

## GRIEKS-ROMEINS EGYPTE

FURLEY, W., and V. GYSEMBERGH — Reading the Liver. Papyrological Texts on Ancient Greek Extispicy. (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, 94). Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2015. (23 cm, X, 123). ISBN 978-3-16-153890-2. ISSN 1436-3003. € 39,-.

This book is the result of a collaboration between William Furley, Professor at the University of Heidelberg, and Victor Gysembergh, now postdoctoral researcher at the University of Reims-Champagne-Ardennes, PhD holder since December 2015. While V.G. has focused his work on Eudoxus of Cnidus in his thesis at the CRIMEL with Didier Marcotte, W.F. is known for his brilliant editions, with translation and commentary, of Menander's *Epitrepontes* and *Perikeiromene* (2015).

*Reading the Liver* is divided in three main parts (1. *Introduction*, pp. 1-29, 2. *Texts*, pp. 31-76, 3. *Conclusions*, pp. 77-95), preceded by the list of figures (p. IX) and the abbreviations (p. X), and followed by a *List of Greek words* (appendix A, pp. 97-106), the *Texts on Extispicy* (appendix B, pp. 107-114), the general bibliography (pp. 115-117), and an index of ancient sources (pp. 119-123).

In the introduction, the authors stress that nobody has yet considered the papyrological evidence on extispicy, despite the fact that they offer a more concrete point of view, less symbolic than the literature, into the study of the connexions between Greek, Roman and Near Eastern practices. According to them, as is the case in the magical papyri, their content could be centuries older than their actual dating. They define hieroscopy as belonging to the "pseudo-sciences" (p. 3), but differing from magical practices as there is no mention of any god or goddess in these texts, while the latter "are constantly referring by name to divine powers" (p. 3). Following this, the authors present the content of the texts. By scrutinizing the shape of one particular part of the liver, the papyri studied

here had different types of goals: establishing friendship in *P.Amh.* 2.14, and considering the auspiciousness or otherwise of present moments, and business dealings in *P.Ross.Georg.* 1.21. The authors describe the papyri as "descriptive manuals of hieroscopic art" (p. 4), as the scribe of *P.Amh.* 2.14 presents it as an "hypnomnema", while *P.Ross.Georg.* 1.21 could be a *syngramma*, to link with the literary and medical papyri. The authors discuss also a Mesopotamian origin of Greek practices, treating the papyrological and literary evidence alongside the arguments of Mary Bachvarova ("The Transmission of Liver Divination from East to West", in *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici*, 54, 2012, pp. 143-164): They present the Greek method which leads to yes or no answers to the question whether any particular course of action was advisable or not, before the Akkadian method consisting of a protasis (if such-and-such a sign is found) to apodosis (such-and-such an event ensues) system. As concerns the content of the papyri, W.F. and V.G. point out the absence of astrological information, and the use of the Greek method with nuances, weighing a number of positive and negative aspects more than giving a strict yes or no answer. The liver is presented there as an *homunculus* (with head, heart, ears, hands, shoulders, and chest) between other metaphoric expressions, such as the topographic metaphors (gates, ways, table, bastion), and the physical terrain is mapped with a binary system (left – negative, right – positive). By the end of the introduction, the authors give useful and welcome "aids to understanding the text" (p. 24), which consist of three figures of the liver (1.1: *A sheep's liver with the main anatomical features*, p. 25; 1.2: *The bronze model of a liver from Piacenza with astrological markings*, p. 27; 1.3: *Diagram of a sheep's liver in Babylonian extispicy from Koch-Westenholz [2000]*, p. 28), and two tables (1.1: *Terminology in extispicy in Akkadian and Greek texts*, p. 25; 1.2: *Resemblances of terminology in Akkadian and Greek texts*, p. 27).

So, in their introduction, the authors furnish the evidence necessary for proper understanding of extispicy, especially hieroscopy, and present the working hypothesis they will discuss further in the commentary of the text: "the Greeks did indeed learn hepatoscopy from their Eastern neighbours, but modified the terminology (a) over time (b) in accordance its influential models such as medicine/anatomy and astrology, which were strongly developed in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt" (pp. 28-29). To do so, the authors consider a very large scope of material: papyri, of course, Greek literature, magic, palmomancy, astrology, as well as some archaeological evidence. However, although useful, the material lacks consideration of the production context. For instance, when the authors distinguish extispicy from magic, arguing that there is no mention of any god or goddess in these texts while the second "are constantly referring by name to divine powers" (p. 3), we have to add that not all the magical prescriptions contain mentions of deities, but some consist of mere prescriptions to prepare, *charaktères* to copy, or a verse to pronounce. Even though every parallel considered is given in the original text, with a translation and a few lines of commentary, showing a very well documented work, poetry, historical, philosophical literary texts (Homer, Xenophon, Plato, Galen, e.g.) are used with astrological (*P.Mich.* 3.149, col. IV, II<sup>nd</sup>) and palmomantic treatises on papyri, without a more thoroughgoing context, which gives the reader the feeling that only the points welcome for the hypothesis have been taken into consideration.

The main chapter presents new editions, with English translations, and commentaries, of three papyri on hepatoscopy: *P.Ross.Georg.* 1.21, *P.Amh.* 2.14, and *PSI* 10.1178. After a brief description (number of columns and date) and a short bibliography mentioning the previous editions, as well as the number of the papyri in the main papyrological database Mertens-Pack (even if we would have expected the number preceded by MP3 and not "Pack", as is the convention), Trismegistos and Leuven Database of Ancient Books, the Greek text is presented as it is written on the papyrus, followed by a functional *apparatus criticus*, which does really not need to be extended as the text, emendations, lacunae, and doubted readings, are developed in a complete and well documented commentary. The commentary does not only focus on the words restored by the authors with some parallels in order to justify the choice, but also comments on the practices mentioned and offers real material for the discussion.

The three papyri were in need of a new edition given the modern expectations on a papyrological edition, which is partly the case. If the text, translation, and commentary are as good as expected from a philologist as W.F., physical and palaeographical descriptions of the documents would have been welcome. If the text is presented in column, as copied on the papyri, following the lacunae, showing the title in *eithesis*, the *vacat* never appear. For instance, on *P.Amh.* 2.14, the first *hypomnema* (recto ↓, 6 lines, 4. πρώτον ὑπόμνημα) has been written on the top of page, after a short margin (as can be seen on the picture provided in the book), and the rest of this side has been left blank, while the second *hypomnema* (33 lines, 2. δεύτερον ὑπόμνημα) has been written on the other side (→). In so far as the same papyrus is first written on the side with vertical fibers, and then on the side with horizontal fibers, the terms "recto" and "verso", used here to present the first and second sides, are not sufficient, and instead the direction of the fibers should be mentioned. Such characteristics would have been interesting when mentioned.

On the other hand, the idea of showing the more subjective restorations in grey is both honest and helpful. The reader knows s/he has to go to the commentary in order to see the alternatives. Providing the number of the column and line where a new chapter starts is potentially useful, but the information sometimes lacks precision: on p. 36 the text starts at col. I line 11, not col. I line 7, which is the location of the title; p. 36. the mention "Column II 32" is very confusing, because as the authors chose continuous numbering of the Greek text, we should read "Column II 71". Usefully, the authors provided pictures of *P. Amh.* 2.14 and *PSI* 10.1178.

The objective of the conclusion based on the study of the evidence, to which the papyri are now added, is to determine the degree of similarity between Mesopotamian and Greek omnia. After considerations on the routes from Mesopotamia to Greece (p. 78), the authors devote a section to the "structure and function of the papyri" (p. 81). The authors discuss the manner of listing signs and their meanings which seem at first glance reminiscent of Mesopotamian compendia of omnia. This argument based on internal criteria seems also to be supported by the general presentation of the papyri which "were likely part of a comparably extensive technical literature" (p. 82). The difference in the structure of the text consists of the choice of an organization based on the

objectives ("the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of present moments" *P.Ross.Georg.* 1.21, ll. 7-10; "business" *P.Ross.Georg.* 1.21, l. 71) and in the general flexibility of the structure of the Greek texts: "the order of apodosis and protasis is interchangeable" and "the text exhibits varied syntax" (p. 84). Then, W.F. and V.G. focus the discussion on the shared elements in the terminology and omen hermeneutics, before going to a conclusion about innovation and contexts of interaction.

If the final conclusion is to be followed ("we believe it is clear, in any case, that the Greek extispicy papyri should from now on be considered crucial to the study of interactions between Greek and Ancient Near eastern cultures" p. 95), and if the authors are conscious that the papyri were written anonymously and centuries later than the Mesopotamian tablets containing omnia, it does not avoid the main methodological problem that they have drawn on the "routes from Mesopotamia to Greece" (p. 78) considering the Anatolian and Aegean routes (p. 80) while using material which was, of course, written in the Greek language, but which was produced in Egypt without mentioning the potential Egyptian "route" and Egypt's potential influence. Although I do not discuss here the Mesopotamian influences on hieroscopy treatises preserved on papyri, the Egyptian tradition even from the Graeco-Roman period should be taken into account.<sup>1)</sup>

The book ends with two useful appendices (A. *List of Greek words*; B. *Longer passages from ancient authors relating to extispicy*), the bibliography, and the *index locorum*. Even if short, the bibliography contains recent and older fundamental studies about divination, hepatoscopy, and papyrology. However, we regret the absence of a bibliography of the editions used for the ancient sources presented as parallels. For instance, Galen appears to have been cited from Kühn's edition, despite the fact there are many more recent editions, while if the authors used the latest ones, they do not mention it, which can be confusing for the reader, especially in technical/medical literature where the text can be slightly different from one edition to another.

From the choice of the title to the commentary itself, there is something really problematic with speaking about « Greek extispicy » while using papyrological documentation. Although the papyri are written in the Greek language, and may be interesting comparative material, they were produced in Egypt. So their weight as evidence for the transmission of Mesopotamian practices from Orient to Greece proper is at

<sup>1)</sup> Presenting papers on the use of animals in omnia at the International Conference "Magikon Zoon: the Animal in Magic" organized at Paris (6-7 June 2016), Luigi Prada (University of Oxford) and Nicola De Zorzi (University of Vienna) showed documents, - the first from Demotic sources and the second from Mesopotamian -, containing similar practices and terminology. Even if very interesting, it is not completely surprising as we know that Egypt and its Eastern neighbours have been in contact for a great deal longer than Greece and its Eastern neighbours. L. Prada, "Beyond the Magical Handbook: Animals in Magical and Divinatory Practices from Graeco-Roman Egypt as Attested in Demotic Textual Sources Other than the Papyri Demoticae Magicae" and N. De Zorzi "Of Raving Dogs, Promiscuous Pigs and Feisty Foxes: Observations on Mesopotamian Animal Omens", both in "Magikon Zoon: the Animal in Magic". *Proceedings of the International Conference (Paris, 6-7 June 2016)* (in preparation). See also: L. Prada (forthcoming) "P.Oxy. XXXI 2607 Re-edited: a Greek Oneirocriticon from Roman Egypt", in *Proceedings of the 27th International Congress of Papyrology Warsaw, 29 July – 3 August 2013*; S. Costanza (2014), "Il contributo dei papiri allo studio della divinazione greca", in *Analecta Papyrologica*, 26, pp. 123-133.

least slight, given that contact between Mesopotamia and Egypt is well known, and documented, since much more ancient times. It is again the fundamental problem with using papyri as Greek evidence as if they were written only by Greeks, who considered themselves as Greek or living in Greece, when the documentary papyri show a much less clear picture between those (we now call) Greeks and Egyptians during the Roman period.

If we leave aside the considerations about the Mesopotamian influences on Greek extispicy, W. Furley and V. Gysembergh offer here a new and careful edition of the papyrological documentation for these practices, with an English translation, and a very interesting, well researched textual commentary, furnishing pictures where possible. The reader is never left by her/himself with regards to technical aspects, as the authors provide lots of useful tools (pictures of the liver, tables, list of words). There is no need to be an expert in divination, nor in papyrology, to use this new study, and so, for now, experts in extispicy no longer have any good reason to avoid or forget the papyrological material.

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