

REVIEW

Luisa Prandi, ed., *Corpus dei papiri storici greci e latini. Parte A. Storici greci. 2. Testi storici anepigrafi. Vol. 9. I papiri e le storie di Alessandro Magno*. Centro di studi papirologici dell'Università del Salento. Pisa/Rome: Fabrizio Serra editore, 2010. ISBN 978-88-6227-237-7. E-ISBN 978-88-6227-300-8. ISSN 1970-142X. Pp. 100. Print €95.00; E-book €95. (<http://www.libraweb.net>)

The *Corpus dei papiri storici greci e latini* is a systematic collection of all papyrus fragments of Greek and Latin historians. The texts are published, or re-published, with a new Italian translation, critical edition, and full commentary on papyrological, linguistic and historical aspects. Editions of each text have been prepared on the basis of an inspection of the original papyrus roll, or of a good quality photograph. The initiative has come from the Centro di Studi Papirologici of the University of Lecce, Italy, under the supervision of a committee directed by Emilio Gabba, and including scholars such as Anna Angeli, Luciano Canfora, Sergio Daris, Daniele Foraboschi, Tristano Gargiulo, Luigi Lehnus, Marie-Hélène Marganne, Francesco Prontera, Paolo Radiciotti, and Mario Capasso. As Mario Capasso pointed out in the introduction to Volume B2 on Sallust, the *Corpus* aims to publish ten volumes at least. The *Corpus* consists of Part A, on Greek historians, and Part B, on Latin historians. So far Volume B1 on Livy and Volume B2 on Sallust have appeared. A third planned volume of Part B will contain the *adespota* Latin historians. As regards Part A, we have a Section 1, devoted to known Greek historians, to which belongs Volume 8, by Natascia Pellé, on the fragments of Xenophon, and a Section 2, devoted to *Testi Storici Anepigrafi*, to which belongs the subject of this review, Volume 9: *I Papiri e le Storie di Alessandro Magno*, edited by Prof. Luisa Prandi, of the University of Verona.

After a rich Bibliography and an Introduction, Prandi presents a new critical edition (with transcription, translation and commentary) of ten papyrus fragments which preserve otherwise lost narratives concerning Alexander the Great. The texts considered are: 1. *PBritLibr* 3085v; 2. *PHamb* IV 130; 3. *POxy* IV 679; 4. *POxy* LVI 3823v; 5. *PCairo* 49653; 6. *PLond* v 1815 (*PLitLond* 115); 7. *POxy* LVI 3824; 8. *PBerol* 21258v; 9. *POxy* XV 1798; 10. *PLaur* IV 138. They are literary fragments, that is, fragments of ancient books, and can all be dated between the second century BC and the second century AD, except *PLaur* IV 138 which is ascribed to the fourth century AD on the basis of the script. These texts have been ascribed by the first editors to the genre of ‘Al-

exandrography' because they contain precise references either to Alexander or to figures strictly connected to him, and because of their style, close to that adopted in the historiographical genre. As Prandi explains in the Introduction, she does not take into consideration all the papyri that modern editors have linked to Alexander (for which cf. Merten-Pack³ 2195–2201), but examines only literary fragments, thus excluding the famous order of Peukestas in *PSaqqara* 1972 GP3 (on which see E. Turner, 'A Commander-in-Chief's Order from Saqqara', *JEA* 60 [1974] 239–42), and, more specifically, only papyri that are likely to belong to lost historical works. For these reasons she deliberately excludes *PRIMI* I 21, the prayer of Alexander to Serapis, possibly belonging to the *Romance of Alexander*; *PBerol* 13044, the dialogue between Alexander and the Gymnosophists; and *PRain* I 7 = *PVindob.* Inv. G 31954 (MP³ 2201; *LDAB* 6832), the so-called *Liber de morte testamentoque Alexandri*, which has been ascribed to the fantastic literature on Alexander (on the papyrus fragments pertaining to this tradition, see R. Stoneman, *Il Romanzo di Alessandro*, I, [Milan 2007] xvii–cix, esp. lxxvii–lxxviii). Prandi clarifies that she also left out *POxy* I 13 (MP³ 2203; *LDAB* 5077) and *PFreiburg* 12b, inv. 7–8 (MP³ 2101; *LDAB* 223), a rhetorical and a school piece respectively, and, finally, *POxy* II 216 (MP³ 2508; *LDAB* 4411), a fragmentary speech probably coming from a rhetorical treatise. Prandi has often updated the first editions thanks to the discovery of matching fragments (e.g. in the cases of *PBritLibr* 3085v and *POxy* XV 1798).

It is commendable, and a rare thing to be found in the first editions of fragmentary papyri, that Prandi offers (Italian) translations, translations that, although rightly cautious, are an extremely helpful tool in the hard work of interpreting these difficult texts. Naturally, indispensable complements of the translations are the commentaries, where Prandi expands on the individual textual, historical and linguistic aspects and suggests different interpretive solutions. The volume closes with a chapter entitled 'I papiri e le storie di Alessandro Magno: per un bilancio', which summarises the conclusions reached, and discusses the relevant scholarship on the historiography on Alexander. The discussion in this final chapter is very thorough and helpful in locating these fragments in their historical context. The only critical point that can be made is that not much space is devoted to the theme of private circulation and reception of the literature on Alexander in Egypt.

Of particular interest are the fragments that enrich our scanty supply of books belonging to the Ptolemaic period.

PBritLibr 3085v is a collage of about ten small fragments written by the same hand, and found at the beginning of the last century by D. G. Hogarth in a mummy cartonnage. The text comes from Lycopolis (Assiut) and belongs to the second or first century BC as the first editors, W. Clarysse and

G. Schepens, suggested on the basis of the mention of Asklepiades, probably an official active at the end of the second century BC, in a document written on the back. The text talks of an Illyrian campaign of Alexander, and mentions some of his companions (Philotas, Parmenio, Corragus) in a ‘telegram style’, that for Prandi suggests that the text was a military commentary of the type of the *Ephemerides*, which was subdivided into *lemmata* and commentary: she thinks that the two *paragraphoi* that appear in the text (not represented in the transcription) served to facilitate the research in the text.

PHamb IV 130, of unknown provenance, is a papyrus roll of the first century BC which containing a concise presentation of some memorable gestures at the battle of Granicus. In less than twenty lines the author talks of the role of Cleitus in saving the life of Alexander, and furnishes some figures (20,000) on the losses in the battle (20,000 are the Persian losses in the battle according to Diodorus and the infantry losses according to Plutarch). The fragment presents some variants from the story of the gesture of Cleitus in Diodorus (17.20.5–7), Plutarch (*Alex.* 16.8–11), Curtius Rufus (8.1.20) and Arrian (1.15.7–8). It talks of a *μάχαιρα* (l. 5), a weapon absent from the known tradition on the episode, and mentions a person hit in his underarm (*μάλην*, l. 9), a detail close to the versions in Arrian and Plutarch, in which Spithridates attacked Alexander from behind, and Cleitus then hit Spithridates on the shoulder amputating his arm. Interestingly Cleitus, described as one of the *ἑταῖροι*, is mentioned twice in a few lines. Prandi cautiously ascribes it to an anonymous author who summarised the memorable facts of the battle of Granicus. However, the affinity of this piece with the version transmitted by Arrian, who used Ptolemy Soter as his main source (*Anab.* 1.1–2) and its character of *memorabilia* suggest that this piece might come from the king’s own work on the campaigns of Alexander.¹ Prandi believes that Ptolemy’s work was certainly still in circulation in the first century BC, and Arrian (*Anab.* 1.1–2) specified that he used it in the second century, although we do not know exactly how widely it was copied and read. From Ptolemy probably Arrian took the portrait of military virtues of Alexander: foresight, rapidity, surprise attacks, art of war; thus the extant quotations from Ptolemy in Arrian give us an indication of what the king loved to discuss.² Ptolemy’s authority is cited when describing battles and their sites, e.g. in *Anab.* 6.11.5, on the exact site of Gaugamela, on the numbers of the troops engaged, e.g. in 3.18.9 where Ptolemy is left with 3000 infantry troops at Gaugamela, or in 6.2.4 which quotes Ptolemy as the source on the size of fleet in the Indian expedition. In his work, Ptolemy probably often discussed military matters,

¹ The fragments of Ptolemy’s lost history of Alexander can be found at *FGrHist* 138 F 1–35 and *Kommentar* IIB.498–508.

² Cf. D. Ambaglio, *Arriano: Anabasi di Alessandro* (Milan 1998) 23.

such as weapons and wounds, as in the case of the description of the horrible wound on the chest received by Alexander, from which ‘air and blood flew out together’ in 6.10.2, or in 6.11.7–8, where Ptolemy rectifies the legend according to which he was named Soter after protecting Alexander with his shield. The latter remark was surely a noble gesture on part of the king, and a way to show off his love of truth—a recurring theme in Arrian, and, most probably, also in the king’s lost work: according to some, even Arrian’s (apparently naïve) statement in *Anab.* 1.1–2 that Ptolemy was a reliable source because, as a king, it would have been more difficult for him to lie, came from the king’s work.³ The title of Ptolemy’s historical work is unknown, but it is clear that he wrote it in his old age, when he was king, and that it belonged to the Hellenistic genre of royal *Memoirs* or *Hypomnemata*, where kings often embellished their role and presented themselves as virtuous leaders loved by all. It is likely that Ptolemy, too, gave to himself a leading role in Alexander’s adventure and presented himself as the most reliable source as he was a protagonist of the events. The ‘insider’s point of view’ emerges from the account on the plot of Philotas (3.26.2ff.), the Indian expedition (6.5.6–7) and the story of the capture of Bessus and the delivery of the naked and bound king to Alexander, on which Arrian gives us also the much shorter version by Aristobulus (3.30.1–5), almost in an attempt to bring Ptolemy’s self-presentation down to earth.

Another fragment ascribed to Ptolemy is *POxy* IV 69, of which the original papyrus roll, once stored in Belgium, was lost in the First World War. The papyrus preserved part of a text on military aspects of a campaign in Cilicia, probably the expedition of Menetes in 331. Grenfell and Hunt hypothesised that it might possibly derive from the work of Ptolemy I Soter, and Prandi agrees with them, as the papyrus was ascribed on the basis of the script to the first century BC, when Ptolemy’s work was certainly still in circulation. We might connect to Ptolemy also *PCairo* 49653 which mentions military operations in India and refers to Craterus, and *PLond* V 1815, also referring to Craterus in the context of a direct discourse. It is worth noting that, in the fragments preserved by Arrian, Ptolemy emphasised his role, to-

³ On the truthfulness of Ptolemy as a king and fellow-soldier of Alexander cf. also Synesius, *FGrHist* 138 F 11. On the truthfulness of Ptolemaic kings see also Pseudo-Aristeas §206, and Diod. 1.70.6. Cf. also Arr. *Anab.* 7.28–30; see C. Gorteman, ‘ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΦΙΛΑΛΛΗΘΗΣ’, *CdÉ* 33 (1958) 256–67, at 266–7. See also G. Schepens, ‘Les rois ptolémaïques et l’historiographie: Réflexions sur la transformation de l’histoire politique’, in E. Van’t Dack, P. Van Dessel and W. Van Gucht, edd., *Egypt and the Hellenistic World: Proceedings of the International Colloquium (Leuven 24–26 May 1982)* (*Studia Hellenistica* 27; Leuven 1983) 351–68, esp. 362–4.

gether with Craterus, in the Indian expedition – it is likely that his account of the expedition was one of the most detailed in circulation, as is shown by the aforementioned choice of Arrian who reports his version, and the shorter one by Aristobulus, of the episode of the capture of Bessus. I suspend judgement on the possible reference to Ptolemy Soter in *PLaur* IV 138 of the fourth century, preserving some moralising reflections on the life and death of Alexander, and the mention of a ‘Soter’, because, as the first editors rightly argued, the epithet ‘Saviour’ and the idea of *imitatio Alexandri* could refer to any king or even to a Roman *princeps*.

POxy LVI 3823v, written on the back of an Augustan document, and thus ascribed to the first century AD, is a very concise presentation of the ancestry and beginning of the reign of Alexander. According to Prandi this text is an extremely selective historical narrative on Alexander presenting ‘diatribical themes’. Again, a protagonist of the campaigns of Alexander who was also interested in philosophy and probably shared his king’s sympathetic attitude towards cynicism was Ptolemy. Ptolemy would be a likely source for anecdotes on Alexander, which populate the extant fragments. The king wanted to emphasise his closeness to Alexander as a sort of foster brother to the king, and this portrait was predominant in Cleitarchus’ collection of the anecdotes that depicted Ptolemy as someone saved by Providence and as a Saviour. Ptolemy probably wrote the history of Alexander’s campaign probably in the first-person. And surely, Ptolemy was also interested in philosophical or diatribical themes. Ptolemy was a general and a king interested in philosophy, not a historian, and in Arrian, too, the pragmatic style of the man of action–philosopher predominates over the historiographical style, a phenomenon that may be seen in at least some of the papyri which Prandi discusses.

Overall, this excellent work offers a thorough discussion on the importance and potential of an invaluable collection of texts, a collection that will probably become larger in future, with the discovery of new fragments pertaining to this genre. The non-dogmatic approach and the questions raised by the texts will no doubt stimulate further research in the field. For these reasons the book certainly deserves to be read by all those interested in ancient history and historiography.

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