

# Iamblichus at Daphne

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IN THE ABSENCE of new evidence, chronological precision about some details of Iamblichus' life will never be achieved. Careful study of the available evidence does occasionally permit progress. Alan Cameron has argued convincingly that Iamblichus was born *ca* A.D. 245.<sup>1</sup> More recently, T. D. Barnes has shown that the philosopher need not have lived much later than A.D. 320.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere I have attempted to establish Chalcis in the Lebanon as the place of his birth, citing a phrase of Themistius not previously noted in this context.<sup>3</sup> One item that still requires a satisfactory explanation is the statement of Malalas that Iamblichus lived at Daphne during the reign of Galerius (312.11f [Bonn]): ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς αὐτοῦ βασιλείας Ἰάμβλιχος ὁ φιλόσοφος ἐδίδασκεν, οἰκῶν ἐν Δάφνῃ ἕως τῆς τελευτῆς αὐτοῦ. This statement has been disregarded by some scholars<sup>4</sup> and interpreted variously by others. It is quite possible, chronologically speaking, that Iamblichus taught at Daphne during the reign of Galerius before moving to Apamea,<sup>5</sup> less likely that he moved to Daphne from Apamea in the late 310's or early 320's.<sup>6</sup>

That the philosopher taught for a time at Apamea is certain. The contemporary correspondence of a former pupil guarantees this,<sup>7</sup> as does the evidence of Libanius later in the century. In a speech addressed to the emperor Theodosius, the sophist mentions "the chorus

<sup>1</sup> "The Date of Iamblichus' Birth," *Hermes* 96 (1968) 374–76. J. DILLON, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (Leiden 1973 [hereafter 'Dillon']) 6f, accepts the argument and pushes the date back to *ca* 242.

<sup>2</sup> "A Correspondent of Iamblichus," *GRBS* 19 (1978) 99–106 [hereafter 'Barnes'].

<sup>3</sup> "Themistios and the Origin of Iamblichos," *Hermes* 16 (1988) 125–28: Them. *Or.* 24.301b, καὶ οἱ μὲν τινες ἐπιχώριον ἄδοντες μέλος, οἱ δὲ Ἀσσύριον καὶ ἐκ Λιβάνου.

<sup>4</sup> Most notably, J. Bidez, "Le philosophe Jamblique et son école," *REG* 32 (1919) 29–40. *PLRE* I 451 remarks that the statement should "probably be rejected."

<sup>5</sup> So Barnes 105. Dillon (12f) remains somewhat uncertain, suggesting that it makes little difference whether the philosopher taught at Daphne or Apamea. Malalas refers to the emperor in question as Maxentius Galerius, an obvious confusion, but this does not necessarily affect his knowledge of Iamblichus' career.

<sup>6</sup> As H. D. Saffrey, "Abamon, pseudonyme de Jamblique," *Philomathes. Studies and Essays in the Humanities in Memory of P. Merlan* (The Hague 1971) 231, thinks (admittedly, the difficulty of this view depends partly on acceptance of Barnes' chronology).

<sup>7</sup> Dillon 11–13; Barnes 105.

of philosophers from Apamea, whose head resembled (ἐώκει) the gods" (*Or.* 51.21). In a letter of 363 he calls Apamea τὴν Ἰαμβλίχου τε ἐρωμένην καὶ Σωπάτρου μητέρα (*Ep.* 1389.3). Moreover, in his funeral oration for Julian, he notes that the emperor, adjudicating a dispute about status, gave pride of place to Apamea over Laodicea precisely because of Iamblichus and Sopater (*Or.* 18.187).

The complete lack of evidence in the works of Libanius for a sojourn at Daphne is surprising. Particularly during the reign of Julian, the sophist had ample opportunity to remark this. Perhaps the most astonishing omission (if it be such) is the sophist's failure to indicate any residence of Iamblichus in Daphne in *Or.* 60, his monody on the destruction by fire of the temple of Apollo in 362—while Julian, a devoted follower of Iamblichus, was at Antioch—though the speech is admittedly fragmentary. Libanius had other opportunities as well. Neither *Or.* 15 nor *Or.* 16, both composed in the context of Julian's anger with the Antiochenes, mention Iamblichus, and Julian's *Misopogon* is similarly silent. It would seem, then, that doubts about the verity of Malalas' claim are well-founded.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Malalas occasionally offers evidence that is not found elsewhere—sometimes correct—and ought not to be rejected summarily.

The first part of Malalas' statement is perhaps little more than the establishment of a *floruit* for the philosopher,<sup>9</sup> or simply an indication that he began teaching during the reign of Galerius. This last is not out of line with what is known about Iamblichus' career, since there are indications that he left Porphyry before the latter's death and returned to Syria.<sup>10</sup> The second part of the statement is more problematic, quite apart from the reference to Daphne. The pronoun αὐτοῦ refers either to Iamblichus or to Galerius. If it refers to the philosopher himself, Malalas is wrong: Iamblichus almost certainly was not residing at Daphne when he died, but at Apamea.<sup>11</sup> Reference

<sup>8</sup> Would Malalas actually have found information on the death of Iamblichus in the 'Stadtannalen' of Antioch, as A. Schenk von Stauffenberg, *Die römische Kaisergeschichte bei Malalas* (Stuttgart 1931) 407, suggests?

<sup>9</sup> For other examples of this in Malalas, cf. 121, ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς οὖν χρόνοις ἦν ὁ Κικέρων καὶ ὁ Σαλλούστιος, οἱ σοφώτατοι Ῥωμαίων ποιηταί; 215, ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς οὖν χρόνοις Λίβιος ὁ σοφὸς Ῥωμαίων ὑπῆρχεν ἱστορικός, ὃς ἐξέθετο πολλὰ περὶ Ῥωμαίων. It matters little that the *Suda*, s.v. Ἰάμβλιχος, places his *floruit* under Constantine.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Dillon 9–14 for discussion. B. D. Larsen, "La place de Jamblique dans la philosophie antique tardive," *De Jamblique à Proclus* (=Entretiens Hardt 21 [Vandoeuvres/Geneva 1975]) 4, suggests that the philosopher was at Alexandria for more than a decade.

<sup>11</sup> Dillon (12f), who chooses this option, works himself out of the problem by supposing that Iamblichus lived at Daphne and visited Apamea often.

to Galerius is more probable, since that allows Iamblichus to move to Apamea ca 311<sup>12</sup> and saves Malalas' integrity.

The problem of Daphne remains. As stated, it is quite unlikely that Iamblichus taught at the famous suburb of Antioch. It is nevertheless altogether possible that Malalas is correct in naming the location of Iamblichus' school. Josephus (*BJ* 4.3) refers to a delightful little place named Daphne, situated at the northern edge of the marshes associated with Lake Semachonitis, with springs that feed the Little Jordan: *μέχρι Δάφνης χωρίου τά τε ἄλλα τρυφεροῦ καὶ πηγὰς ἔχοντας, αἱ τρέφουσαι τὸν μικρὸν καλούμενον Ἰόρδανον*.<sup>13</sup> Some scholars have supposed that Jerome (*in Hiezech.* 47.18) mentions this Daphne,<sup>14</sup> but this depends on the view that Jerome has confused the two places. He writes:

*contra fontem, quem perspicuum est significari Daphnen, de quo fonte supradicta urbs aquis abundantissimis fruitur—hic autem locus a Cnaeo Pompeio, qui primus Iudaeam romano subegit imperio, militari manu consitus est, et ab eo—iuxta fabulam poetarum—Daphnes nomen accepit ob lauros et cyparissos, quae arbores \*et in ipso loco frequentissimae sunt.*<sup>15</sup>

This clearly refers to Daphne at Antioch.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, Jerome (*ab Abr.* 1949) reports that Pompey consecrated a grove (*lucus*) near the temple of Apollo at Daphne. Festus is in agreement (*Brev.* 15: *rediens apud Antiochiam Daphnensem lucum, delectatus loci amoenitate et aquarum abundantia, addito nemore consecravit*), as is, for the most part, Eutropius (*Brev.* 6.13: *aliquantum agrorum Daphnensibus dedit, quo lucus ibi spatiosior fieret, delectatus loci amoenitate et aquarum abundantia*). Interestingly enough, Malalas mentions no activity of Pompey at Daphne, though he mentions the rebuilding of the βουλευτήριον at Antioch (211).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Barnes (105) suggests this possibility.

<sup>13</sup> M. Avi-Yonah, *Gazetteer of Roman Palestine* (=QEDEM 5 [1976]) 51, cf. map 2 (p.107), adds *AJ* 17.24 as an additional reference, but Josephus there clearly refers to the suburb of Antioch. The Loeb translators, citing C. Kraeling, *JBL* 51 (1932) 133–35, remark that the Ulatha in this passage is the Holath Antioch of the Talmud and thus the famous city in Syria.

<sup>14</sup> P. Thomsen, *Loca Sancta* (Halle 1907) 55, citing H. Hildesheimer, "Beiträge zur Geographie Palästinas," *Jahresb.d.Rabbiner-Seminars zu Berlin* 3 (1884–85) 22f. Hildesheimer lists predecessors who think that the place in question is Daphne in Palestine, but himself disagrees with this view.

<sup>15</sup> Text from *CCL* 75. The asterisked *et* does not appear in all manuscripts.

<sup>16</sup> Jerome reveals confusion about the geography of northern Palestine and Syria just before the passage quoted. This is responsible for the view that he is referring to Daphne in Palestine.

<sup>17</sup> Malalas' references to Daphne (204, 234, 243, 261, 272, 275–78, 289, 307f, 327, 360, 396, 421), with the sole exception of the passage on Iamblichus, specifically

The ancient evidence for the existence of a place called Daphne in northern Palestine is meagre. Only Josephus mentions it unambiguously.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the toponym for this little place, near ancient Caesarea Philippi and about 3 km. south of Tell el-Qadi,<sup>19</sup> has survived to the present day, as Tel (or Khirbet) Dafne. The name is perhaps a result of the similarity of its amenities to those of Daphne near Antioch.<sup>20</sup>

Given the complete and surprising lack of evidence for any residence of Iamblichus at the suburb of Antioch, it is possible that he resided at another place of this name. Iamblichus was born at Chalcis in the Lebanon, not far from Daphne, to a wealthy family that undoubtedly had estates in a variety of areas, including perhaps a resort villa. On this interpretation, the philosopher retired to one of his or his family's estates after he left Porphyry and began his teaching career there, presumably during the reign of Galerius, before he moved to Apamea. One other item may make more sense on this view of Iamblichus' place of residence. Eunapius reports that Iamblichus and his disciples travelled to the hot springs at Gadara on one occasion (*VS* 459). This is, of course, not an impossible journey from Daphne near Antioch, but the trip from the other Daphne is less than one-fourth the distance.<sup>21</sup>

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associate it in some way with Antioch (pointed out to me by my colleague Barry Baldwin). This may mean that Malalas was aware of the existence of a second Daphne or of some problem with the tradition about Iamblichus.

<sup>18</sup> *Fons Daphnis* appears in the Vulgate at Num. 34.11, but is absent in the Hebrew and Greek versions of the text.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. I. Benzinger, *RE* IV (1901) 2136 s.v. "Daphne (2)"; F. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine* I (Paris 1933) 444.

<sup>20</sup> One might compare the *delectatus loci amoenitate et aquarum abundantia* of Eutropius and Festus with Josephus' *Δάφνης χωρίου τά τε ἄλλα τρυφεροῦ καὶ πηγὰς ἔχοντος*.

<sup>21</sup> I am grateful to Professor Fergus Millar for sending some materials to which I did not have ready access, after we had discussed the main idea of the present article. The suggestions of a referee have helped to make this paper an improvement on an earlier version.