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Abrevieri

Ancient library of Alexandria foreign book fund

This paper aims to demonstrate that the Lagid Kings showed great interest not only in the works of Greek authors, but also in the non-Greek books, arguing that in the Alexandrian Library there were also books belonging to foreign cultures. According to historians¹, it seems that in the Alexandrian Library there were no books in other languages, but only in Greek, therefore the books of foreign origin had to be translated into Greek in order to be displayed in the library.

About Ptolemy II the sources record that he collected books with zeal and when they came from other cultures other than Greek, he used to request their translation into Greek language². This practice continued also under his successor Ptolemy III Evergetes, who established a second library in Alexandria (called ‘the daughter-library’) within Serapeion.

Some of these books of foreign origins as the Hebrew Bible, the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism and the sacred Buddhist texts, written in faraway lands, were brought to Alexandria where, under the patronage of the Lagid kings, they were translated and included in the famous royal library. According to the sources, the translation of the Hebrew Bible under the name *Ἡ τῶν Ἑβδομήκοντα μετάφρασις* (literally *The Translation of the Seventy*), as well as the translation of the Buddhist texts, were made during Ptolemy II’s reign, while the translation of Persian prophet Zoroaster was made by Hermippos around 200 B.C., therefore during the reign of Ptolemy III Evergetes (246-222 B.C.) or that of Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 B.C.). It’s hard to believe that Hermippos made the translation under Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-180 B.C.) since the sources confirm that he was

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¹ Étienne Noddet, *Josephus and Aristeeas’ Letter: a comparison*, in *The Library of Alexandria: A Cultural Crossroads of the Ancient World*, Polis Institute Conference Proceedings, Editors Christophe Rico and Anca Dan, Jerusalem, Polis Institute Press, 2017, p. 4.

² Syncelle (p. 271 D = p. 516 Bonn): „ἀνὴρ τὰ πάντα σοφὸς καὶ φιλοπονότατος, πάντων Ἑλλήνων τε καὶ Χαλδαίων, Αἰγυπτίων τε καὶ Ῥωμαίων τὰς βίβλους συλλεξάμενος καὶ μεταφράσας τὰς ἀλλογλώσσους εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλώσσαν, μυριάδας βιβλίων ἰ’ ἀπέθετο κατὰ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν ἐν ταῖς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ συστάσαις βιβλιοθήκαις.”, apud J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d’après la tradition grecque*, Paris, Les belles lettres, Collection d’Études Anciennes, 2007, p. 88 (hereinafter: BCM).

Callimachos disciple, under Ptolemy III. A simple calculation shows that in 240 B.C., when he died, Callimachos was around sixty five – seventy years old and Hermippos, as his disciple, would have been twenty – thirty years younger than Callimachos. Even so, until the beginning of Epiphanes' reign in 204 B.C. he would have had a considerable age, which makes really improbable the fact that the Persian sacred texts were translated under Epiphanes' reign, although the sources indicate the approximate date of the translation the year 200 B.C.

Regarding the historical work *History of Babylon (Βαβυλωνιακά)*, written by the Babylonian High Priest Berossos, although was written in Greek and it's not a translation, it reflects the Mesopotamian history, traditions and beliefs which its author wanted to make known and accessible to the Greeks.

1. The Greek translation of the *Pentateuch*

The most important translation and best attested by the ancient sources was the translation of the Hebrew Bible, more precisely its first five books, called the *Pentateuch*. This translation was one of the major achievements of the universal history. The reasons why the Hebrew texts of the Scriptures was translated into Greek were multiple: King Ptolemy II's desire to enrich his famous Library, the need of Alexandrian Jewish community to possess their sacred writings in the language they knew, the *koiné* Greek, and the legal imperative dictated by the need of recognition of the Jewish community and protection of its specificity by the Alexandrian authorities. Regarding the initiative of this translation, there are testimonies whose veracity has been questioned, the oldest and most important of them being *Letter of Aristeas to Philokrates (Ἡ ἐπιστολή τοῦ Ἀριστέου πρὸς Φιλοκράτην)*. However, many scholars doubt the authenticity of the letter, while others believe that it was written at least a hundred years after the date on which it was originally attested (second century B.C.). According to some historians, the letter seems to contain some inconsistencies regarding the association of Demetrios of Phaleron with Ptolemy II Philadelphos, not only with Ptolemy I Soter³. This work most likely belongs to a Jewish author who uses the Greek pseudonym

³ Diogenes Laertios states that in 285 B.C., two years before his death, Ptolemy I Soter named his son Ptolemy II Philadelphos co-regent with him to kingdom's reign, against Demetrios' advice, who recommended another one of Soter's sons, based on the fact that Philadelphos was Soter's illegitimate son. After Soter passed away, Philadelphos sent Demetrios in exile somewhere in the Nile's Delta for not supporting him as the heir to the throne of Egypt (apud Diogenes Laertius, *Demetrius*, in *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. I, Translation by R. D. Hicks, Harvard University Press, 1938, p. 531. This topic has given rise to serious controversy, several authors including Aristobulos, Epiphanius of Salamis and John Tzetzes supporting the information transmitted by the *Letter of Aristeas*, Translated by R. H. Charles-Editor, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1913, Scanned and Edited by Joshua Williams, Northwest Nazarene College, 1995 (hereinafter: Let. Aris.), namely that Demetrios of Phaleron also collaborated with Ptolemy II. These authors are of the opinion that Demetrios himself suggested to King Ptolemy Philadelphos the translation into Greek of the Old Testament (*Pentateuch*) and personally took care of the completion of this project.

Aristeas. This is the oldest source mentioning the Library of Alexandria and the role of Demetrios of Phaleron in its establishment, also providing detailed information about the translation of the Hebrew Bible by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, under the patronage of Ptolemy II Philadelphos. From the beginning of the letter to his brother Philokrates, Aristeas reports on the delegation sent by King Ptolemy II to the Jewish High Priest Eleazar, in order to negotiate the conditions for the translation of the Divine Law. He also mentions that prior to this delegation, Aristeas had had the opportunity to inform the king of the difficult situation of the Jewish slaves, who had been brought to Egypt by the king's father⁴. As a result, King Ptolemy wrote a letter to High Priest Eleazar asking him to consent to the sending of Jewish scholars to Egypt, for the good and benefit of both sides, the Jews, and the kingdom of Egypt⁵. In his turn, Ptolemy frees the Jewish slaves, whose number was very large, their redemption from their masters costing him, according to the *Letter of Aristeas*, more than six hundred and sixty talents. Considering the concessions that Ptolemy Philadelphos was willing to make to persuade Eleazar to agree to the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures abroad (the release of slaves, the payment of a considerable sum as ransom for their release), we can conclude that this translation it was especially important to the king since he understood its political, social, and religious significance. On the other hand, High Priest Eleazar consents to the temporary alienation of the manuscripts of the Divine Law, only to reward the release of Jewish slaves and other benefits granted by King Ptolemy to them. Therefore, if the king had not freed the large number of Jewish slaves, Eleazar would not have honored his request to send to Alexandria the manuscripts of Scripture and the seventy-two scholars (one from each tribe of Israel) who knew the Greek language and were able to translate Scripture into this language, because this request was considered "above nature" (παρὰ φύσιν)⁶. In his letter, Aristeas cites some very important documents, the *memorandum* of Demetrios, the king's letter to Eleazar (mentioning the release of the large number of Jewish slaves and requesting seventy-two scholars to do the translation) and Eleazar's written acceptance, in which he expresses his gratitude for the benefits offered by the king to the Jews and conveys the names of the seventy-two scholars. Writing to High Priest Eleazar, Ptolemy II states that he decided that the Hebrew Law should be translated into Greek: "We want to enjoy these and all the other things existing in the world inhabited by Jews and others. Let your law be interpreted in Greek letters by your appointed interpreters, that we may have them also in the library, along with other royal books"⁷.

⁴ Let. Aris, p. 1-11.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 124-126, 317-321.

⁶ *Ibidem*: „πάντα γὰρ ὅσα σοι συμφέρει, καὶ εἰ παρὰ φύσιν ἐστίν, ὑπακουσόμεθα [...] μεγάλα γὰρ καὶ σὺ καὶ ἀνεπίληστα τοὺς πολίτας ἡμῶν κατὰ πολλοὺς τρόπους εὐηργέτηκας”, p. 44-45.

⁷ *Ibidem*: „βουλομένων δ' ἡμῶν καὶ τούτοις χαρίζεσθαι καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην Ἰουδαίους καὶ τοῖς μετέπειτα, προηρήμεθα τὸν νόμον ὑμῶν μεθερμηνευθῆναι γράμμασιν Ἑλληνικοῖς ἐκ τῶν παρ' ὑμῶν λεγομένων Ἑβραϊκῶν γραμμάτων, ἵν' ὑπάρχη καὶ ταῦτα παρ' ἡμῖν ἐν βιβλιοθήκῃ σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις βασιλικοῖς βιβλίοις”.

The translation of the *Pentateuch* is also referred to in detail by Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis in his work *On Units of Measure and Weight* (gr. *Περὶ μέτρων καὶ σταθμῶν*; lat. *De mensuris et ponderibus*), noting the decision of King Ptolemy Philadelphos to have the Holy Scriptures of the Jews sent to him and then to translate them into Greek, at the urging of his adviser Demetrios of Phaleron⁸. According to the same source, the number of the 72 Jewish scholars was rounded to 70, thus explaining the Greek or Latin name of the famous translation. Philon of Alexandria⁹ also provides information on this subject, according to which “the translators worked as if God had taken possession of their spirit, not with various words and expressions, but all with the same, as under the dictation of an invisible prompter”¹⁰. The same Philon, also known as Philon the Jew, considers that the reason for the translation was the fact that “the Jews of the Alexandrian diaspora had forgotten the Hebrew language”.

By rounding off the number of the wise translators, the translation was called in Greek *Ἡ τῶν Ἑβδομήκοντα μετάφρασις* (*Translation of the 70*); during the reign of Augustinus of Hyppona (4th century A.D.), the Greek translation will be called in Latin *Versio septuaginta interpretum* (*Translation of the 70 Interpreters*), abbreviated *Septuaginta* and the Roman numeral LXX will often be used to designate it.

Regarding the date on which the translation was made, the author Nina L. Collins states that the translation was completed in 281 B.C., being presented to Ptolemy Philadelphos and included in the library in 280 B.C.¹¹. These data emerge from the *Letter of Aristeas*, which, although it does not record the exact date on which the events take place, provides enough clues, which help us to place the translation in time. According to the same author, two important events described by Aristeas, recorded by independent sources, can be considered as points of reference, namely the celebration of translation’s conclusion, which took place in the presence of Ptolemy II¹² and another celebration, earlier, which took place in the presence of the Jews¹³, also mentioned by Jewish sources¹⁴. The celebration of *Pentateuch* translation’s conclusion in the presence of King Ptolemy Philadelphos was recorded in two different calendars used at that time, both dates indicating the year 280 B.C. in the Julian calendar. The second celebration, which took place in the presence of the Jews and, in fact, preceded the one mentioned above, is described by Aristeas and also appears in Jewish sources independent of the *Letter*

⁸ Epiphanius of Salamis, *Περὶ μέτρων καὶ σταθμῶν*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. XLIII, 1864, p. 241-244.

⁹ *De vita Mosis – On the Life of Moses*, II, 37.

¹⁰ André Paul, *Et l’homme créa la Bible: d’Hérodote à Flavius Josèphe*, Paris, Bayard Editions, 2000, p. 210.

¹¹ Nina L. Collins, *The Library of Alexandria and the Bible in Greek*, Leiden, Brill, (*Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 82), 2000, p. 4.

¹² *Let. Aris.*, 312.

¹³ *Let. Aris.*, 308-311.

¹⁴ Nina L. Collins, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

of *Aristeas*, as taking place at the end of 281 B.C.¹⁵. The fact that the two events are dated by several sources with exact historical data gives credibility to the information provided by the *Letter of Aristeas* and confirms that they are not just a legend.

We can conclude therefore that the Bible's translation into Greek was initiated during the reign of Ptolemy I Soter and completed under the reign of his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphos, either that it was initiated and completed during the reign of Philadelphos, in which case the information offered by the *Letter of Aristeas* is true and the animosities between Demetrios and the king were not so strong that Demetrios to be expelled from the Court. In fact, several ancient authors, including Aristoboulos and Epiphanius of Salamis, claim that Demetrios collaborated not only with Ptolemy Soter, but with Philadelphos as well.

2. Berossos' *History of Babylon*

Another work about which we have many reasons to believe that was part of the Alexandrian Library's foreign book fund, belonging to an author that represented other culture than Greek, was *History of Babylon* (*Βαβυλωνιακά*)¹⁶. The book was written by Berossos, a Babylonian priest¹⁷ who lived during the reign of Alexander the Great and who served the cult of the supreme Babylonian god Marduk, also known as Bel. He dedicated his work to the Macedonian King Antiochos I, who ruled the Seleucid kingdom. In order to complete this work, according to his own testimony, Berossos used ancient sources, such as sacred writings from temples and cuneiform inscriptions that hadn't been used before by other authors for writing a history of Babylon. The sources don't mention what was the reason why Berossos wrote this historical work, but the most plausible reason would have been King Antiochos I's desire to know the history of a land that was part of his kingdom. Another explanation could be that the priests of the Great Temple had found among them the one who could justify and explain the important role that the temple and the cult of Marduk had played in the world's history¹⁸. It is clear however that the work was written for the Greeks: in Greek and in a

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

¹⁶ According to Francesca Schironi this work was transmitted with various titles: *Βαβυλωνιακά*, *Χαλδαιικά* and *Χαλδαιική Αρχαιολογία*, Francesca Schironi, *From Alexandria to Babylon: Near Eastern Languages and Hellenistic Erudition in the Oxyrhynchus Glossary (P.Oxy. 1802 + 4812)*, *Sozomena. Studies in the Recovery of Ancient Texts, edited on behalf of Herculaneum Society*, by Alessandro Barchiesi et al., Vol. 4, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2009, p. 15.

¹⁷ According to Geert de Breucker, the word "priest" doesn't imply that Berossos had a cultic or religious function. In the Hellenistic period, the Babylonian Temple had – apart from being a cultic center – large economic and politic power; the temple was a centre of knowledge and learning, as well., apud *Berossos and the Mesopotamian Temple as a Centre of Knowledge during the Hellenistic Period, Learned Antiquity. Scholarship and Society in the Near-East, The Greco-Roman world, and the Early Medieval West*, edited by Alasdair James Macdonald et al., Leuven, Peeters, 2003, p. 13.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

characteristic Greek narrative style. Berossos's work seems to have existed in the Library of Pergam and in the Library of Alexandria¹⁹, where librarians showed a special interest in books on cultures other than Greek, as demonstrated in the case of the Hebrew Bible and Egyptian Manethon's historical work. The sources don't provide much information about Berossos himself, his birthdate being uncertain, placed between 350-340 B.C., but he states in the first book of his work that he was contemporary with Alexander the Great and that he served as High Priest in the temple of Marduk or Bel, in Babylon. The sources claim that Berossos name was originally *Bel-re-usu*, which in Akkadian meant "Bel is the shepherd" and the name that was transmitted to us was, in fact, one of his name's Greek transliterations. The very fact that Berossos bore an Akkadian name places him among the Babylonian temple elite, whose onomastic use remained conservative, although the Akkadian language had been replaced by the Aramaic, the latter becoming the language spoken in Babylon²⁰ in that period. He is believed to have worked in the Great Temple of Esagila where he had access to the archives²¹. Recent discoveries related to the libraries of the Temple of Esagila show that they were similar in purpose and size to King Ashurbanipal's library in Nineveh (Clancier, 2005, p. 272-335)²². Berossos' ability to write in Greek, his familiarity with popular Greek sources on Babylon's past and the fact that his historical work *Βαβυλωνιακά* was written for the instruction of the King Antiochos I, indicates that he was a member of the Seleucid royal court and most likely one of the astrologers consulted by Seleucos I and his predecessors²³. According to P. A. Beaulieu, the "History of Babylon" was completed by Berossos before 281 B.C., being dedicated to king Antiochos I on his ascension to the throne²⁴.

The historian Moses of Chorene (c. 410-490 A.D.) states in *Historia Armeniae* (I, 1.) that Berossos wrote his work at the request of Ptolemy II: "Many famous and illustrious men of letters from Greece not only did seek to have works to be housed in the royal archives and other peoples' temples, translated into Greek, as we understand that Ptolemy II Philadelphos urged a certain Berossos, the Chaldean, skilled in any discipline..."²⁵ According to Gerald P. Verbrugge and John M. Wickersham, the statement made by the Armenian historian is hard to

¹⁹ Francesca Schironi, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²⁰ Kathryn Stevens, *Between Greece and Babylonia: Hellenistic Intellectual History in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Padstow Cornwall, Cambridge University Press, TJ International Ltd., 2019, p. 95.

²¹ Gerald P. Verbrugge and John M. Wickersham, *Berosos and Manetho, Introduced and Translated Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt*, Michigan, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1st edition 1996, 2003, p. 13.

²² Apud Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *Berosos on Late Babylonian History, Special Issue of Oriental Studies. A Collection of Papers on Ancient Civilization of Western Asia, Asia Minor and North Africa*, University of Toronto, 2006, p. 119.

²³ Stanley Mayer Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus, Sources and Monographs. Sources from the Ancient Near East*, Vol. I, fascicle 5, Malibu, Undena Publication, 1978, p. 5.

²⁴ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

²⁵ Apud Gerald P. Verbrugge and John M. Wickersham, *op. cit.*, p. 39-40.

believe, the authors assuming that the reason for this statement was the well-known desire of Ptolemy Philadelphos to permanently enrich his library. It would be more plausible, in my opinion, to believe that Ptolemy's request was related to the inclusion of this historical work in the Alexandrian Library and was not a command to Berossos to write that work, since several ancient sources confirm that Berossos wrote it in Babylon, at the court of Antiochos I. S. M. Burstain states that Berossos was at the crossroads of two cultures, the Babylonian and the Greek, as a Babylonian priest proud of his traditions, who had accepted the Greek-Macedonian regime and adapted to it. The fact that Seleucos I had deliberately tried to destroy Babylon and its temples by transferring much of the population to its new capital on the banks of the Tigris, Seleucia, had been viewed with reproach by Berossos, who may have foreseen in the rise of Antiochos I a change of this policy. Therefore, Berossos would have written the work *Βαβυλωνιακά* hoping that a truthful account of the Babylonian past and its significance might persuade King Antiochos to reverse the policy instituted by his father. The fact that Berossos abandoned Babylon, later in his life, for the Greek island of Kos, controlled at that time by the fierce enemy of Antiochos I, Ptolemy II, can only indicate that his hopes were not fulfilled and that he therefore decided to embrace Greek culture.²⁶ As P. A. Beaulieu notes, *Βαβυλωνιακά* contained three books, as follows: the first book, entitled "Genesis" (*Γένεσις*), referred to the origins of the world and the beginnings of Babylonian civilization; in this book, Berossos stated that he intended to make known to Greek readers archives covering a period of 150,000 years and containing "the stories of heaven (and earth), of the sea and of the first creation, and of kings and their deeds"²⁷. The second book narrates the legend of the antediluvian kings, of the Flood and of the Babylonian kings, until Nabonassar came to the throne in 747 B.C. The third book contained the history of Babylon, from the time of Nabonassar to the king Antiochos I's ascension to the throne.

A particularly valuable and relevant document, that supports the fact that Berossos' historical work existed in the Library of Alexandria, is the *Oxyrhynchos Glossary*, originally published by Arthur S. Hunt, under the name *P.Oxy.15.1802*. Later, several other fragments were added, belonging to the same manuscript, deciphered by Edgar Lobel. The fragments of this manuscript were studied by the professor Francesca Schironi, who states that, in addition to important information on Greek grammar and lexicography, the papyrus also contains data on non-Greek works, highlighting the cultural relations between Greeks and other peoples in the Hellenistic period. It seems that the manuscript was not aimed at literary texts, but rather at rare words in the field of religion, zoology, and ethnography, and contained rare words from Greek dialects and Persian, Babylonian, and Chaldean words, transliterated in Greek characters or translated into *koiné* Greek, probably a part of the collection of someone interested in more eccentric and erudite

²⁶ Stanley Mayer Burstain, *op. cit.*, p. 5-6.

²⁷ Apud Gerald P. Verbrughe and John M. Wickersham, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

subjects²⁸. In the Hellenistic period the interest in these special words, called γλῶσσαι, was stimulated by globalization due to the conquests of Alexander the Great. In the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., the Greeks came into contact with many culturally and linguistically different populations in Asia and North Africa. In such a cosmopolitan environment it was expected, if not necessary, to increase interest in the so-called βάρβαροι, in their language and culture. Much of the dialectal and ethnographic glossography, which resulted from the study of the newly discovered world at that time, has been lost; fortunately, however, some fragments of the original Hellenistic glossaries were transmitted to us, through later sources, such as the lexicon of Hesychios the Alexandrian (5th-6th century A.D.), the Lexicon *Suda* (9th century A.D.) or the Byzantine *Etymologica* (sec. IX-X A.D.). Moreover, according to F. Schironi, there are very few papyri that illustrate the interest in foreign languages and distant dialects. Given all this, the *Glossary* in question, preserved in several papyrus fragments, is of particular importance as a unique example of ethnographic and dialectal glossography²⁹. Regarding the origin of the papyrus, Francesca Schironi states that it most probably came from Alexandria, because this city had the richest library of that time and, therefore, all the works of the authors cited in the *Glossary* could have been found there. The author goes on to show that “the most interesting name that appears in the *Glossary* is that of Berossos, a figure relatively unknown to ancient sources”; this is not surprising, since most of the authors cited in the manuscript are “relatively unknown antiquarians”, most of whom lived between the 4th and 2nd or, the latest, in the 1st century B.C. The names of the authors whose works are cited are given in alphabetical order, Berossos being the only one inscribed at the letter B, with the work *Βαβυλωνιακά* (fr.5, 20; fr.10a, 9-10), which is quoted at least twice (excerpts from books I and III)³⁰. According to the same author, the document was written in Alexandria between the 1st century B.C. and 1st century A.D. M. S. Visscher believes that the *Glossary*’s compiler would have needed an exhaustive and specialized library, given the fact that the work refers to a relatively large number of obscure authors and works³¹.

Based on the facts mentioned above, I think we have enough reasons to believe that Berossos’ work existed in the Alexandrian Library. One of these is, of course, the *Oxyrhynchos Glossary* which confirms that the work *Βαβυλωνιακά* was known and consulted in Hellenistic Egypt and existed in the libraries of Alexandria in the first century. Second, knowing that the work was completed and published in 281 B.C., a period that coincides with Ptolemy Philadelphos’ attempt to collect as many books for the Alexandrian Library as possible, even those belonging to foreign cultures, it can be assumed that the Lagid king showed interest in such a

²⁸ Francesca Schironi, *op. cit.*, p. 3-7.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

³¹ M. S. Visscher, *The Voice of the Local Priests. Manetho and the Ptolemies, Beyond Alexandria: Literature and Empire in the Seleucid World*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 112.

work and acquired it for the Royal Library. Even if we consider that the rivalry between Ptolemy Philadelphos and Antiochos I would have been an obstacle in obtaining this work by Philadelphos, the fact that around 270 B.C. Berossos left Babylon to settle on the Greek island of Kos, which was under the rule of Egypt, would have facilitated the acquisition of the book by Ptolemy. It is hard to believe that a large-scale historical work like the *History of Babylon* would not have aroused the interest of Ptolemy Philadelphos, since he himself had asked Manethon to write a similar history of Egypt.

Since Berossos was the only Babylonian who tried to corroborate sources that had previously circulated independently, creating for the first time a synoptic work on Babylonian traditions³², his role in transmitting Babylonian history and beliefs cannot be ignored. Moreover, Berossos seems to have had a good knowledge of both, Greek and Babylonian, intellectual traditions, which he deliberately tried to combine, which is why Wilfred Lambert stated that *Βαβυλωνιακά* is very important for the history of ideas.³³ According to the author K. Stevens, *Βαβυλωνιακά* “is the only surviving work of its kind from Hellenistic Babylonia, making it a particularly valuable source for the study of cross-cultural contact between Babylonian and Greek intellectual culture”³⁴.

3. The Greek translation of Zarathustra’s Persian religious texts

Another work belonging to a non-Greek culture, about which I argue here that was found in the Library of Alexandria, illustrated the ideology preached by the Persian prophet Zarathustra³⁵, whose name was rendered in Greek as *Zoroástrēs* (Ζωροάστρης³⁶). His religious teachings, which were never written down by him or his disciples, being passed down orally from generation to generation and recorded only seven or eight centuries later, were given the generic name of Zoroastrianism. Hermippos (3rd century B.C.), an Alexandrian scholar and disciple of Callimachos, was often cited by ancient authors as an authority on the Magi (disciples of Zoroaster), was the author of a multi-volume work entitled *On the Magi* (Περὶ Μάγων).³⁷ Arnobios of Sicca (4th century A.D.) also quotes him in the work *Adversus Nationes*³⁸, and Pliny the Elder (1st century A.D.)

³² Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

³³ W. Lambert, *op. cit.*, p.171, apud Kathryn Stevens, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

³⁴ Kathryn Stevens, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

³⁵ In his native language, the Avestic, the name *Zarathustra*, which resulted from combining the proclitic *zarš-* (to pull, to lead) with the noun *-uštra* (camel), meant probably „the one that leads the camels”.

³⁶ The name *Zarathustra*, because of the wrong transliteration in Greek (the Avestic *zarath-* replaced with the Greek *zoros-* and *-uštra* with *-astron*) *Ζωροάστρης*, had a totally different meaning: „the one that worships the stars”.

³⁷ Diogenes Laertios (1.8), apud Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*, Leiden, Brill, 1997, p. 210.

³⁸ Arnobios din Sicca, *Adversus Nationes*, 1.52.

mentions that a certain Hermippus of Smyrna would have translated and interpreted in the third century B.C. two million verses of Zoroaster in the Library of Alexandria: “Hermippus, an author who wrote, with the greatest precision about all the peculiarities of this art and commented on up to two million verses left by Zoroaster, besides the fact that he compiled indexes of several of his works, left the statement that Agonaces was the name of the master from whom Zoroaster received the doctrine, and that he lived five thousand years before the Trojan War”³⁹. Regarding the records of Pliny the Elder about Hermippus, the historians Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet state that it is impossible to estimate the overlap of Hermippus’ collection of writings and the material still available under the name of Zoroaster. The two authors suggest that Pliny referred in this passage to the work *On the Magi* (*Περὶ Μάγων*), which belonged to Hermippus and which covered the issue of the Magi in the East⁴⁰. Studying the same quote from Pliny the Elder, Jan Bollansée concludes that the Latin author probably had a sincere admiration for the erudition shown by Hermippus in commenting on such a large number of verses, their classification and cataloging, in the end, the whole catalog being attached to the work *On the Magi*. Bollansée suggests that Hermippus was also an important source for Pliny on the subject of magic, in general⁴¹. Considering Hermippus’ extensive work *On the Magi*, as well as the fact that he had made laborious investigations of all the books containing the teachings of Zoroaster, we can assume that Hermippus knew the sacred language and texts of the Magi quite well⁴². His writings on the Persian religion have been completely lost, and it is supposed that among the two million verses belonging to Zoroaster, which Hermippus read and commented on in the Alexandrian Library, along with the authentic ones, there were many considered pseudo-Zoroastrian⁴³.

J. Bidez and F. Cumont consider that the term *versus* referred to the lines of the text and not to the verses in the sense of poetry. Although the collection may have contained fragments as poems, it is hard to believe that it was composed exclusively of a single very large didactic poem, as suggested, since, except for the poem entitled *On the Virtues of Stones* (*Περὶ λίθων τιμῶν*), there are no attestations of any corpus in verses of such dimensions attributed to Zoroaster⁴⁴.

³⁹ Pliny, *NH*, XXX.2: “Hermippus, qui de tota ea arte diligentissime scripsit et vicinis c milia versuum a Zoroastre condita indicibus quoque voluminum eius positus explanavit, praeceptorem, a quo institutum diceret, tradidit Agonacen, ipsum vero quinque milibus annorum ante Troianum bellum fuisse”.

⁴⁰ Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule, Handbuch der Orientalistik. Erste Abteilung, Der Nahe und der Mittlere Osten*, Vol. III, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1991, p. 526.

⁴¹ Jan Bollansée, *Hermippus of Smyrna, Die Fragmente Der griechischen Historiker, Continued*, edited by Felix Jacoby, Jan Bollansée, Guido Schepens, Leiden, Brill, 1999, p. 442.

⁴² Martin Haug, *Essays on the Sacred Language: Writings and Religion of the Parsis: To which is also added a biographical memoir of the late Dr. Haug by Professor E.P. Evans*, Third edition, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 8.

⁴³ Albert De Jong, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁴⁴ BCM, p. 86-87: „Si l’on admet que les Alexandrins ont attribué à Zoroastre tout ce qu’ils possédaient de traités sur la «magie» perse, il ne semblera pas improbable que le fonds catalogué par

Whatever the content and form of these verses, they would probably have filled about eight hundred ordinary papyrus scrolls, resulting in a truly impressive collection. Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet consider that the numbers of verses have been systematically rounded, which has led to an exaggerated number; another explanation offered by the two exegetes is that the collection also included duplicates or multiple variants of the same works. A possibility, less fortunate, they think, would have been that a large part of the collection was made up of inauthentic works, forged for profit. This hypothesis is difficult to prove, but it is possible that Zoroaster, a name so well known, but who did not actually write books, compared to which the forgeries are judged, was the ideal author for the inventions of the most “enterprising” of the book sellers⁴⁵. However, the historians J. Bidez and F. Cumont have a different opinion: „L’idée qui vient d’abord à l’esprit, en lisant le texte de Pline, c’est que cette œuvre immense, attribuée à Zoroastre, était une traduction de l’ Avesta. Elle a été exprimée à plu sieurs reprises et l’on a mis la notice d’Hermippe en rapport avec la tradition mazdéenne, suivant laquelle un exemplaire du recueil sacré, composé de vingt et un nasks et de mille chapitres, serait tombé aux mains des envahisseurs lors de l’expédition d’Alexandre et aurait été traduit en grec. Mais il est bien certain que l’ Avesta dont les débris nous sont parvenus, n’a été constitué qu’à l’époque Sassanide et, s’il avait existé du temps des diadoques, qui, parmi les Grecs, aurait eu la patience de traduire cette énorme et indigeste compilation religieuse? Il est donc infiniment probable que l’indication d’Hermippe ne se rapporte pas seulement à certains hymnes et codes sacrés du mazdéisme, mais à toute la littérature que, dès l’époque hellénistique, on attribuait aux Mages et à leur maître Zoroastre, et qui avait probablement été, au moins partiellement, traduite en grec dès le règne de Ptolémée Philadelphe”⁴⁶. According to the two authors, Hermippos translated a material of impressive dimensions, which included the Avesta (sacred texts of Zoroastrianism), certain hymns and sacred codes of Mazdeism, but also all the literature that was attributed to the Magi and Zoroaster in the Hellenistic period.

Along with the testimony of Pliny the Elder, regarding the exaggerated number of “verses” that contained in fact ancient Persian religious literature, there was also the opinion of an Arab historian, Abu Jafir Attavari, who claims that Zoroaster’s writings could cover twelve thousand cow hides⁴⁷, with reference to the parchments used as a writing surface. Although these numbers may seem exaggerated, the famous exegete of ancient Persian writings, Martin Haug, assures us that they are not. He believes that, given the enormous dimensions of the

Hermippe, dans la vaste bibliothèque des Ptolémées, ait en effet compris environ huit cents rouleaux”. See also Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *op. cit.*, p. 526.

⁴⁵ Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *op. cit.*, p. 526-527. Jan Bollansée, *op. cit.*, p. 440-441.

⁴⁶ BCM, p. 87-88.

⁴⁷ Hyde, *De Religione Veterum Persarum*, p. 318, apud Martin Haug, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

religious writings of other Eastern peoples⁴⁸, we are entitled to believe that the texts attributed to Zoroaster by his disciples were also large.

The works attributed to Zoroaster are three, two major and one minor. The major ones are two treatises: *About nature* (*Περὶ φύσεως*) and *Stars' Observation of the stars* (*Ἀστεροσκοπικά*) or *Results* (*Ἀποτελεσματικά*), in the sense of astrological predictions, both titles indicating an astrological work. Regarding these two titles, J. Bidez and F. Cumont suggest that they belonged to two similar, but distinct works, the first in one book and the second in five books. The treatise *On Nature* contained four books, possibly four scrolls, while the minor work entitled *On the Virtues of Stones* (*Περὶ λίθων τιμίων*) contained a single book, which was about the medical and magical properties of minerals. Due to a quote from Pliny, who, referring to this work, states that "Zoroaster sings", J. Bidez and F. Cumont conclude that it was written in verses⁴⁹. Most of the writings attributed to Zoroaster were gathered by J. Bidez and F. Cumont under the titles of these three works, depending on the theme of those writings. However, it is possible that some of these fragments were part of other works, which have not been preserved. Among the works mentioned above, *About Nature* (*Περὶ φύσεως*) is the most interesting, in the opinion of the two historians, due to the fact that it has a diverse content, the narrative of the work being presented in the form of truths revealed by the gods of Zoroaster, in his foray in the underworld, after he died in battle: "These things I wrote, I, Zoroaster son of Armenios, a Pamphylian by race, who died in war, whatever I learned from the gods while I was in Hades"⁵⁰. The date on which this treatise was known in Ptolemaic Egypt can be determined by considering the writings of the Epicurean philosopher Colotes of Lampsakos⁵¹, who lived in the middle of the third century B.C. and made some comments on the subject of the treatise *On Nature*. Thus we can conclude that this treatise, or a variant of it, existed since the middle of the second century⁵². There is also the opinion that many of the original texts belonging to Zoroastrianism were lost due to the destruction caused by the army of Alexander the Great during the conquest of the Persian Empire. It seems that at the time there were only two complete copies of the sacred book, according to the third book of *Dinkard* (compendium of Zoroastrian beliefs dating from the 10th century A.D.), one of which was deposited in the royal archives of Persepolis, which were set on fire by Alexander, and another one, which fell into the hands of the Greeks, who later translated it into their own language. Although this account is not entirely true, historical sources

⁴⁸ Martin Haug, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁴⁹ Pliny, *NH*, XXXVII, 49.133.: *Zoroastrem cecinisse...*, BCM I 128, apud Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *op. cit.*, p. 528.

⁵⁰ This introduction is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria at the end of 2nd century AD, apud Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *op. cit.*, p. 528-529.

⁵¹ Plutarch writes that Colotes of Lampsakos has dedicated a philosophical work to king Ptolemy II, called *Περὶ τοῦ ὅτι κατὰ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων φιλοσόφων δόγματα οὐδὲ ζῆν ἔστιν* (Eleni Kechagia, *Plutarch against Colotes. A Lesson in History of Philosophy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 24).

⁵² Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *op. cit.*, p. 529.

confirm that Alexander the Great burned the palace at Persepolis, which undoubtedly contained valuable archives and texts of Persian culture that were destroyed in the fire. However, along with the original texts of the sacred books, there must have been several, at least partial, copies of these texts in other cities' temples, which were collected and passed on over several hundred years, until the Sassanian kings managed to restore, for the most part, the collection of sacred texts⁵³.

The authors Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet state that, during the Hellenistic period, the main authority in the field of Iranian culture and, more precisely, in its religious sphere, was Hermippos, the Alexandrian scholar. They record that he wrote, around 200 B.C., a treatise in several volumes entitled *On the Magi*, being the first to bring together the works of Zoroaster. The two authors also claim that, along with the original texts, this expert in the field of *magi* also transmitted the so-called *pseudepigrapha*, presented as products of the magician tradition. This is understandable, according to the two authors, since Hermippos dealt with these texts in the Library of Alexandria, far from the practitioners of Zoroastrianism. It is possible, however, that he had previously met Anatolian *magi* in his hometown of Izmir, but this was not confirmed by sources.

4. The Greek translation of the religious Buddhist texts

There are a few sources that attest the existence of Buddhist texts in the Alexandrian Library. Among them, we mention Mostafa El-Abbadi, a renowned Egyptian historian and classicist. In *The Life and Fate of the Ancient Library of Alexandria*, El-Abbadi records that Ptolemy Philadelphos had a fairly close relationship with the Indian king Ashoka, to whom he requested the sacred Buddhist texts, which were to be translated and included among the writings of foreign origin, extant in the royal library⁵⁴. King Ashoka was the grandson of Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya Kingdom and the son of Bindusara, his successor, himself one of the most important monarchs in the world at that time, who supported the spread of Buddhism. El-Abbadi notes that after his conversion, King Ashoka called himself an apostle of Buddhism and dedicated himself to spreading this faith. More than thirty inscriptions have been discovered, spread all over India, known as Edicts, dating from around 260 B.C., which made known the apostolic activity of Ashoka throughout the country⁵⁵. Some of these edicts, inscribed on stone pillars, were discovered in Kandahar in 1958, written in Greek and Aramaic and not in Prakrit (a language related to Sanskrit, which was spoken

⁵³ Martin Haug, *op. cit.*, p.124-125.

⁵⁴ Mostafa El-Abbadi, *Η αρχαία βιβλιοθήκη της Αλεξάνδρειας. Η ζωή και η μοίρα της (The Life and Faith of Ancient Library of Alexandria)*, Translation by Lena Kasimi, Athens, ΣΜΙΛΗ, 1998, p. 47.

⁵⁵ Robin Lane Fox, *Hellenistic Culture and Literature, The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*, edited by John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, Oswyn Murray, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 390.

in India between the 3rd century B.C. and 8th century A.D.), as would have been expected⁵⁶. The thirteenth Edict⁵⁷, discovered at Girnar, explicitly mentions the five rulers of the Hellenistic kingdoms⁵⁸, including Touramaya (Τουραμάγια), who was none other than Ptolemy II. El-Abbadi relates that, apart from the Buddhist monks, who displayed a simple attire and restrained behavior on the streets of Alexandria in the third century B.C., the citizens of the city had the opportunity to see, around 270 B.C., among the participants in an imposing royal parade, “Indian women, Indian dogs and twenty-six white Indian cows”⁵⁹, which proves an active cultural and exchange between the two kingdoms. The same Edict also indicated King Ashoka’s desire and efforts to convert Greeks to Buddhism inside and outside his empire⁶⁰.

In *De vita contemplativa*, Philon of Alexandria (24 B.C. – 40 A.D.) describes a spiritual community, which was called *Therapeutae* and was located near Alexandria, on the shores of Mareotis Lake, as a community of Buddhist ascetics, which had long been believed that they were a kind of reformed Jews (gr. Ἑσσηνοί). These *Therapeutae*, who were an essential model in the development of Christian monotheism, were neither Jews nor Christians, according to U. R. Kleinhempel. Philon stated that “this class of people can be found in many places” and that “there is a very large number of such people in Egypt, in every district or *nomi*, as they are called, and especially around Alexandria”. Regarding the form of organization of these believers, Philon uses the phrase “therapeutic communities”, about which Ullrich R. Kleinhempel says: “suggests a degree of coherence and possibly of central organization, at least a common identity, as belonging to the

⁵⁶ Rachel Mairs, *Bactria and India, The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, Edited by Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt, Oxford, United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 643. David Scott, *Buddhist Attitudes to Hellenism: A Review of the Issue*, “Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses”, 15/4, p. 433-41, automne/fall, Canada, 1986, p. 434.

⁵⁷ This edict mentioned the fact that the buddhist missions that had been sent in the four Hellenistic Kingdoms from East Mediterranean were succesful and that the buddhist faith called “Dhamma” was established there. The most probable region for the presence of a buddhist community was Alexandria, which had important commercial relations with India on the sea, towards the South of India, and on land, towards North-West India, where the buddhism was flourishing. Apud Ullrich R. Kleinhempel, *Traces of Buddhist Presence in Alexandria: Philo and the Therapeutae*, 2019, p. 5, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15496/publikation-51737> [24.03.2021].

⁵⁸ Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *op. cit.*, p. 147: Ashoka claimed in a famous fragment of the 13th Edict that he carried the victory of Buddhism (*Dhamma*) far beyond his borders, „to where reigns the Yona king Amtyoka, and further away then Amtyoka four kings, Turamaya, Amtikini, Maka and Alikasudara”. These kings were all identified as Greek kings, the first three being: the Seleucid king Antiochos II, Ptolemy II of Egypt and Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia. Makas was Magas of Cyrene and Alikasudara was identified by some sources with Alexander of Epirus and others by Alexander of Corinth. Greek translations from Arachosia indicated that Ashoka had well-trained people at his court to be sent as interpreters to the courts of these kings and to engage in debates with philosophers from different (philosophical) schools.

⁵⁹ Mostafa El-Abbadi, *op. cit.*, p. 47. Demetrios Th. Vassiliades (2004), p. 144, who cites Ptolemy Philadelphos’ name in these inscriptions as „Tulamaye”.

⁶⁰ Rachel Mairs, *op. cit.*, p. 643.

same religious community and as abiding by the same rules and values, sharing the same beliefs. This uniformity was so strong that it was readily recognizable to outsiders too”⁶¹. The above statements confirm the existence of numerous and well-organized communities of Buddhists throughout Ptolemaic Egypt, as well as in Alexandria and its vicinity, who shared the same spiritual values. From this we can understand the necessity of the existence of Buddhist sacred texts in these area. And if they existed in these communities, the royal Lagid Court was certainly aware of this and requested a copy of them, if not the original, to be translated into Greek and included in the Alexandrian Library.

The first Greek author to give accurate information about the Buddhist religion is Clement of Alexandria (154-222 A.D.) in *Στρώματα*⁶² (*Miscellanies*): “Among the Indians there are those philosophers who follow the precepts of Voutta (Buddha), which they honor as a god, because of his superior importance”⁶³. Another reference of an ancient Greek author to Buddhist writings belongs to Epiphanius of Salamis⁶⁴ who, writing about Ptolemy Philadelphos’ desire to gather in a library the books of all the peoples of the world, in order to be translated, mentions some books that were still missing from the library, including the books of the Indians. Epiphanius then records that the king sent an embassy to Jerusalem for the sacred books of the Jews, but makes no further reference to obtaining and translating the Buddhist writings of the Indians. According to Pliny the Elder⁶⁵, Ptolemy Philadelphos sent to India a certain Dionysios, who wrote a book on geography, frequently quoted by later authors, but about which Pliny states didn’t provide truthful information. It is possible that Philadelphos also sent a second emissary, because Pliny also refers to a certain Basilis⁶⁶, about whom Athenaios⁶⁷ states that he wrote a book about India⁶⁸.

Other ancient authors, such as Strabon and Athenaios, also mentioned the existence of Greek ambassadors to the Indian royal courts, one of them being Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta and Deimachos to the court of Bindusara, both known for their contribution to the spread of knowledge in the west about the Indian way of life⁶⁹. As for King Bindusara’s son

⁶¹ Ullrich R. Kleinhempel, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁶² Clement of Alexandria, *Στρώματα*, 1.15.5.

⁶³ *Εἰσι δὲ τῶν Ἰνδῶν οἱ τοῖς Βοῦττα πεπιθόμενοι παραγγέλμασιν, ὃν δι’ ὑπερβολὴν σεμνότητος ὡς θεὸν τετιμήκασι*, apud Demetrios Th. Vassiliades, *Greeks and Buddhism: Historical Contacts in the Development of a Universal Religion*, „The Eastern Buddhist”, new series, Vol. 36, No. 1/2 (2004), p. 134-183 (50 pages), Publisher Eastern Buddhist Society, p. 144.

⁶⁴ *Περὶ μέτρων καὶ σταθμῶν*, 9.

⁶⁵ Pliny, *NH*, VI, 58.

⁶⁶ Pliny, *NH*, VI, 183.

⁶⁷ *Deipnosophistae*, ix, 43.

⁶⁸ *Non tamen est diligentiae locus, adeo diversa et incredibilia traduntur*, apud Walter E. Clark, *The Importance of Hellenism from the Point of View of Indic-Philology*, “Classical Philology”, Vol. XIV, No. 4, University of Chicago, October, 1919, p. 307. Vincent Arthur Smith, *Asoka The Buddhist Emperor of India*, Third edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Apud Demetrios Th. Vassiliades, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

Ashoka, sources confirm that he lived in a society that had close relations with the Greeks. Woodcock even puts forward a surprising hypothesis that Ashoka had Greek origins, as his grandfather, Chandragupta, had married a Greek princess named Helena to Seleucos Nicator: “The treaty between the two kings was settled with a marriage agreement, by which a daughter of Seleucos entered the house of Chandragupta. Since she hardly had become the wife of any lesser person than the Indian emperor himself or his son and heir, Bindusara, the fascinating possibility arises that Ashoka, the greatest of the Mauryan emperors, may in fact, have been half or at least a quarter Greek”⁷⁰.

Given the existence of Greek ambassadors at the court of Indian kings for several generations, we can assume that embassies were also sent from India to the Hellenistic kingdoms. With the conversion of King Ashoka to Buddhism, sources confirm the sending of emissaries from India to the Hellenistic royal courts and, in particular, to the court of Ptolemy Philadelphos to preach Buddhism, as recorded in the Thirteenth Edict issued by the Indian king. About the friendship between Ptolemy Philadelphos and King Ashoka, ruler of the Maurya Kingdom between 273 and 232 B.C., writes George Sarton, historian and scientist, who closely dealt with the cultural and scientific achievements of the Hellenistic period. According to him, Philadelphos purchased war elephants and elephant rulers (mahout) from the Indian King Ashoka⁷¹. Author Kelly Trumble also states in *The Library of Alexandria* that Ptolemy II had diplomatic relations with Ashoka, the Buddhist king of India, and that “it is very likely that Buddhist texts were available in the Alexandrian Library”⁷².

Therefore we can conclude that the Buddhist sacred texts could reach the Alexandrian library in two ways: either as a result of the diplomatic relations between King Ptolemy II Philadelphos and the Indian King Ashoka, knowing that Philadelphos had written to all the rulers of the known world, requesting books for the Alexandrian Library or directly from the members of the Buddhist community in Alexandria.

These books of foreign origin, included in the Alexandrian Library at the initiative of the Lagid Kings, had an undeniable importance in spreading the knowledge and wisdom of faraway cultures in the Greek world, first in Alexandria and Ptolemaic Egypt, and later throughout οἰκουμένη, since Greek was *lingua franca* at the time and thus facilitated the spread of these works. This was possible due to the bibliophile ecumenism of the Ptolemies, who did not seek to gather only writings belonging to Greek culture in the Alexandrian Library, but wanted to include in their library all the science and wisdom of the world. The fact that the Lagids brought and translated into Alexandria works belonging to other cultures proves without a doubt their bibliophilic ecumenism.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁷¹ George Sarton, *Hellenistic Science and Culture in the Last Three Centuries B.C.*, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1993, p. 7-8.

⁷² Kelly Trumble, *Library of Alexandria*, New York, Clarion Books, 2003, p. 8.

Ancient library of Alexandria foreign book fund*Abstract*

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the Lagid Kings showed great interest not only in the works of Greek authors, but also in the non-Greek books. I argue here that in the Alexandrian Library there were also books that belonged to foreign cultures. According to sources, it seems that in the Alexandrian Library there were no books in other languages, but only in Greek, therefore the books of foreign origin had to be translated into Greek in order to be displayed in the Library. Among these books of foreign origins we mention the Hebrew Bible, the History of Babylon, written by a Babylonian priest named Berossos, the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism and the sacred Buddhist texts, which were written in faraway lands and were brought to Alexandria under the patronage of the Lagid kings, where they were translated and included in the famous royal library. These books had an undeniable importance in spreading the knowledge and wisdom of other cultures in the Greek world, first in Alexandria and Ptolemaic Egypt, and later throughout οἰκουμένη, since Greek was lingua franca at the time and thus facilitated the spread of these works. This was possible due to the bibliophile ecumenism of the Ptolemies, who did not seek to gather in the Alexandrian Library only writings belonging to Greek culture, but wanted to include in their library all the science and wisdom of the world.

Keywords: Lagid Dynasty; Ptolemy I Soter; Ptolemy II Philadelphos; Ptolemy III Evergetes; Library of Alexandria; bibliophilic ecumenism.

ABREVIERI

<i>AARMSI</i>	= Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice
<i>AARMSL</i>	= Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Literare
<i>AARPAD</i>	= „Analele Academiei Române”, seria II, București, 1879-1916
<i>AA.SS.</i>	= <i>Acta Sanctorum</i> , ed. Bollandisti, III ^a edițiune, Parigi 1863-1870
<i>AB</i>	= Arhivele Basarabiei
<i>ACNSAS</i>	= Arhivele Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității
<i>AE</i>	= L'Année Epigraphique, Paris
<i>AIR</i>	= Arhiva Istorică a României
<i>AIAC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj
<i>AIIAI</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie „A. D. Xenopol”, Iași
<i>AIIC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Cluj
<i>AIINC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională, Cluj
<i>AIIX</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”, Iași
<i>ALIL</i>	= Anuarul de Lingvistică și Istorie Literară, Iași
<i>ALMA</i>	= <i>Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi</i> . Genève.
<i>AM</i>	= Arheologia Moldovei, Iași
<i>AMAE</i>	= Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe
<i>AmAnthr</i>	= American Anthropologist, New Series, Published by Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association
<i>AMM</i>	= Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis, Vaslui
<i>AMMB</i>	= Arhiva Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, Iași
<i>AMN</i>	= Acta Musei Napocensis
<i>AMR</i>	= Arhivele Militare Române
<i>AMS</i>	= Anuarul Muzeului din Suceava
<i>ANB</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, București
<i>ANC</i>	= Arhivele Naționale. Serviciul Județean Cluj
<i>ANDMB</i>	= Arhivele Naționale. Direcția Municipiului București
<i>ANG</i>	= Arhivele Naționale. Serviciul Județean Galați
<i>ANI</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, Iași
<i>ANIC</i>	= Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale
<i>ANR-Cluj</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, Cluj-Napoca
<i>ANR-Sibiu</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, Sibiu
<i>ANRM</i>	= Arhivele Naționale ale Republicii Moldova, Chișinău
<i>ANRW</i>	= Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, Berlin-New York
<i>ANSMB</i>	= Arhivele Naționale. Serviciul Municipiului București
<i>ANV</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, Vaslui
<i>AO</i>	= Arhivele Olteniei
<i>AP</i>	= Analele Putnei
<i>APH</i>	= Acta Poloniae Historica, Varșovia
<i>AqLeg</i>	= <i>Aquila Legionis. Cuadernos de Estudios sobre el Ejército Romano</i> , Salamanca
<i>AR</i>	= Arhiva Românească
<i>ArchM</i>	= Arhiva Moldaviae, Iași
<i>ArhGen</i>	= Arhiva Genealogică
„Arhiva”	= „Arhiva”. Organul Societății Științifice și Literare, Iași
<i>ArhMold</i>	= Arheologia Moldovei
<i>ASRR</i>	= Arhiva Societății Române de Radiodifuziune
<i>AȘUI</i>	= Analele Științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași

- ATS = Ancient Textile Series, Oxbow Books, Oxford și Oakville
 AUAIC = Arhiva Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași
 AUB = Analele Universității „București”
 BA = *Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, Roma, Città Nuova Editrice
 BAR = Biblioteca Academiei Române
 BArchB = Bundesarchiv Berlin
 BAR int. ser. = British Archaeological Reports, International Series
 BBR = Buletinul Bibliotecii Române
 BCIR = Buletinul Comisiei Istorice a României
 BCMI = Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice
 BCU-Iași = Biblioteca Centrală Universitară, Iași
 BE = Bulletin Epigraphique
 BF = Byzantinische Forschungen, Amsterdam
 BJ = Bonner Jahrbücher, Bonn
 BMI = Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice
 BMIM = București. Materiale de istorie și muzeografie
 BNB = Biblioteca Națională București
 BNJ = Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher
 BOR = Biserica Ortodoxă Română
 BS = Balkan Studies
 BSNR = Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române
 ByzSlav = Byzantinoslavica
 CA = Cercetări arheologice
 CAI = Caiete de Antropologie Istorice
 CartNova = *La ciudad de Carthago Nova 3: La documentación epigráfica*, Murcia
 CB = Cahiers balkaniques
 CC = Codrul Cosminului, Suceava (ambele serii)
 CCAR = Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România, CIMEC, București
 CCh = *Corpus Christianorum*, Turnhout
 CChSG = *Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca*
 CCSL = *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Turnhout, Brepols
 CDM = *Catalogul documentelor moldovenești din Arhivele Centrale de Stat*, București, vol. I-V; supl. I.
 CDȚR = *Catalogul documentelor Țării Românești din Arhivele Statului*, București, vol. II-VIII, 1974-2006
 Chiron = Chiron: Mitteilungen der Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, 1971
 CI = Cercetări istorice (ambele serii)
 CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berlin
 CL = Cercetări literare
 CLRE = *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire*, eds. R. S. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S. R. Schwartz, K. A. Worp, Atlanta, 1987
 CN = Cercetări Numismatice
 CNA = Cronica Numismatică și Arheologică, București
 CSCO = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Louvain
 CSEA = *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiae Aquileiensis*, Roma, Città Nuova Editrice
 CSEL = *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Wien, De Gruyter
 CSPAMI = Centrul de Studii și Păstrare a Arhivelor Militare Centrale, Pitești
 CT = Columna lui Traian, București
 CTh = *Codex Theodosianus*. Theodosiani, Libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis, I, edidit adsumpto apparatu P. Kruegeri, Th. Mommsen, Hildesheim, 1970-1971
 Cv.L = Convorbiri literare (ambele serii)

„Dacia”, N.S.	= Dacia. Nouvelle Série, Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne, București
DANIC	= Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale
DGAS	= Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Statului
DI	= Diplomatarium Italicum
DIR	= <i>Documente privind istoria României</i>
DIRRI	= <i>Documente privind Istoria României. Războiul pentru Independență</i>
DOP	= Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DTN	= <i>Din trecutul nostru</i> , Chișinău
DRH	= <i>Documenta Romaniae Historica</i>
EB	= Études Balkaniques
EBPB	= Études byzantines et post-byzantines
EDCS	= <i>Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss-Slaby</i> (http://www.manfredclauss.de/)
EDR	= <i>Epigraphic Database Roma</i> (http://www.edr-edr.it/default/index.php)
EpigrAnat	= Epigraphica Anatolica, Münster
ERAsturias	= F. Diego Santos, <i>Epigrafiya Romana de Asturias</i> , Oviedo, 1959.
Gerión	= Gerión. Revista de Historia Antigua, Madrid
GB	= Glasul Bisericii
GCS	= <i>Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller</i> , Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1897-1969
GLK	= <i>Grammatici Latini Keil</i>
HEp	= <i>Hispania Epigraphica</i> , Madrid
„Hierasus”	= <i>Hierasus</i> . Anuarul Muzeului Județean Botoșani, Botoșani
HM	= Heraldica Moldaviae, Chișinău
HU	= Historia Urbana, Sibiu
HUI	= Historia Universitatis Iassensis, Iași
IDR	= <i>Inscripțiile din Dacia romană</i> , Bucurști-Paris
IDRE	= <i>Inscriptions de la Dacie romaine. Inscriptions externes concernant l'histoire de la Dacie</i> , I-II, Bucarest, 1996, 2000
IGLN	= Inscriptions grecques et latines de Novae, Bordeaux
IGLR	= <i>Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV-XIII descoperite în România</i> , București, 1976
ILLPecs	= Instrumenta Inscripta Latina. <i>Das römische Leben im Spiegel der Kleininschriften</i> , Pecs, 1991
ILAlg	= <i>Inscriptions latines d'Algérie</i> , Paris
ILB	= <i>Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria repertae. Inscriptiones inter Oescum et Iatrum repertae</i> , Sofia, 1989
ILD	= <i>Inscripții latine din Dacia</i> , București
ILN	= <i>Inscriptions latines de Novae</i> , Poznan
ILLPRON	= <i>Inscriptionum Lapidarium Latinarum Provinciae Norici usque ad annum MCMLXXXIV repertarum indices</i> , Berlin, 1986
ILS	= <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , 1892
IMS	= <i>Inscriptiones Moesiae Superioris</i> , Belgrad
IN	= „Ioan Neculce”. Buletinul Muzeului Municipal Iași
ISM	= <i>Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine</i> , București, vol. I-III, 1983-1999
JGO	= Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas
JL	= Junimea literară
JRS	= The Journal of Roman studies, London
LR	= Limba română
MA	= Memoria Antiquitatis, Piatra Neamț
MCA	= Materiale și cercetări arheologice
MEF	= <i>Moldova în epoca feudalismului</i> , vol. I-XII, 1961-2012, Chișinău
MEFRA	= <i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Antiquité</i> , Roma

- MGH = *Monumenta Germaniae Historica inde ab anno Christi quingentesimo usque ad annum millesimum et quingentesimum auspiciis societatis aperiendis fontibus rerum Germanicarum medii aevi*, Berlin 1877-
 MI = Magazin istoric, București
 MIM = Materiale de istorie și muzeografie
 MM = Mitropolia Moldovei
 MMS = Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei
 MN = Muzeul Național, București
 MO = Mitropolia Olteniei
 MOF = Monitorul Oficial al României
 Navarro = M. Navarro Caballero, *Perfectissima femina. Femmes de l'elite dans l'Hispanie romaine*, Bordeaux, 2017.
 NBA = *Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana*, Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum
 NDPAC = *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, I, A-E, 2e edizione, Marietti, 2006; III, P-Z, 2e edizione, Marietti, 2008
 NEH = *Nouvelles études d'histoire*
 OI = Opțiuni istoriografice, Iași
 OPEL = *Onomasticon provinciarum Europae latinarum*, vol. I-IV, Budapesta-Viena, 1994-2002
 PG = *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, 1886-1912
 PIR = *Prosopographia Imperii Romani. Saec. I.II.III*, editio altera, Berlin.
 PLRE = *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vol., eds. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, Cambridge, 1971-1992
 RA = Revista arhivelor
 RBAR = Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române, București
 RC = Revista catolică
 RdI = Revista de istorie
 REByz = *Revue des Études Byzantines*
 RER = *Revue des études roumaines*
 RESEE = *Revue des études Sud-Est européennes*
 RHP = *Die römischen Hilfstruppen in Pannonien während der Prinzipatszeit. I: Die Inschriften*, Viena
 RHSEE = *Revue historique de Sud-Est européen*
 RI = Revista istorică (ambele serii)
 RIAF = Revista pentru istorie, arheologie și filologie
 RIB = *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, Londra
 RIM = Revista de Istorie a Moldovei, Chișinău
 RIR = Revista istorică română, București
 RIS = Revista de istorie socială, Iași
 RITL = Revista de istorie și teorie literară
 RIU = *Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns*, Budapesta
 RJMH = *The Romanian Journal of Modern History*, Iași
 RM = Revista muzeelor
 RMD = *Roman Military Diplomas*, Londra
 RMM = *Römische Militärdiplome und Entlassungsurkunden in der Sammlung des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums*, Mainz
 RMM-MIA = Revista muzeelor și monumentelor, seria Monumente istorice și de artă
 RMR = Revista Medicală Română
 RRH = *Revue roumaine d'histoire*
 RRHA = *Revue roumaine de l'histoire de l'art*
 RRHA-BA = *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art. Série Beaux Arts*
 RSIAB = Revista Societății istorice și arheologice bisericești, Chișinău
 Rsl = Romanoslavica

<i>SAHIR</i>	= Studia et Acta Historiae Iudaeorum Romaniae, București
<i>SAI</i>	= Studii și Articole de Istorie
<i>SCB</i>	= Studii și cercetări de bibliologie
<i>Sch</i>	= <i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> , Paris
<i>SCIA</i>	= Studii și cercetări de istoria artei
<i>SCIM</i>	= Studii și cercetări de istorie medie
<i>SCIV/SCIVA</i>	= Studii și cercetări de istorie veche (și arheologie)
<i>SCN</i>	= Studii și Cercetări Numismatice, București
<i>SCȘI</i>	= Studii și cercetări științifice, Istorie
<i>SEER</i>	= The Slavonic and East European Review
<i>SHA</i>	= <i>Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i>
<i>SJAN</i>	= Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale
<i>SMIC</i>	= Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană, București
<i>SMIM</i>	= Studii și materiale de istorie medie, București
<i>SMIMod</i>	= Studii și materiale de istorie modernă, București
<i>SOF</i>	= Südost-Forschungen, München
<i>ST</i>	= Studii Teologice, București
<i>StAntArh</i>	= Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica, Iași
<i>T&MBYZ</i>	= <i>Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de recherches d'histoire et de civilisation byzantines</i>
<i>ThD</i>	= Thraco-Dacica, București
<i>TR</i>	= Transylvanian Review, Cluj-Napoca
<i>TV</i>	= Teologie și viața, Iași
<i>ZPE</i>	= Zeitschrift für Papyralogie und Epigraphik
<i>ZSL</i>	= Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde