

# The Language of the Papyri

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## Lexical Translations in the Papyri: Koine Greek, Greek Dialects, and Foreign Languages\*

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### 1. LITERARY POPYRI AND LINGUISTICS

In general, literary papyrology does not offer the modern linguist much insight into the spoken language of the ancient Greeks, since a papyrus containing a literary text is by default a more controlled product than a documentary text. Unlike a private letter, petition, or contract, a literary papyrus is not a 'living' document and does not aim to convey practical information. Rather, it is a copy of a text that was often first written some centuries earlier and in a standardized literary language. Moreover, the scribe of a literary text has a particular 'intellectual' interest; hence his level of education can generally be assumed to be higher than that of the 'author' of a private document. This is not to say that literary papyri do not contain the usual misspellings which arose in the Hellenistic and Roman periods as a result of changes in pronunciation; of course they do, but no more so than documentary texts.

There are, however, certain literary papyri that may offer interesting insights into the history of linguistics. Specifically, these are papyri that contain lexica or glossaries of dialectal or foreign words.

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As is well known, Hellenistic scholars did a great deal of work in lexicography and specifically in dialectology, composing glossaries of dialectal words, in addition to glossaries and lexica on specific authors, especially Homer and Hippocrates.<sup>1</sup> Some of these dialectal glossaries were written out of an interest in the literary authors themselves, who wrote in different literary dialects, such as the lyric poets or Hippocrates. Other glossaries, however, gathered words encountered in antiquarian or ethnographical studies in the tradition of Herodotus. In the period following Alexander's campaign and the consolidation of the Hellenistic kingdoms, Greeks came into close contact with many different peoples and cultures. In this cosmopolitan environment it is not surprising that interest developed in ethnography and that antiquarian studies underwent a particular development in the Hellenistic world as never before. Unfortunately, most of the original Hellenistic works in dialectal glossography are lost, and fragments of them can be gathered only from later products such as the lexicon of Hesychius (v–vi AD) or the Byzantine lexica such as the *Suda* (ix AD) or the *Etymologica* (ix–xiii AD). Thus, as the oldest remaining examples of linguistic studies in antiquity, papyri containing glossaries and lexica are of paramount importance in the history of the field.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I use the term *glossary* to denote a collection of exotic or rare words; a glossary can also be a collection of hard words in an author, often following the order in which they appear in his work, as happens for example in the *Scholia Minora* to Homer. I apply the term *lexicon* (or *dictionary*) to works that show an attempt, however successful, at a complete list of the words in a language. To avoid confusion it should also be noted at the outset that I will use the Greek *γλῶσσα* for the exotic word (in the Aristotelian sense) appearing in a glossary as lemma (headword), but the English *gloss* to indicate the explanation of the lemma. On Greek glossography and lexicography see K. Latte, 'Glossographika', *Philologus*, 80 (1925), 136–75; E. Degani, 'Lessicografi', in F. Della Corte (ed.), *Dizionario degli scrittori greci e latini*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1987), ii. 1169–89; K. Alpers, 'Griechische Lexicographie in Antike und Mittelalter dargestellt an ausgewählten Beispielen', in H.-A. Koch and A. Krup-Ebert (eds.), *Welt der Information: Wissen und Wissensvermittlung in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1990), 14–38. For dialectal glossography, we have the so-called *Γλῶσσαι κατὰ πόλεις*, a list of one hundred words divided by geographical areas; cf. Latte, 'Glossographika', 136–47; C. M. Bowra, 'Γλῶσσαι κατὰ πόλεις', *Glotta*, 38 (1959), 43–60.

<sup>2</sup> On lexica and glossaries on papyri, cf. M. Naoumides, 'The Fragments of Greek Lexicography in the Papyri', in *Classical Studies Presented to Ben Edwin Perry by His Students and Colleagues at the University of Illinois, 1924–60* (Urbana, IL, 1969), 181–202.

In order to analyse the evidence for linguistic interest in dialects and foreign words in papyri, we must first clarify exactly what are we looking for. For, especially when dealing with Greek dialects, the first difficulty we face is that most Greek poetry is written in (literary) dialects; therefore a glossary analysing, say, Aeolic or Ionic words does not necessarily mean that the focus is on Aeolic or Ionic dialects *per se*, but rather on Sappho or Alcaeus on the one hand, and on Hippocrates, Herodotus, or Homer on the other. Therefore, to distinguish material of real linguistic value from literary *γλωσσαι* one needs a more precise criterion than the simple presence of a dialectal 'varnish'. A better method is to see whether the *lemmata*, apart from belonging to a certain dialect, also fail to be explained with quotations or references to literary authors and/or to be attested in literary authors. Of course, even if a glossary contains dialectal words neither attested in any literary work nor explained with literary references, the possibility remains, in principle, that the lemma is still a quotation from a lost work. With this unavoidable caveat, we can proceed to our analysis of the preserved material and try to identify a group of works that can bear witness to ancient interest in languages/dialects *per se*.

In this analysis I have excluded glossaries and lexica limited to one author (for example papyri of Apollonius Sophista's *Lexicon Homericum* and the *scholia minora* to Homer), as well as bilingual glossaries, which, though they are linguistic tools, do not actually betray any speculative interest in other idioms but serve a more practical purpose: that of communicating with people speaking another language or (for glossaries/lexica on literary authors) that of translating written texts, whether for use or for school.<sup>3</sup> I have also omitted *onomastica*, lists of words without explanations, since their lack of explanations does not provide any proof that whoever collected the words classified them as proper to a particular dialect or language. With these criteria, a complete analysis of the material has led me to isolate the following texts:

*Glossaries containing dialectal words*

[P. Berol. inv. 9965]

[P. Oxy. XV 1801]

<sup>3</sup> On bilingual glossaries see J. Kramer, *Glossaria bilinguia in papyris et membranis reperta* (Bonn, 1983); id., *Glossaria bilinguia altera* (Leipzig, 2001).

*P. Oxy. XV 1802*  
*Glossaries containing non-Greek words*  
 [*P. Oxy. XV 1801*]  
*P. Oxy. XV 1802*  
*P. Ness. II 8*

The evidence is disappointingly scarce. We have only four papyri, and, moreover, two of them (*P. Berol. inv. 9965* and *P. Oxy. XV 1801*) do not offer reliable evidence, for while they do contain words not attested in literature (and which could therefore be dialectal or foreign), those words are never defined as such in these two glossaries. *P. Oxy. XV 1802* does, however, give positive evidence, since it collects several eclectic *γλώσσαι* unattested in literary texts and defines them as belonging to other dialects or languages. Before we turn to *P. Oxy. XV 1802*, a look at the other three glossaries will make it clear why that manuscript deserves special attention.

*P. Berol. inv. 9965* (iii/ii BC)<sup>4</sup> contains a list of words starting with *βη, βι, βλ, βο*, with brief translations. The words, which follow an alphabetical order limited to the first two letters, are taken from Homer, tragedy, and Hellenistic poetry. Possible dialectal words might be the otherwise unattested *βληχος* (l. 30), *βλύδιον* (l. 22), attested only in *Hsch. β 757* (*βλύδιον· ὑγρόν· ζέον*) and *Zon. 394. 1*, and *βουπρειό[νες]* (l. 31), which probably stands for *βουπρηόνες*, attested only in *Hsch. β 957* (*βουπρηόνες· κρημνοὶ μεγάλοι, καὶ λόφοι*). Similar is the case of *P. Oxy. XV 1801* (mid i AD),<sup>5</sup> showing two columns of rare words beginning with *β*. Citations come from comedy or satyr play (*Eupolis, Cratinus, Hermippus, Aristophanes, Alexis, Sophocles*) and from the historian *Phylarchus*. There are two possible dialectal words: [*βείρακες*] = *ιέρακες* (l. 7), attested only in *Hsch. β 461* (*βείρακες· ιέρακες*), for which a possible Libyan origin has been proposed on the basis of *Hsch. β 216*: *βάρβαξ· ιέραξ, παρὰ Λίβυσι*.<sup>6</sup> The second possible word is *Βε[λ[βιν]α* (l. 42) defined as *κώμη τ[ῆς Λα]κων[ικῆς]* (as also in *Steph. Byz. 161. 12*), which could

<sup>4</sup> Ed. G. Poethke, 'Fragment einer alphabetisch geordneten Wörterliste (*P. Berol. 9965*)', *Archiv*, 39 (1993), 17–20.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also W. Luppe, 'Das Komikerglossar *Pap. Oxy 1801*', *Philologus*, 111 (1967), 86–109.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 107.

indeed be a Laconian toponym. As is clear, none of these papyri provides reliable evidence for dialectal or foreign words. They present only words that are not attested elsewhere or, if they are, are found only in Hesychius and other lexicographical or erudite sources which often do collect dialectal words. Yet in none of these parallel attestations are these words attributed to a particular dialect. Thus *P. Berol. inv. 9965* and *P. Oxy. XV 1801* cannot safely be considered good evidence for Hellenistic and early Roman interest in linguistics. A slightly better witness is *P. Ness. II 8*, a seventh-century codex that preserves a glossary with miscellaneous words and short explanations. All the *lemmata* are standard Greek words, except one in l. 91: [σάραβαρα Π]ερσικὰ βρέκια (= βράκια). Σάραβαρα are the typical Persian and Parthian loose trousers. The word is attested in various sources that define it as belonging to the Persian language (Hsch. c 190. 896; *Suda* c 109; Phot. ii. 146.1 Naber; *EGud.* 496.19 Sturz). It is also attested in the comic poet Antiphanes (fr. 199 *PCG*). So, in principle, the lemma may be part of a commentary on Antiphanes' play rather than a work of purely linguistic content. Compared with these three papyri, *P. Oxy. XV 1802* stands out in terms of both quality and quantity. In quantity, it includes many *lemmata* belonging to either a dialect or a foreign language that are unattested in any literary source; in terms of quality, the entries are rich and well preserved, and include explicit evidence that these *lemmata* were considered foreign or dialectal words.

## 2. *P. OXY. XV 1802*

*P. Oxy. XV 1802* (Pl. 16.1) is written across the fibres of a roll and dated on palaeographical grounds to the second/third century AD.<sup>7</sup> The *lemmata* are set in ekthesis followed by a blank space and then by an explanation, generally of from one to seven lines. *Lemmata* from κ, λ, and μ are preserved, and are ordered in a strict alphabetical

<sup>7</sup> *P. Oxy. XV 1802* was first published by Hunt in 1922. Lobel found some other pieces joining it, but did not publish them. I started working on these new fragments and on Lobel's notes in the summer of 2004. My new edition of the entire papyrus, with translation and full commentary is forthcoming (see p. xxii above).



Plate 16.1. P. Oxy. XV 1802: The Oxyrhynchus glossary

order, a very rare feature in ancient lexica and glossaries. I reproduce here the two largest pieces of the glossary, two columns almost entirely preserved:<sup>8</sup>

P. Oxy. XV 1802, fr. 3 ii

- [μ]έλι[σσαι] αἰ] τῆς Δήμητ[ρος ἰέρει]αι. ἢ αὐτ[ὸς ὁ Ἀπολλ[όδωρος] ἐν τῇ  
 ᾧ ἐπ[αγου-  
 σαν δὲ τὸν κάλαθον ταῖς Νύμφαις σὺν τῷ ἰστώ καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις τῆς Περ-  
 σεφόνης, ᾧ μὲν παραγένεσθαι εἰς Πάρον καὶ ξενισθεῖσαν παρὰ  
 τῷ βασιλεῖ Μελίσιω χαρίσασθαι ταῖς τούτου θυγατράσιν οὐσαι ἐξή-  
 5 κοντα τὸν τῆς Φερσεφόνης ἰστόν καὶ πρώταις αὐταῖς ἀναδοῦναι  
 τὰ περὶ αὐτὴν πάθη τε καὶ μυστήρια. ὅθεν καὶ μελίσσαις ἔκτοτε  
 κληθῆναι τὰς Θεσμοφοριαζούσας {κληθῆναι} γυναῖκας.  
 μελύγιον πομάτιόν τι Κυθικόν. Γλαῦκος ἐν ᾧ ἐξηγήσ[ε]ως τόπων τῶν  
 κει-  
 μένων ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ τοῦ Πόντου μέρη· σὺνκαταθεμ[έ]γων δὲ τῶν ἐλα-  
 10 τῶν ἔλυσε τὸν κύλλογον, καὶ ἀπολυθέντες ἕκαστο[ς] ἐπὶ τὰ ἴδια παρ-  
 εσκευάζον τὸ μελύγιον. τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πόμα μεθ[ύ]σκει μᾶλλον τοῦ  
 οἴνου, γίνεται δὲ ἐφομένου τοῦ μέλιτος μεθ' ὕδατος καὶ βοτά-  
 νη[ς] τινὸς ἐμβαλλομένης. φέρει γὰρ αὐτῶν ἡ χώρα πολὺ τὸ μέ-  
 λι, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὸ ζῦτος, ὃ ποιοῦσιν ἐκ τῆς κέγχρου.  
 15 μελωδία ἢ τραγωδία τὸ παλαιὸν ἐλέγετο ὡς Καλλίμαχος ἐν Ὑπο-  
 μνήμασιν.

<sup>8</sup> What I present here is part of my edition with new supplements and corrections, which differ in part from Hunt's *editio princeps* of 1922.

- μενεμανι** τὸ ὕδωρ παρὰ τοῖς Πέρσαις. Δείνων ἐ[ν - Περικ]ῶν  
**μερμνάδαι** οἱ τρίορχοι παρὰ Λυδοῖς. Ἄνδρων ἐ[ν - Περὶ τοῦ πολέ-  
 μου τοῦ πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους. [
- 20 **μέροπες** οἱ ἄφρονες ὑπὸ Εὐβοέων. Διονύσιος ἐν [
 **μέροψ** εἶδος ὀρνέου ὅπερ ἀντεκτρέφει τοὺς κ[αταγηράσκοντας  
 Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν ἡ Περὶ τῶν ἐν τοῖς ζώοις μορίω[ν  
**μερ[ο]τέλεστον** τὸ ἡμιτέλεστον Αἰτωλοῦς. [
 [ ] αιν [ ]
- 25 [ ] ικ. [...] υ[...]. οἰα. [
- P. Oxy. XV 1802, fr. 3 iii*  
**[M]** ἡ [τις] ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ. καὶ ἐν τῷ ναῶ τῆς Χαλκ[ιοῖκου Λακεδαιμονί-  
 ων ἔστι μικρὸν Ἀθηνάδιον καὶ ἐπιγε[γράφθαι φαὶν αὐτῷ  
 'τὴν Μῆτιν'.  
**μῆτραι** εἶδος μελισσῶν. Ἀρι[ς]τοτέλης ἐν ἡ Περ [ὶ τῶν ἐν τοῖς ζώοις  
 μορίω]
- 5 **μῆτραι** ἐν Ταρσῷ καὶ Κόλοις τὰς δέλτους ἐν αἷς ἀπ[ογράφονται τὰς  
 οἰκίας μῆτρας προσαγορεύεσθαι, ἄς καὶ δημ[οσίας. Ἀριστοτέ-  
 λης ἐν τῇ Σολέων πολιτείᾳ.  
**μιάστωρ** ὁ εἶδὼς ἑαυτὸν μὴ καθαρὸν αἵματο[ς  
 δει καὶ μαιίνων. Ἀντοκλείδης ἐν τῷ ἐπιγρα[φομένῳ ἐξηγητικῷ.
- 10 **μιθοργ** γένος τι ἀρμονίας παρὰ Χαλδαίους περ[
 **Μίθρας** ὁ Προμηθεύς, κατὰ δ' ἄλλους ὁ ἥλιος παρὰ Πέρσ[αις].  
**μιληχ** γένειον ὑπὸ Ἀλβανίων τῶν ὁμορύντων[ν  
 ὡς Ἡρακλείδης ἐν ἁ Ξένης φωνῆς.  
**μινοδολόεσσα** ἀριθμῶν σύνταξις παρὰ Χαλδαίοι[ς. . . ἐν - Τῶν,  
 15 κατὰ Βαβυλῶνα  
**Μινύαι** οὐ μόνον Ὀρχομένιοι ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ Μάγνη[τες. . . Πε-  
 ρὶ ποταμῶν  
**μινῶδες** ἄμπελοί τινες οὕτω λέγονται παρὰ Ῥοδ[ίοις?  
**μικαι** {ὁ} παρὰ Χαλδαίους ἢ τῶν μελλόντων πρόγνωσι[ς . . . ἐν -  
 20 Τῶν κατὰ Βαβυλῶνα  
**Μιτυληναῖοι** κάπηλοι, ἀπ[. . . .]. ὡς Ἡγήσανδρος [
 . . . . . ι μ[ ± 22 ] οριαχ[. . . . .  
 ] . σε[
- . . . . .

Apart from the γλώσσαι taken from a Greek dialect or a Near Eastern language, *P. Oxy. XV 1802* also contains a collection of rare Greek words (μελωδία), cult-related (μέλισσαι, Μῆτις) or ethnic (Μινύαι, Μιτυληναῖοι) vocabulary, and also names of animal species, supported by the authority of Aristotle (μέροψ and μῆτραι). The



peculiarity of the content together with the authorities quoted suggests that this work derives from an original composed in Alexandria between the first century BC and the first century AD, making it a product of Hellenistic erudition.<sup>9</sup>

I shall now focus on the more properly linguistic entries. As for entries concerned with Greek dialects, we have:

*μέροπες*: οἱ ἄφρονες ὑπὸ Εὐβοέων. Διονύσιος ἐν [.

Meropes: foolish men by the Euboeans. Dionysius in ...

The sense of ἄφρονες for *μέροπες* is not elsewhere attested. Generally *μέροπες* is understood as a synonym for mortals (cf. *Il.* 18. 288). The etymology given by the ancient grammarians was from *μείρομαι* and ὄψ, ‘those who are able to divide, to articulate, the voice (ὄψ)’.<sup>10</sup> As a pure suggestion, the meaning ἄφρονες might have originated as an extension from the idea of the mortality and frailty of mortals, who are ἄφρονες, ‘senseless’ (as is common in lyric poetry, for example in Semonides 1.1–5).<sup>11</sup> Still, the mention of the Euboeans remains a mystery.

*μεσ[ο]τέλεστον*: τὸ ἡμιτέλεστον Αἰτωλοῦς.

Mesoteleston: half-finished the Aitolians (acc.) ...

The equivalence *μέσος* = ἡμι- is self-evident; I have not, however, found any evidence that *μέσος* was used instead of ἡμι- by the Aitolians.

*μινῶδες*: ἄμπελοι τινες οὕτω λέγονται παρὰ Ῥοδ[ίους]

Minodes: some grape-vines are so called among the Rhodians.

The only other source for this lemma is Hesychius μ 1417: *μινῶδες εἶδος ἀμπέλου*.

*μήτραι*: ἐν Ταρῶ καὶ Σύλοις τὰς δέλτους ἐν αἷς ἀπ[ογράφονται τὰς] | οἰκίας, μήτρας προσαγορεύεσθαι, ἄς καὶ δημ[οσίας. Ἀριστοτέ] | λης ἐν τῇ Σολέων πολιτείᾳ.

<sup>9</sup> A full account of the dating and the proposed attribution will appear in my forthcoming study.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Hsch. μ 886; Sch. *Il.* 1. 250c; Sch. *Il.* 18. 288.

<sup>11</sup> ὦ παῖ, τέλος μὲν Ζεὺς ἔχει βαρύκτυπος | πάντων ὅς ἐστὶ καὶ τίθησ' ὅκμη θέλει, | νοῦς δ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἀνθρώποις ἀλλ' ἐπήμεροι | ἅ δὲ βοτὰ ζόουσι, οὐδὲν εἰδότες | ὅκως ἕκαστον ἐκτελευτῆσει θεός, ‘Boy, loud-thundering Zeus controls the outcome of everything there is and disposes it as he wishes. There is no intelligence among men, but we live like grazing animals, subject to what the day brings, with no knowledge of how the god will bring each thing to pass’; trans. D. E. Gerber, *Greek Elegiac Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 299.

Metrai: in Tarsos and Soloi writing tablets in which they register the houses are called 'metrai', and they are also called 'public (tablets)'. Aristotle in the *Constitution of Soli*.

The Soli mentioned here can only be the Soli in Cilicia and not that in Cyprus because it is mentioned in close connection with Tarsus. It is not easy to determine which language *μήτρα* is taken from. Soli was originally a Phoenician city, and was then colonized by the Rhodians. In the fifth century BC Soli was under the Persians and after Alexander's conquest it was ruled by the Seleucids. Furthermore, Tarsus has a Semitic origin, but we have also inscriptions written in Hellenistic Koine. Thus in both Soli and Tarsus there was a strong Greek element together with a Semitic and perhaps Persian background.<sup>12</sup> Thus *μήτραι* could be a local name in Hellenistic Koine, but could also be a Semitic or Persian word that had perhaps already passed into the Greek vocabulary in Soli and Tarsus.

More numerous, however, are the lemmata taken from non-Greek languages of people living in the Near East:

*μερμνάδαι*: οἱ τρίορχοι παρὰ Λυδοῖς. Ἄνδρων ἐ[ν] περὶ τοῦ πολέμου τοῦ πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους.

Mermnadai: hawks among the Lydians. Andron in [the xth book *On*] *the War against the Barbarians*.

*Μερμνάδαι* are said to be a type of hawk. This, however, is also the name of the family of Croesus according to Herodotus (1. 7. 2), and it might be that *μερμνάδαι* were actually the totemic animal adopted by the Lydian royal clan.<sup>13</sup>

*μελύγιον*: πομάτιόν τι Κκυθικόν. Γλαῦκος ἐν ᾧ ἐξηγήσ[ε]ως τόπων τῶν κειμένων ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ τοῦ Πόντου μέρη: 'συνκαταθεμ[έ]γων δὲ τῶν ἐλατῶν ἔλυσε τὸν κύλλογον, καὶ ἀπολυθέντες ἕκαστο[ς] ἐπὶ τὰ ἴδια παρεσκεύαζον τὸ μελύγιον. τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πόμα μεθ[ύ]σκει μᾶλλον τοῦ οἴνου, γίνεται δὲ ἐφομένου τοῦ μέλιτος μεθ' ὕδατος καὶ βοτά[ν]η[ς] τινὸς ἐμβαλλομένης. φέρει γὰρ αὐτῶν ἡ χώρα πολὺ τὸ μέλι, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὸ ζῦτος, ὃ ποιοῦσιν ἐκ τῆς κέγχρου.'

Melugion: a Scythian beverage. Glaucus in the first book of the *Description of Places Lying towards the Left of the Black Sea* (says): 'when the drivers agreed he dismissed the assembly and going back each to his own home they

<sup>12</sup> On Soloi, cf. W. Ruge, s.v. *Soloi* (1), *RE* iiiA. 935–8. On Tarsus, cf. id., s.v. *Tarsos* (3), *RE* ivA. 2413–39, esp. 2415–18.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. W. Fauth, 'Gyges und die "Falken"', *Hermes*, 96 (1968), 257–64.

prepared the melugion. This drink is more intoxicating than wine and is made of honey boiled with water, with the addition of a certain herb; for their country produces much honey, and also beer, which they make out of millet'.

The gloss connects this Scythian beverage with μέλι, 'honey'. This drink may or may not be mead.<sup>14</sup> What it is certain is that for a Greek, μελύγιον was interpreted as deriving from μέλι. We are, however, probably dealing with a popular etymology, because in Iranian there is no attested word derived from IE \*meli(t)-.<sup>15</sup> It is therefore either a Greek, not Scythian, word for a Scythian honey-drink, or an Iranian word that is not likely to be derived from the IE \*meli(t)-, 'honey'.

**Μενεμανι:** τὸ ὕδωρ παρὰ τοῖς Πέρσαις. Δείνων ἐ[ν Πέρσι]κῶν.

Menemani: water among the Persians. D(e)inon in [book x] of the *Persian History*.

We are probably dealing with a reduplicated root. No Iranian word for 'water' is known that shows linguistic similarities to μενεμανι.

**Μίθρας:** ὁ Προμηθεύς, κατὰ δ' ἄλλους ὁ ἥλιος παρὰ Πέρσ[αις].

Mithras: Prometheus; but according to others the sun among the Persians.

Normally Mithras is Apollo, Helios, and later also Hermes, but never Prometheus.<sup>16</sup> This identification may draw on the demiurgic functions of both Mithras and Prometheus<sup>17</sup> and on the fact that the Iranian Mithras is often associated with fire.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> As argued by L. Tafuro, 'A proposito dell'idromele nel POxy 1802 e nelle *Quaestiones convivales* di Plutarco', in M. Capasso (ed.), *Da Ercolano all'Egitto*, iv: *Ricerche varie di papirologia* (Galatina, 2003), 143–8.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. Brust, *Die indischen und iranischen Lehnwörter im Griechischen* (Innsbruck, 2005) 457–8.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. R. Turcan, *Mithras Platonicus: recherches sur l'hellénisation philosophique de Mithra* (Leiden, 1975), 119–20, who links this reference to Julian the Apostate, *Against the Ignorant Cynics*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. F. Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, 2nd edn, trans. T. J. McCormack (Chicago, 1903; repr. New York, 1956), 140. I wonder whether the role of Mithras as the mediator between gods and humans (cf. his epithet μεσίτης) could also have played a role in this identification; cf. *ibid.* 127–9; M. J. Vermaseren, *Mithras, the Secret God*, trans. T. and V. Megaw (London, 1963), 106–8.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. M. Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour* (Costa Mesa, CA, 1992), 54; it has also been suggested (*ibid.* 57) that in a pre-Zoroastrian myth Mithras performed the first sacrifice.

**Μιθοργ:** γένος τι ἁρμονίας παρὰ Χαλδαίοις περ[  
Mithorg: type of harmony among the Chaldaeans ...

**μινოდολόεσσα:** ἀριθμῶν σύνταξις παρὰ Χαλδαίο[ις...]| κατὰ Βαβυλῶνα.  
Minodoloessa: numerical system among the Chaldaeans ... in Babylon.

*Μινოდολόεσσα* is perhaps to be related to the Akkadian verb *manû*, 'to count'.

**Μισαί:** {ὁ} παρὰ Χαλδαίοις ἢ τῶν μελλόντων πρόγνωσι[ς... ἐν<sup>-</sup>]| τῶν κατὰ Βαβυλῶνα.

Misai: the foreknowledge of the future among the Chaldaeans [... in the xth book] of the work on Babylon.

**Μιληχ:** γένειον ὑπὸ Ἀλβανίων τῶν ὁμορούντων[ν...]| ὡς Ἡρακλείδης ἐν ᾧ ξένης φωνῆς.

Milech: chin by the Albanians, those who are neighbours of... as Heracleides in the first book of *On the Foreign Language*.

According to the ancients Albania was a region near the Caspian Sea, bordering on Armenia and Colchis. Our lemma for once seems to have a plausible Semitic-root shape; the most obvious parallel would be *m(e)lēk*, 'king' in Aramaic. The appearance of a Semitic word in a Caucasian region is not impossible, given that Aramaic was the lingua franca in the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. If this is right, we may need to correct the 'translation' because *γένειον*, 'chin; beard' does not make obvious sense (unless 'beard' could advance in meaning to 'bearded one', that is 'king', among the ancient Albanians). A very suitable solution would be *γενναῖον*, which means 'noble' (where the semantic path towards 'king' would be shorter), and could have been easily corrupted into *γένειον* by the omission of one *ν* and an iotacistic error.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that the adjective is neuter here renders this interpretation difficult to accept (could the meaning be 'nobility', that is neuter adjective as substantive?). We are hardly in a position to attempt emendation of the papyrus reading.

To set these foreign *γλωσσαι* against a wider background, we may briefly review the evidence we have of Hellenistic work in non-Greek languages. The evidence for glossaries gathering foreign words is scarce. In the third century BC Neoptolemus of Parium wrote about

<sup>19</sup> For *αι* > *ει* cf. Gignac, *Grammar*, i. 260.

Phrygian *γλωσσαι*, but nothing of this work has survived; Athenaeus preserves a *γλωσσα* from Phrygia and one from Soli taken from the work of Cleitarchus of Aegina (second/first century BC); we know of a lost *Περὶ τῶν ξένως εἰρημένων λέξεων κατὰ στοιχείον* of Dorotheus of Ascalon (first century AD). Most evidence is again to be found in Hesychius, who of course derives most of his material from Pamphilus (again first century AD). *P. Oxy.* XV 1802 is thus the only extant collection of foreign and dialectal words dating back to the late Hellenistic-Roman period. Although the lack of other comparable texts makes this papyrus so interesting, it also raises many questions as to the value and the content of this glossary.

With the foreign words of *P. Oxy.* XV 1802 the first problem is to determine what these labels (Persian, Babylonian, Chaldaean) mean. If we are dealing with three different types of languages, Persian is probably Old Persian or Middle Persian.<sup>20</sup> For Babylonian we can understand some variety of Akkadian.<sup>21</sup> For Chaldaean, one possibility would be to identify it with the Aramaic, the lingua franca of the Near East at the time, but it could also be read as a synonym for Babylonian, i.e. Akkadian. Nor can we rule out the possibility that these divisions (that is Persian, Babylonian, and Chaldaean) were not so clearly defined. Perhaps they just meant the language spoken in the (ex-)Persian Empire, without any further distinction. In the end, the linguistic strata of those regions were so complex that it would probably be difficult for a Hellenistic Greek to draw clear distinctions between all these different languages, especially as they were spoken in the same area (with many reciprocal influences in terms of lexicon). Moreover, they would probably all sound equally 'barbarian' to Greek ears.

The second problem is that most of these Semitic and Persian *γλωσσαι* have not been recognized in any of these languages and some of them do not even sound phonetically compatible with the languages they are claimed to be. Most probably whoever collected these

<sup>20</sup> Persian is divided into Old Persian (attested from the sixth to the fourth century BC and written in a form of cuneiform), Middle Persian (c.240 BC–AD 620, written in the Pahlavi alphabet), and Neo-Persian or Farsi. Old Persian is the language attested in the Achaemenid inscriptions, but it was never the administrative language or the *lingua franca* of the Achaemenid Empire (which used Aramaic for this role). Cf. R. Schmitt, 'Old Persian', *CEWAL* 717–41 at 717.

<sup>21</sup> On Akkadian and its divisions see J. Huehnergard and C. Woods, 'Akkadian and Eblaite', *CEWAL* 218–80 at 218–19.

words did not transcribe them correctly. Furthermore these foreign words, whether Persian, Babylonian, or Chaldaean, were very likely acquired by ἀκοή, by hearsay. Inscriptions and written records of these exotic languages were not the kind of evidence in which the Hellenistic antiquarians were interested or to which they had easy access. Their *modus operandi* seems instead much more in the line of Herodotean ἱστορίη. If we think thus in terms of oral transmission, this opens up the possibility of many corruptions to the original word; in any linguistic exchange attempts to reproduce the sounds of an unfamiliar language can result in gross inaccuracies. To sum up, the first feature that makes this glossary linguistically unique is the number of words from Greek dialects and Near Eastern languages. It also offers an interesting historical perspective on the knowledge of non-Greek languages among the Hellenistic Greeks, and points to the various possible mistakes in transmission between these languages.

### 3. QUOTATION OF SOURCES

There is, moreover, another important aspect that makes this glossary extremely interesting for assessing what 'linguistic studies' amounted to in the Hellenistic or Early Roman era: *P. Oxy.* XV 1802 almost always includes a quotation or a reference in the explanation of the lemma. The works quoted in the glossary are glossographical, historical, and ethnographical and include Aristotle (*Constitution of Soli* and *Historia Animalium*), Callimachus, Berossus, Apollodorus, and Erasistratus.<sup>22</sup> Further, the authorities quoted, as far as we can recognize them, are not later than the first century BC, and most of them are dated to the third or second century BC. The behaviour of our glossographer is in striking contrast with the rest of the lexicographical evidence. Among the lexica and glossaries that are preserved, both in papyri and in the medieval tradition, only a few consistently mention the sources of the γλῶσσαι, and when they do so the sources are usually very well-known literary authors. This tendency to quote the *locus classicus* where a word

<sup>22</sup> A full list with identification and comments will appear in my forthcoming treatment. The only two 'literary' authors quoted are Homer and Xenophon, in entries quite damaged and hence difficult to reconstruct.

appears is evident in the following list of glossaries on papyrus. These texts are comparable to *P. Oxy.* XV 1802 in that they are not glossaries limited to one particular author but generally gather words from different literary sources:

- O. Berl. inv. 12605: Homer, Antimachus, Hipponax;
- P. Berol. inv. 13360: Herodotus, Teleclides;
- *P. Hamb.* II 137: Homer;
- *P. Oxy.* XV 1801: Eupolis, Cratinus, Hermippus, Aristophanes, Alexis, Sophocles, Phylarchus;
- *P. Oxy.* XV 1803: Aristophanes, Demosthenes, Eupolis, Menander, Thucydides, Xenophon;
- *P. Oxy.* XV 1804: Aeschines, Dinarchus, Demosthenes, Hyperides;
- *P. Oxy.* XVII 2087: Aeschines Socraticus, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Plato, Thucydides;
- *P. Oxy.* XLVII 3329: Rhinton.

The fact that these glossaries quote classical authors to elucidate their lemmata implies that they were intended as a tool for reading literary texts. On the other hand, we do not find quotations from more technical works of antiquarians, periegetes, and historians to explain the lemmata, as happens constantly in *P. Oxy.* XV 1802, in which entries follow a constant pattern: 1. lemma (=  $\gamma\lambda\hat{\omega}\sigma\sigma\alpha$ ); 2. translation into Koine Greek (= gloss); 3. quotation of the source. In addition, it must be noticed that the sources quoted in *P. Oxy.* XV 1802 are not other lexica or glossaries, but indeed antiquarian or historical works, which must have been the first sources of the glosses. All these features and in particular the presence of the primary sources suggest that this glossary was recopied onto our papyrus in nearly its original form.

#### 4. THE APPROACH TO DIALECTS AND NON-GREEK LANGUAGES

The content of this text, words taken from Greek dialects as well as from other languages that have come into contact with Greeks, is indeed remarkable. However, to see this document as evidence of

interest in dialectology or even of a conscious distinction between language and dialect would be misleading. A closer look at the way this glossary works is indeed revealing of these limits.

Notwithstanding the variety of the *γλῶσσαι*, all the entries more or less adhere to the same pattern. The lemma is followed by the gloss. The ethnic origin of the lemma is normally then specified with the expression 'lemma X παρά + dative' (for instance, παρά Πέρσαις, παρά Λυδοῖς). Sometimes a *verbum dicendi* in the passive form is added (for example, οὕτω λέγονται παρά Ποδ[ίους?, fr. 3, iii. 18). Less frequently the gloss is introduced with ὑπό and genitive (so, μέρορες: οἱ ἄφρονες ὑπὸ Εὐβοέων, fr. 3, ii. 20). In one entry we find κατὰ with accusative (θάλασσα κατὰ Πέρσας, fr. 109), in another ἐν + dative and a *verbum dicendi* (or better *nominandi*) (ἐν Ταρσῶ καὶ Κόλοις τὰς δέλτους... προσαγορεύεσθαι, fr. 3, iii. 5). The entry ends almost invariably with the quotation of the sources for the gloss. This pattern, which repeats itself almost constantly, points to a library compilation.

A product like this papyrus thus presupposes two steps. First a historian or an antiquarian must collect stories and curiosities about the region he is describing. Then a glossographer, with different antiquarian books in front of him, systematically reads and selects all the 'exotic' words. These *γλῶσσαι* are thus taken from Greek books: collections of *mirabilia*, histories, periegeses, and in general the erudite literature that flourished in the Hellenistic period. There is no instance of an entry that seems the result of actual fieldwork by the glossographer. There is also no hint that these words are actually part of a spoken language. It is thus interesting to notice that we never read οὕτως λέγουσιν/φασὶν οἱ Πέρσαι or οἱ Εὐβοεῖς... ('the Persians/Euboeans say...'), but always παρά τοῖς... or similar expressions. Moreover, most entries do not have any *verbum dicendi*, giving the following syntax: 'among the Persians/Euboeans there is word X'. Though minimal, this syntactical format is in my view revealing of the attitude of our glossographer.<sup>23</sup> This collection of

<sup>23</sup> And this is in contrast with the wording in other (later) works concerned with language, linguistic analysis, and glosses, where the usage of active verbs denoting the idea of 'utterance' (λέγουσι) and pronunciation (ῥέζουσι, ψιλοῦσι, δακύνουσι) is well attested; cf. Ap. Dysc. Pron. 111. 17 Τὴν ἡμέτερος, κατὰ τὸν κτήτορα οὖσαν πληθυντικὴν, διχῶς λέγουσι Δωριεῖς· ἀμέτερος γὰρ καὶ ἀμός, καὶ ὑμέτερος καὶ ὑμός; Ap. Dysc. Synt. 54. 2: οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι Ἕλληνες δακύνουσι τὰ ἐν τῇ λέξει φωνήεντα, Αἰολεῖς δὲ μόνον ψιλοῦσι:



words in *P. Oxy.* XV 1802 is thus not a collection of words as ‘spoken by some people’, but as ‘read in some books’. It is a bookish collection, a product no doubt of one of the most incredible libraries of the ancient world, where these kinds of ‘new’ and learned works could be found. This is why Alexandria seems the most likely candidate. While reading in the library, our glossographer would have annotated all these strange words, which he then collected in the glossary.

Moreover, in this glossary dialects and languages are put on the same level. There is no sense that Euboean is Greek and in particular a variety of Ionic, and instead that Chaldaean, whatever branch of Semitic it may be, is in any case another language, not at all related to Greek. Here Persians are equal to Rhodians or Aitolians. We may imagine our glossographer facing a map of the *οἰκουμένη* and busy to place all these *γλῶσσαι* at the right place; the criterion is geographical (or ethnographic) but not linguistic.<sup>24</sup>

This papyrus also clearly shows that the first interest in dialects concerns their vocabulary. This may be obvious because we are dealing with a glossary that by default collects *γλῶσσαι*, ‘exotic words’. However, in my opinion this idea of ‘vocabulary’ can be pushed further. In this glossary the lack of differentiation between, say, Persian and Euboean on the one hand, and on the other hand the lack of any sense that these words come from spoken languages, seems to lead almost to a cancellation of the concept of language differentiation. It seems as if the gloss is needed not because of the difference of language but because of difference of context. To give a modern example, it is as if an American explained to a Briton that ‘a

Athen. 2. 56a *Εὐπολις* (fr. 338 K–A): ‘*σηπίαι δρυπεπεῖς τ’ ἐλάαι ταύτας Ῥωμαῖοι δρύππας λέγουσι*; *ibid.* 3. 1056 *τὸν δ’ ἀστακὸν οἱ Ἀττικοὶ διὰ τοῦ ο ἀστακὸν λέγουσι, καθάπερ καὶ ἀσταφίδα;* Hsch. a 391 *Ἄγγελον Συρακούσιοι τὴν Ἄρτεμιν λέγουσι*; Choerob. *In Theod. Can.* i. 326. 12 *καὶ τὸ τραχύτης καὶ κουφότης οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι δξύνουσι τραχυτής καὶ κουφοτής λέγοντες*; ii. 44. 22 *οἱ γὰρ Αἰολεῖς ψιλωτικοὶ ὄντες τὰ δύο ρρ ψιλοῦσιν*; Hrd. in *Ep. Hom.* ο 99 (575.58 Dyck): *τὸ δὲ ὅτε οἱ Αἰολεῖς ὄστα λέγουσι, Λάκωνες δὲ ὄκα*; *id.* in EM 314, 57: *ἔγωγε: ἰστέον δὲ ὅτι οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὸ ἐγὼ ἔγωγε λέγουσι.*

<sup>24</sup> Although the Greeks distinguished between Greek dialects on the one hand and non-Greek languages on the other, a lack of precise taxonomic distinction between dialects (of languages) and languages (as such) among the Greeks, at least before the 1st c. BC, has been noticed by many scholars, e.g. A. Morpurgo Davies, ‘The Greek Notion of Dialect’, in T. Harrison (ed.), *Greeks and Barbarians* (Edinburgh, 2002), 153–71 at 161–3, 169; T. Harrison, ‘Herodotus’ Conception of Foreign Languages’, *Histos*, 2 (1998; at <http://www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/1998/harrison.html>).

senior' among the Americans is a final-year undergraduate student. Obviously 'senior' is an English word for the Briton; he or she simply does not know its semantic value 'among the Americans'. It is a question of explaining a particular social habit to someone extraneous to it. For example, when Aristotle—and our glossographer—said that *μητραι* meant writing tablets on which houses were registered at Soli, were they conscious that there was a possibility (though a remote one perhaps) that that word might not have been Greek? Or was *μητρα* just considered a Greek word used in a technical sense, within the administration of a faraway (Greek) city like, say, *ἔφορος* at Sparta? As it happens, there is indeed a word *μητρα* in Greek, which is moreover present in our glossary in the preceding entry (see *P. Oxy.* XV 1802, fr. 3, iii. l. 4) and it means a kind of bee. There too Aristotle is the authority quoted. Aristotle thus had at least encountered the word *μητρα* in two semantic contexts. Did he think it was the same word, indicating a bee in mainland Greece and a house-registration tablet at Soli? Or was the question of non-Greekness raised for *μητρα* in Soli?

It seems that the Hellenistic glossographers gathered all these nouns not so much out of a conscious interest in a different language, but rather out of a curiosity for 'exotic' objects. This also seems to be strengthened by the fact that alongside these words that we would define as dialectal or foreign, in *P. Oxy.* XV 1802 we also have words that are purely Koine Greek. They do not belong to a particular dialect, but just indicate unfamiliar objects or animals. In this sense, I would argue that from the Hellenistic glossographer's point of view there is no linguistic difference at all between *μενεμανι*, allegedly 'water' in Persian, *μινῶδες*, the name of grape-wines in Rhodian dialect, a variety of Doric, and *μελωδία*, a Koine Greek word. There is no recognition that the first is from a different language, the second from a Greek dialect, and the third just an unusual but purely Koine Greek word. They are gathered together here only because they are interesting for what they mean, because the relationship between signified and signifier is not obvious in any of them. The reasons, however, for that and the differences in these three cases are not considered relevant. This view is in fact in keeping with the Aristotelian definition of a *γλῶσσα*:

Arist. *Poet.* 1457<sup>b</sup>1: ἅπαν δὲ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἢ κύριον ἢ γλῶττα ἢ μεταφορὰ ἢ κόσμος ἢ πεποιημένον ἢ ἐπεκτεταμένον ἢ ὑψηρημένον ἢ ἐξηλλαγμένον. λέγω δὲ κύριον μὲν ᾧ χρώνται ἕκαστοι, γλῶτταν δὲ ᾧ ἕτεροι· ὥστε φανερόν ὅτι καὶ γλῶτταν καὶ κύριον εἶναι δυνατόν τὸ αὐτό, μὴ τοῖς αὐτοῖς δέ.

Every noun is standard, or a *γλῶσσα*, a metaphor, an ornament, invented, lengthened, reduced, or altered. I define 'standard noun' as the one which each one uses; *γλῶσσα* as what the others use. Thus it is clear that it is possible for the same word to be a *γλῶσσα* and a standard noun, but not for the same people.

A *γλῶσσα* is what the others say, not what is said in other people's languages. The lack of a highly developed sense of dialects and linguistic differentiation in our papyrus and, I would contend, in early glossography in general, does not mean that the Greeks in the Hellenistic period had no concept of dialects and linguistic differences at all. Of course they did. In my view, however, we must not look in works of glossography for a 'technical' interest in dialectology. It is instead in the exegesis of poetry that this idea is emerging. Here there is an interest in Ionic or Aeolic dialects, as they pertain to reading Homer and Sappho. Instead, the study of the dialect *per se* does not exist, at least in Hellenistic times. Thus it is probably only because Greek literature was written in different (literary) dialects that Greek grammarians took an interest in different (spoken) dialects. As for dialectal glossography, like *P. Oxy.* XV 1802, it is an heir of Herodotean *ἱστορίη* more than a forerunner of modern dialectology.