

HONORS TO A LIBRARIAN

(PLATE 91)

A reference in the fragmentary History of Olympiodorus rouses speculation concerning some of the more mechanical aspects of scholarship in Athens in the fifth century after Christ. The passage, as preserved by Photius, is tantalizingly brief, consisting of only one sentence between accounts of unrelated episodes of A.D. 416 and 417:¹

“Ὅτι ζητήματος ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις ἀνακύψαντος περὶ τῶν κεκωλισμένων βιβλίων, μαθεῖν τοῖς ἐπιζητοῦσι τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κῶλου, Φιλτάτιος ὁ τοῦ ἱστορικοῦ ἑταῖρος, εὐφυνῶς περὶ γραμματικὴν ἔχων, τοῦτο ἐπέδειξε, καὶ εὐδοκιμήσας τυγχάνει παρὰ τῶν πολιτῶν εἰκόνας.”

“[The author says] that when the question arose in Athens concerning the books transcribed according to κῶλα, those who wanted to know the measure of the κῶλον were referred to Philtattius, the friend of the historian. He, being well versed in grammar, explained it to them, thereby gaining such renown that the citizens awarded him a statue.”²

The measuring of texts, primarily as a means of computing the copyist's pay, was a matter of concern at least as early as the fourth century B.C.³ For poetry this

¹ Olympiodorus, *Fragmenta*, 32. In *Historici Graeci Minores*, ed. L. Dindorf, Leipzig, 1870, vol. i, p. 463; also *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C. Müller, Paris, 1868, vol. iv, p. 64, and J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 103, cols. 41-42 (ed. I. Bekker).

No apology is offered to the recipient of this volume for a paper so remote from his own special field of activity. It is presented rather in recognition of his interest in the whole spectrum of Greece, whether ancient or modern.

² For κεκωλισμένων and κῶλου Bekker and Müller read κεκολλημένων and κόλλον, thus transforming Philtattius' achievement from resolution of a difficult problem in manuscript transcription into either advice on how to glue pages that had come apart or else furnishing a recipe for glue. Gluing was a menial task, performed by slaves (cf. Cicero, *ad Att.*, iv, 4, b, “mittas de tuis librariolis duos aliquos quibus Tyrannio utatur glutinatoribus”), and it is doubtful that a recipe for glue would have departed far from a standard formula which most likely began with the words “take some flour.” In neither case would one expect such a considerable token of gratitude as fell to Philtattius, quite apart from the waste of his literary talents.

Dindorf (*op. cit.*, preface, p. lv) rejects the reading on the ground that κόλλον is a *vocabulum inauditum*, that the most reliable MS (Venice, Marc. gr. 450, saec. x) has ω in both words, and, most of all, “quum . . . tota res perinde mira, si de libris conglutinandis agitur, ut creditum est, atque imaginis pro ea honore . . .” With perhaps some faint regret therefore we must abandon what would surely have been a unique occasion for the erection of a statue.

³ General accounts of the methods are to be found in Th. Birt, *Das Antike Buchwesen*, Berlin, 1882, pp. 179 ff.; E. Maunde Thompson, *Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography*, Oxford,

presented no problem; it was only a question of choosing a standard unit, and the choice not unnaturally fell on the average Homeric line of about sixteen syllables. Since there was no standard line in prose, an arbitrary measure of about sixteen syllables was selected, making an easy correlation between prose and poetry. The situation became complicated only with the introduction of a division based on clauses, or "sense-lines," which adhered as far as possible to the 16-syllable standard. The first known instance of this method seems to be in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*De Comp. Verb.*, XVIII), where the author explains the principles used in breaking up the text of Demosthenes into *cola* and periods.⁴ The new system was especially suited to texts which were intended to be widely read, e.g. the Orators and the Bible. However much it was used in the classical period it seems to have fallen sufficiently into disuse by the fifth century after Christ to be presented as a new method or at least a revival by two writers, the sixth century rhetorician Castor and St. Jerome.

Castor, according to Harris, proposes "to punctuate a passage of Demosthenes so that the numeration of the broken-up text may agree with the number of verses found in the old copies." (τοῦτον γὰρ στίξομεν, σὺν θεῷ φάναι, κατὰ κῶλον κατανήσαντες εἰς τὴν ποσότητα τῶν κῶλων κατὰ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τὸν ἐγκείμενον ἐν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις βιβλίοις . . .⁵)

St. Jerome, in his preface to the book of Isaiah, warns the reader not to think that because the book is transcribed in verses it was written in meter by the Hebrews, but explains that for the convenience of readers he is introducing a new method of writing by clauses, such as is employed for the works of Demosthenes and Cicero. (Nemo cum Prophetas versibus viderit esse descriptos metro eos aestimet apud Hebraeos ligari, et aliquid simile habere de Psalmis vel operibus Salomonis: sed quod in Demosthene et Tullio solet fieri, ut per cola scribantur et commata, qui utique prosa et non versibus conscripserunt, nos quoque utilitati legentium providentes, interpretationem novam novo scribendi genere distinximus.⁶)

From the careful explanations of Castor and St. Jerome we may infer that the art of writing κατὰ κῶλον was not an altogether simple matter. If St. Jerome († A.D. 424) could refer to it as a "new method" it is understandable that the Athenians in 416-417 may have felt the need of elucidation. It seems strange, however, that they should have been suddenly seized with such a need of clarification that the man who

1912, in the chapter on Stichometry and Colometry; and J. Rendel Harris, "Stichometry," *A.J.P.*, IV, 1883, pp. 133-157 and 309-331. For the intricacies of the systems, cf. *R.E.*, VIII, 1, s.v. *Heliodoros* 16.

The study of stichometry and colometry goes far beyond the scope of the present problem. In venturing on this superficial recapitulation of a small part of the subject I have tried to limit myself to the aspects relevant to the questions posed by the passage in Olympiodorus.

⁴ Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

⁵ *Rhetores Graeci*, ed. Ch. Walz, Stuttgart, 1832-36, III, 721.

⁶ *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 28, col. 825.

could satisfy it should have been honored with a statue, unless some particular event made the knowledge a practical necessity.⁷

Under normal circumstances the new system of writing would presumably take hold only gradually, as wear and tear on old books necessitated their replacement by new copies. But conditions in Athens at the time of which Olympiodorus is writing might easily have caused such a situation as is hinted at in the brief account that Photius saw fit to preserve. The destruction caused by the Herulian invasion of A.D. 267, the subsequent abandonment of at least some parts of Athens and the monumental building program launched in the early years of the fifth century are too well known to need recapitulation here.⁸ Although the philosophical schools had continued to flourish throughout the fourth century, the sudden rush of construction of schools just after 400, e.g. the Gymnasium in the Agora, the school buildings to north and south of the Acropolis and the rebuilding of Plato's Academy,⁹ leave no doubt that their physical plants had suffered,¹⁰ to be rebuilt when the barbarian threat had passed and some measure of prosperity had returned.

But in the meantime the destruction and abandonment of the libraries, as a result not only of Herulian activity but also more recently, in the outskirts, of devastation by Alaric's forces, must have taken a heavy toll of the books as well. Many would have been burned outright and others left unprotected from damp and general decay. Once the buildings themselves were ready the primary concern must have been the restocking of the shelves. With the wholesale acquisition of books the opportunity would quite naturally be taken of bringing the libraries up to date by having the new copies transcribed *κατὰ κῶλον*.

Whether the crisis in book transcription was precipitated by the construction of a new building, repair of an old, or by the general resurgence of material and cultural activity, it is impossible to say. But the later history of the Library of Hadrian may have some relevance (Pl. 91, a). The building evidently suffered heavy damage in the invasion of 267. A series of column bases in the east colonnade of the court (Pl. 91, b), fronting the part of the building actually used for the storage of books, bears unmistakable signs of early fifth century work and must be assumed to have replaced the original bases on that side (Pl. 91, c), probably as part of a general reconstruction of

⁷ The *εἰκόν*, to be sure, might have been only a herm, such as that dedicated a few years earlier to the younger Iamblichus in gratitude for helping to restore the city walls (cf. A. E. Raubitschek, "Iamblichos at Athens," *Hesperia*, XXXIII, 1964, pp. 63-68), but this would only slightly diminish the honor.

⁸ Cf. H. A. Thompson, "Athenian Twilight," *J.R.S.*, XLIX, 1959, pp. 61-72.

⁹ For the first two cf. H. A. Thompson, *Hesperia*, XIX, 1950, pp. 134-137 and XXVIII, 1959, pp. 104-105; for the last two, *Ἔργον*, 1955, pp. 1-11 and *Πρακτικά*, 1950, p. 54. For all four, John Travlos, *Πολεοδομικὴ Ἐξέλιξις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν*, Chap. 6.

¹⁰ This may account for references in the 4th century to the philosophers teaching in their own homes, e.g., Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, 483.

the whole building.¹¹ It seems increasingly likely that the man responsible for the restoration was Herculus, Prefect of Illyricum from 408 to 412, whose statue, dedicated by Plutarch, Head of the Neo-Platonic Academy, stood on the entrance porch, immediately to the left of the main door (Pl. 91, d).¹²

If Herculus did indeed provide for the restoration of the Library of Hadrian it is unlikely that the philosophers would have been so grateful to him if his bounty had stopped short of replenishing the books. It is a tempting hypothesis, to be treated with due caution, that before leaving office in 412 he set in motion a program of complete rehabilitation which reached its culmination in 416.

The honor paid to Philtatius becomes more comprehensible if we suppose that his role extended beyond the limits of the *κῶλον* into this program of rehabilitation, which would include also modernization. For by the middle of the century there is definite evidence that not only were the new books in use in Athens along with the old, but that in some cases texts were emended as well as transcribed *κατὰ κῶλον*. Thus Proclus, the famous Head of the Academy from *ca.* 450 to his death in 485, was able to quote variant readings from the older manuscripts and the new: “διττὴ δ’ ἐστὶν ἡ γραφὴ τῆς ταῦτα τὰ βάλθη διοριζούσης λέξεως. καὶ ἡ μὲν προτέρα καὶ ἀρχαιοτέρα Ἡ δὲ δευτέρα καὶ νεωτέρα, κρατοῦσα δὲ ἐν τοῖς κεκωλισμένοις ἀντιγράφοις”¹³

The sheer volume of the writings left by Proclus and some of his fellow philosophers is sufficient commentary on the gratitude which Philtatius must have inspired by bringing order from confusion in the libraries of Athens, and one would like to think that his statue stood in some newly-appointed reading room where scholars could frequently be reminded of and reflect on his benefaction.

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PRINCETON
NEW JERSEY

¹¹ Travlos, *Ἀνασκαφαὶ ἐν τῇ Βιβλιοθήκῃ τοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ, Πρακτικά*, 1950, p. 55.

¹² *I.G.*, II², 4224. Cf. Travlos, *loc. cit.*; also Frantz, “From Paganism to Christianity in the Temples of Athens,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XIX, 1965, p. 192, and “Herculus in Athens: Pagan or Christian?” in the Acts of the VIIth International Congress for Christian Archaeology, Trier, 1965 (forthcoming).

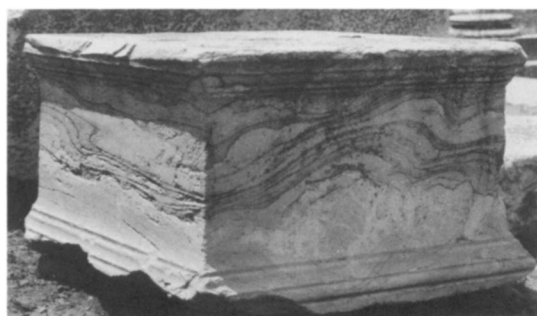
¹³ Proclus, *In Platonis Rem Publicam Commentarium*, ed. W. Kroll, Leipzig, 1899, 1901, vol. ii, p. 218.



a. The West Facade (Arrow points to Hercules Inscription).



b. Late Column Bases in Interior Colonnade.



c. Original Column Base (Now in Roman Market).



d. Inscription Honoring Hercules, *I.G.*, II², 4224.
The Library of Hadrian.

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