

## Reading History with Nicephorus Gregoras: A New Approach to the ‘Heidelberg Epitome’

The so-called Heidelberg Epitome (*BNJ* 155) contains a brief summary of events from the years immediately following Alexander the Great’s death and includes a few details that do not occur in any other source. It has been particularly attractive to those seeking to give a name to the medical conditions with which Alexander’s brother and successor Philip Arrhidaeus lived (e.g. Squillace). The text is not well understood, however, and in this paper I will suggest that reintegrating it into the manuscript in which it was found (Cod. Pal. Gr. 129) allows for a clearer reading of the relevant data. In so doing, I will propose a method for approaching fragmentary ancient Greek literature that capitalizes on recent advancements in medieval manuscript studies.

This project is in line with a movement in scholarship that encourages explicit dialogue between ancient and medieval Greek texts (Kaldellis) and considers the manuscript as a whole object (Treharne). Drawing on such approaches, I will explain several basic features of Cod. Pal. Gr. 129 that have gone unnoticed in Classical scholarship and offer new light on the obscure text we call the Heidelberg Epitome. First, the identity of the manuscript’s creator is known, contrary to what is stated in standard editions of the Heidelberg Epitome (Meeus ad *BNJ* 155). Well-known 14<sup>th</sup>-century polymath Nicephorus Gregoras created this manuscript as a personal reference tool, and his methods of taking notes and using them later have been observed (Ševčenko, Pérez-Martín). Second, many long sections of this manuscript summarize extant texts and, where they depart from their exemplars, they exhibit both intrusions of 14<sup>th</sup>-century intellectual preoccupations and physical factors such as fatigue on the part of the scribe. A brief survey of Gregoras’ summaries of Arrian’s *Anabasis* and *Indica* and his use of scholia to Lucian will illustrate his methods of transcription. Expansions, contractions, glosses, and attempts at correction regularly alter the meaning of these texts, and sometimes make them seem to say things that they do not say at all. By comparing this material to Gregoras’ arrangement of the Heidelberg Epitome, I will show that several unique features of that text make more sense when seen as the result of the 14<sup>th</sup>-century context in which

it was selected for preservation. In particular, I will argue that the idea that Philip Arrhidaeus lived with epilepsy is most likely to be a 14th-century conjecture.

The rush to diagnose Philip Arrhidaeus has long obscured the reality of his life and times (Carney). In a concluding section, I will connect the reading strategies discussed above to a set of epistemological issues pertaining to attempts to diagnose diseases in individuals from the distant past, which is a fraught practice that as yet has no widely accepted methodology (see discussions in King, Goodey and Rose). The Heidelberg Epitome, with its wealth of partial contexts and implications for a critical period of Greek history, thus constitutes an ideal experimental space for improving scholarly methods for approaching the fragmentary past.

### Bibliography

- Carney, E.D. (2001). "The Trouble with Philip Arrhidaeus," *AHB* 15.1: 63-89
- Goodey, C.F. and M.L. Rose. (2013). "Mental States, Bodily Dispositions and Table Manners: A Guide to Reading 'Intellectual' Disability from Homer to Late Antiquity" in Goody and Rose (eds.) *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity: Disparate Bodies A Capite ad Calcem*. Brill: 17-44.
- Kaldellis, A. (2015). *Byzantine Readings of Ancient Historians*. Routledge.
- King, H. (1998). *Hippocrates' Women: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*. Routledge.
- Meeus, A. (2021). 'Anonymous, *Epitoma Heidelbergensis* (155)', in Worthington, I. (ed.), *Jacoby Online. Brill's New Jacoby, Part II*, Brill. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1873-5363\\_bnj\\_a155](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1873-5363_bnj_a155)
- Pérez-Martín, I. (1993) "El Escorialensis X. I. 13: una fonte de los extractos elaborados por Nicéforo Gregorás en el Palat. Heidelberg. Gr. 129," *ByzZ* 86–87: 20–30.
- Ševčenko, I. (1964). "Some Autographs of Nicephorus Gregoras," in Barišić, F. (ed.), *Mélanges Georges Ostrogorsky II. Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta VIII*, 435-50.
- Squillace, G. (2020). "Olympias' *Pharmaka*? Nature, Causes, Therapies, and Physicians of Arrhidaeus' Diseases" in Agostini et al. (eds.), *Affective Relations and Personal Bonds in Hellenistic Antiquity*. Oxbow: 51-61.

Treharne, E. (2021). *Perceptions of Medieval Manuscripts: The Phenomenal Book*. Oxford.