

## THEAGENES: AN EARLY GREEK SCHOLAR

BIONDI (F.) *Teagene di Reggio rapsodo e interprete di Omero*. (Synchrisis 2.) Pp. 144. Pisa and Rome: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2015.

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Theagenes of Rhegium is not an underestimated figure of early Greek scholarship. Although the information on him takes up less than one page in the Diels–Kranz volumes and although nothing of his actual words has survived, there being five (or six) *testimonia* altogether, his name is firmly linked to the development of Greek scholarship. His name is further linked to his alleged *protos heuretes*-function concerning Greek grammar, writing the life of Homer and commenting on epic texts. However, B.'s attempt is the first so far at specific research around Theagenes and to dedicate a monograph to him.

B.'s book is structured as a commentary but meant and written as a monograph. It contains two parts built around the five Diels–Kranz *testimonia*. The first part is short; it contains the *testimonia*, for some reason printed by B. in a different order: 1 = DK8A1, 2 contains two texts, DK8A1a and Sch. Dion. Thr. p. 448, 12–16 Hilgard only mentioned in Diels–Kranz, 3 = DK8A3, 4 = DK8A2, 5 = DK8A4, and each provided with a small apparatus and an Italian translation.

The second part, 'Commento alle testimonianze', contains five commentaries on each *testimonium* respectively, with two further sections, on Seleucus the grammarian as an alleged source for Theagenes' tradition and a general conclusion on Theagenes as a rhapsode and interpreter.

One obvious advantage of B.'s work is the placing of Theagenes into his historical and cultural context. This constitutes an excellent example of close reading of the text, and, what is more, in a situation when the original text has been lost completely. Thus B. literally scrutinises every word of the *testimonia* (the best example being her treatment of the syntagma ἄπὸ τῆς λέξεως in Porphyry, on *test.* DK8A2).

In the end, we do not learn anything new about the texts of the information bearers such as Tatian, *Suda* or Porphyry, but we learn a lot about the context in which Theagenes may have lived and worked (with the help mainly of Italian references). Through a long and complex associative chain, Theagenes' life and work is connected to his (younger) contemporaries such as Metrodorus of Lampsacus, Stesimbrotus of Thasos, Glaucon and Antimachus of Colophon, Pythagorean and Orphic communities, Alcmaeon and Democedes of Croton. In this respect, this book can be placed together with recent research on the intellectual climate of South Italy (such contributions on the Greek West as A. Willi's 2008 *Sikelismos* and K. Boshier's [ed.] 2012 *Theater outside Athens* might have been usefully consulted by B., as one finds many points of intersection with B.'s own considerations).

One of the most interesting elements in the book (pp. 31–42 and 107–8) is the discussion of Theagenes' alleged writings on Homer and of his life, background and poetry (cf. *test.* DK8A1, A2, A4) among other contemporary and later *Vitae Homeri*. Another stimulating argument is on Theagenes' relationship with the written text, on the use of the verb γράφειν in describing Theagenes' activity in *test.* DK8A2 and A4. One might have expected more discussion of the anachronistic use of the term here, and of the origins of prose writing in Greece and of the *peri* genre (cf. C. Kahn's contribution on writing philosophy in H. Yunis [ed.], *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture* [2003], an important volume on the subject).

One of the significant activities ascribed to Theagenes by scholiasts was his concern with the correct usage of language and/or grammar (περὶ τὸν ἑλλητισμόν, *test.* DK8A1a). In her discussion of this *testimonium*, B. convincingly links Dionysius Thrax' definition of grammar Γραμματική ἐστὶν ἐμπειρία τῶν παρὰ ποιηταῖς τε καὶ συγγραφεύσιν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ λεγομένων (D.T. 1.5.2–3) to Theagenes' alleged Homeric studies, and argues that Theagenes' 'grammar' or 'Hellenismos' consisted of an explanation of glosses and the interpretation of epic passages. The extent to which these Hellenistic criteria (Dionysius Thrax being Aristarchus' pupil) can be applied to sixth-century BCE Magna Graecia, could be discussed in greater detail. B.'s attempt to link Seleucus of Alexandria, a younger contemporary of Didymus, and his work περὶ Ἑλλητισμοῦ to Theagenes' studies (pp. 109–10) requires elaboration.

Perhaps the most important and most discussed contribution of Theagenes to Homeric scholarship is his alleged reading ῥά νύ (present in the Cyprian and Cretan editions as well, according to the scholiast) instead of the transmitted μάλα at *Il.* 1.381 (*test.* DK8A3). B. does not print the standard corrupt text of the whole scholium: ἀπίθανον γὰρ τὸ ἴοδενυ† λίαν φίλος ἦν (Erbse 1969 ad loc.). Instead the text is printed as if not corrupt: ἀπίθανον γὰρ τὸ 'ὄ δέ νυ λίαν φίλος ἦ<ε>ν' with B.'s remark 'tuttavia il testo è chiaro' (p. 49). The corrupt reading should be printed at least in the apparatus criticus in this case, otherwise the reader is misled or forced to check other editions. B.'s argument on Theagenes' having the Homeric text in his possession, selecting variants and working on textual problems (sic) with 'versioni moralizzate' (p. 50) and with 'versi ... moralmente problematici' (p. 51) is built on a biased reconstruction of the corrupt text. A noteworthy discussion of this *testimonium* was provided by J.M. González ('The Epic Rhapsode and his Craft', *CHS* [2013], 156–9), who puts Theagenes' reading in the broader context of gradual fixation with the Homeric text and argues that the reading ῥά νύ for μάλα is not enough to save the text 'morally', and that it is actually anachronistic to discuss various 'variants' of a fixed text at this stage. The argument by González is by no means unquestionable, but such a book would be the right place to discuss it, especially in the line of B.'s leading argument that Theagenes may perhaps have been a rhapsode (pp. 113–14).

The most challenging and promising part of B.'s book is her discussion of *test.* DK8A2, Porphyry's allegorical interpretation of the Homeric theomachy (*Il.* 20.67–75). B. analyses in detail the allegorical treatment of the deities, discusses the origins of allegorical interpretation in Greece, linking it to ritual and oracle interpretation (Pythagoreans and Orphics). For Theagenes one sentence in Porphyry is relevant: this (allegorical) type of defence (οὗτος μὲν οὖν τρόπος ἀπολογίας), so says Porphyry, is at least as old as Theagenes (ἀπὸ Θεαγένους τοῦ Ῥηγίνου) and is from diction (ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως). In order to follow Porphyry's sources on Theagenes as well as the network between Theagenes' work and exegetical points mentioned in this passage, B. analyses various sets of relationships. She discusses the compatibility of Porphyry's passage with Theagenes' historical, cultural, religious and philosophical context. Thus the fundamental treatment of the pairs of opposites in the text of the theomachy (such as water vs fire) is placed into the contemporary philosophical framework alluding to the cosmological system of Anaximander of Miletus, as also into the religious framework with allusions to the common epithets of deities used in the Orphic hymns. She discusses the relationship between Orphics and Pythagoreans and their influence on interpretation (more could have been gained here from a discussion of the section on allegory in G. Boys-Stones, *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition* [2003], and especially the contributions by A. Laird and D. Obbink).

B.'s arguments sometime seem hypothetical: Porphyry and ps.-Plutarch had a common source in the description of two allegories in the theomachy and in the Demodocus story,

thus this source might have been Theagenes. This is an example of ‘unnecessary’ argumentation, as we cannot know or prove either pro or contra. B. discusses further parallels to Porphyry sources such as ps.-Heraclitus’ *Homeric allegories* and ps.-Plutarch’s *De vita et poesi Homeri*.

Apart from certain methodological ambiguities, such as the use of Schrader’s conjecture adding Leto as an opposition to Hermes in *test. DK8A2* as a building block for her argumentation, B.’s trust in later sources remains problematic. As has been argued *passim* in recent commentaries on fragmentary texts, text-bearers often can be (un)consciously wrong (cf. *Fragmenta Comica [FrC]* by Verlag Antike). Such a critical approach to the sources mentioning the ‘philological’ work of Theagenes should at the very least be probed. Although the Italian bibliography is studied scrupulously, this is less the case with the English- and the German-language bibliography. Nevertheless, this monograph constitutes an informative and erudite contribution to the study of both the intellectual climate in the Greek West and the history and reception of early Homeric scholarship.

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## DISCOVERIES FROM FRAGMENTS

PIANO (V.) *Il Papiro di Derveni tra religione e filosofia*. (Studi e Testi per il Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici Greci e Latini 18.) Pp. xxiv + 406, ills, colour pls. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2016. Paper, €50. ISBN: 978-88-222-6477-0.

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*The past is rubbish till scholars take the pains / to sift and sort and interpret the remains. / This chaos is the past, mounds of heaped debris / just waiting to be organized into history.*

T. Harrison, *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1991), p. 79

In the course of reflecting on this quote, P. van Minnen, in establishing the relationship between archaeology and papyrology, observes that ‘the advantage of having two kinds of data ... makes a more comprehensive understanding possible’ (‘Archaeology and Papyrology: Digging and Filling Holes?’, in K. Lembke et al. [edd.], *Tradition and Transformation: Egypt under Roman Rule* [2010], p. 469). If there is a find that necessitates this kind of approach, it is the Derveni papyrus.

P. adopts this comprehensive approach in developing her interpretation of the Derveni papyrus. Within this all-encompassing strand of thinking she lists a diversity of disciplines among the resources to employ in her study, drawing on archaeology, epigraphy, papyrology, philology and philosophy in order to provide a holistic approach.

In an endeavour to enlarge the scholarly scope of study on the Derveni papyrus, she focuses on this papyrus in a three-part discussion. With a view to refining the understanding of the intricate first six columns, and expanding the debate on them, the method she uses is different in each part: the macro in Part 1, where she examines the context; the general in Part 2, touching on the text and its interpretation; and the micro in Part 3, in an