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FURTHER COMMENTS ON POXY. 2888

Crates, Seleucus and ancient geography and anthropology

1. Under number 2888 of the 39th volume of the papyri of Oxyrhynchus Lobel edited a commentary on the *Odyssey*, which he introduced (p. 43) with a rather impatient prologue. He said that the papyrus “is of no great interest and I could have wished that a collection of fragments which fitted almost without residue had contained a text of more value”. We don’t know what the late distinguished E. Lobel expected to find, but on certain very obscure and badly known areas of antiquity, these quite well preserved lines might throw some light.

2. POxy. 2888 and Diogenes of Oenoanda

Lobel suggested that the author of the commentary was a Pergamene rather than an Alexandrian scholar and, certainly, Crates Mallotes is named in col. iii. 6. This accepted, something that also strikes the reader is a certain mild philanthropic spirit in the text where the arguments used recall the Epicurean author Diogenes of Oenoanda.

For instance, the argument that reduces ad absurdum (POxy. 2888. ii. 13) the idea that a certain reading could be erased from all manuscripts by an order has a striking parallel with Diogenes of Oenoanda’s “great denominating assembly”. Diogenes believed that, in the evolution of mankind, it would be most ridiculous to assemble all men (or things?) to give names and so create language by decree:

POxy. 2888. ii. 13 (p. 47 and 45)

τ[οῦτ]ο δ’ εὔηθες. γελοῖ-
[ο]ν γάρ τ[ὸ ὑπο]λαμβ[άν]ειν ἐκ
πάντω[ν].. ἀντιγράφω
καθάπ[ερ ἅ]π[ο] προστάγματος

Diog. Oen. 10. iv. 3 (Chilton)

γελοῖον γάρ
ἐστι, μᾶλλον δὲ παν-
τὸς γελοίου γελοιότη-
ρον πρὸς τῷ καὶ τὸ ἀ-
δύνα[τ]ο[ν] αὐτῷ προσεῖ-
ναι, σ[υνα]γαγεῖν μὲν
τινα τὰ [το]σάδε πλήθη
.

V. 3 [διὰ] προσταγῆς τὴν
συ[ν]αγωγὴν αὐτῶν γε-
νέσθαι

Even when it is possible that our papyrus commentary antedates Diogenes, it is interesting to notice the common philosophical ground and to what extent Diogenes drew the type of his arguments from Homeric scholarship.

As regards anthropology, Diogenes depicted the gradual evolution of mankind from utter barbarism to civilization in fragments 9 and 10 of the great inscription of the citadel of Oenoanda. This concern is not far from the mind of the papyrus commentator when in column i. 22 he explains Eidothea's deceiving of her father with the purpose of turning him away ἀπὸ τοῦ θη[ριώδους] βίου. In column iii. 25, Calypso shows Odysseus the quickest way ἵνα προσεν[ε]λθῇς ἡμέροις τόποις καὶ ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων κατοικουμένοις οὐκ ἀγρίων οὐδὲ [θη]ριοδῶν.

3. POxy. 2888 on geography and oceanography

Lobel had already noticed that the papyrus doesn't really seem an elucidation of the text of the *Odyssey*¹; Luppe², in this thorough philological paper finds no evidence of lemmatization. In fact, the author of the commentary deals with the wanderings of two Homeric heroes and with the solving of actual astronomical³, nautical and geographical problems in relation to those travels.

As we know from the fragments collected by Mette⁴, Crates Mallotes dealt with Odysseus' and Menelaus' wanderings⁵. In both cases he believed that the travels had taken place, at least partly, in the Atlantic Ocean, though, as far as we knew until the finding of this papyrus, in a very abstract way, as no geographical names appeared. Only in the resumé by Aristonicus in Strabo 1.2.31, is it possible to assume that Crates and his school believed that Menelaus' journey was a periplus διὰ Γαδείρων μέχρι τῆς Ἰνδικῆς. Since the appearance of POxy. 2888 iii. 32 we have a geographical name (the Pillars of Heracles) and one of the first nautical instructions of how to enter the Mediterranean from the Atlantic Ocean. This was formulated by Homeric scholars trying to solve problems of interpretation by relating Homer to the actual astronomical and geographical knowledge of their time.

After Lobel, Luppe and F. Galiano's⁶ comments and explanations, it is quite clear that what is meant in the papyrus is that with Ogygia in North Western Atlantic Ocean it would be impossible to reach the Mediterranean directly ἀπὸ τῆς δὺ[σεως] ἐπὶ τῇ[ν ἀνατολὴν] (iii. 16) because Odysseus (or his σκηδῆ) would

¹ Cf. Lobel's parallel to POxy. 2888 Fr. (a) col. i 13, p. 46 from Sch. *Od.* 9.60.

² W. Luppe, *Odysseus' Rückkehr von Kalypso. Ein Beitrag zum Odyssee-Kommentar P.Oxy. 2888*, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 24—25, 1976, 39—46. Cf. p. 40. See also M. Fernández-Galiano, *Diez años de papirología*, *Estudios Clásicos* 84, 1979, 289—290, and his introduction to the translation of the *Odisea* by J. M. Pabón, Madrid 1982 (*Biblioteca Clásica Gredos* 48).

³ An astronomical resumé may be found also in *Diog. Oen.* 8 (Chilton).

⁴ H. J. Mette, *Sphairopoia. Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des Krates von Pergamon*, München 1936.

⁵ *Odysseus*: Fr. 30—32 (Mette), cf. Sch. *Il.* 21.195 b (Erbse); *Menelaus*: Fr. 45 (Mette).

⁶ See our n. 2.

encounter the Iberian peninsula or, as far as they knew, a rather undifferentiated coastline running from the Iberian peninsula Northwards.

There is further evidence that some commentator thought that the verse *ποντοπορευόμεναι ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ χειρὸς ἔχοντα* (Od. 5. 277) quoted in lines 2–3 of the third column of the papyrus was referring to the journey from the Atlantic Ocean to the East. Such evidence is supported by the Odyssean scholium⁷ (from the Harleianus) to this verse,

πρὸς τὸ περὶ τῆς πλάνης, ὅτι ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν περὶ τὸ Ἀτλαντικὸν πέλαγος φέρεται ἐπ' ἀνατολάς. νοητέον ὅτι εἰκὸς ἦν τότε πλημμυρῆσαι τὸν ὠκεανόν.

In the rather enigmatic second part of the scholium we may have a clue to why Seleucus (of Babylon) is mentioned in col. iii. 18 of POxy. 2888. It is in a list of theoreticians on the phenomenon of tides that Seleucus was known as an opponent to Crates Mallotes⁸,

Κράτης ὁ γραμματικὸς τὸν ἀντισπασμὸν τῆς θαλάσσης αἰτιᾶται. Ἀπολλόδωρος ὁ Κερκυραῖος τὰς ἐκ τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ παλιρροίας. Σέλευκος ὁ μαθηματικὸς ἀντιγεγραφῶς Κράτητι, κινῶν καὺτὸς τὴν γῆν, ἀντικόπτειν αὐτῆς τῶι δίνῳι φησὶ τὴν περιστροφὴν τῆς σελήνης· τοῦ δὲ μετὰξὺ ἀμφοτέρων τῶν σωμάτων ἀντιπερισπωμένου πνεύματος καὶ ἐμπίπτοντος εἰς τὸ Ἀτλαντικὸν Πέλαγος κατὰ λόγον οὕτω συγκυμαίνεσθαι τὴν θάλασσαν.

Seleucus contradicted Crates on oceanographic points. Possibly, he thought, together with οἱ τοὺς] τόπους ἀνασχ[οποῦντες⁹ (iii. 20), that it was difficult that the Mediterranean Sea could be reached from the Atlantic Ocean during ebb-tide.

This is what can be inferred from the scholium, where νοητέον ὅτι provides an interesting parallel to νοοῦσιν δ' ὅτι of l. 21, col. iii of the papyrus. We must also take into account that Seleucus is quoted by Posidonius¹⁰ as an authority on tides when dealing with the phenomenon in the proximity of Cadiz.

Another condition to steer safely into the Mediterranean (iii.39) would be keeping the λοξὸν πλοῦν recommended by Calypso. That would be correct for certain geographers in I B.C./ I A.D., as for instance Mela. A vessel sailing parallel to the coast coming from a North-western position¹¹ and trying to arrive at cape

⁷ I suppose line 21 ἤς G. Dindorf, Scholia graeca in Homeri Odysseam, Oxford 1855 (1962) 271 is an obvious misprint for ἤν. It is correctly edited in T. A. Cramer, Anecdota Graeca, Oxford 1841 [(O) 1967] III, 447. In A. Ludwich, Scholia in Homeri Odyssea A 1–309 auctiora et emendatiora, Königsberg 1880–1890 (1966) an apparently phantastic location for Calypso's island may be found. Crates considered also, as far as we know, vague north European locations for some parts of the Odyssey: cf. Fr. 37 (Mette).

⁸ Crates Mallotes Fr. 7. Cf. also Fr. 35 (Mette).

⁹ On grounds of Luppe's reading, op. cit., 45 ἀνασχ[οπεῖν.

¹⁰ A 'moderate Cratetean himself', R. Pfeiffer, History of Classical Scholarship, Oxford 1971, 1, 241 and n. 1. See Posidonius Fr. 218 (Edelstein-Kidd).

¹¹ We don't want to say "at the height of Cape St. Vincent", because its position (see the discussion between Erathostenes and Apollodorus in Str. 2.11) and orientation was quite muddled; even for Mela (3.3 Parroni): *huc egressos sequentesque ea quae exeuntibus dextra sunt aequor Atlanticum et ora Baeticae frontis excipit, quae, nisi quod semel iterumque paululum in semet abducitur,*

Trafalgar, would have to take a slant steer, as it may be inferred from the reverse description in Pomponius Mela 2.96 (Parroni 1.984):

tum Melaria et Bel[l]o et Baesippo usque ad Iunonis promunturium oram freti occupat. illud iam in occidentem et oceanum obliquo iugo excurrans, atque ei quod in Africa[m] Ampelusiam esse dixeramus adversum, qua nostra maria sunt finit Europen.

4. Geography and anthropology

Calypso advises the *τάχιον* way (iii. 21) to go back home. Implicitly, the idea of a shorter, possibly a land route¹², is rejected because the author of the papyrus commentary believes in the uncivilised state of the people beyond the Pillars of Hercules. At the time of this commentary, fabulous Erytheia and Tartessus have vanished and what is left is a rather ancient and low level of knowledge of the Iberian peninsula and Western Europe: it is quite the *ἄγνοια τῶν ἐσπερίων τόπων* that Strabo complained of (3.4.4).

For the commentator so concerned with rescuing mankind (and even fabulous beings such as Proteus) from a savage state, progress meant a further geographical step, that is, to arrive as soon as possible *πρὸς τὸν καθ' Ἡρακλείων στήλων διέκπλου*[ν] καὶ οὕτως εἰς ἐπιγινωσκόμενον τόπον (POxy. 2888. iii. 32).

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usque ad fluvium Anam paene recta est ... (3.7) at Lusitania trans Anam, qua mare Atlanticum spectat, primum ingenti impetu in altum abit, dein resistit ac se magis etiam quam Baetica abducit. qua prominet, bis in semet recepto mari, in tria promunturia dispergitur: Anae proximum, quia lata sede procurrens paulatim se ac sua latera fastigat, Cuneus ager dicitur, sequens Sacrum vocant, Magnum quod ulterius est.

For the problems in these lines, see the commentary in the recent edition of Mela by P. Parroni, Rome 1984, 379–380, 382–383. We must have in mind the form of Hispania found in Plinius *NH* 4.113 where the peninsula offers an almost continuous *frons* from the strait of Gibraltar to the Cabo de Roca, believed to be the angle where the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of Biscay (Mar Cantábrico) meet. Cape St. Vincent is seen as a simple protrusion in this *frons* (Plinius *NH* 4.115). This presupposes a “triangular” form of the Iberian peninsula, an idea which, in spite of Strabo’s more correct views, shall reach early medieval geographers: see L. Molina, *Orosio y los geógrafos hispanomusulmanes*, Al-Qantara V, 1984, 63–92. If this geographical view formed part of the “chart of Agrippa” (not unknown by Mela, see Parroni, *op. cit.*, 17), it would also explain the belief of an almost northwards orientation of the entrance to the straits of Gibraltar in Avienus: A. Berthelot, *Festus Avienus. Ora maritima*, Paris 1934, vv. 88 ss. and *comm.* in p. 7,57. Contra A. Schulten, *Avieno. Ora maritima* (Fontes Hispaniae Antiquae 1), Barcelona 1955², 93 (1st ed. 1922).

¹² ...“that Kalypso recommends not the shortest route, but the one that soonest brings Odysseus into regions where he would be forwarded”, Lobel, *comm.* to POxy. 2888. iii. 21. A land route from the Atlantic coast to the Mediterranean Sea (from *Ophiussa* to *Mare Sardum*) is contemplated in Avienus vv. 148–151: see Schulten, *op. cit.*, *comm.* in p. 99.