

RECONSIDERING THE ORIGIN AND THE ACQUISITION OF P.LOND.LIT. 133

Rosa Otranto

The papyri bought from Henry Stobart

In 1857, Rev. Henry Stobart (1824–1895), a clergyman and collector of antiquities, sold to the British Museum a roll, in fragments, bearing the *Epitaphius* that the Attic orator Hyperides pronounced for Leosthenes and his comrades who had died in the Lamian war (323/322 BC)¹ : this is P.Lond.Lit. 133 [MP³ 1236].

We are informed about this acquisition by the *Register of Papyri including papers relating to the collection*, stored at the British Library. This manuscript register is a composite of various materials, which contains papers and the archival elements of several papyri belonging to the collection at the British Museum.

The page pertaining to the group of papyri (inventory numbers 77 to 98) acquired January 8th, 1857 by the British Museum from Stobart is page 88v, which contains the following data : inventory number of the papyrus, its description, size and condition, means of acquisition (see Appendix). The papyri that Stobart sold to the British Museum are almost all Coptic, with the exception of the first (no. 77) and the last (no. 98), which are in Greek². Furthermore, with the exception of no. 98, the *Epitaphius*, which is dated from the second / third century AD, all the papyri belonging to this group contain legal documents relating to the Monastery of St. Phoebammon, of Mount Djeme, near Thebes and are dated from the eighth to the ninth century.

Here is what we read in the *Catalogue of Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, published in 1893 by Sir Frederic Kenyon, about no. 77 – a document containing the last will and testament of Abraham, bishop of Hermonthis, and head of the Monastery of St. Phoebammon³ : « It was found with a number of other documents among the ruins of the monastery about 1856, and was brought along with them to England by the Rev. H. Stobart. The other documents included a fragment of the Sahidic version of the New Testament, and a number of deeds and grants relating to the monastery ; but this is the only one written in Greek. It is written in Greek in spite of the fact that the *testator* was ignorant of the Greek language. »

There is no word on the *Epitaphius*, which was the most valuable papyrus belonging to the group sold to the British Museum by Stobart⁴.

¹ On Stobart, see Dawson / Uphill / Bierbrier (1995) 405.

² A brief description of the Coptic papyri is to be found in Crum (1905) : nos. 280 (= inv. 89), 377–378 (= inv. 79), 379 (= inv. 80), 380 (inv. 81), 381 (= inv. 82), 382 (inv. 83), 383 (= inv. 84), 384 (= inv. 85), 385 (= inv. 86), 386 (= inv. 87), 387 (= inv. 92), 388 (= inv. 94), 389 (= inv. 95), 390 (= inv. 88), 391 (= inv. 90), 392 (= inv. 96), 395 (= inv. 78), 396 (= inv. 97), 436 (= inv. 93), 464 (= inv. 91).

³ Kenyon (1893) 231. This will had already been translated by Goodwin (1859) 244–247, together with some of the Coptic documents found with it.

⁴ The same silence applies also to another report of this find : « A few years ago, somebody discovered an old wooden chest in the ruins of an ancient monastery near Thebes in Egypt. The chest contained a number of papyrus rolls, and a few skins of leather inscribed with mysterious characters. These documents were brought by the finders down to the Nile, the High Street or Cheapside of Egypt, where they quickly found purchasers among the swarms of English who now frequent that thoroughfare, and thus a number of them made their way to England, and the larger part ultimately received lodgment in the British Museum, a few in private collections. Having been submitted to competent decipherers, they proved to contain, not as the reader perhaps is inclined to anticipate, *Confessions of a Convent*, *Memoirs of a Monk*, or any such romantic matters, but a number of deeds of gift, wills, and contracts, dating apparently from the eighth or ninth centuries of our era, one only of them being written in Greek, and the rest in Coptic. » Goodwin (1859) 237–238.

Papers and documents concerning the acquisition

Among the oldest papers concerning this acquisition is a *Report* from Frederic Madden (1801–1873), at that time Keeper at the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum, dated January 8th, 1857, which details the papyri offered for sale by Henry Stobart⁵ :

Sir F. Madden has received an offer from the Rev^d. Henry Stobart, of a collection of Papyri Rolls, and recently brought from Thebes. They include : Fifteen Papyri and one in fragments, written in the Coptic character.

Three leather Rolls (one imperfect) written in the same character.

Three leaves and some fragments of a Greek Manuscript.

These Papyri have been seen by Mr Birch and Mr C.W. Goodwin and are thought to be objects of much interest and value. Only one similar Coptic document is in the British Museum, and no others are known in Europe, except a few in the hands of the French Consul General in Egypt. Mr Goodwin has written a letter on the subject of these Rolls which Sir F. Madden annexes to this Report. It would appear that these Papyri formed part of the muniments of the Coptic Monastery of Saint Phoebammon, of Mount Djeme, near Hermonthis, and are written in the Sahidic, an Upper Egyptian dialect. They are of much philological value in reference to Coptic literature and are expected to throw considerable light on the onomastic institutions of the Copts in the Middle Ages. Mr Goodwin thinks that the Rolls may be as early as the 9th century.

The price asked by Mr Stobart is £ 150 which Sir F. Madden begs to recommend should be given.

Attached to this *Report* is the above mentioned letter from the Egyptologist Charles Wycliffe Goodwin (1817–1878) to Madden (dated November 3rd, 1856), in which Goodwin relates his inspection of the Coptic papyri offered by Stobart⁶ :

My dear Sir Frederic, the Coptic manuscripts brought by Mr Stobart from Egypt which I have had an opportunity of examining appear to me objects of great interest and value. The greater part are in the shape of papyrus rolls and on account of the extreme friability of the material do not admit at present of being examined otherwise than superficially. I have however been able to make out enough to convince me that the contents of the most (probably all) are of the same nature as those of the Papyrus LXXVI, now in the Museum department ; that they are namely title deeds or muniments of the Monastery of Saint Phoebamon of Mount Djeme near Hermonthis. Three of the manuscripts are upon fragments of leather, and these I have been able completely to decipher. One only is perfect, the other two are mutilated. The first is the deed of dedication to the Monastery of a child who had been cured of some malady by the use of the waters of a fountain within the sacred precincts. Of the two others one appears to be a deed of gift of land, the other of certain palm-trees.

These documents are in the Sahidic or Upper Egyptian dialect and are I think the more valuable in as much as they open a new field in Coptic literature. Nothing of the sort has hitherto been published, nor do I think that any such manuscripts exist in the principal European Collections. Almost all the Coptic remains which have hitherto been examined are of astrological or ecclesiastical kind, and what we most want is to get manuscripts upon other subjects, which may afford some prospect of extending the present limited vocabulary.

Palaeographically these documents are also interesting ; they are mostly written in a peculiar cursive hand rarely found in Coptic manuscripts. It is likely enough that some of them may contain matter interesting in an historical view ; they will certainly throw light upon the customs and laws of the Copts of the middle ages. The date of the manuscripts generally I can but guess at. Probably they are not earlier than the 9th century ; how

⁵ On Madden, see Borrie (2004) 66–69. On the *Report* : British Museum, Central Archive, Officers Reports, 8 January 1857.

⁶ On Goodwin, see Dawson / Uphill / Bierbrier (1995) 171 ; Espinasse (2004) 814–815 ; Dawson (1934). On the letter : British Museum, Central Archive, Officers Reports, 3 November 1856. This seems to be the earliest document concerning the papyri sold by Stobart to the British Museum.

much later they may be I cannot say. When the papyri, which appear not in a very perfect state, have been unrolled and are in a fit state to be read, much more satisfactory results will be no doubt attainable than I have hitherto been able to arrive at from the perusal of such fragmentary portions as are at present legible.

I sincerely hope the Museum may become the possessor of this valuable and unique collection.

I remain my dear sir Frederic, being faithfully yours

Charles Wycliffe Goodwin.

The entire letter clearly concerns the Coptic papyri bought from Stobart, with the exception of no. 98, which, containing both Greek and Coptic texts, would also have deserved a mention in this context.

The very first steps concerning the acquisition of the papyrus with inventory no. 98 are described in Churchill Babington's « Introduction » of the *Epitaphius' editio princeps*⁷ :

Towards the close of the year 1856 the Rev. H. Stobart, M.A. returned to this country, bringing with him various treasures which he had a little before procured in the neighbourhood of Egyptian Thebes. Mr Birch, of the British Museum, soon afterwards informed me that among them was a papyrus, which appeared to contain a work of some Greek orator, and that it would probably be purchased for the British Museum.

Happening to be in town in the month of January 1857, after the papyrus had been bought for the Museum, I requested to be allowed to see it. It was, then, broken into many fragments, which were loose and in disorder. A very short inspection, however, of these sufficed to convince me what the work was : it was the long-lost famous ἐπιτάφιος of Hyperides.

According to Babington, then, Stobart procured the papyrus – along with many others – « in the neighbourhood of Egyptian Thebes ».

The journey of Henry Stobart

Between 1852 and 1856, Stobart made a long journey around the world that also led him to Egypt⁸. These data come from the « Papers of Henry Stobart »⁹ : they are letters (mostly to his mother), a journal, some sketches and two obituaries.

From November 1854 up to April 1856 Stobart was mostly in Egypt. In particular, among his papers there is a letter to his mother written from Thebes on March 11th, 1856, where he refers to some purchases made at Thebes, among which there are also « about fifteen papyri ».

I have finished all my purchases. I have got about fifteen papyri but little else : in fact there is nothing this year with the exception of Scarabaei – those little seals in the form of beetles – and they are so sought after that they have reached a most foolish price.

As is clear, the purchases which Stobart describes in this letter are things of little value : nothing important or precious. From the words « about fifteen papyri » we could maybe recognize nos. 77 to 97 of the *Register*, the group of Coptic documents, which is homogeneous in terms of language, content and date.

We know that during his long journey, Stobart procured many other antiquities which he brought to England and sold to various people or institutions. This is the material we were able to trace : a) a group of papyri sold to the collector of antiquities Joseph Mayer of Liverpool, including fragments of the *Gospel of St. Matthew* ; b) a group of antiquities that Stobart kept for himself and that he partly published, which after his death was donated by

⁷ Babington (1858) IX. Churchill Babington (1821–1889) was a British scholar and naturalist : see Dawson / Uphill / Bierbrier (1995) 23 ; Seccombe (2004) 82–83. We know that Babington studied also with Charles Wycliffe Goodwin : see Dawson (1934) 22, n. 1. In 1850 and 1853, he already was the *editor princeps* of P.Lond.Lit. 132 (MP³ 1233 ; *In Demosthenem, Pro Lycophrone, Pro Euxenippo*).

⁸ For more details see Otranto (2010) 241–242.

⁹ Canberra, National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection, Ms. 1033 (no. 31).

his daughters to the Brighton Museum and Bristol Museum¹⁰; among these there was a small collection of four wooden tablets of astrological and astronomical content, written in Demotic and mentioning the positions of the five principal planets¹¹.

Regarding the papyri sold to Joseph Mayer, in the Introduction of his edition of the *Fac-similes of certain portions of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and of the Epistles of Ss. James and Jude*, Simonidis (1861) 9 wrote :

In publishing, according to promise, the fragments of the New Testament, I may remark, first, that they were brought to England from Egyptian Thebes in 1856, by the Rev. Henry Stobart, whose name is universally known. These, together with others, the contents of which I arranged, came into the possession of the erudite Joseph Mayer, as both these gentlemen can testify, and as the public prints stated at the time. And besides these eight fragments, and that containing a portion of the 8th chapter of Genesis, one was discovered in the Collection of the Rev. Henry Stobart, together with an anonymous historical fragment.

Along with these, several other famous works of Grecian intellect were brought by the same gentleman from Egypt into England; among which is to be found the Funeral Panegyric by Hyperides, the winner of the oratorical prize, which he pronounced by command of the Athenian people over the tomb of Leosthenes, and those who heroically fell with him in the Samian [sic] war, and which was first edited by the Rev. Churchill Babington, Cambridge, 1858. The original, also on papyrus, is deposited in the British Museum, and was purchased for a large sum of money. Those who are curious in such matters may see all that relates to the Funeral Panegyric in the Editor's Preface and Introduction.

From what we read on the same page, it seems that Stobart and Simonidis were acquainted. Indeed he tells us that they had met at Adam Holden's bookshop on May 2nd, 1860¹²; this is a very useful detail for this historical reconstruction.

The recto of P.Lond.Lit. 133 : P.Lond. 98

The papyrus containing the *Epitaphius* is written on the verso of two different texts (published as P.Lond. 98), whose nature and identity is not clear at all¹³. As we will briefly consider, both texts written on the recto of P.Lond.Lit. 133 present many difficulties, regarding content, language, handwriting etc. Of col. I only the right hand part remains¹⁴. The first text is a Greek horoscope, which occupies cols. II–III and almost the whole of col. IV¹⁵: in particular, the end of col. III (last seven lines) and more than a half of the following column (col. IV) are quite illegible, because the handwriting seems to have been erased, maybe washed off by water. Because much of col. I is missing, the name of the

¹⁰ See Stobart (1855).

¹¹ Edited by Brugsch (1856). See Griffith (1900) 71, n. 2: « It can hardly be mere accident that in the collection of a single winter were associated these rare objects with the almost equally rare and remarkable Horoscope-papyrus [i.e. P.Lond. 98, the recto of P.Lond.Lit. 133]: we may almost assume that they were found together. »

¹² Simonidis (1861) 9, in talking about the varied origin of the papyri in the Mayer collection, says that they came from Stobart's and Sams' Egyptian collections and that they « were not all obtained by them, but that some were previously purchased by other persons, and some they procured in Egypt. Thus, at least, unless my memory deceives me, the Rev. H. Stobart told me *viva voce*, at Adam Holden's, the bookseller, on the 2nd May, 1860. »

¹³ The recto has been turned by 180° and it has been re-used, so that the beginning of the horoscope corresponds to the beginning of the *Epitaphius*.

¹⁴ Three other minor fragments are almost completely illegible because, as we will see, the text is covered by brown paper used as a mount (cf. *infra*).

¹⁵ The editions of the recto are : a) Greek text : Goodwin (1864) 294–306 ; Wessely (1888) 150–152 ; Kenyon (1893) 126–130 ; Neugebauer / van Hoesen (1959) 28–32, 34–38 ; b) Coptic text : Goodwin (1868) 18–24 ; Griffith (1900) 71–85 ; Černý / Kahle / Parker (1957) 86–100 ; Černý / Parker in Neugebauer / van Hoesen (1959) 32–34.

person in question is not known, nor is his date of birth ; but it has been calculated – on the basis of the position of the planets which are mentioned – that the horoscope was cast for the year AD 95¹⁶.

The second text (which occupies the last four lines of col. IV, and cols. V–VI) contains an astrological treatise in « early Coptic » (with some Greek insertions written by a different hand)¹⁷. As Goodwin observed, it is « probably the earliest extant example of the application of the Greek alphabet to the Egyptian language, the first effort of the system from which Coptic was shortly afterwards developed »¹⁸. A few years after Goodwin, the British Egyptologist Francis Llewellyn Griffith observed : « Though the handwriting itself lacks uniformity, there can be no doubt that the astrologer was not altogether unaccustomed to this spelling of Egyptian texts (...). The text is exceedingly difficult and the handwriting very obscure (...), the reading remains extremely uncertain. » As far as its interpretation is concerned, he observed that « the text almost throughout seems hopelessly obscure (...). The bad and hesitating writing, the inconsistencies and glaring faults of spelling and the general obscurity suggest that the scribe was not an Egyptian and that his knowledge of the Egyptian language was insufficient to enable him to write it phonetically with correctness, or even so as to be properly intelligible. »¹⁹ And also Walter Ewing Crum, the skilled British Coptologist, could observe : « What strikes me in these texts is not their likeness to Coptic, but their extreme unlikeness, while manuscripts of normal Coptic are datable so soon after. »²⁰

As we have seen, scholarly literature has highlighted several unusual aspects of this text. A further peculiar element of P.Lond. 98 is the presence of vertical rulings, which are also found on the verso, *i.e.* on P.Lond.Lit. 133²¹.

P.Lond.Lit. 133

The *Epitaphius* was written on two different pieces of papyrus : on the first (which contains cols. II to X) the writing runs – as we have observed – against the vertical fibres, that is to say on the verso of the horoscope ; on the second – which contains the last three columns – the writing runs along the fibres (that is on the recto), while no trace of ink appears on the other side. It is now divided into three minor fragments (two of which seem to belong to the same column, the first one) and two larger pieces. These three fragments are almost completely covered on the other side by brown paper used as a mount for the entire papyrus²². We could verify if the first two fragments really belong to the same column or not, only if the paper which covers them could be removed in order to examine more of the text of the recto²³.

Regarding the description of the papyrus, which is about 95 cm long and 23 cm high, we can observe a very irregular layout²⁴ : the scribe did not pay attention either to a regular

¹⁶ AD 95 is not necessarily the date of birth of the individual : the horoscope might have been cast at any time during his life. This date is proposed by G.D.E. Weyer in Blass (1881) XVIII–XIX and accepted by Neugebauer / van Hoesen (1959) 28–29. Goodwin (1864) 306 and (1868) 18 suggested AD 154.

¹⁷ See Neugebauer / Van Hoesen (1959) 29.

¹⁸ Goodwin in Kenyon (1893) 127.

¹⁹ See Griffith (1900) 73 and 75–76.

²⁰ Griffith (1901) 81, n. 1.

²¹ We find perfectly parallel double vertical rulings traced between the first and the second column, and a simple vertical ruling between the second and the third. There are no rulings between cols. III and IV, nor between cols. IV and V.

²² Only two lines are readable : for a detailed description of this issue, see Neugebauer / Van Hoesen (1959) 30–31.

²³ In the past, Babington – for example – thought that they were fragments of different columns ; now it is widely recognised that they are from the same column. Removing the paper could reveal, for example, new data regarding the person whose horoscope is on the recto : maybe his name, or date of birth etc.

²⁴ To this length of 95 cm, we should add at least the approximately 7 cm of col. I.

or to an elegant construction of the book. The number of lines, in spite of the height of the column which is almost regular (from 19,2 cm to 20,5 cm), ranges from 33 in col. II, to 44 in the last. The width is also very irregular, as we can see at a glance : it varies from almost 6 cm (col. X) to almost 8,7 cm (IX). Also the number of characters per line varies considerably : from 12 characters (V 40) to 31 (IX 33 and 34). The upper margin is regular and is almost 2 cm ; the lower margin, when present, measures almost 1,3 cm, but it tends to be covered by the writing. Such an irregular layout, together with the wide presence of mistakes (of various types), leads us to believe that this was not a book produced by a professional scribe²⁵. This also seems to be confirmed by the use of the signs that occur very frequently all over the papyrus, which is sometimes inappropriate²⁶. The orthography suggests that the scribe, making so many mistakes which are sometimes obvious and common, and sometimes inexplicable, was quite ignorant of the Greek language²⁷.

Furthermore, as we have already observed, even the scribe of the verso of this papyrus drew vertical rulings (single or double) to divide the columns. These intercolumnary divisions are highly unusual and very rare in literary papyri²⁸ ; but they are not so rare in school exercises²⁹ ; this seems to suggest that they were traced after the scribe completed his work³⁰.

The handwriting is a capital of medium-small size, bilinear except for a few letters which exceed the upper and lower line ; it is slowly written and presents a few ligatures. Sometimes, especially toward the end of the lines as the text proceeds, the letters become more irregular and cramped. The letters, whose *ductus* is sometimes uncertain, present various mixed forms and contribute to making a quite irregular general impression, suggesting that the scribe was not very practised or skilled. The handwriting was described

²⁵ Orthographic mistakes, visual errors, phonetic errors (among them itacistic errors are the most frequent), syllables or noun omissions, mistakes due to haplography or dittography, interchanging of vowels, consonants etc. A list of mistakes can now also be found in Petruzzello (2009) 20. Criore (1996) 240–241 (no. 283) and 112 (where the handwriting is classified as an « evolving hand ») thinks that the scribe could be « an apprentice scribe or a student copying a text ». Zlateo (1961) 182 (no. 138) wrote that P.Lond.Lit. 133 could have been a « testo per la lettura di autori ».

²⁶ Line fillers (in the form of a right angle bracket, sometimes followed by other little strokes), as well as horizontal strokes (in association with the sign of *paragraphos*), and signs of *paragraphos* (sometimes as a form of punctuation) are used all over the papyrus. The characters at the end of the lines with these fillers may be smaller, the last letter may be written above the line. There are no accents with the exception of a circumflex accent (X 12) ; only two smooth breathings (VII 7 and IX 14). *Diaeresis* occurs frequently over initial *iota*.

²⁷ On obvious spelling mistakes, see above n. 25. For inexplicable ones, I refer – for example – to *ολλαδα*, instead of the obvious *ελλαδα* (V 6) ; or to *μλταδην* (with a high stop mark in the word, after the *α*), instead of *μλτιαδην* (XII 42–43). Sometimes we encounter corrections carried out by the scribe : they are marked by a stroke through the letter/s (V 20 ; VIII 25 and 34 ; IX 12), sometimes the emendation is written above (II 22 and 28 ; IV 5 ; V 38 ; VI 33 ; VII 41 ; IX 42 ; XI 11 ; XII 39 ; XIII 22). Sometimes the letters are corrected only by the emendation written above (II 21 ; III 32 ; V 40 ; VIII 19 and 25 ; IX 38 ; X 26 ; XIII 19). Superfluous letters present dots above them, as in VII 28. Letters omitted are inserted in the interlinear space (III 31 ; V 36). Babington (1858) X, while comparing the papyrus containing the oration *Against Demosthenes* and the one containing the *Epitaphius*, wrote : « The present papyrus is worse written, the blunders are decidedly more numerous, and the orthography is somewhat more barbarous. » More recently Petruzzello (2009) 23 considered as probable that « lo scriba di PLit.Lond. 133 sia un copto, poco più che un principiante, desideroso di apprendere il greco letterario ».

²⁸ Turner (1987) 5 : « The only vertical rulings known to me (none of them illustrated) are those that occasionally serve a decorative purpose and were convenient in the school-room : for instance the vertical arcades which frame the exercises in syllabic recognition in the *Livre d'écolier* (Pack², 2642) ; the long vertical lines separating the columns in P.Lond. 98 (Pack², 1236, a text of Hyperides apparently copied as a school exercise) ; or the frames for an illustration or a mathematical diagram or astrological table. »

²⁹ Criore (1996) 77 : « Vertical rulings, which never appear in literary papyri, but sometimes are visible in astrological tables, are found very frequently in exercises. The purpose of such lines was to provide separation between columns whether adjacent columns contained the same text or different exercises. Usually students place their columns very close to each other so that the space between them is almost nonexistent : a vertical ruling distinguishes the letters belonging to each column and in addition saves writing space. »

³⁰ We can consider e.g. IV 34–38 and VI 30–38 : here the lines seem to follow the width of the column.

by Kenyon as a « private and non-literary hand », maybe that of a schoolboy who was doing an exercise³¹. Raffaella Cribiore speaks of an « evolving hand », which is « the hand of a pupil who uses it every day and does a conspicuous amount of writing with it »³².

Regarding the text, we can observe that the end of the roll does not correspond to the end of the *Funeral Oration* : indeed, we know a passage of the final part of the oration, quoted by Stobaeus, which does not appear in the papyrus³³. Furthermore, the blank space on the right of the last column suggests that if the scribe had had something else to copy, he could have done so : we could expect to see at least the first letters of the following column, instead of the blank space left at the end of col. XIII. This seems to suggest that the text to be copied stopped here.

All these features, which are sometimes strange or unusual, in addition to what we now know about the history of this find, suggest that we should re-examine this papyrus very carefully.

The authenticity of the « Stobart papyri » in the British Museum : a debate

Let us consider the debate concerning the acquisition and the authenticity of this papyrus which developed in the years immediately following its publication. Some years after Babington's publication of the *Epitaphius* (1858), on August 10th, 1861, in a London literary magazine, the *Literary Gazette*, a communication appeared regarding the imminent publication of a papyrus, containing – among other texts – also portions of the *Gospel of St. Matthew*³⁴. The papyrus belonged to the collection of antiquities of Joseph Mayer of Liverpool³⁵ ; as we have seen, it was to be published by the famous forger Constantine Simonidis. Here we read :

The manuscript, together with many others, was discovered by the Rev. Mr. Stobart, in a sarcophagus, at Thebes, and was brought by him to England. On his arrival in this country, he sold a portion of his collection to the British Museum, and a considerable number of the remainder he disposed of to Mr. Meyer [sic], the celebrated archaeologist of Liverpool. Those in the British Museum remain unrolled and unread to the present day, but Mr. Meyer, having obtained the assistance of Dr. K. Simonides, proceeded to unroll the various papyri, and among others of great interest was discovered one in fragments, containing portions of the Gospel of St. Matthew.

This communication, which appeared anonymously, states a connection between the group of papyri sold by Stobart to Joseph Mayer, and the group of papyri Stobart sold to the British Museum (that is the papyri with inventory nos. from 77 to 98)³⁶.

As we have said, we find the same information also in Simonidis' Preface to the edition of the fragments of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, where we read³⁷ :

The fragments of the New Testament [...] were brought to England from Egyptian Thebes, in 1856, by the Rev. Henry Stobart whose name is universally known. These, together with others, the content of which I arranged, came into the possession of the erudite Joseph Mayer, as both of these gentlemen can testify, and as the public prints stated at the time. (...) Along with these, several other famous works of Grecian intellect were

³¹ See Kenyon (1899) 103–104.

³² See above, n. 25.

³³ Stob. 4, 56, 36 Wachsmuth-Hense.

³⁴ The *Literary Gazette* was a weekly magazine founded in 1817 : see Otranto (2010) 242, n. 13. The communication is to be found on p. 142.

³⁵ On Joseph Mayer (1803–1886), see Dawson / Uphill / Bierbrier (1995) 281–282.

³⁶ The author of this communication seems not to be well informed. Indeed, he says that the papyri which were bought from the British Museum were at that time unrolled and unread : this detail is clearly in contrast with the fact that the *Funeral Oration* had already been published ; or perhaps the reference once again only regards the Coptic papyri.

³⁷ Simonidis (1861) 9 ; also *supra*.

brought by the same gentleman from Egypt into England ; among which is to be found the Funeral Panegyric by Hyperides.

It is a pity that, soon after its publication, the papyrus containing the *Gospel of St. Matthew* was unmasked as a forgery created by Constantine Simonidis³⁸.

One month later, on January 18th, 1858, the *Literary Gazette* communication was taken up by a Greek weekly, the *Ἀκτῆρ τῆς Ἀνατολῆς*³⁹. The author of the article was Michael Kalopothakis (1825–1911), head of the Greek Evangelical Church and also founder of the magazine. Kalopothakis, after translating the piece which had appeared in the *Literary Gazette*, observed :

Simply reading the previous article and seeing the name of the notorious confidence trickster Simonidis is enough to convince anyone that not only Meyer, but also the British Museum, have fallen victim to the ingenious fraud of one of the greatest and most audacious swindlers in the world. We have no doubts and therefore we state that there are only two possible scenarios : either Rev. Henry Stobart was tricked by the fraudster Simonidis thanks to his brother, who was in Alexandria at that time, or Simonidis provided the skill, and Stobart the prestige, in order that both of them could profit from the situation. We have no doubts about what really happened : that is, the manuscripts sold as ancient, both to the British Museum and to Mayer, are the work of the forger Simonidis, and the product of his irreverent hand.

Such an accusation, obviously, also cast a shadow on the papyrus containing the *Epitaphius*. A reply to this article appeared, once again in the *Literary Gazette*, on November 9th, 1861 (pages 447–448). The article, entitled « Dr. Simonides and the British Museum », sought to defend the Trustees of the British Museum from the accusation of not having paid attention to what they had bought, particularly concerning the *Epitaphius*, rightly labelled « the most valuable of the collection » :

Our attention has been called to a recent number of a journal published in Athens, The Eastern Star (Ὁ Ἀκτῆρ τῆς Ἀνατολῆς) which has done us the honour of translating into its columns a communication which appeared in the Literary Gazette of the tenth of August last relative to the papyri which Dr. Simonides sold to the trustees of the British Museum ; and also to one purchased from him by M. Meyer, of Liverpool, which on being unrolled proved to contain a part of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The writer in the Eastern Star proceeds to comment upon our various statements (...). According to these representations, both M. Meyer and the British Museum have fallen sacrifices to the artful imposture (ἐντέχνου ἀγυρτείας) of Simonides. We are then presented with some details of this gentleman's previous history, very unfavourable to his moral character. But with all this we have, for the present at least, nothing to do ; and we should not have noticed so virulent and intemperate an attack, had we not been anxious to clear the authorities of the British Museum from the charge here made against them of having fallen victims to Simonides' craft. Of M. Meyer's manuscripts we are unable to speak decisively ; but we can confidently affirm that those purchased by the Museum are genuine and beyond suspicion.

It is useful to note that the editor of the *Literary Gazette* from 1860 to 1862 was Charles Wycliffe Goodwin, who, as we have seen, was also involved in the assessment of the papyri which led to their acquisition by the British Museum.

The polemic between these two literary magazines, which has been completely neglected until now, clearly shows that a debate about the authenticity of P.Lond.Lit. 133 ensued in the years immediately following its publication⁴⁰. Further research will probably cast

³⁸ See Canfora (2008) 60–62 ; (2010) 180–185 and 247–248.

³⁹ See Otranto (2010) 244, n. 15. The communication appeared on September 30th, 1861, no. 194, p. 1552–1553.

⁴⁰ An echo of the dispute regarding the origin and the authenticity of this papyrus also reached Italy. Domenico Comparetti, the Italian scholar who played such an important role in the promotion of early papyrological studies, touched upon the polemic created by the *Eastern Star*, in a note in his edition of the *Epitaphius*, which appeared in 1864 (p. 15, n. 1).

light on the various problems arising from the study of this papyrus, which is peculiar or even strange in several respects, also considering that the name of Constantine Simonidis, the well known 19th century forger, appears in its history. Here is a good reason to continue to study this papyrus very carefully : for the moment, it can be said that the history of its acquisition is by no means as clear as we had imagined.

Bibliography

- Babington, Ch. (1858), *Ἐπερίδου λόγος ἐπιτάφιος. The Funeral Oration of Hyperides over Leosthenes and his Comrades in the Lamian War* (Cambridge / London).
- Blass, F. (1881), *Hyperidis orationes quattuor cum ceterarum fragmentis* (2nd ed., Leipzig).
- Borrie, M. (2004), « Frederic Madden », in Matthew, H.C.G. / Harrison, B. (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 36, 66–69.
- Brugsch, H. (1856), *Nouvelles recherches sur la division de l'année des anciens Egyptiens* (Berlin / Paris).
- Canfora, L. (2008), *Il papiro di Artemidoro* (Bari).
- Canfora, L. (2010), *Il viaggio di Artemidoro. Vita e avventure di un grande esploratore dell'antichità* (Milano).
- Černý, J. / Khale, P.E. / Parker, R.A. (1957), « The Old Coptic Horoscope », *JEA* 43, 86–100.
- Comparetti, D. (1864), *Il discorso d'Iperide pei morti nella guerra Lamiaca* (Pisa).
- Criamore, R. (1996), *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta).
- Crum, W.E. (1905), *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London).
- Dawson, W.R. (1934), *Charles Wycliffe Goodwin 1817–1878. A Pioneer in Egyptology* (Oxford).
- Dawson, W.R. / Uphill, E.P. / Bierbrier, M.L. (1995), *Who Was Who in Egyptology* (3rd rev. ed., London).
- Espinasse, F. [rev. J.L. Altholz] (2004), « Charles Wycliffe Goodwin », in Matthew, H.C.G. / Harrison, B. (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 22, 814–815.
- Goodwin, C.W. (1859), « Conveyancing among the Copts of the Eight Century », *The Law Magazine and Law Review* 122, 237–248.
- Goodwin, C.W. (1864), « Sur un horoscope grec contenant les noms de plusieurs décans », in Chabas, F. (éd.), *Mélanges égyptologiques*, II^e sér. (Chalon-sur-Saône) 294–306.
- Goodwin, C.W. (1868), « On an Egyptian text in Greek characters », *ZÄS* 6, 18–24.
- Griffith, F.Ll. (1900), « The Old Coptic Horoscope of the Stobart Collection », *ZÄS* 38, 71–85.
- Griffith, F.Ll. (1901), « The Date of the Old Coptic Texts and their Relation to Christian Coptic », *ZÄS* 39, 78–82.
- Kenyon, F.G. (1893), *Greek Papyri in the British Museum* (London).
- Kenyon, F.G. (1899), *The Palaeography of Greek Papyri* (Oxford).
- Neugebauer, O. / Van Hoesen, H.B. (1959), *Greek Horoscopes* (Philadelphia).
- Otranto, R. (2010), « Una disputa tra due riviste sull'Epitafio di Iperide », *QS* 72, 239–255.
- Petruzzello, L. (2009), *Iperide : Epitafio per i caduti del primo anno della guerra Lamiaca (PLit.Lond. 133v). Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e commento* (Pisa / Roma).
- Seccombe, Th. [rev. M.C. Curthoys] (2004), « Churchill Babington », in Matthew, H.C.G. / Harrison, B. (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 3, 82–83.
- Simonides, C. (1861), *Fac-similes of Certain Portions of the Gospel of St. Matthew and of the Epistles of Ss. James and Jude Written on Papyrus in the First Century, and Preserved in the Egyptian Museum of Joseph Mayer, Esq. Liverpool* (London).
- Stobart, H. (1855), *Egyptian Antiquities Collected on a Voyage Made in Upper Egypt in the Years 1854 and 1855 and Published by the Rev^d. H. S.* (Berlin).
- Turner, E.G. / Parsons, P.J. (1987), *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (2nd ed., BICS Suppl. 46, London).
- Wessely, K. (1888), « Griechische Zauberpapyrus von Paris und London », *Denkschriften der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien (philosophisch-historische Classe)* 36.2, 150–152.
- Zalateo, G. (1961), « Papiri scolastici », *Aegyptus* 41, 160–235.

Appendix

<i>N^o</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Size and condition</i>	<i>Whence procured</i>
LXXVII	Coptic Greek Papyrus Will of Abraham B(isho)p of Hermonthis	3 feet 7 ½ inches x 4 in. framed	Purchased of the Rev ^d . H. Stobart 8 Jan ^{ry} . 1857
LXXVIII	Coptic Papyrus	4 ft. 8 in. x 13 ½ in. d(itt)o	D(itt)o
LXXIX	D ^o	3 ft. 8 ¾ x 11 ½ in. do.	D ^o
LXXX	D ^o	2 ft. 10 ½ x 10 ½ in. under glass	D ^o
LXXXI	D ^o	3 ft. 10 ½ in. x 13 ½ in. framed	D ^o
LXXXII	D ^o	3 ft. x 10 in. under glass	D ^o
LXXXIII	D ^o	do.	D ^o
LXXXIV	D ^o	do.	D ^o
LXXXV	D ^o	do.	D ^o
LXXXVI	D ^o	do.	D ^o
LXXXVII	D ^o	do.	D ^o
LXXXVIII	D ^o	do.	D ^o
LXXXIX	D ^o	do.	D ^o
XC	D ^o	do.	D ^o
XCI	D ^o	4 ½ in. x 7 in. do.	D ^o
XCII	D ^o (fragments)	do.	D ^o
XCIII	D ^o (fragments)	do.	D ^o
XCIV	D ^o (fragments)	do.	D ^o
XCV	Coptic roll on leather	19 ½ in. x 12 in. under glass	D ^o
XCVI	D ^o	13 in. x 6 ½ in. under glass	D ^o
XCVII	D ^o	23 in. x 6 in. under glass	D ^o
XCVIII	Greek Papyrus (Hyperides) with Greek and Coptic writing on the dors(e)	under glass	D ^o