

PINDAR, *Olympian Odes*; DIONYSIUS PERIEGETES, *Description of the World*;

SOPHOCLES, *Ajax*; SOPHOCLES, *Electra*

In Greek, manuscript on paper

Byzantium, likely Constantinople, c. 1420-25

135 leaves, paper folded in 4°, chain-distance 30 mm, watermarks: ff. 1-40 similar to Piccard nos. 119540-2 (attested in Padua, AD 1421), ff. 41-56, 67-70 similar to Piccard nos. 116216 (attested in Udine, AD 1422), ff. 75-135 similar to Piccard nos. 150008-9 (attested in Padua, AD 1423), text complete, collation (quires unsigned): i-viii⁸, ix², x-xiii⁴, xiv-xix⁸, xx⁶, written on 21 lines per page, in a brownish ink (sometimes faded, but always readable), with interlinear glosses written by the same hand (of Greek origin) as the main text, and with marginal scholia. Early-nineteenth-century binding of marbled paper and white calfskin over cardboard; bookplate of Eduard de Turckheim, dated 1883 (In clean condition throughout). Dimensions 202 x 143 mm.

Probably written in Constantinople for export to Italy by a professional scribe who was a contemporary of the well-known scribe-schoolmaster George Chrysococces, the present previously unknown manuscript with its interlinear gloss and marginal scholia was meant for use by students. The primary interest of the manuscript lies in its place as a link in the chain of the transmission of Classical Greek literature. It is by means of books like this one that this literature reached Italy from Byzantium and thus stimulated the development of Renaissance learning.

PROVENANCE

1. The script suggests that the manuscript was produced in Byzantium, quite possibly Constantinople, around 1420-25. The paper of Greek manuscripts from the thirteenth century on is almost always Italian, as is the present paper, because the Byzantines did not produce their own paper. Watermarks help pin down the date to the early fifteenth century.
2. Plausibly in Italy, where people were starting to get seriously interested in Greek, in the early fifteenth century, and perhaps originally made for export to Italy.
3. Baron Eduard de Turckheim (1829-1909), his bookplate with the date 1883, French book collector

TEXT

1.

ff. 1r-38v, Pindar, *Olympian Odes I-XIV*, with interlinear gloss (inc. ἄριστον] τῶν ἄλλων
δηλονότι στοιχείων, des. περοῖσι] στέφανος and occasional marginal scholia (inc. *Olym II.1.*
Ἐν ἐρωτήσῃ σχηματίζει τὸν λόγον· ποιεῖται δὲ τὴν ἐρώτησιν πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ
Μούσαν τὴν συντιθεῖσαν τοὺς ὕμνους), cf. E. Abel, ed. *Scholia recenta in Pindari Epinicia*,
Budapest 1891, 52-428; Published by Abel but with slightly different wording (hence the cf. [ed.
used when the text is the same).

The greatest lyric poet of ancient Greece, Pindar (c. 522–443 BC) was born at Cynosephalae of a family whose roots went back to the days of Cadmus, founder of Thebes. Of the nine canonical lyric poets of Classical Greece, he is sometimes considered the greatest, and his work is best preserved. He composed choral songs of various genres, but the only works of his to survive in a complete form are the victory odes. The remaining works are known only by quotations of other ancient authors or from scraps of papyrus.

Pindar's victory odes were composed for the aristocratic winners of the four most prominent athletic festivals of early Classical Greece: the Olympic, Pythian, Isthmian, and Nemean Games. Rich and allusive in style, they contain dense parallels between the athletic victor, his illustrious ancestors, and the myths of the gods and heroes underlying the athletic festival. The present manuscript includes the complete text of the fourteen Olympic Odes, listed below with victor followed by race: 1) Hieron of Syracuse, Horse Race; 2 and 3) Theron of Acragas, Chariot Race; 4 and 5) Psamis of Camarina, Chariot Race with Mules; 6) Agesias of Syracuse, Chariot Race with Mules; 7) Diagoras of Rhodes, Boxing Match; 8) Alcimidas of Aegina, Boys Wrestling Match; 9) Epharmus of Opous, Wrestling Match; 10 and 11) Agesidamus of Epizephyrian Locris, Boys Boxing Match; 12) Ergoteles of Himera, Long Foot Race; 13) Xenophon of Corinth, Short Foot Race and Pentathlon; 14) Asopichus of Orchomenos, Boys Foot Race;

2.

f. 38v, outer margin, biographical note on Dionysius Periegetes, Inc. Διονύσιος ὁ Περιηγητὴς
γένονεν υἱὸς Διονυσίου Ἀλεξανδρέως, des. ἐν δὲ τῇ χωρογραφίᾳ πάντων, cf. K. Müller,
Geographi Graeci minores, 2 vols., Paris 1882, II:xvi;

ff. 38v-67v, Dionysius Periegetes, *Description of the World*, ed. E. Amato, *Descrizione della terra abitata*,
Milan 2005; with interlinear gloss (inc. γαῖαν] τὰ περὶ τὴν γῆν, des. ἐκ τῶν θεῶν αὐτάξιος
ἐνεκα τῶν ὕμνων) and marginal scholia (inc. Ὁ Κάνωβος κυβερνήτης ἦν Μενελάου·
μετὰ γὰρ τὴν ἄλωσιν Τροίης Μενελάου πάντα τῆς Αἰγύπτου μέρη πλανηθέντος καὶ
τοῦ κυβερνήτου αὐτοῦ πνιγέντος διαδέχεται ὁ Κάνωβος etc., des. Παράδεισος μὲν
γὰρ λέγεται κήπος ὁ ἔχων δένδρα διάφορα ἔγκαρπα, λειμών δὲ ὁ παντίοις ἄνθεσι
κομῶν), cf. Müller, II: 427-457;

The author of this description of the habitable world, written in Greek hexameter verse in a terse and elegant style, is Dionysius Periegetes (literally, Dionysius of The Description). He is believed

to have lived in the second or third centuries and to have come from Alexandria. In ancient times (and evidently into the Renaissance) his work enjoyed a high degree of popularity as a schoolbook. It was translated into Latin by Rufus Festus Avienus and by the grammarian Priscian.

3.

ff. 68r-69v, Anonymous *Biography of Sophocles*, des. τοῦ μέλιτι τὸ στόμα κεχρισμένου, ed. W. Dindorf, *Scholia in Sophoclis tragoedias septem*, Oxford 1852, 1-8;

ff. 69v-70v, Argument (summary) of *Ajax*, des. τὸ δὲ μὴ καλυφθὲν ὅπερ ἦν ἡ πλευρὰ τρωτὸν ἔμεινε, cf. Dindorf, 25-28;

f. 70v, Anonymous note on comedy, inc. Γέλως τῆς κωμωδίας ἔκ τε λέξεων καὶ πραγμάτων ἔχει τὴν σύστασιν, des. Ἐβδομον ὡς Στρεψιάδης πεισθεὶς ἀληθεῖς εἶναι τοὺς περὶ ψύλλης λόγους, cf. W. J. W. Koster, *Prolegomena de comoedia*, Groningen 1975, 16;

ff. 70v-71r, Anonymous note on literary theory, Δεῖ γινώσκειν, ὅτι ἐπὶ παντὸς βιβλίου δέκα τινὰ ζητοῦνται κεφάλαια, ἡγουν· τὸ χρήσιμον· τὸ γνήσιον· ἡ τάξις τῆς ἀναγνώσεως· ἡ αἰτία τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς· ὁ διδασκαλικὸς τρόπος· τὸ πῶν δεῖ εἰσάγειν τὰς ὑποθέσεις καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα· ἡ ὑπὸ τι μέρος ἀναφορὰ· τόποι καθ' ὃν τρόπον, ὅπως· αἰτίαν δι' ἣν· καιρὸς ὅτε; cf. C. Walz, ed. *Rhetores Graeci*, 9 vols., Stuttgart 1832-6, III: 728;

ff. 71r-102v, Sophocles, *Ajax*, with interlinear gloss (inc. παῖ] υἱέ, des. ὅ τι πράξει] ἡγουν εὐπραγήσει ἢ δυσπραγήσει) and occasional marginal scholia (inc. Πλατυκὸς ἐνεστῶς, ἐπεὶ ἔχει τὸ «αἰεί», des. Ἀμφότερα γὰρ ἡ λέξις δηλοῖ, ἡγουν ὅπως διάκεισαι), cf. Dindorf, 196-238;

ff. 102v-103r, Argument (summary) of *Electra*, ed. Dindorf, 29-30;

ff. 103r-125v, Sophocles, *Electra*, with interlinear gloss (inc. τοῦ στρατηγήσαντος] ἡγουν τοῦ στρατήγος γεγονότος καὶ τοῦ ἀγάγοντος τὸν στρατόν, des. τῇ νῦν ὁρμῇ] ἡγουν ἐπιχείρησαν ἀντὶ τοῦ διὰ τέλους, ἐπιρρηματικῶς) and occasional marginal scholia (inc. Ἄργος· τὰ περὶ τῆς Μυκῆνης χωρία καὶ αὐταὶ αἱ Μυκῆναι, des. Ὡσπέρμ' Ἀτρώως πλεῖστα παθόν, μόλις διὰ τέλους ἐλευθερώθης κατὰ τὴν νῦν ἐπιχείρησιν), cf. Dindorf, 243-277.

Sophocles (c. 497/6-407/6 BC) is one of three ancient Greek playwrights whose works of tragedy have survived. He was active after Aeschylus and before Euripides. Although he is thought to have written some 123 plays, only seven have survived in their complete form. *Ajax* and *Electra*, included in this manuscript, are among them. Among his contributions to Greek drama is his addition of a third actor and reduction of the importance of the chorus in the presentation of the plot. His characters are also better developed than are those of earlier playwrights.

The tragedy Ajax focuses on the prideful hero of the Trojan War, Telamonian Ajax, who is driven to treachery and eventually suicide. Ajax becomes upset which Achilles armor is presented to Odysseus instead of to him. Finally, in spite of enmity to Ajax, Odysseus persuades the kings Menelaus and Agamemnon to grant Ajax a proper burial. The play Electra corresponds roughly to the plot of Aeschylus's Libation Bearers and details the avengement of Electra and Orestes for Agamemnon's murder by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.

This amply annotated volume of works by Pindar, Dionysius Periegetes, and Sophocles was meant for use by students—quite possibly Italians, whose interest in Greek literature was on the rise in the 1420s. It may have been produced in Constantinople, where George Chrysococces, a schoolmaster, is known to have copied a number of Classical Greek texts for foreign patrons between 1420 and 1428 (see Wilson, 1996, 271-2). The hand here is not that of Chrysococces, but certainly belongs to a well-trained, professional scribe. The three authors represented in the volume were all part of the school curriculum. This particular manuscript has remained completely unknown to the scholars who have studied the textual tradition of their respective works. The manuscript is of considerable interest to those who study the exchange between Byzantium and Italy in the early fifteenth century—not only in the context of Italian humanism and its interest in Greek texts, but also in relationship to the respective schools and their learning strategies in Byzantium and in Italy.

The manuscript tradition of all four texts is fairly complex and has been studied in specialized monographs (cited below). The present manuscript, being relatively late, has no importance for establishing the original text of any of the four. Because of its date early in the fifteenth century, it cannot, however, be a copy of a printed edition, and therefore other aspects of its text are of potential interest to scholars. The interlinear gloss consists of simple explanations of the meaning of individual words. It is rather dense and, even if many of these glosses are trivial explanations of the primary text, they deserve further study. Transcribed above are the first and last glosses that accompany each of the four texts. The numerous marginal scholia, the equivalent of our footnotes, are for the most part anonymous. All of the scholia found in the present manuscript are published, although not always in the exact same form. Since these had to be fitted into the margin, scribes tended to change their wording somewhat, depending on how much space was available to them. These scholia were composed by Byzantine schoolmasters more than a thousand years after the texts themselves had been written.

Copies of classical texts are always of interest to philologists, even when many manuscript copies survive. This, as well as the fact that the present manuscript has remained completely unknown until now, makes the book attractive. Only five manuscripts of Pindar's *Olympian Odes* are listed in the Schoenberg Database as changing hands over the last two centuries, the last copy in 1888. This one is the earliest of these five manuscripts, which date from the middle of the fifteenth through the middle of the sixteenth centuries. The Schoenberg Database records no copies in Greek of Dionysius Periegetes; one copy of a Latin translation is listed in a library in the United Kingdom.

The primary interest of the manuscript lies, however, in its place as a link in the chain of the transmission of Classical Greek literature. It is by means of books like this one that this literature reached Italy from Byzantium and thus stimulated the development of Renaissance learning.

LITERATURE

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Irigoin, J. *Histoire du texte de Pindare*, Paris, 1952.

Koster, J. W. *Prolegomena de comoedia*, Groningen, 1975.

Müller, K. *Geographi Graeci minores*, 2 vols., Paris, 1882

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Walz, C. ed. *Rhetores Graeci*, 9 vols., Stuttgart, 1832-6.

Wilson, N. G. *Scholars of Byzantium*, 2d ed., London, 1996.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Watermarks Database

www.piccard-online.de

Pindar's Olympian Odes in Greek with English translation

<http://www.rhapsodes.fll.vt.edu/PindarOlympia.htm>

Sophocles site

<http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/sophocles/p/Sophocles.htm>