Fragments of a Ptolemaic Thucydides Roll in the Beinecke Library
Author(s): Kevin W. Wilkinson
Source: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik, Bd. 153 (2005), pp. 69-74
Published by: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn (Germany)
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20192047
Accessed: 10-03-2015 10:59 UTC
FRAGMENTS OF A PTOLEMAIC THUCYDIDES ROLL IN THE BEINECKE LIBRARY

The two fragments of P.CtYBR 4601 are the first witness on papyrus to Thucydidcs VIII.93.3, 94.3, 95.2-3.2 Fragment 1 preserves an upper margin, the ends of the first four lines of one column, and the beginnings of the first six lines of the next.3 Visible on Fragment 2 are a lower margin and most of the final 14 lines of the second column. A tiny third fragment with traces of ink cannot be placed with confidence but almost certainly belongs to the same roll. The papyrus itself is of good quality, with the text written along the fibers. The back of each fragment is blank.

The columns observe Maas’s Law, exhibiting a rather pronounced forward tilt (5-7°).4 There is no punctuation, with the exception of spaces to mark the end of a periodus (col. ii, line 6; col. ii, line 29), and there are no other lectional signs. Orthographic differences from modern critical editions include the assimilation of ν to μ before a labial (col. ii, lines 27, 30)5 and the occurrence of σων rather than ξων (col. ii, line 30). Iota adscript is written (col. ii, line 32).

The hand is a small, slow, upright, and mostly bilinear capital, with only ϕ descending below the line. ε and σ are unevenly rounded and vary considerably in size, though they are usually narrow. Of the two occurrences of θ, curiously one appears to have a cross stroke and the other an internal dot, but the latter may be due merely to carelessness. ξ is written in the form Ξ. The crossbar of τ, usually quite broad, is sometimes truncated (as when followed by another τ or by a letter with a left vertical, such as η). ο often hangs from the horizontal bars of τ and γ. μ is made in three movements rather than four and may be shallow or deep. A few letters (η, τ, μ, ν, π, α, γ, υ, and ϕ) are sporadically decorated with small, left-pointing serifs. The script shares a number of features with literary hands assigned to the middle of the third century BCE, such as P. Lit. Lond. 73 (Pack2, 397) and P. Hamb. II 163 (Pack2, 1504).6 But it also has affinities with hands supposed to be early-second century; compare, for example, P.Par 2 (Pack2, 246).

A date in the third century or in the first half of the second is also suggested by documents from the year 138-137 BCE, to which the Thucydidcs fragments were attached in the cartonage. These are mainly petitions addressed to Boethos, epistategos of the Heracleopolite nome.7 138-137 BCE, therefore, is a likely terminus ante quem, but the Thucydidcs roll may be considerably older.8 In any

---

1 I would like to thank Robert Babcock for first bringing this piece to my attention and for much sound advice during the preparation of the present article.

2 The fragments were extracted from cartonage purchased by the Beinecke Library in 1997.

3 A small piece of papyrus, transcribed Τυρ, is not quite contiguous with the bulk of Fr. 1, but several distinctive horizontal fibers ensure that there is no question about its placement in col. ii., line 2: ξεδόλαρ.ιουνυ.

4 An exact measurement is not possible, since only 8 line beginnings are extant. However, the slope of col. ii, lines 1-5 measures roughly 5-6°; the slope of col. ii, lines 24-32 (with only one extant line beginning in between) is 6-7°.

5 There is no assimilation, however, in col. ii, line 4 and probably also in col. ii, line 1 (περιν [Περιναία]).

6 The latter was assigned by its original editors to the first century CE (Griechische Papyrusurkunden der Hamburger Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, vol. 2, ed. B. Snell et al. [Hamburg, 1954]). It was dated to c. 250 BCE by E. G. Turner, “Two Unrecognised Ptolemaic Papyri,” JHS 76 (1956) 95-98.


case, its association with the Boethos material is consistent with the palaeographical evidence for a third- or early-second-century date. This makes it one of the two earliest witnesses to the text of the *Historiae*, the other is P.Hamb. II 163.\(^9\)

![Fig. 1. Reconstruction of the two columns (drawing by K. Wilkinson)](image)

A fairly secure reconstruction of the roll’s dimensions is possible owing to the fortuitous preservation of the tops of two columns and the bottom of the second. If one supposes that the first line of col. i contained 19 letters (see below), and reconstructs the rest of the column according to a modern critical edition, the result is a total of 653 letters.\(^10\) Excluding the first line, whose starting point cannot be known for certain, and the second line, which must contain an error or a variant reading,\(^11\) there are only two lines in the column for which the number of letters per line can be determined. Lines 3 and 4 contain 21 and 19 characters respectively.

A character count of approximately 653 letters for col. i ensures that Fragment 2 does indeed preserve the bottom of col. ii and not the bottom of a third column. Reconstructing the lines of col. ii on both fragments (excluding lines 33-35, whose precise start- and/or endpoints cannot be established), as well as the missing text between the two fragments, yields 605 letters. An average of 19 letters per line for the final three lines of Fragment 2 yields a total of 662 characters for the entire column.

There are 15 lines in col. ii whose letter counts can be calculated and averaged. These contain a total of 283 characters and thus a mean of approximately 19 letters per line, with actual letter counts varying from 15 to 23 per line (all but three are between 17 and 20). This figure suggests that the missing text from col. ii, line 6 to col. ii, line 22 (inclusive)—322 characters in all—comprised 17 lines with an average of just under 19 letters per line. The entire column, therefore, was likely 35 lines, with an average of roughly 19 letters in each. The 653 characters of col. i, when arranged in 35 lines, also yield approximately 19 letters per line.

---

\(^9\) See note 4. The number of published Thucydidean papyri has grown immensely since Pack\(^2\). See now Mertens-Pack\(^3\) (http://promethee.philo.ulg.ac.be/cedopal/getPack.asp?_auteur=79) containing 91 entries. Of these 91, only one (P. Hamb. II 163) is Ptolemaic; nine preserve portions of book VIII.

\(^10\) I have relied primarily on G. B. Alberi, *Thucydides Historiae*, vol. 3: books VI-VIII (Rome, 2000) for the text of VIII.93-95, but I have also consulted the editions of C. Hude (Leipzig, 1901) and H. Jones/H. Powell (Oxford, 1942). The figure 653 is according to Alberi’s text (Hude: 654; Jones/Powell: 660).

\(^11\) See below, “Notes”.
No single line is preserved entire, but several on Fragment 2 are lacking only two to five letters. These lines range in length from approximately 4.8 cm to at most 5.5 cm, suggesting a notional column width of just over 5 cm. The intercolumn, where it can be measured, varies from 0.4-0.8 cm, yielding a probable column-to-column width of slightly less than 6 cm.

As for the height of col. ii, the average measurement from the bottom of one line to the bottom of the next is 0.536 cm. This figure, multiplied by 34 lines, plus the height of the top line, yields a total column height of 18.5 cm.12 The upper margin, measuring 3 cm, and the lower margin, measuring 2 cm—not either of which appears to be entire—bring the total height of the roll to >23.5 cm.13

According to the figures assembled above, the received text of book VIII would require approximately 153 columns and a roll 9 meters in length. This, of course, is only a very rough estimate. In fact, it may be entirely misleading. If Bertrand Hemmerdinger is correct in suggesting that the current division of the Historiae into eight books was first introduced in the mid-second century BCE, then the original extent of this roll cannot be known.14

When compared with data from Alain Blanchard’s study of third-century Ptolemaic rolls and William Johnson’s recent Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus, the dimensions of the Yale Thucydides roll appear to be mostly unexceptional.15 At approximately 5.2 cm, the column width falls into Johnson’s Class I (or narrow, 4.5-6 cm). He maintains that narrow columns were popular throughout the Roman era, especially in the second century CE, and that somewhat wider columns (falling into his Class II, 6-7.5 cm) were probably the norm during Ptolemaic times and became fashionable once again in the third century CE.16 The figures assembled by Blanchard bear out the claim that Ptolemaic columns tended to be somewhat wider, on average, than those from the early Roman period. Of his 12 prose examples from the third century BCE, 11 have column widths of 6 cm or greater.17 Nevertheless, the sample set for Ptolemaic rolls is so small that the relatively narrow Yale Thucydides should not be considered particularly anomalous. The intercolumnar width of roughly 0.6 cm, on the other hand, is quite narrow, even for Ptolemaic rolls, which tend in this direction.18 The estimated column-to-column width of less than 6 cm, therefore, is also very narrow.

At roughly 18.5 cm, the column height falls into Johnson’s Class II (or middling, 16-21 cm).19 The roll height of >23.5 cm might be compared with Blanchard’s Groupe E, containing rolls approximately 26 cm tall.20 If this was indeed its original height, however, one must admit that the layout of the Yale Thucydides differed somewhat from the other members of this group. All but one of the latter have column heights of 21-23.5 cm, and therefore combined margins that are considerably smaller than the

---

12 0.536 cm is the mean of lines 1-5 and 22-33. However, the lines at the top of col. ii are a little taller than those at the bottom. Because there are more lines extant at the bottom of the column than the top, the average of 0.536 cm may be slightly skewed. The margin of error, however, is small. Using only lines 1-5 and 22-26 to arrive at a mean height for the missing lines, and then measuring the extant text results in a total column height of 18.85 cm (or +0.35 cm)

13 It is probable that the lower margin was originally 3 cm or more, but it seems unnecessarily speculative to say any more than this. See the excellent discussion of margin size and roll height in W. A. Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus (Toronto, 2004), 130-143.


16 Johnson, Bookrolls, 108.

17 Blanchard, “Papyrus littéraires grecs extraits de cartonages,” 35.

18 See Johnson, Bookrolls, 113. The intercolumns in Ptolemaic prose texts of the third century BCE, as presented by Blanchard, range from 0.5 cm to 2 cm (“Papyrus littéraires grecs extraits de cartonages,” 35).

19 The ratios of column height to column width in papyrus rolls vary considerably, even among roughly contemporary productions (see Ibid., 35; ratios reported by Blanchard for prose rolls from the third century BCE range from 2:3 to 4:1). The ratio of the Yale Thucydides is between 3:1 and 4:1, which is quite common in all periods.

20 Ibid., 28 (table on p. 33).
projected 7.5 cm of the Yale Thucydides (if one assumes a roll height of 26 cm). As is the case with the Yale piece, however, the dimensions of many of Blanchard’s examples have been reconstructed rather than measured; any firm conclusions, therefore, seem to be unattainable. It is perhaps sufficient to note that the estimated column and roll height of the Yale Thucydides are not out of place among other Ptolemaic productions.21

While the dimensions of this roll are more or less unremarkable, its text is not. Excluding orthographic variants, the 12 readable lines (fewer than 40 words) of Fragment B deviate six times from every other known manuscript, once or twice in quite startling ways. In their considerable deviation from the textus receptus, the Yale fragments are very much like the only other Ptolemaic witness to the text of the Historiae, P.Hamb. II 163. Turner’s comment on the latter holds equally well for the Yale Thucydides: “The number of variant readings found in these scraps in less than eighty words of Greek contrasts strikingly with the much closer conformity to the manuscript tradition found in the papyri of Roman date.”22 The existence now of two Ptolemaic papyri that vary considerably from later witnesses strengthens the claim that the text of Thucydides was standardized in antiquity, perhaps in the second century BCE.23

Where the papyrus is in agreement with a part of the later textual tradition, it does not consistently support a single family of manuscripts.24 On one occasion (col. ii, lines 23-24), it agrees with B against the rest of the tradition (ἐν τάξει βουλόμενοι, not βουλόμενοι ἐν τάξει), on another (col. ii, line 24), it agrees with ACEFGM against B (βοσθησα, not βοσθησα). Likewise, in col. ii, lines 31-32 it supports CG against ABEM (ἐν Εὐβοιαί, not ἐς Εὐβοιαν), and in col. ii, line 25 it supports ABEM against CG (αὐτοῖς, not αὕτης). In every such case, the Yale Thucydides contains the correct reading, or at least the reading preferred by modern editors, including one instance where it preserves the correct accusative form Θυμοχάρη (col. ii, lines 27-28) while all other manuscripts incorrectly read Θυμοχάρην or Θυμοχάρειν. All of this suggests that the text is of a very high quality, despite the fact that it represents a tradition different from those of the medieval manuscripts.

Transcription

Fr. 1:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>col. i</th>
<th>col. ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>λούς λόγων γιγνομένων</td>
<td>τὸν [Πειραιά] πανθημει</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἦπιώτερον ἦν ἢ πρότερον καὶ ἐ-</td>
<td>ἐξώ[σ]ουν, ὧς τού ἰδίου</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>φοβεῖτο μάλιστα] περὶ τοῦ</td>
<td>πολέμου μείζονος ἢ ἀπὸ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>παντὸς πολιτικοῦ· συντε-</td>
<td>τῶν πολεμίων οὐχ ἐκάς,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οἱ πορὸς τῷ λιμένι ὄν·</td>
<td>ἀλλὰ π[ρὸς τῷ λιμένι ὄν-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 Cf., e.g., the only member of Blanchard’s Groupe E whose mise en page is similar to the Yale Thucydides: P.Hamb. II 128 at 24 cm (roll) and 19.5 cm (column). Also cf. the Lille Stesichorus (Mertens-Pack, 1486.1) at 23.5 cm (roll) and 17.5 cm (column).


23 Despite the lack of any ancient testimony, B. Hemmerdinger argues, on the basis of the standard division into eight books, that the Historiae were edited in Alexandria in the second century BCE (Essai sur l’histoire du texte de Thucydide). Turner (“Unrecognised Ptolemaic Papyri,” 98) recognizes the possibility of ancient editing but is much more cautious about when, where, and according to what principles this may have taken place.

24 On the the manuscript tradition of Thucydides and the place of the papyri, see recently S. Poli, “Note sui papiri tucididei e sulla fonte Ξ,” MD 47 (2001): 121-132, and bibliography cited there.
Fragments of a Ptolemaic Thucydides Roll in the Beinecke Library

(1)

(2)

(3)
Fr. 2:

τε σταξὶαξοῦσης καὶ πε- 22
ρί τοῦ μεγίστου ἐν τιέχει
βουλόμενοι βοήθησαι. Εὔ-
βοιας γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἀποκε[κλη-]μένης τὰ τῆς Ἀττικῆς
πάντα ἤµ, περισσου. Θυ[
-]
χίάρη στρατηγὸν καὶ ναὶ[ς
εῖ] Ἐρετρίαν. ἄφικμοι[έ-
νὸν ὡν σὺµ πάσας[ς
ταῖς πρότεροι ἐν Εὔβοι-
αι οὖσας ξε καὶ τρίκοντα
ἐγένοντο, καὶ [εὐθὺς νω-
μαχῳν] ἱγνάζας[κάζοντο].

Notes

col. i, line 2. When reconstructed according to the textus receptus, this line contains 24 characters, yet it ends short of the other three lines in the column. It is possible that there was a textual variant in the lacuna, but, since there are no attested variants at this point in the text and the 20 characters preceding ξαί are full of pitfalls for an inattentive scribe, haplography is perhaps a more likely explanation.

col. ii, line 6. No ink is visible at the beginning of the line where τ is expected, but the surface layer of papyrus is missing at this point. There appears to be uninscribed papyrus between σ and χ, which would mark the beginning of a new periodus.

col. ii, line 22. [σταξὶαξοῦσης καὶ]: the papyrus agrees with ABCEFG against M (καὶ στασαξοῦσης).

col. ii, lines 23-24. ἐν τιέχει βουλόμενοι, preferred by modern editors, is the reading of B over against ACEFG, which contain βουλόμενοι ἐν τάχει.

col. ii, lines 24-27. Εὔβοιας here belongs with ἀποκεκλημένης in the genitive absolute, whereas all other manuscripts make Εὔβοια the subject of the main verb (γενύσεα). Conversely, all other manuscripts place τῆς Ἀττικῆς in the genitive absolute construction, whereas the papyrus makes τὰ τῆς Ἀττικῆς the subject of the main verb. As a result, the sense of this parenthetical comment is reversed. Instead of Εὔβοια γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἀποκεκλημένης τῆς Ἀττικῆς πάντα ἢµ ("for, since they were cut off from Attica, Euboea was everything to them"), the papyrus reads Εὔβοιας γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἀποκεκλημένης τὰ τῆς Ἀττικῆς πάντα ἤµ ("for, since they were cut off from Euboea, the resources of Attica were everything to them"). The latter is unobjectionable in itself, but it fails to provide an adequate explanation for the preceding statement, in which Thucydides explains that the Athenians rushed to defend Euboea, their most important resource (τὸ μέγατον). That the reading preserved in the textus receptus is correct is also suggested by VII.27-28, where Thucydides relates how the Spartan occupation of Decelea deprived the Athenians of their entire country.

col. ii, lines 27-28. Θυ[μοχαρίη]: The papyrus preserves the correct form of the accusative. Θυμοχαρίη ABFEGiM: Θυμοχαρίη CG.

col. ii, lines 29-30. The textus receptus reads ὄν ἄφικμον ἑξιὸν ταῖς πρότεροι ἐν Εὔβοια ὁσίας κτλ. The papyrus reads differently at three points. ὄν is omitted. ὡν appears after ἄφικμον. Together with the space preceding ἄφικμον, this signifies the beginning of a new periodus. Finally, πάσας appears before ταῖς πρότεροι κτλ.

col. ii, lines 31-32. ἐν Εὔβοιαίς agrees with CG against ABFEM, which read ἐς Εὔβοιαι.

col. ii, line 33. Modern editors place a period after ἱγνάζας, but the papyrus exhibits no punctuation at this point.

New Haven

Kevin W. Wilkinson