

WATER AND PARADOXOGRAPHY: POLEMON'S WORK Περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ θαυμαζομένων ποταμῶν

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1. INTRODUCTION

The wondrous world in the field of myth, art, ethnography and especially of nature had aroused a great interest in the Greeks from very ancient times.¹ Archilochus, in a famous passage,² used for the first time the term θαυμάσιος to indicate the solar eclipse in 648 BC, a phenomenon that was perceived as belonging to the divine sphere, according to a typical way of thinking of the ancient world, in which wonderful aspects of nature had long been seen as a manifestation of the supernatural.³

Curiosity about the wonders of nature and fabled peoples is already to be found in Homer and in particular in the *Odyssey*, where the link between the marvellous facts and the divine sphere is clearly evident:⁴ the term τέρας always implies a reference to the divine, often present even where it is written θαῦμα, a word used to

1 See the paradoxographic studies by K. ZIEGLER, s.v. *Paradoxographoi*, in RE XVIII 3, 1949, pp. 1137–1166; A. GIANNINI, *Studi sulla paradossografia greca. I. Da Omero a Callimaco: motivi e forme del meraviglioso*, “RIL” 97 (1963), pp. 247–66; Id., *Studi sulla paradossografia greca. II. Da Callimaco all’età imperiale*, “Acme” 17 (1964), pp. 99–138; C. JACOB, *De l’Art de compiler à la fabrication du merveilleux. Sur la paradoxographie grecque*, “LALIES” 2 (1980), pp. 121–40; G. SCHEPENS – K. DELCROIX, *Ancient Paradoxography: Origin, Evolution, Production and Reception*, in O. PECERE (ed.), *La letteratura di consumo nel mondo greco-latino*, Cassino 1996, pp. 373–460; M.M. SASSI, “Mirabilia”, in C. CAMBIANO, L. CANFORA, D. LANZA (edd.), *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica*, vol. 1, *La produzione e la circolazione del testo*, tome 2, *L’Ellenismo*, Roma 1993, pp. 449–68; O. WENSKUS, s.v. *Paradoxographoi*, in *Der Neue Pauly* 9, 2000, pp. 309–312; Á. IBÁÑEZ CHACÓN, *Poesía y paradoxographia*, “Maia” 60 (2008), pp. 393–404; I. PAJON LEYRA, *Paradoxografía griega: estudio de un género literario*, Diss. Madrid 2008, Madrid 2009; Ead., *Entre ciencia y maravilla: El género literario de la paradoxographia griega*, Zaragoza 2011. For the texts of the paradoxographic authors see the collections by A. WESTERMANN (ed.), *Παραδοξόγραφοι, Scriptores rerum mirabilium Graeci*, Brunsvigae – Londini 1839 (= Amsterdam 1963); O. KELLER (ed.), *Rerum naturalium scriptores graeci minores*, Leipzig 1877; A. GIANNINI (ed.), *Paradoxographorum Graecorum Reliquiae*, Milano 1967.

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2 Archilochus, fr. 122 West.

3 GIANNINI, *Studi cit.*, I, pp. 250, 253 with note 39.

4 See G. NENCI, *La concezione del meraviglioso nei poemi omerici*, “AAT” 92 (1957–8), pp. 275–311, part. pp. 281–93. Homer had already been attributed by the Stoà with the creation of the paradoxographic literature (Ps.-Plut. *Vit. Hom.* 6.618), see G. VANOTTI (ed.), *De mirabilibus auscultationibus*, Padova 1997, p. VII.

indicate a miraculous event or a marvel from an aesthetic point of view.⁵ However, it is in the episode of Polyphemus that the interest for the wondrous, intended in the way which will be typical of the paradoxographic literature, emerges. He is referred to as a “wondrous monster” who “was not like a man that lives by bread, but like a wooded peak of lofty mountains, which stands out to view alone, apart from the rest”⁶. Polyphemus was therefore a creature who astonishes because he goes beyond the horizon of what is known, contrary to all expectations. The attention to what is out of the ordinary and exceeds the bounds of human experience will effectively be one of the elements which will cross the centuries up to the Hellenistic period and beyond, becoming one of the main features of the paradoxographic writings.

The Homeric Odysseus, so curious towards the lands and the peoples he comes into contact with, embodies the spirit of the Ionic world. The colonisation and the commercial development that took place in the VIII–VII century B.C. spurred on the Ionians of Asia Minor to compete with new human and geographical realities, which both attracted and repelled. Fascination with the marvellous developed in conjunction with the rise of geographical and ethnographic interests which led to the birth of the *periploi* literature and the subsequent literary experiences of Herodotus and the logographers. The *mirabilia* in Herodotus, especially in the naturalistic and ethnographic fields, represent a frequent τόπος.⁷ Alongside the attention with which climatic and zoological peculiarities as well as customs of people such as the Egyptians⁸ and the Arabs⁹ are described, a particular interest for the world of water is observed in Herodotus, with a view to highlighting wonderful and extraordinary aspects. Paradoxographic aura can be perceived in the description of the Nile and the Meride lake in Egypt: the historian notes that the Nile behaves in a totally different way from all other rivers and he is therefore led to delve more deeply into the reason for this peculiarity, all the more remarkable for the fact that none of the Egyptians, when questioned about it, could provide a scientific and acceptable explanation;¹⁰ he also describes the Meride lake as a *thauma* because of the size and human ingenuity with which it had been excavated and realized.¹¹ The amplitude of the Pontus Euxinus is observed with a similar degree of astonishment.¹²

The lively curiosity for whatever is strange and abnormal, which could be found in the Ionic world that Polemon himself came from, was inherited from the

5 VANOTTI, *De mirabilibus* cit., pp. 251–52.

6 Hom. *Od.* 9.190–191 (translation by A. T. MURRAY, Loeb edition).

7 Cf. K. TRÜDINGER, *Studien zur Geschichte der griechisch-römischen Ethnographie*, Diss. Basel 1918, pp. 34–37; A. MOMIGLIANO, *Alien Wisdom: the Limits of Hellenization*, Cambridge 1975, p. 25; W. M. BLOOMER, *The Superlative Nomoi of Herodotus's Histories*, “CIAnt” 12 (1993), pp. 30–50.

8 Hdt. II.35–36. The presence of numerous *thaumasia* in Egypt is indicated by Herodotus as the reason why he devotes considerable time to this region where natural phenomena and customs are very different from those the Greeks are accustomed to.

9 On Arabia and the Arabs see Hdt. II.75; III.107–113.

10 Hdt. II.19–22.

11 Hdt. II.149.1.

12 Hdt. IV.85.

rhetorical historiography of the Isocrates school with Ephorus¹³ and especially with Theopompus,¹⁴ in whose writings we find it combined with the awareness of offering the readers a welcome distraction from the historical description. In the Alexandrine age the wondrous as a reason for ῥῆδονή will be the basis for the development of paradoxography as an independent genre. Among the many authors who in the fourth century B. C. were interested in *paradoxa*, a prominent role should be attributed to the historians of Alexander, who were particularly interested in the fabulous customs of the East, in the flora and fauna of the lands conquered by the Macedonian king.

2. POLEMON AND THE RISE OF THE PARADOXOGRAPHIC GENRE

The line of studies that made the most significant contribution to the rise of a specific literary εἶδος was the Peripatetic school. Among the exponents of the Peripathos the taste for everything that is curious and unusual resulted, at least initially, in scientific research. In this sense Aristotle's critical investigation, devoted especially to the animal kingdom and meteorological phenomena, was crucial and aimed not at a mere collection of material but at a detailed analysis which would make it possible to comprehend the laws of nature. He promoted an ambitious gathering of data, intended to cover all branches of knowledge, from literature and natural phenomena to science, seen from every possible angle. In the late Peripathos research which had originally been directed towards the acquisition of new knowledge, gradually gave way to a taste for the gathering of data for its own sake. Aristotle's successor in the direction of the Peripathos was Theophrastus, who turned his attention primarily to the field of botany but did not neglect other interests dear to paradoxography which are evident in his writings *περὶ ὑδάτων*, *περὶ λίθων* and *περὶ ζώων*. He had access to a huge amount of data, deriving from the studies by Aristotle, some of which could be rationalised, while other items lacked an immediate scientific explanation. Theophrastus, followed by members of the Peripathos, devoted his attention to the latter and over time the impetus to scientific inquiry that had been typical of their master Aristotle was lost.¹⁵

Polemon's erudition is clearly indebted to the Peripatetic model and was undoubtedly influenced by the Aristotelian school, although he never explicitly de-

13 GIANNINI, *Reliquiae* cit., p. 364.

14 The *mirabilia*, which are extensively present in the historical work of Theopompus, have been widely used by the paradoxographers of later periods. A writing entitled *Θαυμάσια* has been ascribed to him. The presence in the eighteenth book of his *Philippika* (*FGrHist* 115, F 64–77) of a large number of *mirabilia*, however, has suggested two hypotheses: the work *Θαυμάσια* could be a section of the *Philippika* (JACOBY, *FGrHist* II B, *Komm.* p. 365), detached some time later from the rest of his work, or it could be a subsequent work made up of extracts taken from the author's total production (cf. ZIEGLER, s. v. *Paradoxographoi* cit., pp. 1144–45). Cf. GIANNINI, *Studi* cit., II, pp. 102–104; Id., *Reliquiae* cit., pp. 365–68; W. R. CONNOR, *Theopompus and fifth-Century Athens*, Washington 1968, pp. 12–13; G. S. SHRIMPTON, *Theopompus the Historian*, Montreal – London 1991, pp. 15–20; SCHEPENS, *Paradoxography* cit., p. 380 with note 18.

15 Sassi, *Mirabilia* cit., pp. 454–57.

clares his indebtedness or makes direct references in any of his fragments. We do not know for certain whether Polemon joined one specific philosophical school, but the interest he showed for the *thaumasia* in the naturalistic field as well as the information that he provides on topics of botany and zoology and the almost encyclopedic collection of data does recall the Aristotelian school as it had developed over time.¹⁶ His learned approach to research with this insistence on details and his attention to the precise organization of the information according to criteria among which that of geography, which characterised the classification of knowledge of this school, lead to a similar reflection.¹⁷

The previous examples of the paradoxographic literature were resumed by Callimachus, who was undoubtedly known to Polemon and who devoted particular attention to the theme of the wondrous for its own sake. All the elements present in the authors, who had already made the marvellous the object of their interests, merged in him and from this point onwards we can refer to paradoxography as an independent literary tradition.¹⁸

The work *Θαυμάτων τῶν εἰς ἅπασαν τὴν γῆν κατὰ τόπους ὄντων συναγωγή*, handed down to us by the *Suida*¹⁹ and known also by the shorter titles *Ἐκλογή τῶν παραδόξων*²⁰ and *Θαυμάσια*, which are likely to have been of common use, must be assigned to Callimachus, who is generally recognized as the founder of the paradoxographic genre. If the title is by no means sure, because of textual problems which cannot be easily solved,²¹ it can be said with a reasonable degree of certainty that his writing was organized by geographical sections, each of which in turn is thought to have been subdivided into different topics. The theme regarding *paradoxa* of water received particular attention as is shown by the surviving fragments, thirty-nine out of forty-eight of which were related to hydrographic material.²² Philostephanus²³ can be placed in the same line as Callimachus. He too was a native of Cyrene and may also have been his student, the author of *περὶ παραδόξων ποταμῶν*, which was very close to the interests of his probable master, as can be seen in the work on the specific and sectorial subject of the wonderful rivers.

16 M. ANGELUCCI, *Polemone di Ilio: fra ricostruzione biografica e interessi antiquari*, “SCO” 49 (2003), p. 170; Ead., *Polemon's Contribution to the Hellenistic Literature of the Second Century B. C.*, “Hormos” 3 n. s. (2011), p. 329.

17 R. CAPEL BADINO (ed.), *Filostefano di Cirene. Testimonianze e frammenti*, Milano 2010, pp. 35–36.

18 GIANNINI, *Studi cit.*, I, pp. 264–65. See also R. PFEIFFER, *Storia della filologia classica, dalle origini alla fine dell'età ellenistica*, ed. it. Napoli 1973, pp. 223–24; GIANNINI, *Reliquiae cit.*, pp. 15–20.

19 *Suid.* κ 227.

20 On the problem of the connection between *ἐκλογή* and *συναγωγή* see SCHEPENS, *Paradoxographoi cit.*, p. 395 note 68 who rejects the idea that considers the *ἐκλογή* an epitome and gives an account of the different positions of modern scholars. See also GIANNINI, *Studi cit.*, II, pp. 105–106 with note 33.

21 On the textual problems of the title see SCHEPENS, *Paradoxography cit.*, p. 395 note 68.

22 GIANNINI, *Studi cit.*, I, pp. 107–108.

23 GIANNINI, *ibid.*, pp. 21–23.

Polemon was also unquestionably familiar with the writings of Antigonus of Carystus, whom he attacked in the work πρὸς Ἀδαῖον καὶ Ἀντίγονον, which consisted of at least six books. The author, a contemporary of Philostephanus and slightly younger than Callimachus, may be identified with the sculptor and versatile writer who flourished at the school of Pergamon, particularly during the reign of Attalus I. Modern scholars are in some doubt as to whether he should be credited with the ἱστοριῶν παραδόξων συναγωγή on various paradoxographic topics, organised according to an organic plan where the thematic criterion can be found. The topic which was best structured and richest in details after the zoological theme, is unquestionably the one connected with water (ch. 129–65).²⁴ Dorandi,²⁵ however, has questioned the authenticity of this writing, claiming that it should be considered the work of a Byzantine compiler, who lived probably at the time of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. He argues that it is the result of *excerpta* of paradoxographic works including the tract Περὶ ζώων by Antigonus, the Περὶ ζώων ἱστορίας by Aristotle, the work Θαυμάτων τῶν εἰς ἅπασαν τὴν γῆν κατὰ τόπους ὄντων συναγωγή by Callimachus. Alongside the thematic criterion there is the bibliographical, which allows the subdivision of the material on the basis of the sources used, as was the intention of the author, who points out the beginning and the end of the Aristotelian sections and the beginning of the Callimachean ones.²⁶

Irrespective of who the author really is, the collection is essential for the information conveyed and for the authors whose testimony is thus preserved. It enables us to understand more clearly the paradoxographic material, which is frequently passed on by fragments very brief and unsystematic.

In this context Polemon's paradoxographic work, with its particular emphasis on the *paradoxa* of water, according to a typical predilection of the Hellenistic age, which saw the flowering of paradoxographic writings,²⁷ can more easily be understood: the perieget, a native of Asia Minor, where the cultural stimulus of the Ionic literature originated, is part of a wide and varied tradition, which he helped to enrich, thus giving expression to a commonly felt interest on the part of his readers.

24 Jacob, *De l'art* cit., pp. 124–29; GIANNINI, *Studi* cit., II, p. 116; Schepens, *Paradoxography* cit., p. 396.

25 T. DORANDI (ed.), *Antigone de Caryste. Fragments, texte établi et traduit*, Paris 1999, pp. XIV–XVII; O. MUSSO, *Sulla Struttura del Cod. Pal. Gr. 398 e deduzioni storico-letterarie*, “Prometheus” 2 (1976), pp. 1–10 has confirmed this hypothesis by making reference to issues of codicology. He has shown that the *Palatinus gr. 398*, the only code that hands down to us the collection of Antigonus' fragments, is the work of a copyist of the tenth century A. D. who flourished at the court of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who had gathered around him scholars whose task was to create a project of συλλογαί. There are also many affinities between the work ascribed to Antigonus and the *Excerpta de animalibus* composed as part of the studies sponsored by the emperor.

26 SCHEPENS, *Paradoxography* cit., p. 396.

27 For a list of writers of paradoxography in Hellenistic times see GIANNINI, *Studi* cit., II, pp. 105–127, 139.

3. THE PROBLEM OF THE TITLE

Polemon's paradoxographic work has been handed down to us with four titles: *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ θαυμαζομένων ποταμῶν* (F 83), *περὶ Θαυμασίων* (F 84), *περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ ποταμῶν* (F 82) and *περὶ ποταμῶν* (F 81).²⁸ The first two reveal the paradoxographic nature of his work; the two latter confirm the attention he paid to rivers.

Despite the uncertainty that often surrounds the titles of ancient works, in this case they already give us some idea as to the problems underlying the writing of Polemon: the fragments we have do not seem to deal always with paradoxographic information; not all fragments concern rivers, nor was Sicily the only geographical area considered. And this is why it is difficult to attempt to establish the exact structure and content of Polemon's work, of which we can get only a partial idea.

The most significant fragment is undoubtedly F 83, taken from Macrobius, in which Polemon refers to two sulphur springs located in Sicily in the district of Mineo in what is now the province of Catania,²⁹ which were linked with the ancient deities of Palici and had the extraordinary power to unmask and punish perjurers. This passage testifies to the unquestionable interest of the perieget in natural phenomena related to the world of water in Sicily and provides us with an example of crucial importance – and one that is unique for its length – about his attitude to the world of *paradoxa*.

The first problem arises from the discovery that the perieget does not confine himself to the wonders related to waterways as shown by F 84: he mentions the exceptional thinness of the diviner Arcestratus, who weighed no more than an obol, and of Panaretus,³⁰ who was a disciple of Arcesilaus of Pitane and flourished at the court of Ptolemy Euergetes, where he lived without ever falling ill despite his slight physique.

Two hypotheses have been therefore formulated, either that they are two independent writings, the one relating to wonderful facts in general, the other more specific and dealing with wonderful waterways, addressed by region, with particular attention to Sicily or that it is a single work concerning *thaumasia*, divided into sections according to a geographical or thematic criterion. In the case of a geographical criterion, it was argued that sections had been ordered by topic, according to the model of Callimachus; in the case of the thematic criterion, apparently used by Philostephanus, it was believed that the thematic sections had been divided into geographical subsections.

28 References to Polemon's fragments follow the numbering adopted by L. PRELLER *Polemonis Periegetae Fragmenta*, Leipzig 1838 (= Amsterdam 1964): F 83 (= F 2 Giannini) *Macr. Sat.* V.19.26–30; F 84 (= F 1 Giannini) *Athen.* XII 552 c; F 82 (= F 3 Giannini) *Athen.* VII 307 b–c; F 81 (= F 4 Giannini) *Schol. Eurip. Med.* 835.

29 See VANOTTI, *De mirabilibus* cit., p. 100; N. CUSUMANO, *Siculi*, in P. ANELLO, G. MARTORANA, R. SAMMARTANO (edd.), *Ethne e religioni nella Sicilia antica*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Palermo 6–7 dicembre 2000), Roma 2006, p. 122.

30 *Athen.* XII 552 c; *Eusth. ad. Il.* 1287 44 (*Il.* 23.72). Cf. *Ael. Var. Hist.* 10.6.

The hypothesis of the two independent writings is supported by Preller, who believes the *περὶ Θαυμασίων* to be separate from the one dealing with rivers, to which the three remaining titles would accordingly refer. He imagines a work with a title similar to the *περὶ παραδόξων ποταμῶν* by Philostephanus, who had dealt more with marvellous and special issues related to rivers than with a description of their origin or of the route they followed, a fact which would presuppose a more specific geographical approach.³¹

Likewise, Müller keeps the two writings separate and treats the *mirabilia* of the rivers of Sicily as one section of a wider *περὶ παραδόξων ποταμῶν*.³² Deichgräber, while following Preller, recognizes the problematic nature of the issue and argues that rivers and unusual springs found in Sicily were just one of the topics covered by Polemon, who then moved on seamlessly to deal with other matters according to his customary mode of exposition.³³

Giannini on the other hand agrees with the hypothesis of a single work entitled, according to the current use, *περὶ Θαυμασίων*, in which special attention was paid to what was wondrous in the world of water, a topic from which the perieget devoted to tackle subjects which had little to do with paradoxography.³⁴

This is the second problem posed by Polemon's fragments, namely the presence of passages that do not seem at first glance to have *mirabilia* as their theme: in F 81 Polemon records the rivers named Cephisus to be found in Greece and writes "there is a Cephisus in Athens, in Sicyon and in Argos", while in F 82 he notes that mullets (*κεστρεῖς*) were also called *πλωτες*. A third hypothesis on the organization of Polemon's work has therefore been put forward, in addition to the other two previously mentioned: the existence of a work entitled *περὶ ποταμῶν*, not paradoxographic in nature, has been envisaged, divided into sections on the basis of geographical criteria, each of which was in turn divided into a subsection on the *paradoxa*.³⁵ It is a hypothesis, however, that would appear to be superfluous inasmuch as these two cases do not deal with *θαυμάσια*, but fall within what can

31 PRELLER, *Fragmenta* cit., pp. 125, 131.

32 C. MÜLLER, *FHG* III, Paris 1883, pp. 139–41.

33 K. DEICHGRÄBER, s. v. *Polemon*, in *RE* XXI 2, 1952, pp. 1315–16. On Polemon's tendency to resort to *excursus* see G. PASQUALI, *Die Schriftstellerische Form des Pausanias*, "Hermes" 48 (1913), pp. 176–86; ANGELUCCI, *Polemon's contribution* cit., pp. 334–35; Ead., *Polemone* cit., p. 176.

34 GIANNINI, *Studi* cit., II, pp. 120–21. F. SUSEMIHL, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur in der Alexandrinerzeit*, II, Leipzig 1891–92 (= Hildesheim 1965), p. 673 note 134 largely agrees with him, even though, when he quotes Polemon's writings, he keeps separate the two titles *περὶ Θαυμασίων* and *περὶ ποταμῶν*. The *περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ ποταμῶν* and the *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ θαυμαζομένων ποταμῶν* may represent a part of this latter work.

35 GIANNINI, *Studi* cit., I, p. 121 note 134, even though he is in favour of a single work *περὶ Θαυμασίων* and thinks that there is little doubt that the *περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ ποταμῶν* and the *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ θαυμαζομένων ποταμῶν* are one and the same work, does not rule out completely this hypothesis. W. SCHMID – O. STÄHLIN, *Wilhelm von Christs Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, II 1, *Die nachklassische Periode der griechischen Litteratur. Von 320 vor Christus bis 100 nach Christus*, München 1920⁶, p. 243, affirm that the *περὶ ποταμῶν* had as its theme focused on the homonyms of rivers and did not possess a paradoxographic nature.

be regarded as ἴδιον³⁶: the river is cited for the particular fact that there are several rivers with the same name, just as it is a linguistic peculiarity to find two terms to describe the same species of fish.

Having discarded this third hypothesis, a fourth can be proposed, in my opinion, on the basis of considerations about Polemon's type of writing. He is remembered by the tradition above all for his periegetic writings, organized geographically, in which he describes not only regions and cities of ancient Greece but also Sicily, Magna Graecia and the areas of Greek culture in Asia Minor.³⁷ We do not know for sure if he was the author of separate writings or of one work in which he systematized the data in a περιήγησις κοσμική³⁸ with macro-sections dedicated to the different areas covered, including in particular Greece, organized in turn into subsections relating to different regions such as Attica, Argolis, Elis etc. Writings such as περὶ τῶν ἀναθημάτων τῶν ἐν Ἀκροπόλει would thus form part of far more extensive work. It is also possible to argue that the macro-sections were in actual fact self-contained and subdivided into chapters. Following this line of reasoning the controversial title Ἑλλαδικός has been on occasion interpreted as an indication of an alleged *periegesis* of Greece.³⁹

On the contrary, there also exists a belief that the idea of a universal periegesis or of a *periegesis* of Greece has its origin in later times as a result of the weight of the authority of Pausanias, who is the lens through which periegetic writings have not infrequently been read. Furthermore, the lack of reliable data confirming the existence of such general works and the extensive presence of single and specific titles have induced scholars to think that Polemon's writings were composed and edited independently.⁴⁰ This thesis tallies with the encyclopedic nature of his re-

36 On the terminology connected with the marvellous see SCHEPENS, *Paradoxography* cit., pp. 381–82 with note 24 and p. 398.

37 See ANGELUCCI, *Polemon's Contribution* cit., pp. 331–41. Cf. Ead., *Polemone* cit., pp. 165–83.

38 According to PRELLER, *Fragmenta* cit., p. 23 the adjective κοσμική dates back to the Byzantine era so it is preferable to use the expression περιήγησις οἰκουμένης. At any rate, the authenticity of the περιήγησις κοσμική is a source of debate. The expression περιήγησις κοσμική is never quoted in Polemon's writings but appears only in the Suida and almost at the end after the incomplete list of some monographic writings of the perieget. Furthermore, there are almost no periegetical Hellenistic works bearing the title περιήγησις and the adjective κοσμική appears to date back to Byzantine times. See F. DE ANGELIS, *Pausania e i periegeti. La guidistica antica sulla Grecia* in E. VAIANI (ed.), *Dell'antiquaria e dei suoi metodi*, Pisa 1998, p. 2.

39 This is the opinion of PRELLER, *Fragmenta* cit., pp. 23–25. See also MÜLLER, *FHG* III, pp. 112–13. The work known as Ἑλλαδικός is actually controversial. Athenaeus himself doubts its authenticity and in both passages (XI 479; XIII 606 b), in which he specifically refers to the title, he writes: Πολέμων γοῦν ἢ ὅστις ἐστὶν ὁ ποιήσας τὸν ἐπιγραφόμενον Ἑλλαδικός. DEICHGRÄBER, s. v. *Polemon* cit., pp. 1302–1303 ascribes it to Polemon. On the contrary SUSEMIHL, *Geschichte* cit., p. 669 affirms that the work is a sort of epitome, composed by another author. The theme of the two passages, which deal respectively with the votive offerings found in the Treasuries of Olympia and with an anecdote related to the Treasury of Spina in Delphi, actually conforms to the perieget's erudite approach and so it is possible to attribute them to him. It is more the title and the nature of the work that cause controversy.

40 PRELLER, *Fragmenta* cit., p. 23, believes that it is a single work made up of individual writings collected together by Polemon or by later grammarians. See also MÜLLER, *FHG* III, p. 112. W.

search which produced works in which a very considerable amount of space was devoted to the description of limited portions of territory. Strabo informs us that the work *περὶ τῶν ἀναθημάτων τῶν ἐν Ἀκροπόλει* consisted of four books. For that matter the author closest to Polemon for his type of writings and undoubtedly known to him was Heliodorus of Athens,⁴¹ who dedicated fifteen books to the Acropolis. This was the nature of the antiquarian research in Hellenistic times and it clearly shows the influence of the Peripatetic model. Polemon himself is the author of a work contesting Timaeus in fifteen books, in which he seems to focus on erudite issues. These reflections do not exclude that the perieget had a broader project in mind or may have systematized his writings at a later date, just as we cannot rule out that their organization in a single work was the fruit of subsequent efforts.

In the light of these considerations, the *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ θαυμαζομένων ποταμῶν*, abbreviated to *περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ ποταμῶν*, might arguably be a self-contained work perhaps thematically connected to Polemon's work *Κτίσεις Ἰταλικῶν καὶ Σικελικῶν πόλεων* of a periegetic and antiquarian nature. The fragment on the river Cephissus could similarly belong to a work on the marvellous rivers in Attica, abbreviated to *περὶ ποταμῶν*, which might have followed up his periegetic writings about this region. The content of the fragment concerning Archestratus and Panaretus lead us to think that the perieget had recourse to the *excursus* technique or it might suggest the existence of a further paradoxographic work. The *περὶ Θαυμασίων*, to which this fragment belongs, would be an abbreviation commonly used to refer to one or more of his paradoxographic works, in the same way as Pausanias defines the writers of paradoxography with the generic formula of οἱ ἐπὶ τοῖς θαύμασι.⁴² According to the line of reasoning adopted for the *περιήγησις κοσμική* and for the Ἑλλαδικός the title *περὶ Θαυμασίων* may have been used by Polemon himself or by others in a later period to group together the paradoxographic writings which were first composed as self-contained works.

At any rate it is clear that the lack of a paradoxographic title on Attica or at least on another region apart from Sicily prevents us from doing more than formulate a simple hypothesis and that in the attempt to solve the problem of the organisation of the antiquarian data in Polemon's works the two authors who immediately come to mind are Callimachus with his geographical criteria (this would presuppose, however, an organisational approach and the systematic orderings of the material which we do not know if Polemon possessed) and Philostephanus with his thematic criteria.

JUDEICH, *Topographie von Athen*, München 1931, p. 11 is in favour of a single work, while DEICHGRÄBER, *Polemon* cit., p. 1292 and pp. 1303–1304, prefers the hypothesis of individual self-contained writings, arguing that had it been a single work the perieget would not have been given the title of *proxenos* of Delphi (p. 1303). CAPEL BADINO, *Filostefano* cit., pp. 36–37 believes that Philostephanus' works, as is the case with Polemon, represented "the gathering together of heterogeneous monographs which were assembled at a later stage on the basis of the organisational criterion they shared".

41 *FGrHist* 373.

42 Paus. VIII.46.5.

4. THE FRAGMENT ON THE PALICI

Polemon's fragment on the Palici (F 83) is undoubtedly his most significant passage in terms of hydrographic *paradoxa*. Macrobius cites him in connection with his exegetical commentary on some verses of Virgil's *Aeneid* (9.581–85), in which the altar of Palicus, located on the banks of the river Symaethus in Sicily,⁴³ is mentioned. He relies on the perieget and on three other Greek authors, Callias,⁴⁴ Aeschylus⁴⁵ and Xenagoras,⁴⁶ to explain the myth of the Palici and the trial by ordeal related to them, accusing the Latin authors of ignorance, in that they confine themselves to defining Palicus as a god, without adding anything more precise. In point of fact, Silius Italicus⁴⁷ and Vibius Sequestres⁴⁸ had already dealt with the Palici and the oath, albeit briefly.

The Palici⁴⁹ were local deities of Sicily who were rapidly absorbed by the Greek mythology. Traditionally they were believed to be twin brothers and sons of the nymph Thalia who, fearing the wrath of Zeus, were granted the possibility of being swallowed up by the earth at the time of birth. The twins, at the moment they were born, sprang from the earth itself and were therefore called Palici ἀπὸ τοῦ πάλιν ἰκέσθαι, according to the etymology given by Aeschylus.⁵⁰ In the district of Mineo,⁵¹ near the point where the two brothers are believed to have appeared, there were two sulphur springs, which according to the testimony of Polemon formed

43 Macr. *Sat.* V.19.15–19.

44 *FGrHist* 564. Callias, who lived between the IV and the III century B. C., is the author of a history of Agathocles in twenty-two books.

45 Aesch. fr. 6 *TGrF* 3, 127–28 (= Macr. *Sat.* V.19.24).

46 *FGrHist* 240. Xenagoras, who lived in the II century B. C., composed works entitled *χρονική* and *On the islands*.

47 Sil. It. *Pun.* 14.219–20. Silius Italicus, a Latin poet who lived between the I and the II century A. D. and who was a great admirer of Cicero and Virgil, is known above all for the epic-historical poem in seventeen books, in which he narrated the Second Punic War from the battle of Sagunto to the battle of Zama.

48 Vib. *Seq.* 177. Vibius Sequester, a scholar from the IV–V century A. D., was a contemporary of Macrobius. He is the author of a lexicon containing geographical place-names taken from poets.

49 K. ZIEGLER, s. v. *Palikoi*, in *RE* XVIII 3, 1949, pp. 99–123; J. H. CROON, *The Palici. An Autochthonous Cult in Ancient Sicily*, “*Mnemosyne*” s. IV, 5 (1952), pp. 116–29; G. GLOTZ, s. v. *Palici*, in *DA*, IV 1, pp. 284–85; L. BELLO, *Ricerche sui Palici*, “*Kokalos*” 6 (1970), pp. 71–97; E. MANNI, *Divagazioni sul culto dei Palici. Hommages à Robert Schilling*, Paris 1983, pp. 175–85; F. P. RIZZO, s. v. *Palico*, in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, directed by F. DELLA CORTE, Roma 1987, pp. 935–36 with bibliography.

50 Aesch. fr. 6 *TGrF* 3, 127–28 (= Macr. *Sat.* V.19.24). Cf. Macr. *Sat.* V.19.18.

51 According to Callias's testimony (*FGrHist* 564, F 1) the place was located not far from the river Symaethus, which flows to the south of Catania. See VANOTTI, *De mirabilibus* cit., p. 100; CUSUMANO, *Siculi* cit., p. 122. On the site of Palice see G. DI STEFANO, s. v. *Palice*, in G. NENCI – G. VALLET (edd.), *Bibliografia topografica della colonizzazione greca in Italia e nelle isole tirreniche*, pp. 280–82; A. MESSINA, s. v. *Mineo*, in *Bibliografia topografica* cit., pp. 145–51.

very deep craters,⁵² whose connection with those deities was established by the ancients. These are the words of the perieget:

The so-called Palici are believed by the inhabitants to be gods native to the region. They have as brothers craters sunk in the ground: those who approach them must be free of pollution and abstain from sexual intercourse and also from certain foods. 27. The heavy odor of brimstone rises from them and produces a strange drowsiness in bystanders; their water is foul, with a color very like white soapsuds and rises in frothing waves, like the swirling and bubbling of water on a high boil. They say that these craters are unfathomably deep, so that cattle that fall into them and a mule-team driven into them disappear, as do grazing mares that jump in them.⁵³

Here those who were under accusation could come to declare their innocence and undergo a singular rite, aimed at exposing perjurers. Polemon provides a detailed description of the oath-swearing ceremony, which the Sicilians considered to be the most powerful and whose sacredness is confirmed by the conditions and the acts laid down by the rite.⁵⁴ The swearer had to appear purified from all defilements, crowned, dressed only in his tunic and without a belt. From the rim of the crater, which he had to approach waving a branch, he uttered the formula of the oath that was communicated to him by the ὄρκωταί, who are to be seen as priests of the Palici' shrine, rather than as accusers. If the accused was guilty, he died instantly. Therefore, before swearing, he had to provide guarantors who had to undertake to cover the purification expenses in the event of perjury.⁵⁵ Polemon does not specify how perjurers died, but according to Ps.-Aristotle it was by combustion.⁵⁶ In the text that precedes Polemon's quotation Macrobius, perhaps citing the perieget,

52 The craters are called by the ancient sources with different names: *krateres*, *pegai*, *krenai*, *lacus*, *stagna*. See CUSUMANO, *Siculi cit.*, pp. 122–23.

53 Macr. V.19.26–27 (translation by R. A. KASTER, Loeb edition).

54 For an in-depth study of the Palici and the trial by ordeal see N. CUSUMANO, *Ordalia e soteria nella Sicilia antica. I Palici*, in *Mythos* 2, 1990, pp. 9–186 with bibliography; CUSUMANO, *Siculi cit.*, pp. 121–45 particularly pp. 122–128. See also on the Palici K. ZIEGLER, s. v. *Palikoi*, in *RE* XVIII 3, 1949, pp. 99–123; CROON, *The Palici cit.*, pp. 116–39; G. GLOTZ, s. v. *Palici*, in *DA*, IV 1, pp. 284v85; L. BELLO, *Ricerche sui Palici*, “*Kokalos*” 6 (1970), pp. 71–97; E. MANNI, *Divagazioni sul culto dei Palici. Hommages à Robert Schilling*, Paris 1983, pp. 175–85; F. P. RIZZO, s. v. *Palico*, in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, Roma 1987, pp. 935–36 with bibliography; L. MANISCALCO (ed.), *Il santuario dei Palici: un centro di culto nella Valle del Margi*, Palermo 2008.

55 Macr. *Sat.* V.19.28–29: “For the Sicilians the craters provide the most powerful oath, when opponents who have issued a challenge have been ritually purified. With a writing tablet in hand, the persons administering the oath address the parties to the oath about whatever matter it is for which the oath is being sought. Then one party to the oath, garlanded and waving a green bough, ungirt and wearing only a tunic, dips his hand in the crater and repeats the words of the oath after the person administering it. Should he make good the oath taken, he departs for home unscathed; but if he is shown to have transgressed against the gods, he dies on the spot. In the course of the ritual the parties promise that they will provide bondsmen for the priests, who are liable for purifying the shrine should anything untoward happen. Near this spot the Palikēnoi founded the city Palikē, named after the gods” (translation by R. A. KASTER, Loeb edition).

56 Ps.-Arist. *Mir. Ausc.* 57. According to Diodorus (XI.89) the perjurer didn't die but became blind.

whose testimony probably was not limited to the passage referred to above, states that they were not general allegations, but accusations of theft or similar crimes.

Polemon's testimony is essential because it reveals his interest towards *mirabilia* in the field of nature but it is also interesting for the reconstruction of the rite⁵⁷ and because it focuses on local gods, later acknowledged by the Greeks, that is to say on a cult that was a point of contact between Greeks and natives.⁵⁸ Even though the passage has not been seen as directly relevant to the sphere of wonders,⁵⁹ we cannot deny the existence of a description of the natural phenomena considered a marvellous fact in reference to the depth of the craters and to the water that "rises in frothing waves, like the swirling and bubbling of water on a high boil". Likewise the power given to them in the trial by ordeal intended to unmask perjurers can rightly be considered to be something extraordinary.

Polemon can justly be included in the authors who came under the influence of the Peripathos, which no longer sets out to uncover scientific explanation of phenomena in accordance with Aristotle's approach, but extrapolates especially those facts most lacking in a possible rational interpretation from the wide range of Aristotelian data – and not just from them.⁶⁰ After all "θαῦμα is no match for explanation; the sense of the marvellous cannot survive on a rational basis. It is imperative for the paradoxographer to concentrate on *historia*, the establishment and the recording of facts without explaining them."⁶¹ The amazement at a phenomenon that goes beyond what man is accustomed to observe in nature, without a rational explanation being provided, emerges from the passage taken from the perieget referred to above and we can also find the aspect of the divine on which the ordeal rite is based and is revealed in the immediate death of the perjurer.

The extraordinary springs of the Palici were a topic dear to the Aristotelian school, as is evident in an extract from the *περὶ θαυμασίων ἀκουσμάτων*, preserved in the *corpus aristotelicum* which should be considered as belonging to the Peripatetic tradition and dating back perhaps to the third century B. C.⁶² The text, which is provided below and which is useful for a comparison with that of the perieget, shows the same sense of wonder for the miracle related to water:

There is a spring among the Palici in Sicily, covering the space of ten couches; this throws up water to the height of six cubits, so that the whole place is thought to be inundated; and it falls back again to the same spot. There is an oath which is regarded as very sacred there; for a man writes down the oath he takes on a small tablet and casts it into the water. If he swears truly, the

57 Polemon provides the most complete and reliable evidence for the trial by ordeal. In addition to him we have only Diod. IX.89.

58 See E. MANNI, *Culti greci e culti indigeni nella Sicilia antica. Problemi di metodo e spunti di ricerca*, "ASS" (1980), pp. 5–17.

59 GIANNINI, *Studi* cit., II, p. 121 note 135.

60 P. M. FRASER, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, Oxford 1972, I, p. 770.

61 SCHEPENS, *Paradoxography* cit., p. 391.

62 It is difficult to establish with certainty the chronological context of the work whose authenticity had already been questioned by Erasmus in the XVI century. If certain clues point to the era of the emperor Adrianus, the placing of the work in the III century B. C. nevertheless would seem to be preferable. See SASSI, *Mirabilia* cit., pp. 457–59 and the analysis of the two chronological hypotheses in VANOTTI, *De Mirabilibus* cit., pp. XI–XIV.