

THE ARTEMIDORUS PAPYRUS

CANFORA (L.) *The True History of the So-called Artemidorus Papyrus*. Pp. iv + 199, ills. Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2007. Paper, €16. ISBN: 978-88-7470-044-8.

GALLAZZI (C.), KRAMER (B.), SETTIS (S.) (edd.) *Il Papiro di Artemidoro*. With the collaboration of Gianfranco Adornato, Albio C. Cassio, Agostino Soldati. In two volumes, cased. Pp. 630, b/w & colour ills, b/w & colour pls, DVD. Milan: Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto, 2008. Cased, €480. ISBN: 978-88-7916-380-4.

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In these books we are witnesses to an event unprecedented in the history of classical scholarship – the publication of a papyrus-roll containing not only a fragment of an account of Spain derived from the geographer Artemidorus of Ephesus, but also an artist's sketches of hands, heads and feet, a map apparently of part of Spain, and a series of monsters labelled with exotic names; all the drawings are extremely fine. This edition, of a sumptuous quality matched only by that of the famous roll of Posidippus, even contains scientific tests of the material, showing that the papyrus dates from the first century, and of the ink, showing that it is of the carbon-based variety that was standard until the third century A.D. The text in the papyrus is equally unprecedented, since we never knew before that any author active in 100 B.C. wrote Greek like the following (to aid comprehension I omit the dots and brackets – the restorations seem secure):

τὸν ἐπιβαλλόμενον γεογραφία [sic] τῆς ὅλης ἐπιστήμης ἐπίδειξιν ποιέσθαι ἑαυτοῦ δεῖ
προπλαστεύσαντα τὴν ψυχὴν εἰς ταύτην τὴν πραγματείαν τευκτικωτέρᾳ τῇ θελήσει εἰς
τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ταύτην καὶ κατὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς δύναμιν θέντα ἑαυτὸν τοῖς θεληματικοῖς
ὄργάνοις τῆς ψυχῆς ἔτομον (col. i 1–10).

The reader will rightly find this repetitive and hiatus-prone period hard to understand: the ‘organs of will of the soul’ are particularly striking. The errors introduced by the copyist are also unprecedented for a first-century literary papyrus written in a professional hand, above all the misspelling *γεογραφ-*, which is consistently so written (five times), and the peculiar *ἐντοτέρω* for *ἐνδοτέρω* (col. iv 2–3). It is also unprecedented that the scribe violates the usual conventions of the literary papyrus-roll, with different layouts in different columns and one where he leaves no lower margin. The editors have done a magnificent job in presenting all the technical features of the papyrus and of its script; its inconsistencies take them considerable effort to explain, and require a complex hypothesis about the successive stages of reuse of the papyrus, which is oddly contradicted by the fact that all the writing (even the names of the monsters, which were, according to their hypothesis, added last) is in the same hand as the original text.

This extraordinary phantasmagoria supposedly comes from a mass of documents, with some still unpublished documents of Flavian date, that looks as if it was used to stuff a cavity; it cannot have been *cartonnage*. It is said to have belonged to Sayed Khâshaba Pasha of Assyut in the nineteenth century. When it was exhibited in Turin

in 2006 everyone was amazed, but nobody more so than Canfora (C.), who soon decided that it could not be genuine. Even as its editors were completing their work, C. dogged their heels, publishing articles in the press that chronicled the stages in their struggle to interpret what they saw and taking them severely to task for the inconsistencies between their successive reconstructions of the papyrus' reuses. The polemics must have been entertaining to watch, but cannot have been fun for those involved; it would have been unbelievably galling to see the object of one's research traduced as a fraud even before one had been able to bring it before the public in a manner befitting its importance. The polemic culminated in 2008 with the simultaneous publication of this edition and of C.'s books (both written with the help of other Italian scholars); C. audaciously attacks in ungentle terms what he thought the edition would contain, including reconstructions of some crucial passages *avant la lettre*. I did not follow the controversy, but thank the authors on both sides of it for gifts of copies of their works.

Only with these publications can we finally understand the debate with full clarity. C. even proposes actually to unmask the forger – one Constantine Simonides (henceforth S.), a Greek so skilful that, in 1855, he deceived the great scholar Wilhelm Dindorf and the Oxford University Press into publishing one of his creations, the *History of the Kings of Egypt* by a certain Uranius, which he had supposedly found in a palimpsest on Mount Athos; S. had certainly been on Mount Athos, since in 1853 he sold to the British Library some (genuine) maps of Spain that had been removed from a codex in Vatopedi. The text of Uranius, full of interpretations of the names of the Pharaohs, was part of S.'s attempt to discredit Champollion's decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics. At the last minute, after eighteen copies of Dindorf's edition had been sold, S. was betrayed by his unwitting collaborator Alexandros Lykourgos, to whom he had been showing passages that were difficult to read; after Lykourgos had fixed up the inept spelling or grammar, S. would always find on the palimpsest the reading that his friend had proposed, a pattern which aroused Lykourgos' suspicions. The police arrested S. and discovered his laboratory; but the trial, in which Count von Tischendorf, who had found the *Codex Sinaiticus*, played a major role, collapsed over questions of jurisdiction. S. left Germany for England, where he denounced von Tischendorf for having forged the famous *Codex*. His proof was simple: he had written it himself in 1840, when he was on Mount Athos, as a gift for Tsar Nicholas I of Russia; the Count suppressed the title page bearing his dedication (this was of course untrue).

S. burnished his credentials in his new country by ghosting his own biography: for the *Biographical Memoir of Constantine Simonides* (London, 1859) by Charles Stewart (significant initials!) betrays its origin by claiming, in its list of manuscripts owned by S., that he sold to Sir Thomas Phillips the 'Andimachean MS. of Homer' (p. 45); this is 'Antimachus' under a Modern Greek veneer. The book reveals his motives – to assert the superiority of Greek scholarship and civilisation against that of western Europe; it also shows that he was profoundly learned in the history of manuscripts. In Liverpool he found a perfect patron for his ambitions in the unsuspecting person of Joseph Mayer, who had amassed a large collection of authentic papyri (papyri were just replacing palimpsests as the favoured source of new texts). Mayer gave him the run of his collection, which had, according to the Rev. H. Stobart who sold many of the papyri to Mayer, included rolls that were blank (S.P. Tregelles, 'Codex Mayerianus and Simonides', *Notes and Queries* 4:3 [24 April 1869] 369). S.'s lavish volume *Fac-similes of Certain Portions of the Gospel of St. Matthew* (London, 1861 [1862]) was the first-fruits. This very erudite, well illustrated book

contains reproductions not only of a fragment of the gospel that was written a mere fifteen years after the Ascension (and tells us so), but also a passage from an unknown historian, in which, as S. notes, ‘the genitive plural of the word *ναῦς* is written *νηῶν* instead of *νεῶν* throughout’ (p. 75 n.); evidently the creator of this text had had reason to miss Lykourgos’ help with language. There followed *The Periplus of Hannon, King of the Karkhedonians* (London, 1864), an edition of a forged text which shows much real knowledge of ancient geography. S. was in Paris in 1864, when C. suggests that he borrowed details of the Artemidorus from *P. Par.* 1, the famous illustrated papyrus of pseudo-Eudoxus (S. 2008, pp. 428–31). In 1867 he faked his own death: the *Times* printed a report that he perished from leprosy in Alexandria on 19 October, but he was seen still alive years afterwards, both in Russia (Tregelles loc. cit.) and in Egypt, where he supposedly died in 1890 (*Times*, 18 October). But is there in fact reason to think that more of his work, hitherto unknown, has resurfaced?

The quality of the papyrus that forms the material support for this exciting content is superb; radiocarbon testing decisively favours its first-century date. The ink is also of the correct kind, and the handwriting is exactly right (except for the kink in the tail of *P*, which has a nineteenth-century feel to it, as Prof. H. Maehler remarked to me). These are powerful arguments indeed. But an ancient support and an ancient mode of preparing ink could both be used by a modern forger; S. was an accomplished chemist (A. Lykourgos, *Enthüllungen über den Simonides-Dindorf Uranios* [Leipzig, 1856], p. 11), and boasts of his knowledge of the different inks that were used at different times (Stewart, 1859, pp. 51–2, and Simonides 1864, p. 22). In such a case as this, content must be the decisive factor.

C.’s circumstantial case that this papyrus is a modern counterfeit, and indeed one made by S., is extremely strong. The Greek of the opening preface partly quoted above can hardly be ancient, although *προπλαστεύσαντα* is not as bad as S.’s notorious *συνώψισε* ‘wrote in short form’ (Uranios p. 5,16 Dindorf). Indeed, M. Calvese has suggested (in L. Canfora and L. Bossina [edd.], *Wie kann das ein Artemidor-Papyrus sein?* [Bari: Editori di Pagina, 2008], pp. 210–15) that the preface is adapted from that of K. Ritter’s *Erdkunde* (Berlin, 1818), or rather from the French version of the latter, *Géographie générale comparée* (Paris, 1836). Major scribal errors are characteristic of Byzantine or Modern Greek, most notably the confusion of *νδ* with *ντ* (a change never attested in Attic inscriptions even of Roman date, according to L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions* I, Berlin and New York 1980, p. 567); their repetition can be paralleled in S.’s confections. The inconsistent layout of the columns is bizarre, as if created by someone who was unfamiliar with the layout of multicolumnar papyrus-rolls, few of which were then known; some of S.’s facsimiles of 1861 even separate the columns with a vertical line as if in a newspaper. S. was profoundly interested in ancient geography. C. convincingly argues that Artemidorus’ work was in content closer to Strabo’s than to the dry *Periplus* of Marcianus, which the latter extracted from Artemidorus; S. would have copied column v from Marcianus, whose text he knew well, along with Stephanus of Byzantium and other geographers (cf. Simonides 1864, pp. 16–19). The whole debate teaches us much about geographical writing in antiquity.

However, there are two serious obstacles to C.’s case. The first is the handwriting. Whereas S.’s samples of Byzantine scripts are excellent (e.g. 1861, Pl. VI), and he produces fine imitations of a Ptolemaic hand (*ibid.* nos 12–13), there is nothing as elegant as the script of this papyrus. The latter hand so convinced me that I long hesitated over C.’s claims – until I realised that I knew it: for it is almost the same as that of the first-century exemplar of Philodemus’ *De pietate*, engravings of which

were first published in 1863 in the *Volumina Herculanensia*, second series, vol. 2 (Naples): see Plate 1, with the script of 'Artemidorus' in Plate 2. The latter differs only in the kink-tailed *P*, the absence of a serif on the second apex of *M*, and in the Ξ

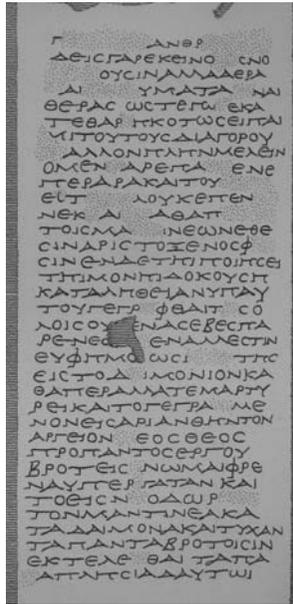


PLATE 1. *Volumina Herculanensia*, second series, Vol. II (Naples, 1863), pl. 18, to show the hand of Philodemus' *De pietate* (*P. Herc.* 1428 col. 11). Drawn by Giuseppe Casanova; engraved by Giam Battista Casanova.

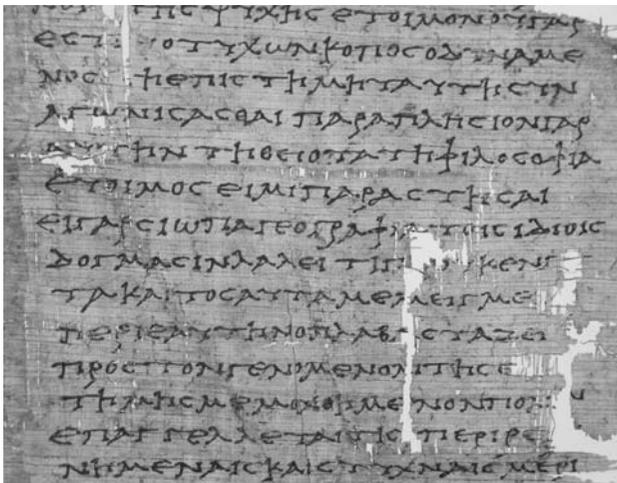


PLATE 2. The hand of *P. Artemid.* (col. i 10–23). From C. Gallazzi, B. Kramer and S. Settis (edd.), *Il Papiro di Artemidoro*, foldout plate.

written Ζ (on which see C. 2008, p. 431 with his pl. 3). This would suggest a *terminus post quem* of 1863.

Secondly, C. presents no evidence that S. was an artist capable of executing such fine drawings, apart from his claim in the preface to his *Σύμμιγα* (Moscow, 1853) that he had studied painting on Athos with Damascenus and Gennadius, and in Paris with David's pupil 'Vitalis' (but Génie Vidal was not directly a pupil of David, *pace* C. 2008, p. 52). However, in 1859 he lists his publications, including not only the 'Ο ἀναιδής λογοκλόπος, supposedly printed in Constantinople in 1854 and seemingly meaning 'The shameless forger', but also a work *Ecclesiastical Painters and the Painting of Dionysius the Hieromonach and Painter of Phourna of Agrapha*, allegedly published in Athens in 1853 (I can locate neither book); he lists as forthcoming *A Brief Exposition of the Paintings of Mount Athos and their Painters* (Stewart 1859, p. 24). S. also claims that he had proof in a manuscript from Athos that the Byzantine painter Panselenus invented the heliotype long before Daguerre, and professes expertise in the technique (*ibid.* pp. 48–9, cf. 1861, p. 33). Above all, we actually have a lithograph of one of his icons. In his book of 1861, the full title of which is *Fac-similes of Certain Portions of the Gospel of St. Matthew and of the Epistles of Ss. James and Jude, Written on Papyrus in the First Century, with a Portrait of St. Matthew from a Fresco Painting at Mount Athos*, with its not-so-innocent motto on the title-page Πάντ' ἀνακαλύπτων ὁ χρόνος εἰς φῶς φέρει, 'Time bringeth to light all discoveries', I at first disregarded the frontispiece, even though the title signals its importance. It shows St Matthew enthroned (Plate 3). The caption reads:

MATTHEW THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

Was born at Gennesaret in Galilee in the year 24 before Christ and suffered martyrdom at Hieropolis in Parthia A.D. 83. the likeness of which a fac-simile is here given was executed in the fifth cent^y by HIEROTHEUS of Thessalonica the Saint portrait painter who was a pupil of the famous EMMANUEL PANSELENUS. The original is preserved among the frescoes of Athos. The Copy here given was taken from it by C. S. The figure of the original is oval, 2½ English feet in height by 2 in width.

The style is not fifth century, but nineteenth, and of course Mt Athos was hardly settled until the ninth; Manuel Panselenos, a legendary figure among the monks of the Holy Mountain, is often dated to the early fourteenth century. Simonides is hinting, with the extraordinary shamelessness of which only he was capable, that he ('C.S.') created this image himself. In a long discussion of Byzantine painting (1861, pp. 32–3), he lyrically claims that the figure 'manifests a character truly and entirely apostolic. For the glance of the eyes, ... the thoughtfulness of the character, the holy smile on the lips, and the cheerful benevolence pervading the whole countenance, proclaim the character of the original, and prove the painter to have been one of the best masters of Byzantine art'. I believe that this Simonidean head (Plate 4, shown in mirror-image) is remarkably similar to a head on the Artemidorus papyrus, drawing R1 (Plate 5), except for the latter's heavy brow-ridges. This figure is, I suspect, an idealised self-portrait: '[i]mmense black whiskers, moustache and imperial; huge black eyebrows; an enormous mass of jet-black and glossy hair ...; deep-sunk but fiery and piercing eyes; dark swarthy visage; massive lips and strongly marked mouth make up a face not easily forgotten' (a manuscript letter of 'Charles Stewart' cited by J.A. Farrer, *Literary Forgeries*, London 1907, p. 58). The papyrus also contains a sketch in profile, drawing R2 (Plate 6), again with heavy ridges over the brow. The editors well compare

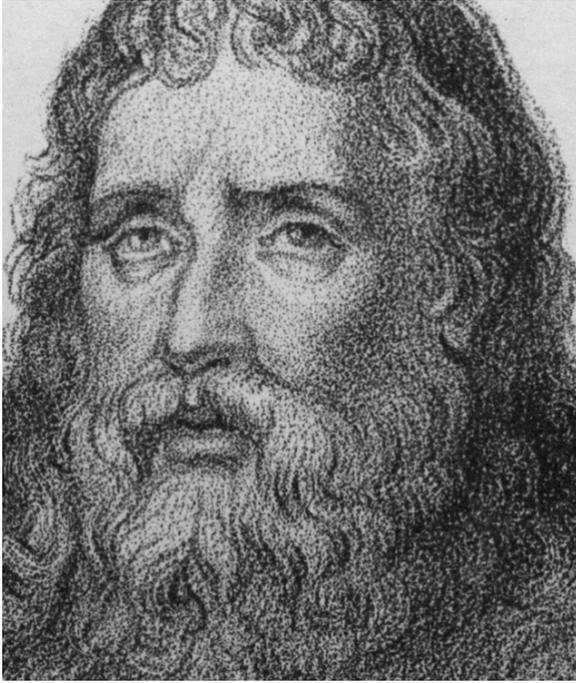


PLATE 4. Detail of 'Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist' (Plate 3), shown in mirror-image. As Plate 3.



PLATE 5. Drawing R 1 (bearded male head, three-quarter face) from *P. Artemid*. As Plate 2.



PLATE 6. Drawing R 2 (bearded male head, profile) from *P. Artemid.* As Plate 2.

a bust of Zeus Ammon in Copenhagen (their Fig. 5.12), but it is odd that Stewart's description at once continues: 'the forehead is in itself a marvel. For about the height of an ordinary forehead it rises perpendicularly and is exactly what a phrenologist would call a finely developed organisation, but above this rises a second forehead, only the second storey takes its rise one step farther back than the first. This step forms a kind of ledge. The consequence is that, when he puts his hat on, it only covers the top forehead ... The effect is curious in the extreme ...'

S.'s brazen ambitions to outsmart the *Philologen* knew no bounds of time or space. As we have repeatedly seen in the course of this review, he constantly planted clues within his fabrications, as if taunting scholars to find him out. His return was predictable, and was indeed foreseen: for a Viennese journalist wrote '[i]n the year 1956, when weeds shall have grown over the Berlin academies, and Dindorf's bones are mouldering in the grave, perhaps the government authorities will assist some scholar in his search after Simonides' Uranius, and if haply he should discover it in the dust of that old library, he will at once make for himself a name and a reputation' (*Die Presse* no. 88, 10 April 1856, cited and translated in J.K. Elliott, *The Codex Sinaiticus and the Simonides Affair*, Thessaloniki 1982, pp. 130–1). If this is indeed another of his apparitions, let us hope it is the last.

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