

Der Wert dieser Edition, die als erste die Neufunde bis 2012 mit einbezieht, und der schönen Übersetzung wird aber durch diese Unstimmigkeiten nicht wirklich beeinträchtigt.

Wien

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*The Vienna Epigrams Papyrus (G 40611). Edited by Peter John Parsons, Herwig Maehler, Francesca Maltomini. Berlin/München/Boston: de Gruyter 2015. VII, 153 S. 11 Taf. 4. (Corpus Papyrorum Raineri. 33.).*

In 1981 H. Harrauer published a tantalizing ‘Vorbericht’ of P.Vindob. G 40611, in which he gave a summary description of a third-century BC papyrus roll of epigram incipits.¹ For over thirty years scholars working on Hellenistic epigrams have eagerly anticipated the publication of the incipits with a fuller account of this devilishly difficult papyrus. In the meantime, our knowledge of ancient Greek epigram books has been dramatically increased by the publication of two papyrus bookrolls, both of which lack author names. The Milan Papyrus (P.Mil. Vogl. VIII 309, late 3rd or early 2nd c. BC), generally believed to contain epigrams by Posidippus based on the attribution of two poems, is marked by its categorization of epigrams and its emphasis on the Ptolemies.² The very fragmentary Yale Papyrus (P.CtYBR inv. 4000, 4th c. AD), likely containing epigrams by Palladas, consists mostly of scoptic epigrams with a number of local Egyptian references.³ What these two papyri have shown beyond doubt is that from the early Ptolemaic era to late antiquity epigrams were collected and circulated in bookrolls. It also appears most likely that both these papyrus books contain epigrams by a single author, rather than multiple anonymous authors, though this remains to some degree controversial.

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² G. Bastianini and C. Gallazzi with C. Austin (Eds.), ‘Posidippo di Pella. Epigrammi’ (Papiiri dell’Università degli Studi di Milano 8), Milan 2001.

Now at long last comes an important, if problematic, addition to our knowledge of ancient epigram books in the publication of the Vienna Papyrus. Parsons, who was brought into the work of editing by Harrauer, eventually teamed with Maehler and Maltomini to issue a «first tentative edition» (p. v), which the editors generously ask readers to join in improving. The difficulty of reading the text results from extensive loss of ink, transfer from other written surfaces, and the lack of context that comes with incipits. Multispectral photographs made by R. Macfarlane and G. Ware in 2009 offered a major breakthrough in deciphering the previously unreadable portions of the papyrus. The resulting publication consists of an introduction (by Parsons with a contribution by Maehler), text with commentary presented column by column (divided among the three editors), an index of Greek words and names, a general index, and black/white plates. Color scans are promised on the website of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (ÖNB).

The bookroll has been reconstructed from 20 pieces of cartonnage that had been used to make a mummy mask. As published, it consists of G 40611, a mostly continuous piece of papyrus 17 cm high x 70 cm long, and G 40611a, which has been fitted together from six fragments to produce an additional portion of the text. The recto contains seven columns followed, after a loss of about 25 cm, by two more columns on (a) (uncertainly cols. x–xi or xi–xii). The verso consists of three non-contiguous columns, one on (a) and two others, separated by about 37 cm of seemingly blank papyrus and corresponding roughly to recto col. vii and cols. ii–iii. It appears that the first column on the recto preserves the opening of the list.

The format consists of headings containing a book number at the top of a column followed by a list of incipits with the number of verses for each in the right margin. The first column bears the heading τὰ ἑπιζητούμενα τῶν ἑπιγράμματος ἐν τῇ ἀβύβλῳ, ‘the epigrams being sought in book 1’; headings designating books 2 and 4 survive in col. v and (a) recto; book 3 must have begun in the lost col. viii. Paragraphoi separate the incipits. The letters εὖ that appear in the left margin of seven or eight lines are the only marginalia. This could be εὖ as an expression of approbation or, as Parsons prefers, an abbreviation of εὑρίσκειν, indicating desiderata of some type, already found or to be found. The text on the recto belongs to two scribal hands, the first providing stichometric marks at the bottom (cols. i–iv) and the other not (cols. v–vii, recto [a]). The writing on the verso, with stichometric sums after col. i and perhaps ii, is very similar to that of the second scribe.

Documentary papyri from the mummy mask provide dates of 231 (or less likely 206), 213, and 212 BC, and the editors find the script, of a type well attested in Ptolemaic literary and documentary papyri, to suit the last quarter of the third century. If the incipit list was made roughly in the same era as the accompanying papyri, that suggests a work product, not preserved once the job was done. The documentary papyri found in the mummy mask, like others purchased in the same batch, concern the Arsinoite Nome.

1 Maltomini has provided me with the url for the only section online as of this writing: http://aleph.onb.ac.at/F/SBXJS2QT7PPFSM7BVJU2CHP6GS1PUGBER8S182RM A5NPY5-01236?func=find-b&find_code=WRD&adjacent=N&request=40611&x=0&y=0.
In its current condition the papyrus lists 226 incipits, dominantly in elegiac couplets but with a variety of lyric meters intermingled. The majority of incipits are from epigrams of 4 or 6 lines, with fewer of 2, 8, 10, and 12 lines. Lengths of 13, 20, 21, 24, 40, and 52 lines are given for single poems. The word ἐπιγράμματα in the heading of col. i (also in abbreviated form at the end of cols. i and iv) provides additional evidence (cf. the title σύμμεικτα ἐπιγράμματα on P.Lond.Lit. 60 = SH 961) that in the third century this term was used for a recognized poetic type, including poems of various meters and, under special circumstances, in lengths considerably beyond the two or three couplet norm. The old scholarly question concerning the length at which a short elegiac poem should be considered an elegy rather than an epigram has now been rendered obsolete by such evidence. Assuming 1,000 lines per book, Parsons reckons that the original compilation contained about 800 poems in 4,000 lines, roughly comparable to the remains of Meleager’s Garland. Though each epigram’s type is difficult to determine from its incipit alone, most seem to fall into the categories of erotic, sympotic, or scoptic, with fewer perhaps dedicatory or funerary. The scoptic element is a welcome find, since Meleager’s lack of interest in this epigram type has likely obscured the extent to which the form developed in the Hellenistic period. The epigram types represented by the incipits interestingly contrast with the preserved portion of the Milan Papyrus, which contains mostly inscriptional types together with unique categories such as stones and omens, but not erotic/sympotic poems.

Parsons finds «no [...] organisation» of the kind known from other epigram collections (p. 16). But given that it is reasonable to assume the incipits were copied in order from the source collection, then some traces of non-random arrangement do seem to remain. Parsons suggests that the first incipit from book 1 (col. i 3) may be a dedication (λευκὴν σοι μίτρην ...; cf. Αρσινόη, σοὶ τοῦτο ... ἐκκλεισταὶ βρέγματα', Posid. 36.1–2 AB, beginning the dedicatory section in the Milan Papyrus) and that the first incipit from book 2 (κ.σ.λ. ... μου, col. v 2) may refer to a Castalian Muse. Maehler’s interpretation of the last incipit in book 2 (ἄλλην εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν ἐρωμένου, «toward a different enjoyment of a beloved», col. vii 16) indicates a change in erotic predilection that might herald a transition to a new book. The clustering of the similar sounding Ζήνων, Ζήνης, and Ζεῦ in col. vi 11, 13, 14 and the repeated καλός in vi 8, 13, 15, and 16 also suggest purposeful arrangement. The scant remains of the three longer epigrams grouped last in verso col. i (15–17) reveal too little to indicate whether their placement is utilitarian or based on some formal design. But the increasing lengths of 21, 40, and 52 lines at the end of a column are suggestive of a programmatic or valedictory purpose (cf. Parsons p. 16).

As Harrauer noted, the only identifiable epigram is an erotic composition by Asclepiades of Samos (AP 12.46), and many of Asclepiades’ poems preserved in the Greek Anthology belong to the erotic and sympotic types that populated the papyrus. The similarity of Εὔφρων καὶ Θ., δύναμιν ἀδελφοῖ (col. v 22) to Asclepiades’ opening Εὔφρω καὶ Θαῒς ... αἱ Διομήδους γραῖαι (AP 5.161) is striking, and
Maehler’s interpretation of the letters υβλις in recto (a) ii 3 as Ὑβλαῖος, ‘of Megara Hyblaia’, is intriguing in light of Asclepiades’ nickname Sicleides.¹

Parsons admits to a «fantasy» (p. 17) that the incipit list represents poems of Asclepiades extracted from a mixed collection, perhaps even the Soros that Reitzenstein envisioned as a miscellany of Asclepiades, Posidippus, and Hedylyus.² It does seem likely that the list is a guide to the production of a sylloge drawn from a larger collection (like Byzantine sylloges extracted from Cephalas’ compendium), but we can derive little certainty from the papyrus about the source compilation or the intended project. The size of the original, extending to at least four books, in no way rules out exclusive authorship by the renowned epigrammatist Asclepiades,³ as the parallel of Martial clearly shows. The source text might even have been divided by subject headings, which would not have been copied if irrelevant for the purpose of the list. Alternatively, selecting bare incipits allows for the possibility that the original collection contained lemmata with different authors’ names, an early anthology like Meleager’s Garland. Or perhaps the authors’ identities were considered unimportant and omitted, as in Elizabethan miscellanies adduced by Parsons. We simply cannot tell from the incipit list. As with the Milan Papyrus, what this Vienna papyrus does show us is the astounding number of epigrams written and circulated in the early Hellenistic period and the persistent transitoriness of epigrams in collection.

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