

Guglielmo Cavallo & Herwig Maehler (eds.), *Hellenistic Bookhands*, Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008. Pp. xvii + 153, 12 figures, and 96 black & white plates. ISBN 978-3-11-020124-6. €99.00 / \$141.00.

- [1] At a first glance readers of TC may wonder why a book on the palaeography of Greek bookhands in the Hellenistic era (from 4th BC to the end of the Augustan era) should be of value for those interested in biblical textual criticism. The answer is both easy and complex at the same time. Of course, early manuscripts of the Greek Bible, i.e. the Septuagint (and other versions) and the New Testament, are written by certain scribes and copyists who employed writing styles typical of specific time periods. Consequently, palaeography is *the* tool (a) to identify these styles, (b) to ascribe a date to a scribe's hand in an individual manuscript, and (c) to characterize the manuscript itself somewhat further (e.g., its purpose). The more difficult task, however, is to get familiar with the criteria and method of palaeography in order to benefit from this scientific and, to some scholars, quite arcane discipline. Thus, *Hellenistic Bookhands*, published by two distinguished and well-respected specialists in this field of research, is very much welcome as it helps us to understand and follow the reasoning that ends up assigning a certain date to a manuscript on the basis of paleographical data (e.g., the formation of letters) and in providing further essential data for the socio-cultural background of a manuscript.
- [2] Guglielmo Cavallo and Herwig Maehler (hereafter C&M) have already provided an indispensable tool for those using palaeography to describe manuscripts in more detail and more appropriately in relation to letters, layout, punctuation, diacritical signs etc. Their *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period: A.D. 300-800* (BICS Supplement 47; London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1987) has become a classic, and many scholars of textual criticism are familiar with Cavallo's *Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica*, (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), though he has published many more outstanding studies than the titles mentioned here alone.
- [3] Without doubt there are quite a few handbooks of palaeography that serve as classic and brilliant reference tools today, for example, W. Schubart, *Griechische Paläographie* (HAW 1.4.1; München: C.H. Beck, 1925 [repr. 1966]), C.H. Roberts, *Greek Literary Hands, 350 BC – AD 400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), R. Barbour, *Greek Literary Hands, A.D. 400-1600* (Oxford Palaeographical Handbooks; Oxford-New York: Clarendon Press, 1981), R. Seider, *Paläographie der griechischen Papyri* (3 vols.: I. Tafeln, 1. Teil: Urkunden, Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1967; II. Tafeln, 2. Teil: Literarische Papyri, Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1970; III 1: Urkundenschrift. Mit einer Vorgeschichte zur Paläographie der griechischen Papyri, Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1990), E.G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (BICS Supplement 46; 2nd ed. revised by P.J. Parsons; London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1987), and, recently published, H. Harrauer, *Handbuch der griechischen Paläographie: Textband – Tafelband* (Bibliothek des Buchwesens 20-21; Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2010). But C&M rightly stress that (v) “[t]he development and typology of Greek bookhands in the Hellenistic era ... has never been explored in a monograph.” So, *Hellenistic Bookhands* constitutes a missing link for the comprehensive description of the development of Greek scripts.
- [4] In their preface (v-vii), C&M present crucial information about the layout, structure, and method of their book. Although both editors – and others, too – had their share in producing this fine publication (Maehler: bibliographical data and description of individual hands; Cavallo [together with Edoardo Crisci, Paola Degni and Filippo Ronconi]: definition of groups of stylistically related hands), they underline that the book as a whole is the product of many years of fruitful exchange and cooperation with each other and with other colleagues all over Europe and the United States of America.
- [5] The book offers a list of abbreviations and a bibliography at the beginning of the book (xiii-xvii), a list of papyri, indices (authors and general), and photographic credits (145-153).

- With these in hand the reader is well equipped and can easily navigate through the volume.
- [6] Of particular help is the introduction (pp. 1-24) in which C&M provide a general survey of Greek alphabetic writing (also based on vases, ostraca, and inscriptions) before they address the special topic of their volume. For them *Hellenistic* is a bookhand “from the middle of the fourth century BC to about the middle of the first century AD” (6). Thus, they avoid the term *Ptolemaic* in order to stress that some writing styles survived the time of Ptolemaic rule and that writing was also found outside Egypt (e.g., in Derveni, Qumran, and Herculaneum). In addition, they define the term *bookhand* as “the kinds of script in which literary texts were copied” (6) though a differentiation between literary and documentary scripts is not always an obvious one and is sometimes rather difficult to make. All in all, the rationale is that the term covers those scripts and hands “that keep the letters separate and bilinear” (7). Then, the authors discuss the oldest surviving Greek books (e.g., the Derveni and the Timotheos papyri), book production and literary scripts, and the emergence of the Greek cursive. Special focus is set on a brief description of letter forms and their development as a means to distinguish between writing specimens from different periods of time and how to date them at all. By means of twelve images, C&M visualize what they describe in words. Then they discuss literary and documentary scripts and features common to them, the situation in the second century BC, in the first centuries BC and AD, the layout of specific texts, the use of aids to the reader (e.g. ekthesis, paragraphos, blank space, high stop, and dicolon), and indicators of scholarly activity (e.g. again ekthesis, accents, breathings, punctuation, coronis, but, above all, dipole, asterisk, and obelos). Their concise remarks are essential and very sufficient.
- [7] Of course, the section with texts and plates forms the major part of the book (25-143) with 96 papyri discussed in detail, starting with the “classic” *P.Thessaloniki* (the Derveni papyrus). The 96 Greek papyri are arranged in clusters or groups consisting of stylistically related hands. For every manuscript readers are supplied with relevant bibliographical data, a palaeographical description, and a transcription of the text that is found on the corresponding image. Discussion and transcription are given on the left pages and the image on the facing right pages with only a few exceptions where discussion and transcription are on the same page as their corresponding image. C&W provide the size of the images in percentages so that readers can see if an image is reduced or enlarged relative to the original. After the individual presentation of bookhands forming a certain group, C&W discuss the members of such a cluster in more detail and precisely demonstrate the development of that special style of writing. Here and there attentive readers find that C&W demonstrate in their volume what they stated in their introduction: not only literary texts were written by scribes employing bookhands but there are documents, too. Thus, many clusters include one or more documents.
- [6] Scholars working on textual criticism might be disappointed that the volume does not include any biblical manuscripts, nor is there any item from a Jewish or Christian background. This partly results from the period of time covered (mid-fourth century BC to mid-first century AD). But it is definitely not a shortcoming. Everybody working with manuscripts should understand the development of scripts. Therefore, a biblical scholar who works with a manuscript and is about to discuss its palaeography in some detail should not only compare it with contemporary ones including those classified as biblical (whether Jewish or Christian), but he or she should also know about the development of scripts in order to better understand the formation of letters in the manuscript being studied.
- [7] *Hellenistic Bookhands* is a major and indispensable reference tool and, at the same time, a brilliant guide to palaeography. Not only is it a must-have for people (a) who are very fond of documents and manuscripts from antiquity (and late antiquity), (b) who are working with manuscripts and (c) who have some background in and understanding of palaeography, (d) it is a masterpiece of accuracy. Transcriptions are correct, formulations are brief and precise. If you want to do serious work on manuscripts, make sure that your library has this book.

Bibliophiles will also want a copy for their own bookshelves.

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