia Minor*.

33 Thorough examination and previous bibliography in HÜBNER 2005, 81–120; more recently, economic evidence has been carefully studied by DREXHAGE 2012; see also the contribution CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.

34 MAMA I; MAMA III.

Christianity led to an extraordinary confessionalisation of epitaphs, whereas earlier tombstones had never mentioned traditional cults. The new religion was everywhere with ubiquitous crosses and spurred new funerary and votive *formulae* which constantly referred to rest, salvation and resurrection. As these Christian values and beliefs mostly relied upon individual behaviour, it is logical that Late Antique epitaphs differed from inscriptions of the High Empire by their mention of fewer and fewer dead people. Numerous relatives and extended families progressively vanished from funerary monuments and made way for standardised, individual Christian epitaphs.<sup>35</sup> The deceased were mentioned as members of a couple if they were adults or as related to parents if they were children. It is worth noting that, from Late Antiquity onwards, the number of epitaphs mentioning single individuals greatly increased whereas the epigraphic documentation was shrinking. As brief, individual epitaphs already existed in classical times, one might ask whether Late Antiquity marks less an epigraphic decline than a return to a greater simplicity on epitaphs. In any case, a radical difference appeared in the Christian funerary inscriptions at the end of Late Antiquity: the exclusive relationship which now united the faithful to God. Individuality disappeared in favour of confession.

## Corresponding Address

Prof. Dr. Sylvain Destephen  
 Université de Paris Nanterre  
 Département d'histoire  
 200, avenue de la République  
 92000 Nanterre  
 sylvain.destephen@parisnanterre.fr

## Bibliography

- Agosti, Gianfranco (2006–2007), “Cultura greca negli epigrammi epigrafici di età tardoantica”, in: *Incontri triestini di filologia classica* 6, 3–18.
- Agosti, Gianfranco (2010), “*Saxa loquuntur?* Epigrammi epigrafici e diffusione della *paideia* nell’Oriente tardoantico”, in: *Antiquité Tardive* 18, 163–180.
- Bagnall, Roger S./Cameron, Alan/Schwartz, Seth R. (1987), *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Philological monographs of the American Philological Association, 36), Atlanta.
- Bagnall, Roger S./Casagrande-Kim, Roberta/Ersoy, Akin/ Tanriver, Cumhur/ Yolaçan, Burak (2016), *Graffiti from the Basilica in the Agora of Smyrna*, New York.
- Bavant, Bernard (2004), “L’Illyricum”, in: Cécile Morrisson and Bernard Bavant (eds.), *Le Monde byzantin*, vol. 1, *L’Empire romain d’Orient (330–641)* (Nouvelle Clío), Paris, 303–347.

35 DESTEPHEN 2010b, 145f.; MITCHELL 2017b, 138f.

- Begass, Christoph (2018), *Die Senatsaristokratie des oströmischen Reiches, ca. 457–518. Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Vestigia 71), Munich.
- Blanco-Pérez, Antonio (2016), "Nomenclature and Dating in Roman Asia Minor: (M.) Aurelius/a and the 3rd Century AD", in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 199, 271–293.
- Brandt, Johann R./Hagelberg, Erika/Bjørnstad, Gro/Ahrens, Sven (eds.) (2017), *Life and Death in Asia Minor in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Times. Studies in Archaeology and Bioarchaeology* (Studies in Funerary Archaeology 10), Oxford/Philadelphia.
- Breytenbach, Cilliers/Zimmermann, Christiane (2018), *Early Christianity in Lycaonia and Adjacent Areas: From Paul to Amphilochius of Iconium* (Early Christianity in Asia Minor 101), Leiden/Boston.
- Calder, William M. (1912), "Colonia Caesarea Antiocheia", in: *Journal of Roman Studies* 2, 79–109.
- Calder, William M. (1922–1923), "Philadelphia and Montanism", in: *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 7, 309–354.
- Cameron, Alan (1988), "Flavius: A Nicety of Protocol", in: *Latomus* 47, 26–33.
- Carletti, Carlo (2008), *Epigrafia dei cristiani in Occidente dal III al VII secolo. Ideologia e prassi* (Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae. Subsidia 6), Bari.
- Chiricat, Édouard (2013), "The 'crypto-Christian' Inscriptions of Phrygia", in: Peter Thonemann (ed.), *Roman Phrygia: Culture and Society* (Greek Culture in the Roman World), Cambridge, 198–214.
- Destephen, Sylvain (2008), "L'apport de la prosopographie à la connaissance des clercs: l'exemple du diocèse d'Asie", in: Pascal-Grégoire Delage (ed.), *Les Pères de l'Église et les ministères* (actes du III<sup>e</sup> colloque de La Rochelle, 7, 8, et 9 septembre 2007), La Rochelle, 279–294.
- Destephen, Sylvain (2010a), "La christianisation de l'Asie Mineure jusqu'à Constantin: le témoignage de l'épigraphie", in: Hervé Inglebert, Sylvain Destephen and Bruno Dumézil (eds.), *Le problème de la christianisation du monde antique* (Textes, images et monuments de l'Antiquité au haut Moyen âge), Paris, 159–194.
- Destephen, Sylvain (2010b), "Familles d'Anatolie au miroir des MAMA", in: *Epigraphica Anatolica* 43, 2010, 135–148.
- Destephen, Sylvain (2011), "La coexistence du grec et de latin en *Illyricum*", in: Coline Ruiz Darasse and Eugenio R. Luján Martínez (eds.), *Contacts linguistiques dans l'Occident méditerranéen antique* (Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 126), Madrid, 129–144.
- Destephen, Sylvain (2020), "The Process of 'Byzantinization' in Late Antique Epigraphy", in: Marc Lauxtermann and Ida Toth (eds.), *Inscribing Texts in Byzantium: Continuity, Invention, Transformation* (Proceedings of the 49th SPBS Spring Symposium, Oxford, March 18–20, 2016), (Publications of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies), Oxford, 17–34.
- Drexhage, Hans-Joachim (2012), "Wirtschaft und Handel Westkilikiens in römischer und frühbyzantinischer Zeit (1.–6. Jahrhundert n. Chr.). 2: Handwerk und Gewerbe sowie Handel", in: *Marburger Beiträge zur antiken Handels-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte* 30, 139–174.
- Feissel, Denis (1992), "Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne (VIII)", in: *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 116, 383–407.
- Feissel, Denis (1995), "Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne (X)", in: *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 119, 375–389.
- Feissel, Denis (1999), "Épigraphie administrative et topographie urbaine: l'emplacement des actes inscrits dans l'Éphèse protobyzantine (IV<sup>e</sup>–VI<sup>e</sup> siècles)", in: Renate Pillinger, Otto Kresten, Fritz Krintzinger, Eugenio Russo, Reinhardt Harreither and Gunhild Jenewein (eds.), *Efeso paleocristiana e bizantina, Frühchristliches und byzantinisches Ephesos* (Kongress, Rom, 22.–24. Februar 1996) (Denkschriften Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 282), Vienna, 121–132.
- Felle, Antonio (2006), *Biblia epigraphica. La Sacra Scrittura nella documentazione epigrafica dell'Orbis Christianus Antiquus (III–VIII secolo)* (Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae. Subsidia 5), Bari.

- Gerov, Boris (1980)**, "Die lateinisch-griechische Sprachgrenze auf der Balkanhalbinsel", in: Günter Neumann and Jürgen Untermann (eds.), *Die Sprachen im römischen Reich der Kaiserzeit*, Cologne/Bonn, 147–165.
- Gibson, Elsa (1978)**, *The "Christians for Christians" Inscriptions of Phrygia* (Harvard Theological Studies, 32), Missoula.
- Habicht, Christian (2014)**, "Kyzikos: The Epigraphic Evidence", in: Michel Sève and Patrice Schlosser (eds.), *Cyzique, cité majeure et méconnue de la Propontide antique* (Centre de recherche universitaire lorrain d'histoire, Site de Metz 51), Metz, 167–177.
- Harter-Uibopuu, Kaja (2014)**, "'Tote soll man ruhen lassen...' Verbote und Strafen zur Sicherung von Gräbern am Beispiel der Inschriften von Ephesos", in: Josef Fischer (ed.), *Der Beitrag Kleinasiens zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte der griechisch-römischen Antike*, Vienna, 157–180.
- Hasluck, Frederick W. (1910)**, *Cyzicus. Being Some Account of the History and Antiquities of that City and of the District Adjacent to It* (Cambridge Archaeological and Ethnological Series), Cambridge.
- Hübner, Sabine (2005)**, *Der Klerus in der Gesellschaft des spätantiken Kleinasiens* (Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolloquium, 15), Stuttgart.
- Keenan, James G. (1973)**, "The Names Flavius and Aurelius as Status Designations in Later Roman Egypt", in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 11, 33–63.
- Kelp, Ute (2013)**, "Grave Monuments and Local Identities in Roman Phrygia", in: Peter Thonemann (ed.), *Roman Phrygia: Culture and Society* (Greek Culture in the Roman World), Cambridge, 70–94.
- Lochmann, Tomas (2003)**, *Studien zur kaiserzeitlichen Grab- und Votivreliefs aus Phrygien* (Schriften der Skulpturenhalle Basel), Basel.
- Machatschek, Alois (1967)**, *Die Nekropolen und Grabmäler im Gebiet von Elaiussa Sebaste und Korykos im Rauhen Kilikien* (Ergänzungsbände zu den Tituli Asiae Minoris 2) (Denkschriften Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 96), Vienna.
- McKechnie, Paul (1999)**, "Christian Grave-Inscriptions from the *Familia Caesaris*", in: *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50, 427–441.
- Mitchell, Stephen (1993)**, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor. Vol. 2, The Rise of the Church*, Oxford/New York.
- Mitchell, Stephen (2014)**, "Epigraphic Display and the Emergence of Christian Identity in the Epigraphy of Rural Asia Minor", in: Werner Eck and Peter Funke (eds.), *Öffentlichkeit, Monument, Text* (Akten des XIV Congressus Internationalis Epigraphiae Graecae et Latinae 27.-31. August 2012) (Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum; Auctarium, N.S. 4), Berlin/Boston, 275–297.
- Mitchell, Stephen (2017a)**, "The Christian Epigraphy of Asia Minor in Late Antiquity", in: Katharina Bolle, Carlos Machado and Christian Witschel (eds.), *The Epigraphic Cultures of Late Antiquity* (Habes 60), Stuttgart, 271–286.
- Mitchell, Stephen (2017b)**, "Die Ausbreitung und Einbettung des Christentums in Galatien ab 325 n. Chr.", in: Walter Ameling (ed.), *Die Christianisierung Kleinasiens in der Spätantike* (Asia Minor Studien 87), Bonn, 125–141.
- Mitchell, Stephen/French, David (eds.) (2019)**, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Ankara (Ancyra). Vol 1: Late Roman, Byzantine and other Texts* (Vestigia 72), Munich.
- Newby, Zahra/Toulson, Ruth E. (eds.) (2019)**, *The Materiality of Mourning: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, London/New York.
- Ogureau, Julien M./Huttner, Ulrich (2019)**, "The *Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae* Database. Towards a Digital Corpus of Early Christian Inscriptions from Greece and Asia Minor", in: Franziska Beutler and Theresia Pantzer (eds.), *Sprachen, Schriftkulturen, Identitäten der Antike* (Beiträge des XV. Internationalen Kongresses für Griechische und Lateinische Epigraphik, Wien 28. August – 1. September 2017), Vienna, 1–5.
- Ramsay, William M. (1916)**, "Colonia Caesarea (Pisidian Antioch) in the Augustan Age", in: *Journal of Roman Studies* 6, 83–134.

- Ramsay, William M. (1918), "Studies in the Roman Province of Galatia. II. Dedications at the Sanctuary of Colonia Caesarea", in: *Journal of Roman Studies* 8, 107–145.
- Ramsay, William M. (1924), "Studies in the Roman Province of Galatia. VI. Some Inscriptions of Colonia Caesarea Antiochea", in: *Journal of Roman Studies* 14, 172–205.
- Ramsay, William M. (1926), "Studies in the Roman Province of Galatia. VII. Pisidia", in: *Journal of Roman Studies* 16, 102–119.
- Ritti, Tullia (2004), "*Iura sepulcrorum* a Hierapolis di Frigia nel quadro dell'epigrafia sepolcrale microasiatica. Iscrizione edite e inedite", in: *Libitina e dintorni. Libitina e i luci sepolcrali, le leges libitinae campane, iura sepulcrorum: vecchie e nuove iscrizioni* (Libitina 3) (Atti dell'XI Rencontre Franco-Italienne sur l'Épigraphie), Rome, 455–634.
- Ritti, Tullia (2017), *Storia e istituzioni di Hierapolis* (Hierapolis di Frigia 9), Istanbul.
- Robert, Jeanne/Robert, Louis (1980), "Bulletin épigraphique", in: *Revue des Études Grecques* 93, 368–485.
- Robinson, David M. (1925), "Notes on Inscriptions from Antioch in Pisidia", in: *Journal of Roman Studies* 15, 253–262.
- Roueché, Charlotte (2009), "The Kuretenstrasse: The Imperial Presence in Late Antiquity", in: Sabine Ladstätter (éd.), *Neue Forschungen zur Kuretenstrasse von Ephesos* (Akten des Symposiums für Hilke Thür, Wien, 13. Dezember 2006) (Denkschriften Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 382), Vienna, 155–169.
- Salway, Benet (1994), "What's in a Name? A Survey of Roman Onomastics Practice from c. 700 B.C. to A.D. 700", in: *Journal of Roman Studies* 84, 124–145.
- Sarantis, Alexander (2016), *Justinian's Balkan Wars. Campaigning, Diplomacy and Development in Illyricum, Thrace and the Northern World A.D. 527–65* (ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 53), Leeds.
- Sironen, Erkki (2017), "The Epigram Habit in Late Antique Greece", in: Katharina Bolle, Carlos Machado and Christian Witschel (eds.), *The Epigraphic Cultures of Late Antiquity* (Habes 60), Stuttgart, 449–471.
- Tabbernee, William (2013), "Material Evidence for Early Christian Groups during the First Two Centuries C.E.", in: *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 30, 287–301.
- Thonemann, Peter (2014), "Poets of the Axylon", in: *Chiron* 44, 191–232.
- Waelkens, Mark (1986), *Die kleinasiatischen Türsteine. Typologische und epigraphische Untersuchungen der kleinasiatischen Grabreliefs mit Scheintür*, Mainz.
- Zimmermann, Christiane (2019), "Faith and Verse: Gregory of Nazianzus and Early Christian Village Poetry", in: Stephen Mitchell and Philipp Pilhofer (eds.), *Early Christianity in Asia Minor and Cyprus. From the Margins to the Mainstream* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 109) (Early Christianity in Asia Minor 3), Leiden/Boston, 126–147.
- Zimmermann, Norbert (2011), "Das Sieben-Schläfer-Zömeterium in Ephesos: Neue Forschungen zu Baugeschichte und Ausstattung eines ungewöhnlichen Bestattungskomplexes", in: *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* 80, 365–407.
- Zimmermann, Norbert (2016), "Christliche Zömeterien konstantinischer Zeit in Kleinasien?", in: *Costantino e i Costantinidi. L'innovazione costantiniana, le sue radici e i suoi sviluppi* (Acta XVI congressus internationalis archaeologiae Christianae Romae, 22–28. 9. 2013), Vatican City, 745–762.

## Figure Credits

Fig. 1 Sylvain Destephen.

