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Greek Historiography in Hellenistic Egypt

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyse the reception and perception of Greek historiography in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period, through a study of the textual, palaeographic and bibliographical characteristics of fragments containing passages which can be (more or less confidently) attributed to Greek historical works.

Keywords: Greek historiography, literary papyri, Ptolemaic Egypt.

1 Introduction

Ancient Greek historiography is a discipline with shifting boundaries for which it is hard to find a single definition. Indeed, it appears to be made up of multiple “threads”, naturally connected, but at times differing sharply from each other.¹ According to A. Momigliano,² historical narratives are organised in terms of content and form in such a way as to suit the audience at which they are aimed. Applying this insightful observation to ancient historiography, it may be observed that the common definition of the term encompasses a range of contrasting experiences. These include Herodotean “national” history, founded on the “unifying” event represented by the Persian wars and aimed at a curious yet non-specialist readership, as well as the erudite “local” histories that flourished above all in the Hellenistic epoch (“partly as a revival of traditions of liberty and independence in the face of ethnic and political homogeneity resulting from monarchical powers”).³ Then there is Thucydidean history, which provides reflections on contemporary events but is founded on the assumption of the immutability of human nature. It thus serves a markedly paradigmatic purpose, being aimed at political leaders, for whom the narrated events represent the *exemplum* to follow in their endeavours. Even more explicitly aimed at rulers is the pragmatic historiography of Polybius, who quite deliberately neglects all other types of reader and for this reason tackles a much narrower range of themes, focusing on political and military events.

1 See Gabba 2001, 13.

2 Momigliano 1978.

3 Gabba 2001, 14.

2 The Recovery of Texts not Handed Down by the Medieval Tradition

As regards ancient historians, the medieval manuscript tradition only preserved works by those authors who had been considered exemplary since Antiquity, as they belonged to a canon already familiar to Cicero and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and consisting of works that dealt with a succession of very long periods, so as to “constitute an uninterrupted account of all past history”.⁴ It is to papyri that we must attribute the recovery of fragments and other testimonies regarding the large quantity of historiography that was not deemed to serve this purpose. This essentially consists of monographs in the form of annals, dedicated to the history of an individual city, generally the author’s home town, rich in erudite observations, filled with more or less mythological accounts of origins, eponymous heroes, divine progenitors, and epic battles to establish supremacy over neighbouring regions. References to the existence of such works, labelled as Atthidography, can be found in quotations by lexicographers, scholiasts, and compilers of anthologies.

On the basis of the available papyri, it is currently impossible to establish who invented this genre, given that *P.Oxy.* VIII 1084 (2nd c. AD) (Fig. 54),⁵ the only papyrus attributed to Hellenicus of Lesbos,⁶ the inventor of the genre according to Felix Jacoby,⁷ contains an *excerptum* of the *Atlantis*,⁸ a mythographical and cosmological work,⁹ and that there are no known papyri by Androton, who C. Joyce identifies as the originator.¹⁰

However, the abundance of fragments shows that local histories also circulated in Graeco-Roman Egypt to some extent: we are dealing with works written in Greek but whose subject varies from Classical Greece to the Mediterranean lands steeped in Greek culture (such as Sicily), and the Hellenistic reigns that sprung up after Alexander’s death.

4 Canfora 1999, 320–321.

5 MP³ 459; LDAB 1086; TM 59974.

6 About 470 to 406 BC. Twenty-six fragments of his *Ἀτθίς* survive, published in Jacoby 1954, 1–21. Hereinafter this work is abbreviated as *FGrHist*.

7 Jacoby 1949, chap. I.

8 Identified on the basis of a citation in the *scholia* to Venetus A (VIII 486 = *FGrHist* 4 F 19 a) about the liaisons between Atlas’ daughters and various gods.

9 See the Corpus of Paraliterary Papyri (= CPP), no. 0002, at <https://relecta.org/cpp/detail.php?CPP=0002> (last visit March 2024).

10 Joyce 1999.

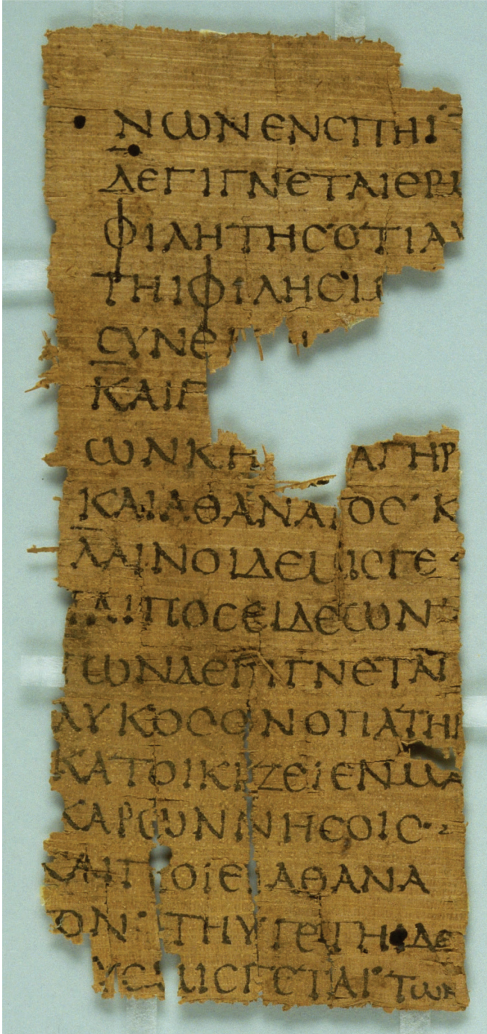


Fig. 54: *P.Oxy. VIII 1084.*
 Courtesy of Princeton University.

With reference to the historiography circulating in Egypt in the Ptolemaic epoch, the MP³ database contains 21 entries pertaining to fragments variously connected to the history of the ancient Mediterranean, attesting to an abiding interest in this literary topic.

All of them will be mentioned in this paper, but the focus will be on those containing episodes of Greek historiography and passages about its rulers and commanders.

As for fragments from local histories, we can recall three papyri.

The most ancient is *P.Köln* VI 248, which is datable to the 3rd c. BC,¹¹ and has been tentatively assigned to the *Persika* by Ctesias of Cnidus¹² or to a work by Dinon of Colophon.¹³ It is a fragment from a historical composition; the few extant lines concern a peculiar scene: a letter is reported and the addressee bursts out laughing. The editor's hypothesis is that we are dealing with Semiramis, who on another similar occasion reacts in the same way after reading a letter by Stabrobates, king of the Indians: "Semiramis, however, on reading his letter dismissed his statements with laughter and remarked, 'It will be in deeds that the Indian will make trial of my valour'".¹⁴ This fragment comes from a *cartonnage*, along with the ten closing lines of a column. It is difficult even to tell whether this material comes from a roll or whether we are dealing with a fragmentary sheet preserving an *excerptum*. We just can observe that the writing is a clear, bilinear upright majuscule that alternates large and small letters, characterized by small serifs at the top of some letters (*iota*, *pi*, *tau*, and *chi*). The column is more than 8 cm wide, with a large interlinear space. The punctuation consists of two *vacua* respectively indicating a stop (ll. 4 and 8) and a *paragraphos* associated with a *vacuum* at l. 8. The baseline runs horizontal and the letters are regularly spaced on it. All the examinations carried out until now suggest that the copy is a professional one.¹⁵

A second fragment contains some references to the expulsion of tyrants from Sicyon and Athens by the Spartans: it is *P.Ryl.* I 18,¹⁶ 2nd c. BC, coming from a papyrus roll (ca. 10.2 × 8.8 cm), which preserves parts of the top of two consecutive columns of writing, with an upper margin of 0.8 cm (Fig. 55).

It contains minimal parts of the right ends of 11 lines of a column followed by 12 lines from the following one. The text has been written by a round-pointed pen in black ink and arranged on horizontal and regularly spaced lines. The intercolumnium is 0.9–1.5 cm wide. No breathings or accents are preserved. The punctuation consists of a simple *paragraphos*, one letter wide (col. II 4–5 and 10–11), that is used alone (ll. 4–5) or with a *vacuum* (ll. 10–11). Maas' law only slightly seems to affect the column.

The writing is a medium rounded majuscule, with cursive elements, slightly inclined to the right, generally bilinear, clear even if not elegant; letters have the

11 MP³ 2252.01; LDAB 6969; TM 65715.

12 *FGrHist* IIC 1, fr. 416–517. A translation of all these texts (with a short commentary) can be found in Auberger 1991. For partial editions with translations see Henry 1947 and König 1972.

13 *FGrHist* IIC 1, fr. 1–3.

14 Diod. Sic., 1.18.2–4.

15 On the criteria I rely on to define bibliological categories see Pellé 2010, 25–32. A very useful study on the book standards can be found in Del Corso 2022, 132–138; 196–212.

16 MP³ 2177; LDAB 6873; TM 65622.

same size and show some small serifs at the top and bottom of the vertical strokes (e.g. *iota*, *ny*, *pi*, and *tau*).

It is a professional standard copy by the same scribe as *P.Rein.* I 5 + *BKT* II 55 (perhaps a treatise on music or a philosophical dialogue) and probably also *BKT* V.2, pp. 123–128 (an anthology on the topic of marriage, with passages from tragedies and comedies, as well as one in trochaic tetrameters).¹⁷ Until now it has been impossible to establish whether we are dealing with a collection of *excerpta* taken from one or more historio graphical works or with the epitome of a work on a historical topic.

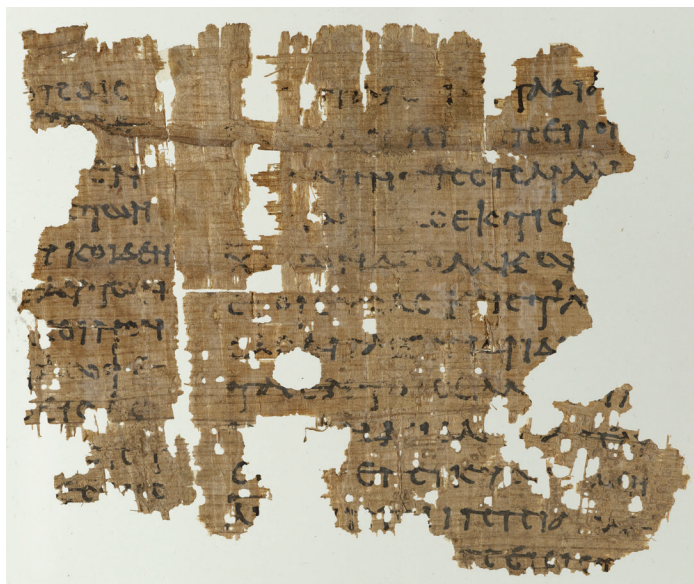


Fig. 55: *P.Ryl.* I 18. Courtesy of The John Rylands Library.

Finally we have *P.Oxy.* XXXIV 2399, 1st c. BC (16.5 × 23.5 cm, and five smaller fragments),¹⁸ which preserves, in four consecutive columns, parts of an anonymous text on the history of Sicily during the reign of Agathocles (Fig. 56).

¹⁷ It includes quotations from Plato the comedian, Pherecrates, Menander, Theodectas (?), Pseudo-Epicharmus, Antiphanes, Euripides' *Melanippe*, Protesilaos, and Hippolytos. A related text was later added on the verso by another scribe. See Della Corte 1936.

¹⁸ MP³ 2194; LDAB 823; TM 59719.



Fig. 56: P.Oxy. XXXIV 2399. Courtesy of Egypt Exploration Society – University of Oxford Imaging Papyri Project.

In particular it concerns Agathocles' campaign against Carthage and the political situation in Syracuse in the autumn of 310 BC. Coll. I–II 5 describe a Carthaginian assault on Leukos Tynes, also mentioning some other raids and an imminent war; coll. II 6–III 8 summarize a harangue delivered in Syracuse by Diognetos, who was bribed by Amilcar and sought to spark a revolt. In col. III 9–20, after the astonished reaction by the assembly, Antandros — the tyrant's older brother, who has been left in Syracuse as a guardian of the city during Agathocles' African expedition — expels Diognetos from the Assembly.

The text is written in a clear hand, similar to the so-called *epsilon-theta* style. It is mostly bilinear (with the exception of *phi*, whose vertical stroke protrudes slightly above and below); the letters have the same size, even if they are not always regularly distributed on the horizontal baselines, and are provided with small *apices* at the top of vertical strokes. Punctuation is obtained by using *paragraphoi* that are one letter wide and associated with a *vacuum*, to identify sentences (II 5–6, III 8–9, III 19–20, IV 17–18) — although they sometimes stand alone (II 14–15). A *diple* appears in the intercolumnium (col. II 8), probably connected to the summarized speech (II 7–III 18) or to the speaker's identification.

As for the author of this historical work probably focusing on Agathocles and his Campaigns against the Carthaginians,¹⁹ different hypotheses have been formulated: Duris of Samos,²⁰ Callias,²¹ and Antandros of Syracuse²² seem to be the most probable candidates, but the question of the work's authorship remains open. As for the intended readership of the copy, the writing is undoubtedly the work of a professional, although it is not calligraphic. But it is difficult to say anything else: the indication of the subdivision into cola in a single case (col. II 41–42) and the *diple* to mark the beginning of an indirect speech do not seem enough to suggest that the roll was used by someone interested to the study of rhetoric.

Six fragments refer to episodes related to the official history of Hellenistic Egypt and the Near East. They are:

- *P.Petr.* II 45, 3rd c. BC,²³ a report on the Third Syriac War, probably a literary reworking of a war bulletin addressed by Ptolemy III to his court;
- *P.Ryl.* III 491, 2nd c. BC,²⁴ an episode from the Second Punic War, the ephemeral peace of 203 BC. We are probably dealing with an epitome of Quintus Fabius Pictor's work.²⁵ According to the most probable hypothesis it was "compiled to serve readers whose interest in Roman history did not stretch quite as far as reading him complete";²⁶
- *BKT* II 192, 1st c. BC,²⁷ a fragment from a history of the Seleucid Empire;
- *P.Ryl.* I 20, 1st c. BC,²⁸ a fragment about the fiscal policies of Persia;
- *P.Köln* VI 247, 2nd/1st c. BC,²⁹ an account of Antigonos Monophthalmos' assumption of kingship, with Ptolemy's and the Rhodians' reactions to the event. The account is probably by a Rhodian historian;
- *P.Duk. inv.* 4 V, 1st c. BC,³⁰ a fragment from a chronological list of numerous Ptolemies.

19 On these campaigns see at least Trundle 2017.

20 *P.Oxy.* XXIV, pp. 101–102.

21 Cavallaro 1977.

22 Manni 1966.

23 *MP*³ 2206; *LDAB* 2602; *TM* 61457.

24 *MP*³ 2212; *LDAB* 3845; *TM* 62659.

25 On this historian, a predecessor of Polybius who wrote in Greek and sided against those historians who accused Rome of imperialism, see Cornell/Bispham 2013, 168–169.

26 Hoyos 2001, 79.

27 *MP*³ 2207.1; *LDAB* 6767; *TM* 65517.

28 *MP*³ 2262; *LDAB* 6784; *TM* 65533.

29 *MP*³ 2202.01; *LDAB* 6908; *TM* 65656.

30 *MP*³ 2209.01; *LDAB* 6771; *TM* 65521.

One fragment, *P.Lond.Lit.* 112 (second half of the 3rd c. BC)³¹ contains a more explicitly ethnographic work: a treatise on *Nomima barbarika*, recently attributed to Nymphodorus of Amphipolis.

In some cases it is impossible to establish the content of highly damaged or very short fragments, which can only be assigned to historiography by analogy, on the basis of the presence of certain terms or expressions frequently occurring in this genre (*P.Ryl.* III 501, 2nd c. BC;³² *P.Bour.* 6, 2nd/1st c. BC;³³ *P.Ryl.* I 31, 1st c. BC³⁴).

Another theme frequently attested in Hellenistic papyri is the deeds of Alexander the Great, a subject of extraordinary interest in the historiography of all epochs, and one which has been made the focus of numerous works across a wide range of fields:

political history, military history, the history of cultures, the construction of ethnic identities, literature of a moral or moralising nature, satire and, last but not least in terms of success and dissemination, the fictional reinterpretation and expansion of the character and his encounters with the *oecumene* that is the *Alexander Romance*.³⁵

The ten papyri analysed by Luisa Prandi in 2009 in the *Corpus dei Papiri Storici Greci e Latini* contain fragments of ‘narrative’ texts dated to the period from the 2nd c. BC to the 4th c. AD, which show the immense, varied, and widespread interest in Alexander and in anything more or less closely associated with his character and deeds. Three of these papyri are Ptolemaic.

The first contains parts of a commentary on Alexander’s *Ephemerides* by the historian Strattis of Olynthus, specifically focusing on a series of military initiatives he took in the Balkans in 335 BC (*P.Brit.Lib.* 3085v,³⁶ 2nd c. BC). The text is written on the verso of a document and consists of ten fragments, not all of which are contiguous. The columniation is not respected on the right-hand side, and the lines tend to move upwards slightly, with the modules of the letters narrowing in some places. The artefact, which L. Prandi “intuitively” considers to be a private copy,³⁷ was probably commissioned by a client with a specific interest in the deeds of the Macedonian conqueror. Arranged with regular spaces between lines and letters, it is written in an upright bookhand with a slight modular contrast — alternating

31 MP³ 2183; LDAB 403; TM 59306.

32 MP³ 2265; LDAB 3846; TM 62660.

33 MP³ 2246; LDAB 6916; TM 65663.

34 MP³ 2264; LDAB 6786; TM 65535.

35 Prandi 2009, 85.

36 MP³ 2197.01; LDAB 6866; TM 65615.

37 Prandi 2009, 95.

between rigid and softer forms, as is often the case in literary *volumina* from the 3rd c. BC — and non-systematic thickening at the extremities of the vertical strokes³⁸ (a parallel is provided by *P.Hamb.* II 163, Thuc. 1.2–3.28, mid 3rd c. BC,³⁹ which however exhibits greater regularity in the distribution of the letters and is written with greater care). Two revisions by m_1 and two *paragraphoi* (fr. 7, l. 1 and fr. 8, l. 10) of contested interpretation can be seen: for the first editors, who saw in the fragment a section of a prose text about Alexander, these served to delimit two separate narrative sections,⁴⁰ for N.G.L. Hammond they marked sections of the text that were summarised but not annotated,⁴¹ while For L. Prandi they should be seen “from the perspective of diversification and as a way of facilitating the search for information in the text”.⁴² In the absence of any cogent proof, it seems appropriate to limit ourselves to recalling that in contemporary commentaries the *paragraphos* is mostly linked to the end of a lemma.⁴³ It would thus be perfectly reasonable to propose that they also have this function here. The characteristics identified thus far suggest that the copy may have belonged to a private individual, perhaps a common reader interested in Alexander’s campaigns, but was created by a professional scribe despite being of modest quality and written on reused material.

The second Hellenistic papyrus among those dealing with Alexander dates from a later period, compared to the one discussed above, namely the 1st c. BC. It contains a selection of references to the Battle of the Granicus (*P.Hamb.* II 130; 1st c. BC)⁴⁴ and consists of the central part of 19 lines, with a lower margin of ca. 2 cm. In 1954 the first editor, R. Merkelbach, who reconstructed up to 20 letters per line, argued that this was an account of the Battle of the Granicus, with a particular reference to Cleitus’ intervention — that saved Alexander’s life — followed by an assessment of losses in the battle.⁴⁵ This hypothesis, further discussed by Merkelbach in 1954⁴⁶ and accepted by later scholars who re-assessed the fragment,⁴⁷ was called into question by L. Prandi, who argued that rather than a short summary of the battle (May 334 BC), it is in fact a concise list of memorable moments of the clash, including Cleitus’ intervention, which is mentioned twice within a few lines (ll. 5 and 11). The fragment’s

38 On this type of writing, see Cavallo 2008, 34–37.

39 On *P.Hamb.* II 163, see Pellé 2022, 15 and 93–94.

40 Clarysse/Schepens 1985, 43 and 45.

41 Hammond 1987, 338–339.

42 Prandi 2009, 25.

43 Del Fabbro 1979, 87.

44 MP³ 2196; LDAB; 6781; TM 65530.

45 Merkelbach 1954, 74.

46 Merkelbach 1956, 110.

47 Mette 1979, 19–20; Denuzzo 2003, 78–79.

state of conservation and the lack of ‘diagnostic’ data prevent us from formulating hypotheses concerning the milieu of production and context of circulation. However, the fragment’s general appearance, the fact that it is written only on the recto in broadly horizontal lines with a regular interlinear space (ca. 0.4 cm) and a distance between the letters, in an upright bookhand with thickening at the lower and upper extremities of the vertical strokes, swashes (e.g. in *delta*, although not systematically), and the presence of three *vacua* — possibly used as punctuation (ll. 2, 5, and 8) — all suggest that what we have is an artefact of reasonable, and in any case professional, craftsmanship.

The third and final fragment (*P.Oxy.* IV 679),⁴⁸ lost during the Second World War, contains small parts of an account of Alexander’s Asian expedition, which, according to the editors B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt,⁴⁹ may have been composed by Ptolemy I Soter. L. Prandi agrees, adding new elements to their hypothesis. Based on palaeographic data, the fragment has been assigned to the 1st c. BC by the editors.⁵⁰

In its published form, the fragment (ca. 12.5 × 6.1 cm) comprises parts of the right-hand side of the first 21 lines of one column and minimal remains of the first 27 lines of the next column. Of the latter, ll. 4–9 have been completely lost, while as regards ll. 1–3 and 10–27 we only have minimal traces of the initial parts, with a single word preserved intact in l. 21: βασιλεια (interpreted as βασιλεία by L. Prandi).⁵¹ Regarding the *paragraphoi* identified by the editors below ll. 1, 16, and 21, it is obviously impossible to establish their function, just as it is impossible to infer anything from the fact that ll. 14–24 show letters with a smaller module than the others.⁵²

In the surviving parts of the first column, local terms (ll. 1; 2–3), proper nouns (l. 2), and military terms (ll. 12–13; 20) were recognised, enabling the original editors to assign the action described in the papyrus to an operation in Cilicia. Through a comparison with Arrian (*Anabasis* 3.16,9–10), L. Prandi was able to identify this operation as the task which Alexander entrusted to Menetes in 331 BC, supporting the editors’ suggestion that the passage may derive from the writings of Ptolemy I Soter. Specifically, she stresses that “the palaeographic dating of the writing to the 1st c. BC indicates a period in which the survival and the circulation of Ptolemy were assured”.⁵³

48 MP³ 2198; LDAB 6769; TM 65519.

49 Grenfell/Hunt 1904, 127.

50 Grenfell/Hunt 1904, 127.

51 Prandi 2009, 32.

52 Grenfell/Hunt 1904, 127.

53 Prandi 2009, 87.

Among the Hellenistic papyri, it is these three that contain references to Alexander and/or figures associated with him and are thus open to historical interpretations regarding their content and historiographical observations about the genre or arrangement of the text. Among these we may include another Ptolemaic fragment on the Macedonian conqueror,⁵⁴ *P.Rain.* I 7 (1st c. BC/1st c. AD),⁵⁵ the so-called *Liber de morte testamentoque Alexandri*, associated above all with the “sensational” literature on Alexander.⁵⁶ Lastly, to this cluster we may add a fragment of Hellenistic historiography datable to the 3rd c. BC and coming from *cartonnage* (*P.Monts.Roca* IV 39).⁵⁷ It can perhaps be ascribed to the historiography on Alexander based on some references to a Eurydice and perhaps a Ptolemy. These copies are from the Ptolemaic period, confirming not just the typological variety of Greek historiography, but also the widespread interest in the multiform manifestations of this genre in Egypt, which continued in the Roman and Byzantine epochs.

There is no lack of fragments that resist classification but have been attributed to known authors, owing to certain characteristics in terms of content or the presence of references to recognisable events from Greek history, even though they have not been handed down by the medieval *paradosis*. One example is Theopompus, one of the six historians of the first canon that arose in the Alexandrian period according to R. Nicolai,⁵⁸ together with Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Philistus, and Ephorus: the eight fragments attributed to him were newly published by Claudio Biagetti in 2019 in a volume of the *Corpus dei Papiri Storici Greci e Latini*.⁵⁹ Three fragments believed to be by him are datable to the Ptolemaic period (*P.Hib.* I 15,⁶⁰ 280–250 BC; *P.Ryl.* III 490,⁶¹ 3rd c. BC and PSI Laur. inv. 22013,⁶² 2nd/1st c. BC), but only one of these, *P.Ryl.* III 490, perhaps part of his *Philippika*, is likely to be genuine. This actually consists of two non-contiguous fragments (a: 10.5 × 15.8 cm; b: 11 × 28.6 cm) which contain part of three consecutive columns (31 lines per column, with 13–31 letters per line, interlinear space constant and intercolumnium varying from ca. 1.5 to 2 cm), an upper margin of ca. 2.2 cm and a lower margin of ca. 2.8 cm;

54 For *P.Mil.Vogl.* I 21 (MP³ 2199; LDAB 6789; TM 65538), a specimen in a mature, severe style, I adopt the dating of Funghi/Messeri 1992, 83–86, to the 2nd or 3rd c. AD.

55 MP³ 2201; LDAB 6832; TM 65581.

56 On the relationship between the papyri and the Alexander Romance, see especially Heckel 1988, 1–18, and Stoneman 2007, LXXVII–LXXVIII.

57 MP³ 2201.02; LDAB 219235; TM 219235.

58 Nicolai 1992, 249–339.

59 Biagetti 2019.

60 MP³ 2496; LDAB 6983; TM 65729.

61 MP³ 2192; LDAB 7007; TM 65753.

62 MP³ 2558; LDAB 6773; TM 65523.

according to such measures, it is possible to infer that the *volumen* was originally at least 28.6 cm tall. The column is only slightly affected by Maas's law. No diacritics, accents, or punctuation marks are preserved. The two simple *paragraphoi* in col. III, each of one letter width and jutting slightly into the intercolumnium (see coll. III 5 and 12), identify a section of the account and suggest an analogous form of organisation in the rest of the copy.

The text, written in black ink with a round-nibbed pen, is in an upright majuscule, bilinear (except for *phi*), with a slight modular contrast and mixing of square and more sinuous forms. In some places there is a thickening of the extremities of some letters, especially in the horizontal stroke of the *tau*. The characteristic letters include *alpha* in two movements with a triangular eye; *epsilon* in two movements, in some cases with a jutting intermediate stroke; *omega* positioned in the upper part of the line, angular, and with the central element visible. C. Biagetti sees a correspondence between this fragment and P.Berol. inv. 13270⁶³ (a poetic anthology from Elephantine, roughly 300–284 BC), “a form of ω in a phase of transition from the more ancient type ‘with a convex curve’ to the version ‘with a double bowl’”,⁶⁴ but there is also a parallel with Aristander's letter to Zenon in *PSIV* 383 (248/247 BC, from Philadelphia),⁶⁵ written in a sinuous bookhand, with a slight modular contrast. The proposed parallels date the writing of *P.Ryl.* III 490 to the first half of the 3rd c. BC. The papyrus contains a prose text in a concise style, which condenses the events into three columns, prompting its most recent editor to suggest that the roll contained the epitome of a more extended historiographical work regarding both the deeds of Philip and events affecting the Persian empire.⁶⁶

In 1921,⁶⁷ when describing the batch of papyri destined for the John Rylands Library, B.P. Grenfell attributed the text to the Φιλπικὰ of Theopompus. Subsequent attribution attempts were divided between those according to whom the papyrus contained the work of an Atthidographer, based on the use of chronographical annotations, and those who stressed the role of Philip II in the events described, considering the papyrus to be the summary of a work on his life and “career” and thus looking to the works of Anaximenes of Lampsacus and Theopompus of Chios. These two positions were respectively supported by H.T. Wade-Gery and C.H. Roberts, who worked together on the *editio princeps*.⁶⁸

⁶³ MP³ 1924; LDAB 6927; TM 65674.

⁶⁴ Biagetti 2019, 32.

⁶⁵ TM 2067.

⁶⁶ Biagetti 2019, 45.

⁶⁷ Grenfell 1921, 151.

⁶⁸ Roberts 1938, 110 and 112.

The annotations of the *editio princeps* represented a solid starting point for the subsequent work of M. Gigante, who upheld the idea of the text as a summary, which the author called “an epitome of Φιλισπικά [PRyl 490]”.⁶⁹

Biagetti explored the question further, considering Roberts’ interpretation of *P.Ryl.* III 490. He also recognised a summary of the episodes of 339–337 BC (in most of which Philip II was the main figure), discussed by means of a simple and succinct presentation of the arguments in question. The most probable source seems to be Anaximenes’ or Theopompus’ Φιλισπικά,⁷⁰ but the admittedly unlikely possibility that this papyrus-based epitome was assembled from composite literary documentation — that is, documentation involving the simultaneous recourse to multiple sources — should not be ruled out.⁷¹

As for the intended readership of the papyrus, Roberts hypothesized that the text is likely to have circulated among the second generation of Philip’s veterans,⁷² while Biagetti — on the basis of the formal correctness of the text and the use of diacritic notations — regards as plausible the idea of its “use within erudite circles interested in the study of the Attic oratory of the 4th century”.⁷³ These views appear to be little more than speculation, however, since neither is supported by actual evidence. Unfortunately, together with the impossibility of deriving from this specimen any information on its use, we must acknowledge — as the most recent editor rightly stresses — the extreme difficulty of establishing whether the text is a copy of a model epitome or a summary of the historical work written by the author for his own personal use.

Clearly not by Theopompus but just as relevant to the study of fragmentary historiography are the two other fragments mentioned above, which appear to have circulated in two completely different environments and suggest a varied use of this literary genre, foreshadowing the vast and varied historiography of the Roman epoch:

P.Hib. I 15 is composed of a group of ten fragments, the largest three of which (A: 20.6 × 15.4 cm; B: 19.1 × 18.5 cm; C: 15.3 × 8 cm) have six columns of text, to which may be added some much more limited parts from the other seven fragments. The average height of the columns, with 23 to 26 lines, is believed to have been ca. 17 cm, the width varying from ca. 5.7 to 6.7 cm: a fairly frequent size for the period of

⁶⁹ Gigante 1946, 134.

⁷⁰ Biagetti 2019, 60, that relies on Körte 1941, 129 and Parker 1995.

⁷¹ Biagetti also mentions the hypothesis that the papyrus was linked to less probable sources, such as the Ἀθηναί by Philochorus, the σύνταξις by Di(i)llo, and the Ἰστορίαι by Duris.

⁷² Roberts 1938, 110.

⁷³ Biagetti 2019, 45.

reference. The number of letters per line varies from 14 to 25. The upper margin is preserved to a depth of 1.7–1.8 cm, and the lower margin of 1.7 cm. The interlinear space is consistently 0.4–0.5 cm, while the intercolumnium is highly variable, ranging between 0.4 and 3.4 cm. Maas's law only minimally applies to these columns.

The text of *P.Hib.* I 15 is written in an upright bookhand, with the mixing of archaic square forms (*alpha* in three movements and *zeta* with a vertical median stroke), *theta* with a punctiform central element, and more sinuous forms (*beta* with rounded bowls, *eta* and *pi* with slightly curved external strokes, *my* with a curved central element, *rho* with a round eye, and *xi* with a central element reduced to a point and an undulating lower stroke). As a consequence, the letters have different size; the most characteristic include *omega*, with a rounded left bowl and a very small right bowl; *ny* with a slightly raised right stroke; and *phi* with an almost triangular central eye. A parallel among documents not from El-Hibeh is provided by L. Del Corso, who stresses the analogies between *P.Hib.* I 15 and some documents from the Zenon archive, as *PSI IV 444 = P.Cair.Zen.* I 59019, a letter to Zenon perhaps written in Alexandria around 258 BC.⁷⁴

Punctuation consists in the use of the simple *paragraphos*, in some cases associated with hyphens in the body of the text. A *diorthotes*, who — as Biagetti rightly observes — may be the scribe of the main text, has written the corrections in the interlinear space, showing a certain grammatical sensitivity in rectifying the iotacistic forms ὑμεῖν (col. III 4; col. IV 4; col. V 6) and μεμεῖσθαι (col. III 5) and the repeated word παρακαλῶ by means of a strikethrough (col. III 24–25).

P.Hib. I 15 contains the remains of a speech in which a figure identified only as a *persona loquens* exhorts the public to decide on questions that for Biagetti concern “national security”. The exhortation is conducted with reference to conventional themes such as the education of the young (col. IV 2–14) and the battles of Marathon and Salamis (col. V 9–10), and it might contain an appeal to follow the example of one's ancestors (col. III 1–5).

According to Blass, who was the first to examine the text, and then to Grenfell and Hunt, the background to the *oratio* is the political upheaval in Athens following the death of Alexander the Great,⁷⁵ and the anonymous orator might be the Athenian commander Leosthenes, a key figure in the initial phase of the Lamian War.⁷⁶ However, as Biagetti rightly points out, the lack of a clear context and the uncertainty surrounding some textual readings, the presence of which is decisive, make the hypothesis unreliable and suggests the need for prudence, although it is possible to date

74 Del Corso 2004, 46.

75 Blass *ap.* Grenfell/Hunt 1906, 55.

76 See Diod. Sic. 17.111.1–4; 189.1–13, esp. 6.

the composition of the discourse to between 480 BC (Battle of Salamis: col. v 10) and the mid 3rd c. BC, when the text was transcribed.

The hypothesis that the speech (or speeches) of *P.Hib.* I 15 are merely a rhetorical exercise was proposed by Blass and accepted by K. Jander.⁷⁷

The most recent editor also appears to be open to his idea, affirming that the artefact may contain a historical μελετή with careful writing and a precise arrangement of the text in the non-written space.⁷⁸ As is known above all from recent research into educational practices in the ancient world,⁷⁹ it is not always possible to distinguish a school writing exercise from a passage in a textbook or a fragment of a literary work, when the textual tradition of the passage is uncertain. Moreover, a study by Del Corso⁸⁰ further focuses on the physical and palaeographic features of the written items linked to ‘school’ environments, insisting on their peculiar, extreme variability, encompassing as they do both texts written by unskilled hands and products created by individuals accustomed to writing. They also include manuscripts of apparently modest craftsmanship and specimens of greater value. Moreover, in terms of content, the impossibility of making a distinction between a ‘scholastic’ declamation of historical subject-matter and a speech from a historiographical work was stressed in a study by R. Nicolai, who, examining the case of *P.Hib.* I 15, highlighted its affinity with the deliberative genre, without excluding an original historiographical purpose.⁸¹ A recent study by Del Corso convincingly includes our papyrus in a set of “rhetorical material, which can be compared to later collections of progymnasmata”,⁸² relying on three relevant aspects: 1. The occurrence of some stylistic changes added by the scribe; 2. The palaeographic features of *P.Hib.* I 15 and their relation to the so called “scrittura di rispetto”; 3. The fact that “*P. Hib.* I 15 is not too dissimilar from *P.Hib.* I 26: a rhetorical text useful for whoever wished to learn or practice rhetoric, and written by someone with a bureaucratic training or at least familiar with bureaucratic scripts”.

However, even assuming that speech of *P.Hib.* I 15 may well be part of a historical work, it should be noted that it would be impossible to identify its author. Out of the various hypotheses suggested by scholars, the most plausible perhaps is

77 Blass *apud* Grenfell/Hunt 1906, 55; Fuhr 1906, 14; Jander 1913, 33; Edwards 1929, 117; Russell 1983, 4 n. 6.

78 Criboire 1996, 97–102.

79 Criboire 1996, 51–52; Stramaglia 2015, 162–164.

80 Del Corso 2010.

81 Nicolai 2008, 154–158.

82 Del Corso 2020, 49–50.

therefore the attribution to Anaximenes (as suggested by Mathieu)⁸³ or Duris (as suggested by Biagetti).⁸⁴

PSI Laur. inv. 22013 is a fragment of a papyrus roll (7 × 20.5 cm) containing what remains of two columns of text, about 16 cm high and composed of 27 and 29 lines, with an upper margin of ca. 2.2 cm and a lower margin of ca. 3 cm, the roll having an estimated height of ca. 23–24 cm.⁸⁵ The lines are separated by an intercolumnium that progressively narrows from ca. 1.8 cm at the top to 0.7 cm at the bottom and is rendered oblique by Maas's law. Striking to the observer is the change of dimensions starting from col. II 12, a variation that R. Pintaudi attributes to a change of pen.⁸⁶ In contrast, on the basis of the results of L. Del Corso's influential 2010 study of 'collective' writing practices,⁸⁷ Biagetti argues that although the letters of the two parts are written in a similar way, there may have been a change of scribe:

it cannot be excluded however that the text was written by two different hands, the one (col. I 1 – II 11) characterized by a very dense rounded writing, in a small module with slightly cursive elements (α, κ, υ, μ; cf. Pintaudi[–Canfora], 81) and ligatures (col. I 1: προσδεχόμεθα; col. I 2: χεῖμας), the other (col. II 12–29) thinner, in a larger module, with greater spacing between the individual letters and narrower interlinear spaces.

This hypothesis should definitely be taken into consideration.

Regardless of the reasons for the change in the writing, the fragments show some palaeographic characteristics that are also seen in documentary papyri dated to the end of the 2nd c. BC: some strokes are markedly curved; letters are leaning on each other and may be joined in ligatures; there is no real ornamentation, but there can be thickenings at the top of some letters (see e.g. *eta*, *iota*, *ny*, *pi*, *rho*, *tau*, and *psilon*). Other elements worth noting are: *alpha*, drawn in two movements with the curve of the eye in some cases sinuous, in others rigid; *epsilon*, also drawn in two movements with protruding median line; *my*, with oblique strokes joined in a single curved line, in some cases almost flat; and *omega*, with a pronounced double bowl. The last editor suggests as a parallel PSI III 166, a petition from Panopolis, written in 118 BC.⁸⁸

In addition to *vacua* and *paragraphoi*, marking the progression of the sentences and the change of speaker in *oratio recta*, there are two diacritics in the

⁸³ Mathieu 1929, 160–161.

⁸⁴ Biagetti 2019, 41–43.

⁸⁵ Pintaudi/Canfora 2010, 83–84.

⁸⁶ Pintaudi/Canfora 2010, 85.

⁸⁷ Del Corso 2010b.

⁸⁸ Biagetti 2019, 62.

intercolumnium, in correspondence with col. II 19 and 21: in the first case, its shape recalls that of the Arabic number six, while in the second case, near to the *paraglyphos* between lines 21 and 22, “a curved mark, almost a parenthesis” is observed. The text was clearly modified by a corrector, who rectified the text in several cases, without however eliminating all the errors.⁸⁹

The historic background of PSI Laur. inv. 22013 was recognised by L. Canfora, who in a recent study of the fragment⁹⁰ identified its content as the trial of the Athenian strategists immediately after the Battle of Arginusae (406 BC).

The probable presence of a narrative interlude, sandwiched between two speeches (ll. 18–21), suggests that PSI Laur. inv. 22013 was derived from a work of historical prose. Considering the topic discussed, Canfora put forward the names of Theopompus, Ephorus, and Duris as the potential authors of the passage, without excluding “other candidates, who however are beyond our powers of identification”.⁹¹ Biagetti, however, emphasising the impossibility of verifying Theopompus’ authorship due to the lack of evidence concerning Books II and III, to which Canfora tentatively assigned the passage, as well as the weakness of the clues pointing to Ephorus or Duris, prudently leaves the question open:

there does not seem to be sufficient evidence to establish the authorship of the passage transmitted by PSI Laur. inv. 22013, not only because generic thematic and stylistic considerations are not enough in themselves to assign the content to a specific author, but also because — more generally — neither the claim that it belongs to a historic work nor its admittedly plausible connection to the trial arising from the Battle of Arginusae have been demonstrated.

A few brief observations can perhaps be made about the fragment’s material aspects: the “irregular” nature of the copy, the variation of the intercolumnar and interlinear spaces and the alternation of two different hands (or two different pens) all somewhat limit the copy’s editorial value. At the same time, in our specimen, the presence of an elaborate system of punctuation, the signs of revision, and the use of diacritics whose meaning is not immediately clear, all point to a field of use related to study, although we cannot say precisely in what way.

⁸⁹ Gallavotti 1939, 260; Pintaudi/Canfora 2010, 85.

⁹⁰ Pintaudi/Canfora 2010, 88–92.

⁹¹ Pintaudi/Canfora 2010, 93.

3 Texts also Known from Medieval Manuscripts

We should not neglect the direct and indirect evidence provided by texts that have been handed down via medieval codices. Those of the Ptolemaic epoch are currently limited to three fragments: one by Herodotus and two by Thucydides. There are no Xenophon fragments from the Hellenistic period.

3.1 Herodotus

The only Herodotean papyrus assigned to the Hellenistic period is P.Duk. inv. 756 + P.Mil.Vogl. inv. 756.⁹² The two fragments were published at different times: in 2002 by R. Hatzilambrou (P.Duk. inv. 756, ca. 6 × 12.7 cm),⁹³ and in 2005 by A. Soldati (P.Mil.Vogl. inv. 756, ca. 6.7 × 6 cm),⁹⁴ who established a connection between them and correctly dated them to the 2nd or 1st c. BC. The two fragments belonged to a papyrus roll with the text written parallel to the fibres, with columns ca. 6.5 cm wide, an average of 17–18 letters per line, and an intercolumnium of ca. 2 cm — a significant width for the Ptolemaic period.⁹⁵ The lower margin, preserved only in the case of P.Duk. inv. 756, measures at least 4 cm. The interlinear space, broadly constant and double the height of the writing, is ca. 0.4 cm. The letters maintain a constant distance from each other, except for a few cases in which they touch. The text runs parallel to the fibres and was written using a thin, round-nibbed pen. The other side is blank. No diacritics or accents are preserved; the only certain punctuation mark is a simple *paragraphos* with the same width as a letter between lines 6 and 7, corresponding to a logical pause. The script is a majuscule in a small-to-medium-sized bilinear upright bookhand (ca. 0.35 cm × ca. 0.2 cm), in which angular shapes (e.g. *alpha* with a highly pointed eye) alternate with more sinuous ones (e.g. *epsilon*, *sigma*, *omega*). The script is characterized by a tendency for oblique strokes (e.g. *kappa*, *ny*) and horizontal strokes (e.g. *eta*, *pi*) to be slightly convex. Characteristic letters include a slightly oval *epsilon*, with the intermediate stroke in some cases detached from the body of the letter and slightly descending; *eta*, with the horizontal stroke slightly descending; *tau* with a ‘split’ crossbar and a very small foot pointing to the left at the base of the vertical stem; *omega* raised significantly

⁹² *Hist.* IV 144, 2–145,1; 147, 4–5; MP³ 474.11; LDAB 1119; TM 60005.

⁹³ Hatzilambrou 2002, 41–45.

⁹⁴ Soldati 2005, 101–106.

⁹⁵ Johnson 2004, 113–114 and Blanchard 1993. Blanchard records an intercolumnium of 1 to 2 cm in *P.Hib.* I 15.

above the baseline, with rounded bowls, of which the right-hand one descends further than the left.

The two fragments do not show any particular “diagnostic” characteristics. Thus, without even knowing their provenance, it is impossible to propose a context of circulation. It would appear, however, to be a professional copy of Book IV, of average quality, written with care and rich in Ionic forms, as highlighted by the editor of P.Mil.Vogl. inv. 756.

3.2 Thucydides

Although the Thucydidean documentation as a whole is rather abundant, for the Hellenistic period the corpus is numerically minimal but highly significant, for the reconstruction of the circulation of Thucydides’ writings in the ancient world.⁹⁶ It comprises only two papyri: *P.Hamb.* II 163 and P.CtYBR inv. 4601.

***P.Hamb.* II 163 (3rd c. BC; *Hist.* 1.2.2–3; 2.6–3.1; 28.3–5; 29.3)**

The papyrus was published by B. Snell in 1954 in a very concise edition that rightly focused on the significant textual details, but neglected its more strictly bibliographical and palaeographic aspects.⁹⁷ It was first assigned to the 1st c. AD, but only two years later E.G. Turner proposed to date it to the 3rd c. BC, stressing its importance for the Thucydidean tradition. It is composed of a pair of fragments (A = P.Hamb.Graec. 646: ca. 7 × 9 cm; B = P.Hamb.Graec. 666: ca. 4.7 × 11 cm) from *cartonnage*. Fr. A has 13 lines of writing from the central part of a column of which the beginning is missing, followed by the first one or two letters of 12 lines from the next column, while fr. B has the central portion of 17 lines of writing. The text was written in black ink using a round-nibbed pen. The column, ca. 6 cm wide, is believed to have contained 33–34 lines of perfectly horizontal writing; each line had an average of 19 letters, well distributed at a constant distance from each other without ligatures. The interlinear space is constant and measures ca. 0.4 cm and the letters are ca. 2.8 cm high on average. The intercolumnium is narrow, as is typical

⁹⁶ I discuss the two specimens in Pellé 2022, 15, 49, 95–96. See also Pellé 2023, 248–262.

⁹⁷ MP³ 1504, LDAB 4117; TM 62925.

for Ptolemaic-era papyri,⁹⁸ but not constant, varying between ca. 0.5 and 1.0 cm. The column is slightly affected by Maas's law, as can be seen from the position of the initial letters of the lines of fr. A col. II. The height of the column, reconstructed on the basis of the preserved portion, is believed to have been ca. 22.5 cm. Since the margins have all been lost, the height of the roll cannot be determined. We shall limit ourselves here to recalling that the data on the number of lines and the height of the column prompted Blanchard, in his 1993 bibliological study of literary papyri extracted from *cartonnages*, to classify it among the larger rolls, those 26 cm or higher.⁹⁹ The estimated number of letters per column and a comparison with the modern editors' printed text rule out the possibility that before our fragment there were originally two columns of writing, as the first editor argued: the text of the papyrus begins about 990 letters after the beginning of Book I, which suggests that the portion of text that was lost was slightly less than what would be contained in a column and a half. The original roll plausibly contained the whole of Book I. In that case, given that the estimated number of lines per column varied from 33 to 34, and the average number of letters per column thus varied from 627 to 646,¹⁰⁰ the roll was made up of about 189 columns and was about 13 m long, considering the variability of the width of the intercolumnium.¹⁰¹ It is written in an elegant, small-to-medium-sized upright bookhand with ornamental *apices*, characterized by the presence of both square and rounded elements, with a modular contrast between wide letters (*eta*, *kappa*, *my*, *ny*, *tau*) and narrow letters (*epsilon*, *theta*, *omicron*, *sigma*); *my* traced in 4 movements; *theta* rounded, very small with a central dot; *upsilon* with a wide and deep cup; and *omega* written in the upper part of the line, with an evident central element and deep rounded bowls, of which the right-hand one is narrower than the left. The writing is typical of the second half of the 3rd c. BC, with modular contrast.¹⁰² A good parallel might be *P.Hib. I 1* (Ps.-Epich., *Sententiae*, 280–240 BC),¹⁰³ which, like our fragment, is from *cartonnage*. There are no diacritics

98 Our fragment is no. 20 of group E in Blanchard 1993, 28. Johnson 2004, 113 points out that the available sample of Ptolemaic papyri from Oxyrhynchus is too small to be able to make any universally applicable remarks. However, he observes that whereas in the Roman period rolls characterized by good craftsmanship typically had wide intercolumnia, for the Ptolemaic papyri the pattern seems to be inverted: for high-quality editions, narrow intercolumnia were preferred. In any case, he records a tendency to use narrow intercolumnia for Ptolemaic-era rolls.

99 Blanchard 1993, 33.

100 Blanchard 1993, 36 and 39.

101 The length ranges from ca. 12.9 to 13.2 m, applying to the length of Book I the numerical values given in Johnson 2004, 223. This is slightly less than what was calculated by Blanchard 1993, 39.

102 Cavallo 2008, 35–36; Del Corso 2004, 39–53.

103 MP³ 363; LDAB 3856; TM 62668.

or accents, and the punctuation involves the use of a *vacuum* one letter wide. On the basis of the considerations set out thus far, *P.Hamb.* II 163 should be seen as a high-quality copy, intended to be kept in a library.

The verso of fr. B, published as *P.Hamb.* II 124,¹⁰⁴ preserves “fifteen verses of a highly fragmentary poem in couplets”,¹⁰⁵ plausibly from the *Aetia Romana*,¹⁰⁶ and was dated by Snell, its first editor,¹⁰⁷ to the 3rd or 2nd c. BC. The Thucydidean roll, having become unusable as the result of damage or wear or for some other reason that we are unable to determine, was partly recycled to contain another literary work, plausibly shorter than Book I of the Peloponnesian War. This would be consistent with the hypothesis that the Thucydidean roll was rendered unusable by material damage affecting only a certain part of it, or perhaps by the splitting of the *volumen* into two parts, which made it possible to transcribe another literary work on the verso of part of the roll.¹⁰⁸ The writing on the recto suggests that this is a professional copy. The copy on the verso probably was less expensive than the elegant Thucydidean copy, but given the more “specialist” nature of its content, it may have circulated in an academic context.

Although the literary papyrus catalogues record the provenance of the *cartonnage* as unknown, in 2010 M.R. Falivene convincingly proposed to include it among the documents of the so-called ‘Al-Hibah series’,¹⁰⁹ a group of papyri whose provenance from Hibeh is indicated by internal elements, i.e. a combination of places, persons, and the business with which they were connected. Confirmation of the provenance of our *cartonnage* is provided by the close resemblance of the text of *P.Hamb.* II 163 to the formal writing of papyri recognised as coming from that site,¹¹⁰ especially *P.Hib.* I 1, cited above, but also, according to L. Del Corso, *P.Hib.* I 88 (perhaps originally from Herakleopolis), a papyrus regarding a cash loan dated to the period between August 4 and September 5, 263 BC.¹¹¹ This is consistent with the assignment of *P.Hamb.* II 163 to Group C of the Ptolemaic papyri analysed by Turner

104 MP³ 1770; LDAB 7029; TM 65775.

105 Barbantani 2000, 77.

106 Barbantani 2000, 78–99.

107 *P.Hamb.* II, p. 32. *Ed. alt. SH* 957, 458–459.

108 On the frequency of material damage to literary rolls, in addition to Blanchard 1993, 17 and n. 10, with further bibliography, see at least Puglia 1995 and Puglia 1997.

109 Falivene 2010, 210 3 n. 18, 211 and the tables on p. 215.

110 A resemblance already highlighted in Del Corso 2004, 43.

111 TM 2819.

in his fundamental study *Ptolemaic Bookhands and the Lille Stesichorus*,¹¹² where several papyri from Al Hibah are discussed.¹¹³

Fr. A keeps part of *Hist.* 1.2–3, in which Thucydides describes the nomadic lifestyle of the populations that originally inhabited Greece, affirming that the various groups that occupied the area were not farmers and were preyed upon by rival groups partly because of their lack of defensive walls; furthermore, expecting to be able to find what was necessary for survival wherever they went, they moved frequently and thus had no large cities or other defensive resources.

As has been already well discussed, in 1.2.2 the text of the fragment presents $\delta\iota\alpha\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$ instead of $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\kappa\kappa\epsilon\upsilon\eta$, seen in medieval manuscripts and the indirect tradition. It is recorded as a variant by H² on the basis of a comparison between H (Cod. Graec. 1734, Parisinus, 14th c.) and a lost manuscript, ξ , derived from the most ancient Thucydidean manuscript in a majuscule script, Ξ . A. Kleinlogel¹¹⁴ and G.B. Alberti¹¹⁵ regarded this mistake seen in two versions as proof of the existence of a tradition, i.e. Ξ , of the pre-Alexandrian or proto-Alexandrian era. The continued circulation of this tradition in the post-Alexandrian era is confirmed by multiple cases of agreement between the papyri of the Roman period and the *recentiores* representatives of ξ . The most frequently cited case is *P.Pisa.Lit.* 5 (= *P.Bodmer* XXVII), a miscellaneous codex of the 3rd and 4th c. AD from a Christian monastery in Upper Egypt, which, in addition to passages from the New Testament, also contains 6.1.1–2,6, with various cases of agreement with that tradition, in particular with the correctors of H (H²). This confirms that even in a peripheral area far from Alexandria, alongside the “canonical” tradition, which existed and circulated in Roman Egypt, the ancient proto-Alexandrian tradition continued to survive.

The Greek passage is printed by G.B. Alberti as follows:¹¹⁶

[...] τῆς τε καθ' ἡμέραν ἀναγκαίου τροφῆς πανταχοῦ ἂν ἠγοῦμενοι ἐπικρατεῖν, οὐ χαλεπῶς ἀπανίσταντο, καὶ δι' αὐτὸ οὔτε μεγέθει πόλεων ἰσχυρον οὔτε τῇ ἄλλῃ παρασκευῇ.

Almost all modern critics, including editors of Thucydides's texts, such as Luschnat¹¹⁷ and Kleinlogel,¹¹⁸ and other scholars working on his writings, such as

¹¹² Turner 1980, 19–40.

¹¹³ Turner 1980, 27–30. From Hibeh are nos. 11, 15, 17 (*P.Hamb.* II 163), 20, 21.

¹¹⁴ Kleinlogel 1965, 39–40.

¹¹⁵ Alberti 1972; Alberti 1992.

¹¹⁶ Alberti 1972, 26–27.

¹¹⁷ Luschnat 1954.

¹¹⁸ Kleinlogel 1965, 7.

A. Carlini,¹¹⁹ agree on this reconstruction of the passage, with a few exceptions, discussed below. In the *Addendum* to his landmark paper of 1956, E.G. Turner¹²⁰ believed it noteworthy that this was a *lectio difficilior*, and he returned to the topic in his 1968 handbook,¹²¹ translating the passage as “they were not strong in size of their cities, or in mental attitude”. Turner stressed that παρασκευῆ and διανοία were both respectable ancient variants, the former of which — for unknown reasons — was chosen for “the ruling ancient edition”, while the other was preserved in “another edition”.

In 1995, in his study on interpolation in Thucydides, K. Maurer¹²² expressed a preference for διανοία, interpreting it as “nor, either, in their plans”. He based his choice on the occurrence of διάνοια with that meaning in three other passages of the *Historiae*, in which the sense of “intention” is extended to mean something more concrete, i.e. the plan of action.¹²³ In this regard, he deemed it highly significant that in another passage of the work, 6.65.1, the infinitive παρασκευάσθαι had in his view been incorporated into the text despite having originally been a gloss (written in the margin) on the expression εἶναι ἐν διανοία. The verb, expunged by Duker in 1731,¹²⁴ continued to be considered spurious in Marchant’s *editio maior*¹²⁵ but was accepted as part of the text by Powell.¹²⁶ De Romilly¹²⁷ and Alberti¹²⁸ keep it while mentioning its removal in the notes.

In 1998, H. Maehler confirmed the value of the variant, which had survived in a tradition independent from the medieval *paradosis* and translated διανοία as “thanks to their *character*”.¹²⁹

In 2012, B. Bravo revisited the issue,¹³⁰ accepting διάνοια and translating the whole sentence as follows: “[...] they abandoned their lands without difficulty and thus were strong neither in terms of the size of the *poleis* nor in terms of their corresponding capacity to conceive projects”. He argued that over time διανοία was replaced by παρασκευῆ (already not implausibly in *P.Oxy.* LVII 3877, 2nd c. AD),

119 Carlini 1975, 36.

120 Turner 1956, 98.

121 Turner 1968, 112.

122 Maurer 1995, 100–101.

123 2.43.1; 2.61.2; 6.15.4.

124 Duker 1731, 419.

125 Marchant 1897, 67.

126 Jones/Powell 1942, 114.

127 De Romilly 1963, 48.

128 Alberti 2000, 63.

129 Maehler 1998, 32.

130 Bravo 2012, 48–51.

perhaps by the hand of a corrector or an editor, possibly under the influence of 6.31.1: here the two nouns are used side by side with somewhat similar meanings, which may have led a corrector or an editor to consider them synonyms and to introduce παρασκευῆ as a gloss in the margin; over time, the latter would appear to have been incorporated into the text, replacing διανοία.

The question has most recently been examined by M. Capasso, who, like Bravo, prefers διανοία but interprets it, “as is often the case in Thucydides, as ‘plan, purpose, programme’”.¹³¹

None of the proposed translations appear to be fully satisfactory with respect to the context in question, in which the term παρασκευῆ, which already appears in 1.1 παρασκευῆ τῆ πάσῃ (which, following Canfora, may be interpreted as “in each sector of the war machine”),¹³² better renders the causal relationship between the tendency to nomadism and the lack of any means of defence.

The clearest interpretation of the passage seems to be that of L. Canfora, who in the edition of the work he edited states: “and precisely as a result of this disposition towards nomadism they had neither large cities nor other substantial defensive resources”.¹³³

For the next passage, Bravo again prefers the text of the papyrus, but the only modern scholar to defend this position is Maddalena,¹³⁴ who argues that the expression Πελοπόννησός τε πλὴν Ἀρκαδίας was corrupted into Πελοποννήσου τε τὰ πολλὰ πλὴν Ἀρκαδίας under the influence of the genitive τῆς ἄλλης, which in this view prompted the scribe to amend Πελοπόννησός τε into Πελοποννήσου τε τὰ πολλὰ.

The third significant *lectio* of the fragment is the imperfect of 1.2.6 ἐξέπεμπον, which in the papyrus is represented only by an uncertain *pi*, which Snell expands, based on Hude’s edition, into an aorist. The verb is also deemed aorist in Jones-Powell and Luschnat, the first editor of Thucydides to use the papyrus, while Maddalena¹³⁵ and Alberti¹³⁶ choose the imperfect, which they compare to the form ἀνεχώρουν, which expresses the causal relationship between the continuous enrichment of the population and the creation of colonies in Ionia.

The second fragment of *P.Hamb.* II 163, which contains parts of *Hist.* 1.28–29, with the passage in which the Korkyrans propose a truce with the Corinthians, is badly damaged: following Turner,¹³⁷ we shall only mention here the possibility of

131 Capasso 2022, 363.

132 Canfora 1996, 5.

133 Canfora 1996, 7.

134 Maddalena 1955, 422.

135 Maddalena 1955, 422.

136 Alberti 1972, 27.

137 Turner 1956, 97 n. 24.

adopting ἀπα|[γάγωσι] in ll. 7–8 rather than ἀπά|[γωσι], given that the number of missing letters (10–15) and the effects of Maas’s law clearly make ἀπα|[γάγωσι] preferable.

P.CtYBR inv. 4601 (3rd/2nd c. BC; *Hist.* 8.93.3; 94.3; 95.2–3)

This papyrus¹³⁸ was recovered from a *cartonnage* that the University of Yale purchased in 1997 from the Nefer Gallery in Zurich.¹³⁹ From the same *cartonnage* are 15 documentary fragments,¹⁴⁰ all belonging to the Euphranor archive, named after the *strategos* of the Herakleopolites.¹⁴¹ These are mostly petitions dated to June and July 137 BC, addressed to the *epistrategos* Boethos¹⁴² and forwarded to Euphranor. With all due caution, it appears plausible that the Thucydidean *volumen* also comes from the same office. Concerning literary papyri from *cartonnage*, the observations made by A. Blanchard in his bibliological study *Les papyrus littéraires grecques extraits de cartonnage* remain valid:¹⁴³ they are clearly not specimens taken from the prestigious library of Alexandria, but much more modest books, used by the Greek conquerors (officials and perhaps even simple soldiers) in the *chora*, whose administrative archives found in the *cartonnages* also illustrate their activities. These books, true symbols of Greek culture, were read repeatedly until they fell apart, which explains their “disposal” (*mise au rebut*, says Blanchard) and their reuse in *cartonnages*.¹⁴⁴ The palaeographic characteristics of our *volumen* suggest an earlier dating than the documentary materials, to the 3rd or 2nd c. BC. But, as Turner explains with reference to literary papyri recovered from *cartonnages* and the Lille Stesichorus, this is not unusual in materials of this type.¹⁴⁵

The papyrus was published by K.W. Wilkinson in 2005 and consists of a pair of fragments (fr. 1: ca. 6.5 × 5.25 cm, fr. 2: ca. 9.5 × 5.0 cm) and a third smaller fragment (fr. 3: ca. 0.3 × 0.25 cm) of uncertain collocation, all from the same roll. The Thucydidean text is written parallel to the fibres on the side that is plausibly the recto. The

138 MP³ 1534.001; LDAB 10615; TM 69677.

139 See <https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/research-teaching/doing-research-beinecke/introduction-yale-papyrus-collection/guide-yale-papyrus> (last visit March 2024).

140 *P.Yale IV* 138–152, edited by R. Duttenhöfer, forthcoming.

141 TM Arch. Id. 658.

142 On the *strategos* Boethos, see Kramer 1997; Heinen 1997; Quenouille 2002.

143 Blanchard 1993, 15–40.

144 Blanchard 1993, 24. A similar concept is developed in Del Corso 2023, esp. 339–352.

145 On the relationship between the dating of the documents and that of the books recovered from the same *cartonnage*, see Turner 1980, 19–40, esp. 22–25 and the postscript to the same study, 39–40.

other side is blank. Fr. 1 contains part of the upper margin (about 3 cm of which are preserved), the right-hand extremity of the first four lines of a column and, after an intercolumnium between ca. 0.4 and 0.8 cm wide, the initial part of the first six lines of the next column. Fr. 2 contains the last 14 lines of this latter column and part of the lower margin (about 2 cm of which is preserved). The two columns, whose length was calculated by the editor to be 35 lines, with an average of 19 letters per line, are strongly affected by Maas's law (5–6 for column I, 6–7 for column II).¹⁴⁶ The average width, based on column II, is ca. 5.2 cm and the reconstructed height is ca. 18.5 cm, which would give a height for the roll of at least 23.5 cm. A comparison between the text of the papyrus and that of the modern critical editions shows that the roll was probably made up of 153 columns and had a length of 9 m. The text was written in black ink using a pen with a thin round nib. There are no diacritics or accents. In two cases, to mark the end of a sentence, a *vacuum* one letter in width (col. II 6 and 29) is used. The letters were arranged in an orderly fashion by an expert hand on perfectly horizontal lines with a constant interlinear space (ca. 0.3 cm).

The text is written in an upright bookhand decorated with small *apices*, clear but not elegant, bilinear, characterized by the alternation of rounded shapes (especially *beta*, *epsilon*, *my*, *omicron*, and *sigma*) with more angular ones (*alpha*, *kappa*, and *upsilon*) and by a slight modular contrast. The most characteristic letters include: *alpha* with a triangular eye and slightly curved descending oblique stroke; *beta* with two carefully drawn bowls, of which the lower is wider than the upper one; *my* drawn in three movements, in some cases with a deep curve; *xi* written in the epigraphical form; and *phi* with a broad oval ring.

Given its physical and bibliographical characteristics, the artefact can be considered a *volumen* of no particular value, although it is professional and crafted with care. The few surviving lines contain a considerable number of textual variants, a characteristic shared with the previously examined *P.Hamb.* II 163.

Due to its publication date, the papyrus could not be considered in G.B. Alberti's edition, nor in the study by S. Poli — who in 2001 further analysed the relationships between the Thucydidean papyri and the source Ξ —¹⁴⁷ or in the above-mentioned works by B. Bravo. The Yale papyrus shows a text that differs in some cases from that of the medieval *paradosis*. In other cases, although it does not systematically agree with any particular branch of the tradition, it always provides the correct reading, as stressed by the editor in the notes.¹⁴⁸

146 Wilkinson 2005, 69 and n. 4.

147 Poli 2001.

148 For a comparison see *P.Petr.* II 50 (MP³ 1409; LDAB 3836; TM 62650) in Pontani 1995.

It should be pointed out straight away that in col. 1 1–3 the papyrus could not have contained the *textus receptus* of 8.93–94 (γιγνο]μένων | [ήπιώτερον ήν ή πρότερον] και έ|[φοβείτο μάλιτα] περι τοϋ | [παντός πολιτικοϋ]), which would have required a line five letters longer than the average length of 19. Faced with a compact tradition, the editor argues that this is a case of haplography, which is fairly plausible considering the succession of similar sounds in the phrase ήπιώτερον ήν ή πρότερον.

Fr. 2 contains the following *lectiones singulares*: the correct form of the accusative Θυμοχάρη in 8.95.2 (preferred by modern editors but not seen in the codices, which instead have Θυμοχάρην or Θυμοχάρην), the parenthesis immediately before the name of the *strategos* and the clause that begins with an absolute genitive in 95.3. The parenthesis contains the corrupted Εύβοίας γάρ αυτοίς αποκεκλημένης τὰ τῆς Ἀττικῆς πάντα ήμ in place of the correct Εύβοία γάρ αυτοίς αποκεκλημένης τῆς Ἀττικῆς πάντα ήν of 8.95.2–3. Immediately after this, the papyrus has άφικομένων οϋν cϋμ πάσαις ταίς πρότερον έν Εύβοία οϋσαι έξ και τριάκοντα έγέγοντο in place of ων άφικομένων ξϋν ταίς πρότερον έν Εύβοία οϋσαι έξ και τριάκοντα έγέγοντο. Grammatically, this is admissible, given that the *vacuum* in the papyrus suggests an emphatic logical pause and that in Thucydides a similar construction at the beginning of a sentence occurs in 6.75.4.1 (άφικομένων οϋν έκ μὲν κυρακουσών Ἐρμοκράτους και άλλων έν τήν Καμάριναν από δὲ τών Ἀθηναίων Εϋφήμου μεθ' έτέρων, ό Ἐρμοκράτης ξυλλόγου γενομένου τών Καμαριναίων βουλόμενος προδιαβάλλειν τοϋς Ἀθηναίους έλεγε τοιάδε). However, this would require a genitive plural as the subject to complete the parallel. It is tempting to interpret the traces of the last two surviving letters in l. 30 differently and to read άφικομένων οϋν κυπακων, which however would give us a line that is too short. It would also be impossible to correlate with the dative of the next line, unless we assume κυπακων cϋν ταίς, which is extremely rare: only five cases are recorded by the *TLG*, of which only two are from Antiquity (Aristot., *Athen. Pol.* 19.6.8 and Diod. Sic. 19.27.1.2).

Similar considerations can be made for cϋμ πάσαις in l. 30, which however is also a very rare expression (just 21 occurrences). It first appears in Greek literature in Philochorus in the 4th or 3rd c. BC and then, apart from one occurrence in Dio Chrysostom and another in Sextus Empiricus, is not seen again until Byzantine literature.¹⁴⁹

In any case, the version in the papyrus is not found in the medieval manuscript tradition, nor can it be established whether it is the text of source Ξ, since in this case not even the *recentiores* are of any help. Indeed, H stops at 8.50 and concerning this passage there are no recorded interventions by NF² (Neapolitanus III-B-10, 1320–1340),

149 According to a query made on *TLG* there are no more occurrences for this reference.

Pi², Pi³ (Par. gr. 1638, 15th c.), Pl³ (Par. suppl. gr. 256, 11th c.), Va² (Vat. gr. 127, a. 1372) or Ot³ (Vat. Ott. gr. 211, early 14th c.), i.e. the correctors who availed themselves of specimen ξ to amend the text handed down in their respective manuscripts. Even Lorenzo Valla's Latin translation gives the text of the medieval codices.

The text handed down by the Yale fragments contains distinctive orthographic features linked to the specific scribe or the particular writing habits of that time (such as the assimilation of the nasal before the labial and the non-adoption of the form ξυv for cuv). However, as Turner supposed for the Hamburg fragments, the text may also have been manipulated by the scribe in order to simplify it and thus may be the result of an erroneous interpretation of the antigraph rather than any discrepancy between the antigraph's text and that of the main tradition.¹⁵⁰ It is not currently possible to establish the relationship between that tradition and the tradition deriving from Ξ, which circulated in a plausibly contiguous geographical context.

4 Some Final Remarks

For the Herodotean and Thucydidean papyri of the Ptolemaic epoch, the observations made thus far have yielded information that can schematically be summarised as follows:

1. The two Thucydidean fragments come from professional copies of the *Historiae*, plausibly intended to be kept in a library, maybe in a district capital or in an even more peripheral town or city maybe in a district capital or in an even more peripheral town or city. These were permeated with the Greek culture of the conquerors, which was disseminated for essentially celebratory purposes, above all by the local ruling classes. The two Herodotean fragments also seem to come from a professional copy made for conservation purposes, even if it is impossible to determine its provenance.
2. On the bibliological level, the two Thucydides' copies show differing degrees of craftsmanship: one is a specimen of a certain value (*P.Hamb.* II 163); as regards the other (*P.CtYBR* inv. 4601), the layout and the overall aspect of the columns make it appear more "ordinary". The Herodotean copy is also a standard one, as suggested by its bibliological and palaeographical features. It is not implausible that it is linked in some way to the socio-economic position of the client who commissioned the work.

¹⁵⁰ Turner 1956, 97.

Concerning those fragments that contain texts not transmitted by medieval manuscripts, they help us to understand the topics of Greek historiography apparently most appreciated by readers in Ptolemaic Egypt, and more in general the way in which Greek history was read and taught:

1. Alexander and his father seem to have been popular topics: Ptolemaic papyri often preserve passages of works on their campaigns and political careers.
2. Readers seem to have been interested in some specific episodes of Greek history, especially those events which took place in the fourth century BC, at the beginning of Greek domination over Egypt, often connected to relevant battles and charismatic leaders.
3. Apparently Greek history was often read in an abridged form, such as *epitomai* of longer works or *excerpta* from them.
4. It may not be accidental that more than one papyrus preserves parts of historical works containing speeches given in public: on the one hand this confirms the close link existing in Antiquity between historiography and rhetoric as literary genres, on the other hand it suggests that those materials may originate from exercises carried out in educational contexts for rhetorical purposes.

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