

NEW NON-EVIDENCE FOR THE NAME OF BABRIUS

Paris. gr. 2511 (*P*), hitherto unnoticed, indicates that the name Valerius Babrius has been wrongly deduced from the evidence of two other MSS (*AH*). What we in fact have is two malformations of Βαβρίου, that is, Βαλερίου (*PH*) and Βαλεβρίου (*A*).

The evidence usually cited for the name of the Mythiambographer includes *Harley MS.* 3521 (= *H*, now in the British Museum)¹. This MS contains *adversaria* of Scaliger among those of some seventeenth century humanists². On fol. 17 (*recto* and *verso*) an unknown scholar (Dilherr?) has copied Babrius fab. 58 together with the title Βαλερίου χωριαμβικοὶ στίχοι ἐκ τῶν Αἰσώπου μύθων. Above this title one finds 5 illegible letters followed by Βαβρίου. It has been suggested that *H* in effect gives the name Babrius Valerius. Now the principal MS of Babrius, the Athoan codex (*A* = *Brit. Mus. Add. MS* 22087), gives the name Βαλεβρίου, «which may be an error by syncopation for Βαλερίου Βαβρίου»³. Thus the full name Valerius Babrius may be deduced⁴.

While working in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale during the Summer of 1979, I came across a very close relative of *H*, namely, *Paris. gr.* 2511 (*P*). On fol. 56 *recto* this MS contains the same fable (58) with the same title, but without the five illegible letters or Βαβρίου. Again an isolated transcription of fab. 58, but in a MS some three centuries older than the seventeenth century *H*. Omont dates *P* to the fifteenth century⁵, but we may now correct this to the fourteenth. Two watermarks correspond to Briquet nos. 5765-66 and 7497, 7502-3 respectively; these types range from 1348 A. D. to 1383. The writing too should be dated to the same

¹ The evidence for the name of Babrius is cited and discussed at Crusius, «Babrius», *RE* II 2 (1896), col. 2656, 47 ss. See also B. E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Cambridge, Mass. & London 1965), pp. lii-liiii (henceforth: Perry, *Babrius*); and P. Bádenas de la Peña and J. López Facal, *Fábulas de Esopo, Vida de Esopo, Fábulas de Babrio*, Madrid 1978, p. 291.

² Cf. Clark, *CR* 5, 1891, p. 365 ss.

³ Perry, *Babrius*, p. lii.

⁴ It must be noted that Crusius, Perry and Facal (*loc. cit.*, *supra* n. 1) all express strong doubts about this deduction.

⁵ *Inventaire sommaire des MSS grecs de la Bibliothèque nationale*, etc. II, Paris 1888, p. 275 s.

period according to M. Charles Astruc, who very kindly examined *P* at my request.

Before turning to the new MS we should clear up some difficulties of the old. The main problem here is what we are to make of Βαβρίου and the illegible letters that precede. The following interpretation by Musgrave is supported by autopsy: «In MSto nomini Βαβρίου, quod in prima linea clare legitur, praefigitur vocula, ut videtur, Latina, sed characteribus ex festinatione scribentis tam perverse formatis, ut de vera eorum potestate aliquid certi statuere difficillimum sit, nisi forte plura eiusdem manus scripta inspiciendi facultas detur. Coniicere licet, nomen illud Βαβρίου esse emendationem alterius, quod infra scribitur, Βαλερίου...»¹.

The four or five letters preceding Βαβρίου certainly seem Roman rather than Greek. Lewis suggests «Versus» —a remote possibility². Less likely is Rutherford's view that the copyist set out to write Βαλερίου, stopped at the epsilon, and then erased Βαλε³. There is no sign of erasure here. Nor does Perry's interpretation convince. According to the latter the copyist first writes Βαβρίου, correcting the erroneous Βαλεβρίου of his presumed source, *A*; then «in the second line, on further thought», he substitutes Βαλερίου «in place of his original correction, Βαβρίου»⁴.

The evidence of *P* further confirms Musgrave. The new MS gives the text of fable 58 (closely agreeing with *AH*) preceded by the title Βαλερίου χωριαμβικοί στίχοι, ἐκ τῶν Αἰσώπου μύθων. This title is exactly the same as *H*'s including the error χωρ —for χωλ—. But in *P* there is no trace of Βαβρίου or of the mysterious Latin(?) letters. The obvious deduction is that both *P* and *H* go back to a common source best represented by *P*, or *H* may derive directly or indirectly from *P* itself. The copyist of *H* writes the title exactly as it occurs in *P*, and then adds Βαβρίου in the line above to correct the erroneous Βαλερίου.

Thus *H* is not evidence for the name Βαβρίου Βαλερίου, much less Valerius Babrius⁵. Both *P* and *H* give the name Βαλερίου, a malfor-

¹ Musgrave *apud* Tyrwhitt, *Diss. de Babrio* (London 1776), reprinted at *Fabulae Aesopicae* ed. F. de Furia (Leipzig 1810), pp. CLIII-CCIII. Musgrave is cited at Furia p. CCIII. Note that the Leipzig ed. of Furia reprints the original ed., Florence 1809, and very usefully includes *inter alia* Bentley on Aesop and Tyrwhitt on Babrius.

² «On the Fables of Babrius», *Philological Museum* 1, 1832, p. 292 n. on fab. 4, 7.

³ *Babrius* ed. W. G. Rutherford, London 1883, p. xix.

⁴ Perry, *Babrius*, p. liii n. 1.

⁵ «...Babrius Valerius... is by no means equivalent to Val. B., which alone is plausible as a Roman name.» Perry, *Babrius*, p. liii.

mation parallel to *A*'s Βαλεβρίου, itself possibly the ancestor of *PH*'s misnomer¹. As for «Valerius», *requiescat in pace*, or at least *apud* L. Herrmann².

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¹ Cf. Perry, *Babrius*, pp. lii-liii.

² *Babrius et ses poèmes*, Brussels 1973, p. 22.