

NEW EVIDENCE FOR THE DATING OF CLEITARCHUS (*POxy* LXXI. 4808)?

Abstract: The recently published *POxy* LXXI. 4808, an evaluation of Alexander and Diadoch historians, says that Cleitarchus was the tutor of Ptolemy IV (Philopator), a notice that, if true, would significantly affect the ‘high’ dating of Cleitarchus by which he is assigned to the end of the 4th/beginning of the 3rd c. BC. The present article re-assesses the evidence for the high dating of Cleitarchus, concluding that it remains likeliest, and that the new papyrus’ date is incorrect and ought not to affect the *communis opinio*.

A text of great historiographic relevance has been published in a recent volume of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*:¹ it transmits, albeit in a fragmentary way, the evaluations of a learned anonymous scholar about certain historians, who are listed in chronological order from the Alexander historians—Onesicritus, Chares and Cleitarchus—to Hieronymus of Cardia and to Polybius. The fragment thus gives us a ‘Macedonian’ perspective from the privileged position of Alexandria,² but while its value as a whole seems indisputable, the same cannot be said of its contribution about Cleitarchus, because lines 9–17, which concern him, are partly incomplete and require specific analysis and careful consideration before they can be properly evaluated. Below I quote the text as it will appear in the *Corpus dei Papiri Storici Greci*, edited by myself and F. Landucci Gattinoni, while in the footnote I report the original editors’ version:³

νει.] Κλείταρχος δὲ κομπω-
δῶς] μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν ἰσ- 10
τορί]αν γέγραφεν, ἄμεμ-
πτο]ς δ’ ἐστὶν τὴν διάθε[σι]ν.
ἐγέ]νε[το] δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κ[
]. γε . [] καθά φησιν . [

¹ Beresford–Parsons–Pobjoy (2007) 27–36, who date the papyrus to the beginning of the 2nd c. AD.

² Cf. Landucci Gattinoni–Prandi (2012).

³ This is the reconstruction of lines 13–7 proposed by the editors, based on a different reading of small papyrus pieces :

[γέγ]ονε[ν] δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κ[α
[ταλ]ογεί[ου] καθά φησιν Φ[ί-
[λιπ]πο[ς] καὶ διδάσκαλος [γεγο- 15
[νὼς] τοῦ [Φ]ιλοπάτορος τε [
[λευτ]αι *vacat*

]πο . [κ]αὶ διδάσκαλος [15
]του [Φ]ιλοπάτορος τε [
] . . *vacat*

Lines 9–12 express a clear judgment about Cleitarchus' tendency to sensationalism in his writing and about his manner of composition (*διάθεσις*), defined as 'blameless'; the following lines (13–4) seem perhaps to be revealing his position of responsibility; finally (15–7), he is stated to have been tutor of Philopater (Ptolemy IV, born around 224 BC and on the throne from 222 to 205 BC), which is, in fact, the chronologically relevant news.

The *communis opinio* about Cleitarchus is still in favour of a 'high' dating, which situates him between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 3rd;⁴ in the last twenty years, more or less isolated voices have proposed to place him during the reign of Philadelphus,⁵ or in the second half of the 3rd century B.C.⁶ Unfortunately, these theories have never examined in depth the evidence in favour of the high dating. Given this scenario, it is necessary to compare the information that seems to be offered by the papyrus with the biographical information presented by all other ancient texts, reassessing the dating elements used by scholars so far.⁷

I

For what concerns Cleitarchus, we have nothing but small additions to reports about other authors. Pliny says that Dinon was his father (*NH* 9.36 = *FGrHist* 137 T 2): Dinon wrote *Persika*, a historiographical genre which disappeared after the Achaemenids and was somehow replaced by Alexander historiography; this means that he must definitively have been active before the end of the 4th century.⁸ Again Pliny, in another famous passage where

⁴ For example, Baynham (2003) 10–11; Zambrini (2007) 20; Heckel (2008) 7–8. For previous bibliographical references, see Prandi (1996) 69–71 and 77–9.

⁵ Hazzard (1992) 52–6, quoted in Hazzard (2000) 7–17; Ravazzolo (1998) 31–44. I discuss their remarks below, §3.

⁶ Parker (2009) 28–55: his research consists in verifying which other Alexander historians were known to Cleitarchus, and his conclusion is that he knew many, almost all of them; he affirms that Cleitarchus, thanks to his vast research, deserves better consideration than what is generally accorded to him and that his activity has to be postponed to at least the second half of the 3rd century BC. I discuss these remarks below, §2; cf. also below, n. 9.

⁷ I take the chance to reconsider, and at the same time verify, after some years, what I wrote in Prandi (1996), esp. 13–83.

⁸ For the genre of the *Persika* and for the place of Dinon see Lenfant (2009) 5–49 and 51–6 (the consequence the scholar draws from the relationship between Dinon and

he mentions Greek authors who brought early news about Rome, defines Cleitarchus as *proximus* to Theopompus (*NH* 2.57 = *FGrHist* 137 T 4): this statement reveals that the Roman writer, although not aiming to date Cleitarchus, was led by his own knowledge to place him close to a fourth-century historian such as Theopompus; that Pliny was wrong, is still to be demonstrated.⁹ Diogenes Laertius (3.113 = *FGrHist* 137 T 3) quotes Philip of Megara's news that two pupils of Aristoteles of Cyrene, Cleitarchus and Simias, withdrew to Stilpon of Megara, who lived at the same time as Ptolemy I.¹⁰

Moreover, the way in which other authors mention Cleitarchus, even if they do not provide any specific chronological data, seems to lead in the same direction. Describing Babylonia's walls, Diodorus (2.7.3 = *FGrHist* 137 T 5 / F 10) compares Ctesias' claims with those of Cleitarchus and of other anonymous Alexander historians who took part in the expedition, thus showing that Cleitarchus was somehow part of that second group. Longinus (*Subl.* 3.2 = *FGrHist* 137 T 9) matches Callisthenes' and Cleitarchus' sensationalism and includes both with Amphicrates, Hegesias and Matris, who constitute a later triad. Quintilian (10.1.74 = *FGrHist* 137 T 6), in a famous list of authors, places Cleitarchus right after Ephorus and adds that Timagenes was born *longo post intervallo temporis*. Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.139.4 = *FGrHist* 137 F 7) mentions Cleitarchus right after Phaenias and Ephorus and before Timaeus, Eratosthenes and Duris.

There seems to be a substantial range of agreement about Cleitarchus showing that ancient writers continually associated him with the first generation of Alexander historians;¹¹ for the aforementioned passages, particularly those by Diodorus, Pliny, and Clemens, it is necessary to demonstrate their worthlessness before proposing a new chronology.

2

Starting from these premises, it is also possible to evaluate the relationship between Cleitarchus and the other Alexander historians. Of course, when

Cleitarchus, which is at risk of circularity, could be at first left pending; however, I think that, at the end of my analysis, it could regain its value).

⁹ *Pace* Parker (2009) 52–4, who thinks that Pliny did not know what he was writing. It does not seem to me that the greater or lesser reliability of the fact narrated by Cleitarchus—the dispatching of a Roman embassy to Alexander—had any impact on the dating; about this fragment compare also below, n. 29.

¹⁰ Cf. Diog. Laert. 2.115 and 3.111, with Prandi (1996) 67.

¹¹ Prandi (1996) 69–71.

working on texts preserved only in a fragmentary state, it is imperative to be extremely cautious in drawing definitive conclusions; it is also important to remember that, since the whole first era of the Alexander historians is for us known only from fragments, every comparison, inference and deduction should be based on meticulous analyses. Even more so, taking indications from Diodorus XVII or from Curtius Rufus and applying them to Cleitarchus lacks method and is extremely risky.¹²

Specifically, it seems logical to conclude that Cleitarchus had knowledge not only of Callisthenes, but also of Nearchus and Onesicritus,¹³ three authors who do not contradict a dating at the end of the 4th century; while the cases of Timaeus, Patrocles, and Berossus seem to me questionable and in need of discussion.

2.1

The fact that, according to the already-mentioned passage by Clement (*Strom.* 1.139.4),¹⁴ Timaeus and Cleitarchus (*FGrHist* 566 F 126 and 137 F 7) followed the same calculation for the dating of Alexander's expedition as for the Heraclidae's return is at first of great importance, considering the prestige of the Sicilian historian in the field of chronography. However, if we look more in depth, it is not so clear whether Cleitarchus has actually derived his calculation from Timaeus' work, and whether this really requires a lowering of Cleitarchus' dating.¹⁵ What I am arguing¹⁶ is that Cleitarchus' stay in Athens, where he could have met Timaeus, while not impossible, is not based on any reliable evidence.¹⁷ On the other hand, even before Timaeus finished his work, the Asiatic expedition excited so much interest in

¹² In the matter of Diodorus' use of a second source, in addition to Cleitarchus, in Book 17, I do not think the comparison outlined by Parker (2009) 28–33, which is based on only ten passages, is sufficient to answer in the negative. About his identity (Duris of Samos?) I had already made suggestions in Prandi (1996) 86–91; I am now preparing a historical commentary on Book 17.

¹³ I do not think it is suitable to resume extensively in the text the systematic discussion that I have already made: see Prandi (1996) 61–3 and 75–83, but I remind the reader here of the most significant elements: the news about India preserved in Cleitarchus' fragments shows a great resemblance to Nearchus' work (and Onesicritus') and the treatment is similar to that in Arrian afterwards.

¹⁴ This passage is rich with implications and problems: see L. Breglia Pulci Doria (1996) 63–4; Prandi (forthcoming); F. Landucci Gattinoni (forthcoming).

¹⁵ As Parker (2009) 48–9 would do.

¹⁶ For more details, see Prandi (1996) 82–3 and n. 63.

¹⁷ Cf. also Prandi (1996) 67.

its dating—and thus also revisions, re-readings and calculations—to popularize his chronological deductions.

In this scenario, it must not be forgotten that Cleitarchus' fragments often show a preference for dates and versions that could be called 'modern', if compared to the traditional ones:¹⁸ this suggests that—apart from reading Timaeus' work—he could also have made chronological researches and investigations of his own.

2.2

As for Patrocles, an isolated coincidence between Cleitarchus and him—the attribution of the same size to the Black Sea and to the Caspian Sea, though with no numerical reference (*FGrHist* 137 F 12 = Plin. 6.36 and 712 F 7 = Str. 11.7.1)—is an element too scanty and generic to suppose the use of Patrocles' account (written about 284–280 BC) by the historian.¹⁹ All the more so because Cleitarchus' F 12 is not isolated but instead closely related, because of its theme and approach, to four other passages (FF 13–16) dealing with the same geographical area and including also the Amazon fragment,²⁰ a situation that might suggest, and with more evidence, his use of Polyclitus of Mende, a writer—probably of earlier date—who contends with Onesicritus the authorship of the Amazon episode and who was a point of reference for the other Alexander historians.

2.3

Finally, Berossus. Parker's demonstration²¹ that Diodorus gets from Cleitarchus what he writes at 2.10 about the construction of Babylon's terraced gardens, in a section dedicated to the city and derived from Ctesias, is solid.²² However, I cannot follow him when he tries to prove²³ that Diodorus 2.10 and Curtius 5.1.24–5 agree about Babylonia's description and that consequently they have Cleitarchus as a common source; and even less when he asserts, with a sort of tightrope walking, that in the *Historiae* the phrase *Samiramis eam [scil. Babyloniam] condiderat, non, ut plerique credidere, Belus cuius regia ostenditur*, reveals that Curtius' source, Cleitarchus, had not just read Be-

¹⁸ Prandi (1992) 88–104, quoted in Prandi (1996) 2–75.

¹⁹ As Parker (2009) 36–7 argues.

²⁰ F 13 = Strab. 11.11.5; F 14 = Dem. *De eloc.* 304; F 15 = Plut. *Alex.* 46; F 16 = Strab. 11.5.4. I am summarizing Prandi (1996) 77–9.

²¹ Parker (2009) 45–6.

²² I had already written in similar terms: see Prandi (1996) 121–4.

²³ Parker (2009) 43–7.

rossus (who denied that Semiramis was responsible for the foundation: *FGrHist* 680 F 8), but also argued with him. In fact, the resemblances between Diodorus' and Curtius' descriptions of Babylon are not substantial and the latter seems to betray the use of a Roman source close to Cleitarchus. They do not agree about the garden's location and about the measurements of the retaining walls; the spirit is different, because in Diodorus there is a tone of decadence, while in Curtius a strategic interest and attention to town-planning are evident, and this does not seem coherent with a dependence on an Alexander historian.²⁴

2.4

As for what concerns the knowledge of Cleitarchus by other Hellenistic authors who did not write about history, it has to be pointed out that the fragment about the Amazon queen's journey preserved by Strabo (11.5.4 = *FGrHist* 137 F 16), who stigmatises Cleitarchus for a patent mistake about the indication of a distance, is quoted in a passage that comes from Eratosthenes and reflects his geographical controversies with the Alexander historians' descriptions of the Caucasus area.²⁵ In the same way, Cleitarchus' fragments 2, 11 and 30, concerning Sardanapalus' death, Thais' responsibility in the fire at Persepolis, and Harpalus' request of more than human honors for himself and for Glycera, all preserved by Athenaeus (12.530a; 13.576d-e; 13.586c-d), derive from the Peripatetic Clearchus of Soloi:²⁶ the high chronology of this writer suggests for Cleitarchus' work a high dating that cannot be matched with the tutoring of Philopator attributed to the historian in *POxy* LXXI. 4808.

3

The issue of the relationship between Cleitarchus and Ptolemy I deserves particular attention because it seems to be the heart of the matter for a high dating and because it has given rise to the hypothesis that Cleitarchus lived during Philadelphus' reign.

²⁴ Cf. Prandi (1996) 133–6 for more details.

²⁵ In his fragment Cleitarchus says that the queen left from the Caspian Gates and the Thermodon, two places too far from one another to be linked together; the historian might have had a different vision about the formation of the area. For the evidence in favour of Strabo's dependence on already established discussions, see Prandi (1996) 20–1.

²⁶ Cf. Prandi (1996) 40–1. For the use of Clearchus of Soloi by Athenaeus see Zecchini (1989) 202–8.

3.1

There is no indisputable evidence to date the composition, and above all the completion, of Ptolemy's work: a 'low' dating is suggested by the well-known passage in which Arrian (*Anab.* 1.2) considers Ptolemy reliable because he wrote some time after the expedition, like Aristobulus, and because he was a king;²⁷ but these two conditions are true throughout his reign in the 3rd century.²⁸ By comparing the fragments, we can identify three not-so-small divergences: Cleitarchus narrates the meeting between the Amazon queen and Alexander while Ptolemy thought it was an invention (*FGrHist* 137 F 15 and 138 F 28, both quoted—among others—by Plut. *Alex.* 46.1: Cleitarchus is the first name on the list); Cleitarchus attributes to the Greek Thais (a woman linked to Ptolemy) the initiative of the Persepolis fire (*FGrHist* 137 F 11 = Athen. 13.576d–e) while Ptolemy (probably used by Arr. *Anab.* 3.18.11–2) attributes directly to Alexander the desire to set the palace on fire; Cleitarchus asserts that Ptolemy participated in the assault on the Malli's city in India, where Alexander seriously risked his life, while Ptolemy himself said that he was busy at the time with another task (*FGrHist* 137 F 24 and 138 F 26, quoted by Curt. 9.5.21, who mentions Cleitarchus together with Timagenes; cf. also below).

I have argued elsewhere²⁹ that three such important differences do not characterise a court historian but rather an autonomous historian. I would also like to add, as others have,³⁰ another argument, which is not a proof but can indeed constitute an opportunity for reflection. If Cleitarchus finished his *Histories* after Ptolemy had written his memoirs, the divergences we have just considered become a deliberate correction of the version of one of the Asiatic expedition's members, who also became king of part of the conquered territory. Even if we take into account the fact that Cleitarchus' work had a bigger circulation and impact than Ptolemy's—and that it is probably inappropriate to think about a real historiographical debate between them—it remains obscure why Cleitarchus should have chosen to diverge

²⁷ For the relationship between the King and the Truth, cf. Prandi (2010) 53–64.

²⁸ Moderns do not agree on the attribution of political aims to the work and on the necessity of a high dating, at the times of the struggles between the Diadochi; cf. Huß (2001) 95 with n. 17 and Meeus (2009) 245 with n. 50.

²⁹ Prandi (1996) 79–81; it does not seem to me that my attitude can be defined as superficial, as Ravazzolo (1998) 40 n. 22 says, and it must be said that the conclusions I drew, and that I reassert here, are concerned with the existence of an excessive royal control on historical works, not the existence of cases of repression against pamphlets hostile to the king.

³⁰ For this same line about the relationship between Cleitarchus and Ptolemy see Baynham (2003) 10–11, and, more briefly, Zambrini (2007) 20.

from a source that was reliable and that was part of his environment. If, however, Cleitarchus wrote and published *before* Ptolemy, while Ptolemy's work was being elaborated, the relationship appears more understandable and less fraught with consequences: the historian, although he could know what the king remembered, was freer to choose a different tradition without appearing controversial; moreover, the king—acknowledging the historian's choice—was also free to modify the narrative in his own memoirs so as to bring it back to what he thought had really happened during the expedition.

3.2

A possible solution to these problems could be to locate Cleitarchus' work during the reign of Ptolemy II and to link it to that king's politics.³¹ Considering Cleitarchus' work as subsequent to Ptolemy I, however, leaves unexplained once more some of his choices and, if the fact of narrating a meeting with the Amazon may look of little importance compared to its denial by the king, the other two aforementioned differences seem more relevant, because they deal with Thais³² and Ptolemy himself. The genesis of the epithet *Sotêr* and its connections with the episode of Alexander's rescue in India constitute a tricky issue: I agree with a very recent and highly acute analysis,³³ especially attentive to the significance of the literary and epigraphic evidence,

³¹ Hazzard (2000) 8-14 considers solid arguments for a placing in the reign of Ptolemy II: Cleitarchus' striking style, the stress he puts on Alexander and Dionysus' relationship and the news about the Roman embassy to Alexander (*FGrHist* 137 F 31 = Plin. *NH* 3.57). The first was apparently real, but it was a personal peculiarity that the ancients themselves did not relate to any literary current; the second is not easy to find in the extant fragments; the third, upon which Ravazzolo (1998) 34-5 also insists, recalls the late 270s, when Philadelphus started good relations with Rome, but the hypothesis that it reflects a local tradition is based on elements and developments of the *Alexander Romance* that I think methodologically dangerous to put *sic et simpliciter* next to the historian's evidence.

³² Ravazzolo's (1998) 31-4 remarks—that Cleitarchus' mention of Thais (and, indirectly, the memory of her and Ptolemy's sons) would not have created a problem anymore after Philadelphus had secured for himself the succession in 272 (and that Ptolemy could not, with his silence about Thais, hope to suffocate the rumours about the woman's role)—do not seem to me to be really decisive: the same goes, in fact, for a time chronologically high such as the end of the 4th century, when every problem linked with the succession was still non-existent; on the other hand, nothing proves that Ptolemy's work was written with a marked propagandistic aim. It should be pointed out, then, that if the decision to set Persepolis on fire has to be motivated by the inhabitants' long-lasting hostility (persuasive arguments in Briant (2010) 107-11) it is possible that Ptolemy assigned the fire idea to Alexander because he was well aware of this situation, and not for other reasons.

³³ Cf. Muccioli (forthcoming).

that excludes an active role for Ptolemy I in taking the title and recognises instead the importance of Philadelphus' role; the evidence for Ptolemy's intervention in favour of Rhodes as the episode from which the epithet originated appears to be scanty; and the same goes for the evidence for Cleitarchus' responsibility in linking Alexander's rescue by Ptolemy in India—narrated by the historian but denied by the king—with the birth of the epithet *Sotêr*,³⁴ which Curtius Rufus does not trace back explicitly to Cleitarchus more than to the other author mentioned in the passage, namely Timagenes.³⁵

To conclude this paper, let me propose a consideration of methodology. The fact that *POxy* LXXI. 4808 has only recently been discovered does not make it more important or invalidating for the outcome of the data we have at hand, not least because it seems to be the product of a non-official private cultural environment.³⁶ The possibility that the writer was wrong is not very remote, if one considers the number of inaccuracies commonly recognised by modern scholars in the famous list of Alexandrian librarians and princes' tutors in *POxy* X. 1241 (2nd c. AD), including, among others, the claim that Apollonius Rhodius taught Ptolemy I and that Aristarchus taught Philopator's sons.³⁷ We can nonetheless retain the information regarding Cleitarchus' position of responsibility and his role of *didaskalos*, possibly for a later king.³⁸ The importance of *POxy* LXXI. 4808 thus remains undeniable, both for what concerns the aforementioned authors as well as for its overall view. Let me also point out that the information about Chares' hostility towards Parmenio's entourage is valuable, because it allows us to attribute an author to the only source about the general that had been left without a

³⁴ Hazzard (2000) 14–7 seems to be more than sure about this fact and, based on this, considers Cleitarchus' work later than the official use of the epithet, and so to 282.

³⁵ Also Parker (2000) 50 n. 71; this scholar is thus convinced that Cleitarchus is later and he enumerates various explanations for the divergences, all of them quite weak, e.g., that Cleitarchus did not know or did not understand very well the news, that he did not read the king's memoirs at all, etc.; for the issue I refer again to Prandi (1996) 24–9, where I hypothesised that the link between the rescue of Alexander and the epithet *Sotêr* was subsequent to Cleitarchus and was to be found precisely in Timagenes.

³⁶ Cf. Landucci Gattinoni and Prandi (2012).

³⁷ Cf. Parsons (1952) 153–5; Fraser (1972) 330–4 and, more recently, Berti and Costa (2010) 129–34.

³⁸ The historian may have been appointed as *didaskalos* to Philadelphus, for instance, at some point before 285 BC.

name, even if it had already been identified and examined;³⁹ the indication of Hieronymus' age allows us to confirm the hypothesis that his work went down to the end of the Chremonidean war.⁴⁰ If this papyrus had been published at the beginning of the 19th century, it would have already been included by Jacoby among the *testimonia* about Cleitarchus and discussed in the same way as the rest, as should be done now. Probably, if the author of the *Fragmente* had had the possibility to consider this papyrus also, he would have concluded that the ancient tradition appeared to be contradictory and that the chronological placement of the historian was therefore difficult.

I think it is also possible to conclude reasonably in favour of the hypothesis of high dating, which is supported by the greater amount of evidence.

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³⁹ Cf. Bearzot (1987) 89-104, esp. 94-6.

⁴⁰ Cf. Primo (2006) 719-22 and Primo (2008) 533-9.

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