INDENTED PENTAMETERS IN PAPYRI AND INSCRIPTIONS

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The visual arrangement of indented pentameters in elegiac verses is generally associated with Byzantine manuscripts or modern editorial convention. While the *Greek Anthology*, as preserved in the Palatine Codex, indents pentameters, most Greek papyri do not, and the earliest known papyrus displaying indentation is in Latin, not Greek[1]. Found in Qasr Ibrîm and dating possibly to the third quarter of the first century BC, this papyrus contains an elegy by Gaius Cornelius Gallus and shows deep indentation of the pentameters[2]. The earliest indented pentameters in Greek elegiacs preserved on papyrus are found in the seven-couplet encomium to Augustus celebrating the peace and prosperity that his victory at Actium brought to Egypt (*SH* 982). The part of the papyrus with the poem might be later than the Gallus papyrus by a couple of decades, if at all, and it has been suggested that its scribe was familiar with the Latin practice of indenting pentameters[3].

Indeed, on the Greek side it is not until two centuries later that we find another papyrus with indented pentameters. The convention is employed on the verso of a roll now in Leipzig (P.Lips. Inv. 1445) that contains remnants of six epigrams on various topics written in two columns[4]. Other layout-features of this papyrus include centered headings, as well as *diplai* and spaces separating epigrams. The papyrus, the recto of which displays as yet unpublished documents, dates to the last quarter of the third century. Next in date is a Yale papyrus (P.CtYBR inv. 4000 qua) dating probably to the fourth century and containing a collection of epigrams, apparently by Palladas of Alexandria, the pentameters of which are indented[5].

A different, if somewhat related, formatting device can be observed in epigrams in P.Oxy. I 15 and XV 1795 from the first century[6]. There, each epigram consists of four hexameters in which the final foot is iambic ; each is followed by the words αὔλ(ε)ι μοι. The initial letters of the successive quatrains are in alphabetical order, which is visually emphasized by the protrusion (*eisthesis*) of the first letter of each quatrain by a couple of letters into the left margin. As far as the proper indentation of pentameters goes, however, no surviving Greek papyrus can be adduced as evidence for a Greek origin of the practice[7].

While relevant papyrological examples are scant and limited to Egypt, there exists a large body of material that demonstrates attention to the display and layout of epigrams in antiquity, namely inscriptional epigrams. Peter Parsons, the editor of the Gallus papyrus, points out a few early examples of indentation of pentameters in Latin inscriptions, and cautiously suggests that this may have been a Latin, not a Greek, practice[8]. Of the evidence he adduces, two inscriptions can be dated with a fair degree of certainty. One, found in

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[1] Images of all the pages of Cod. Pal. graec. 23 are available at <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpgraec23>.

[2] *Ed. pr.* Anderson / Parsons / Nisbet (1979).

[3] On the date, see Barbantani (1998). Obbink (2004) 25 supports a date close to the battle of Actium, in which case this papyrus may be contemporary with or even earlier than that of Gallus. On the Latin practice of indenting pentameters, see Barbantani (1998) 259–260.

[4] *Ed. pr.* Luppe (2002). In addition to the photo in the *ed. pr.*, a high-resolution image can be accessed at <http://papyri.uni-leipzig.de/receive/UBLPapyri_schrift_00002400>.

[5] The codex is being published by K. Wilkinson. Images can be viewed at <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/papyrus/oneSET.asp?pid=4000%20qua>.

[6] Image of P.Oxy. XV 1795 is available online at the Oxyrhynchus Online project <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/>.

[7] The occasional use of indentation or reverse indentation to set off verses of different metrical patterns, particularly in drama, lies outside the scope of my investigation, although it is conceivable that the practice of visually distinguishing pentameters from hexameters may have had similar roots. For a recent study of the use of *eisthesis* in tragedies preserved in papyri, see Savignago (2008) ; also Turner (1987) 12.

[8] Anderson / Parsons / Nisbet (1979) 130. Parts II (The Papyrus) and III (Transcript) are by Parsons.

Corinth, is a laudatory poem in honor of a proconsul whose name was erased ; it was probably Marcus Antonius, the grandfather of Mark Antony whose *damnatio memoriae* caused the erasure of the name in the inscription. The poem refers to the campaign against the Cilician pirates of 102 BC for which a fleet was hauled over the Isthmus under the supervision of Marcus Antonius. The inscription was evidently cut shortly after this event[9].

The other inscription is the epitaph for Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Hispanus (*RE*, Cornelius 347), who was *praetor* in 139 BC and probably died not long afterwards[10]. If the epitaph was inscribed about the time of his death – and there is no reason to believe that it was not –, it would be the earliest surviving example not only of indented pentameters, but of Latin inscriptional couplets, too. These two epigrams firmly establish the indented-pentameters format in Latin verse inscriptions during the latter part of the second century BC. The question addressed here is whether the indentation of pentameters was a Latin convention that eventually influenced the display of Greek epigrams in both inscriptions and papyri, or whether it represented a Greek taste that was later acquired by Latin composers, stone-cutters, or scribes.

Indentation of pentameters in Greek inscriptional epigrams of the Imperial period is not common, but neither is it exceptionally rare[11]. Determining whether earlier Greek verse inscriptions ever indent pentameters is made difficult however by the fact that the criteria for dating Hellenistic verse inscriptions are often insecure ; also, one of the best epigraphically attested areas, Attica, produced very few verse inscriptions between ca. 300 and 100 BC. The problem is compounded by lack of attention paid by editors of the past to the spatial design of verse inscriptions. Inscriptional verses are occasionally printed with indented pentameters in conformity with modern convention in order to distinguish visually hexameters from pentameters, or else they are « justified by the left margin » because such was, for the most part, ancient convention[12]. At times both conventions are mixed, and thus in the absence of a photo, which is often the case, the format is undeterminable. Only some editors routinely note features of the layout including indentation of the pentameter on the actual stone[13]. The following survey is based on the material I could examine from the photographs available to me and is by no means exhaustive. Further work on Hellenistic epigrams would certainly help to refine it.

The earliest example of indented pentameters in Greek inscriptions known to me is a three-couplet epitaph from Kalchedon commemorating twenty-five-year old Menios (SGO 09/07/10 with 24/15 ; best photo is in *ZPE* 41 [1981] Taf. III)[14]. The suggested date, third century BC, is based on the letter forms and the type and style of the monument, a relief-stele which depicts the deceased sitting on a chair and reading a book scroll while a servant stands to the right.

An epitaph for a twenty-one-year old Amphia from Lato pros Kamara in Crete (Martínez Fernández / Apostolakou [2004] 45–47) is plausibly dated by its editors to the early second century BC[15]. The epigram, a competent poetic composition, also consists of three

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[9]   *Ed. pr.* Taylor / West (1928) ; Dow (1951) ; Courtney (1995) no. 15.

[10] CIL I 15 = VI 1293 = ILLRP 316 ; Courtney (1995) no. 13.

[11] The editor of the Gallus papyrus points to a few examples from Egypt dated to the second century AD, and although he notes that Greek verse inscriptions do not indent before Imperial times, he emphasizes in a footnote that this is only an impression ; see Anderson / Parsons / Nisbet (1979) 130, n. 38.

[12] Printed with indented pentameters : *e.g.* Kaibel (1878). Justified by the left margin : *e.g.* Peek (1955). Sometimes he does note indented pentameters ; compare no. 1843 (noted) with no. 702 (not noted).

[13] So, *e.g.*, Bernand (1969) ; Petzl (1982).

[14] I am grateful to Prof. Wolfgang Blümel for providing me with a copy of the original photo of the inscription. The right-hand side of the inscription is poorly preserved, but the indentation by one letter is discernible in lines 2 and 6.

[15] The inscription is republished in Martínez Fernández (2006) 139–141, no. 19B.

couplets, with pentameters indented by two to three letters[16]. Another example from the second century BC is an honorary decree from Gerenia in Laconia which is accompanied by an epigram (SEG XI 949). Only the beginnings of the couplets survive, but the indentation of pentameters is clearly visible[17].

In the second / early first century BC, inscribed epigrams with indented pentameters can be found in more locations. At least three more are attested on Crete, one of which can be securely dated to not long after 116/115 BC (SEG XXXIX 972)[18]. Another epigram with indented pentameters comes from Maionia on the upper Hermos river area in Lydia (SGO 04/22/07, with photo). It stands on a high-quality relief-stele depicting two men and a woman, presumably the deceased, young Menekrates, and his parents, who are flanked by the smaller figures of two servants. The arrangement of the text of the epitaph, cut under the relief, is carefully planned : four lines of the prose part are written in block and end with the word ἐτείμηϲαν centered in the fifth line. Then follow the eight lines of the elegiac epigram whose pentameters are neatly indented by two letters[19]. As the last example, I adduce an epitaph from Karystos on Euboia (Peek 1981, with drawing) that contains two epigrams, one of which consists of two distichs and has indented pentameters, while the other, separated from the first one by a *vacat* and consisting of one distich, does not indent[20].

This brief survey demonstrates that by ca. 100 BC elegiac inscriptions with indented pentameters can be found in different parts of the Greek world, such as Laconia, Crete, Euboia, and Lydia, while the earlier example comes from Bithynia. Even if we set aside the unique example from the third century, we are left with inscriptions that may be approximately contemporaneous with Scipio's epitaph, the earliest example of indented Latin elegiacs on stone. It seems highly improbable that private inscriptions in various parts of the Greek world were being influenced ca. 100 BC by a nascent Latin practice. The high quality of the Greek inscriptions that show indentation attests to the learnedness of their composers, while the grandeur of some of the monuments on which they stand suggests that the people who commissioned them opted for « higher-end » commemorative objects. Some inscriptions are particularly notable examples of literary mastery, such as Exacon's epitaph from Itanos on Crete, which consists of fifteen couplets, or the intricate wording of Kletonymos' epitaph from Lato, also on Crete[21].

The bookish character of the verses suggests that they were passed to the stone-workshop by composers who were steeped in literary culture and who perhaps wrote out the verses with indented pentameters, or alternatively that they were arranged in this way by the person responsible for the layout of the inscription on the stone[22]. Either way, the prac-

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[16] Verse 3 does not scan properly, but the word that mars the meter, αἶψα, has all four letters dotted in the edition and is not legible on the photo. Perhaps another restoration should be sought.

[17] For a squeeze, see Peek (1971) Taf. I.

[18] This is an epitaph for Kletonymos, a magistrate attested in other inscriptions from Lato, who is called here « the eighth Sage ». For recent commentary, see Martínez Fernández (2006) 123–131, no. 17. The other two are epitaphs for Tyros daughter of Sosamenos from Polyrhenia in 4 couplets, SEG XVI 532 = Martínez Fernández (2006) 211–218, no. 38 (second half of II BC), and for twenty-two year old Exacon from Itanos consisting of fifteen couplets laced with learned allusions to epic, IC 3.4.37 = Martínez Fernández (2006) 235–242, no. 43 (II/I BC).

[19] I am grateful to Prof. Hasan Malay who took high quality photos of this stone for me.

[20] I thank Donald Keller and Roz Schneider for taking a photo of the stone for me in the Archaeological Museum in Karystos.

[21] For the references to these inscriptions, see n. 18 above.

[22] Courtney (1995) 11 aptly calls this official the ordinator. The epitaph from Karystos perhaps points to the involvement of the composer rather than the ordinator. Since the two epigrams are carved differently there, one wonders whether the ordinator received two pieces of papyrus (or tablets) from two different composers, one of whom indented while the other did not. Notably in this inscription both epigrams display expressions found elsewhere which also suggests that both could have come from or been based on texts in a pattern-book, and a pattern-book might have contained texts written with different formatting conventions.

tice must have been adopted by those who cared to use it in order to show by the format that the inscription was in verse and that this verse was of a certain meter. The relief that accompanies our earliest example, on the gravestone for Menios, shows the young man holding a book roll, an indication that the deceased was a man of letters. It may be no accident that his epitaph, perhaps composed by a similarly-minded literary man, shows attention to a feature of pure learnedness.

But one may reasonably wonder how a grave epigram in Kalchedon or an honorary inscription in Laconia could have influenced the composer or cutter of Scipio's epitaph in Rome or of the inscription of praise for Marcus Antonius in Corinth. First of all, there were thousands of inscribed epigrams that Latin speakers could have encountered in the Greek speaking world in the second century BC. Furthermore, inscriptional epigrams must have, at some point, been written out on a portable medium, such as a papyrus or tablet to be approved by the commissioner of the monument and passed on to the stone-cutter. In addition to possible collections of epigrams compiled for various purposes, there probably were numerous pattern-books of verse inscriptions in circulation[23]. Because virtually no epigram survives in portable – and perishable – form from outside of Egypt, the volume and accessibility of texts in circulation is hard to assess, but it should not be underestimated.

Besides presuming extensive availability of Greek inscriptional verses, one needs also to assume a willingness on the part of Latin speakers to adopt Greek conventions. And in this respect, the two earliest Latin elegiac inscriptions are remarkably placed. The epigram commemorating Marcus Antonius was set up in Greece, whether in Corinth or at the Isthmus, while the Scipio epitaph comes from a family known for its Hellenizing tastes. The meter itself, which was perhaps introduced into Latin by Ennius, from whom two apparently literary epigrams on Scipio Africanus survive, is a Greek feature[24]. At the end of the second century BC it probably coexisted with the Saturnian, but was soon to take over inscriptional verses. Our two Latin elegiac inscriptions can be seen as marking the « transitional » period.

Finally, both Scipio's epitaph and the Corinthian elegiacs show familiarity with Greek epigrams in the expressions and themes they employ. For example, the beginning of Scipio's epitaph, *uirtutes generis mieis moribus accumulaui*, is reminiscent of expressions in Greek funerary and honorary epigrams with the verb αὐξάνω / αὔξω, *e.g.* αὔξων οἰκείων προγόνων ἀρετάς, κτλ. (FD III 4, 460 ; 7, 1 [Delphi, 337/336 – 333/332 BC). The opening of the epigram for Marcus Antonius (1–2) :

> *quod neque conatus quisquanst neque [   ]au[   ]*
> *noscite rem, ut famaa facta feramus uirei*[25]

can be paralleled by such lines as οὐδείς πω θνητῶν καλλίον' ηὗρε τέχνην (CEG 830, 7 [Olympia, IV BC]). Performing a deed that nobody had accomplished is a *topos* of both literary – *e.g.* in the « Simonidean » epigram on the victory at Eurymedon or Cyprus – and inscriptional epigrams from the Classical period on[26] ; and so is the address to the reader of the epigram.

In the milieu in which the two early Latin inscriptions with indented pentameters were produced, there were probably both the opportunity and inclination to borrow from Greek literary practice, including formal features such as the arrangement of verses on a stone or page. The tendency to imitate did not need to aim at the most common patterns, but perhaps rather at the best and most elaborate, and the device of inscribing elegiac verses in a

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[23]   For an excellent introduction to the processes involved in the creation of a verse inscription, see Courtney (1995) 11–16.

[24]   See Courtney (1993) 39–42, fr. 43–44.

[25]   Text after Courtney (1995) 44, no. 15.

[26]   On the « Simonidean » epigram, see Page (1981) 266–268, verses 870–877.

particular way was a means of displaying one's learnedness and literary affinity. As we have seen, this practice never became conventional in Antiquity, and perhaps was never employed in more than 10% to 15% of elegiac epigrams in the later Hellenistic and Imperial period ; but by Imperial times it must have been common enough that it was used in qualitatively inferior epigrams, where the sequences of hexameters and pentameters could be confused[27]. It was, however, the best Greek examples of the Hellenistic period that the Latin composers followed in the late second century BC.

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[27] See for example an epitaph from Smyrna for eleven-year old Dionysios, who died after falling from a tree, SGO 05/01/36. The composer clearly worked from some patterns but had trouble putting them together, and he – or the ordinator – indented every even line, whether it was a pentameter or not.