

# Crossing the Halys and its Dangers: Nicolaus of Damascus and the Croesus Oracle

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THE PURPOSE of this paper is to reassess a late scholion and its background. The scholion, on an extract from Nicolaus of Damascus in the *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis*, transmits Croesus' hexameter oracle on the great empire to be overthrown: it shares common ground with another scholion on Euripides' *Orestes*. It seems likely that the former depends on the latter: however, it can also be argued that the ultimate source of both scholia is Nicolaus of Damascus himself.

*The marginal notes on Nicolaus*

The *Turonensis* C 980 of the tenth century is the manuscript which uniquely preserves the *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus.<sup>1</sup> At ff. 154<sup>r</sup>–162<sup>r</sup> it transmits two

<sup>1</sup> The *Turonensis* C 980 (formerly *Peirescianus*) was acquired in 1627 by Nicolas de Peiresc from a merchant of Marseille, coming from Cyprus. It was edited in 1634 by Henri de Valois. Since 1791 it has been preserved at the Bibliothèque municipale de Tours. The MS. has been dated to the eleventh century by T. Büttner-Wobst and A. G. Roos, *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis* I (Berlin 1906) XXI, and to the mid-tenth century by J. Irigoien, "Pour une étude des centres de copie byzantins," *Scriptorium* 12 (1958) 208–227, and 13 (1959) 177–209, at 177–181, with pl. 17. However, it has recently been re-dated to the 970s or 980s by A. Németh, "The Imperial Systematisation of the Past in Constantinople: Constantine VII and his *Historical Excerpts*," in J. König and G. Woolf (eds.), *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge 2013) 232–258, at 242. History and description of the MS., with its complex pagination: A. Dorange, *Catalogue descriptif et raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de Tours* (Tours 1875) 428–429; H. Omont, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs des départements* (Paris 1886) 63–65; T.

stories about Croesus: seeking money as crown prince and saved from the pyre after being defeated by Cyrus.<sup>2</sup> Both stories are compiled from Nicolaus of Damascus' *Universal History*: Felix Jacoby recorded the two as *FGrHist* 90 F 67 and F 68. At the end of f. 154<sup>r</sup> (lines 27–32), we find F 67: we also find the name Κῦρος, written in semi-uncial by the first hand on the right margin. At ff. 154<sup>v</sup>.1–162<sup>r</sup>.9 is F 68. At f. 154<sup>v</sup>, some marginal notes precede the beginning of the second excerpt (Croesus' rescue). One addition, written in the left margin, is ὄρα τὰ περὶ (περι T) Κροῖσον τῶν Λυδῶν βασιλέαν.<sup>3</sup> A second one, added in the upper margin—so out of the text, which contains 32 lines<sup>4</sup>—is περὶ Κύρου σὺν Κροίσῳ. In the following lines, still in the upper margin, we read:

ὁ γὰρ Κροῖσος ὅτε πρωτεύσειν κατὰ Κύρου ἔμελλεν, ἐρωτήσαντι τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα εἰ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ περιέσται, (sc. ὁ θεὸς) εἶπε· Κροῖσος Ἄλυν διαβάς μεγάλην ἀρχὴν καταλύσει. τοῦτο ἦν ἄγνωστον, εἴτε τὴν οἰκείαν εἴτε <τὴν> τοῦ Κύρου. ὅθεν ἀπατηθεὶς ὁ Κροῖσος, δοκῶν τὴν τοῦ ἀντιδίκου ἀρχὴν καταλύσειν, καταλέλυκε τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρχὴν, ὡς ὄρα κάτωθεν.

1 κροῖσος T: corr. Müller *FHG* III 407; πρωτεύσειν T: στρατεύσειν Müller; ἐρωτίσαντι τῷ ἀπόλλωνι T: corr. Müller II 3 ἄλην T: corr. Müller; καταλύσει ego: κατὰ λύσει T, καταπαύσει Müller II 4

Büttner-Wobst, “Der Codex Peirescianus. Ein Beitrag zur Kenntniss der Excerpte des Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos,” *SBL Leipzig* 45 (1893) 261–352, at 297–301; M. Collon, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France, Départements, 37, 2, Tours* (Paris 1905) 704–706; É. Parmentier, “Ms. *Turonensis* C 980 f.101,” in *Φιλολογία. Mélanges offerts à Michel Casevitz* (Lyon 2006) 9–10. On Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637) see A. M. Cheny, *Une bibliothèque byzantine. Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc et la fabrique du savoir* (Ceyzérieu 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Or at ff. 156<sup>r</sup>–158<sup>r</sup> according to the old pagination of the MS.: cf. Büttner-Wobst, *SBL Leipzig* 45 (1893) 267 and 300.

<sup>3</sup> The accusative βασιλέαν is first attested in *Apocalypsis apocrypha Joannis* 31 (II A.D.?).

<sup>4</sup> On the features of 32-line MSS. see J. Irigoin, “Les manuscrits d’historiens grecs et byzantins à 32 lignes,” in K. Treu (ed.), *Studia codicologica* (Berlin 1977) 237–245, at 238–241, on *Turonensis* C 980.

ἄγνωστον T: ἄγνωτον Müller; οἰκίαν T: corr. Müller; <τὴν> τοῦ ἐχθροῦ Müller || 5 ἀπατιθεῖς T: corr. Müller; τὸν τοῦ ἀντιδίκου ἀρχὴν κατὰ λύσαι T: corr. Müller || 6 οἰκίαν T: corr. Müller; ὄρα Müller: ὄραϊ T

When Croesus was planning to fight victoriously against Cyrus, Apollo answered him who asked whether he would prevail over the enemy: Crossing the Halys, Croesus will overthrow a great empire. It was unintelligible whether the empire was his own or that of Cyrus. Misunderstanding this, Croesus was convinced that he would overthrow the enemy empire, but in fact overthrew his own, so that (?) see below.

*Analysis of the marginal notes*

The short ‘title’ (περὶ Κύρου σὺν Κροίσῳ) is written in semi-uncial by the same hand that wrote the whole manuscript in the tenth century, so at a time very close to the compilation itself of the *Excerpta*. The other two marginal notes are written instead by a later (and the same) hand—how recent has not been investigated—so one wonders whether they are somehow linked to each other.<sup>5</sup> ὄρα τὰ περὶ Κροῖσον τῶν Λυδῶν βασιλέαν seems unlikely to be an internal reference to one of the other fifty-two Constantinian *Excerpta*.<sup>6</sup> Such cross-references to

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Büttner-Wobst and Roos, *Excerpta* I 345 *in apparatu*. On the different, more recent, hands that have written the marginalia of the *Turonensis* see Büttner-Wobst, *SBL Leipzig* 45 (1893) 268–269, and *Excerpta* I XXIX.

<sup>6</sup> For τὰ περὶ Κροῖσον as the title of one of the *Excerpta Constantiniana* see E. Seidenstücker, *De Xantho Lydo rerum scriptore quaestiones selectae* (Sondershausen 1895) 35 n.4. On the titles and subjects of the fifty-three sections of the *Excerpta*, all lost except for περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας, two volumes of περὶ πρέσβεων, περὶ γνωμῶν, and περὶ ἐπιβουλῶν, see T. Büttner-Wobst, “Die Anlage der historischen Encyclopädie des Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos,” *BZ* 15 (1906) 88–120; A. Dain, “L’encyclopédisme de Constantin Porphyrogénète,” *BAGB SER.* III 12 (1953) 64–81; B. Flusin, “Les *Excerpta* constantiniens: Logique d’une anti-histoire,” in S. Pittia (ed.), *Fragments d’historiens grecs. Autour de Denys d’Halicarnasse* (Rome 2002) 537–559. For the concept of ‘culture of *sylloge*’ rather than ‘encyclopaedism’ see P. Odorico, “La cultura della *sylloge*. 1) il cosiddetto enciclopedismo bizantino. 2) Le tavole del sapere di Giovanni Damasceno,” *BZ* 83 (1990) 1–21. On the working method of the Byzantine compilers see P. A. Brunt, “On Historical Fragments and Epitomes,” *CQ* 30 (1980) 477–495; R. M. Piccione,

other Constantinian compilations, decided by the excerptors and added by the first hand, are instead introduced through either ζήτει ἐν τῷ περὶ or formulas such as ὡς γέγραπται or τέθειται ἐν τῷ περὶ.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, ὄρα appears again in other marginal notes of the *Turonensis*, also written by a more recent (and the same) hand, and clearly belongs to a different system of references or comments. At f. 5<sup>v</sup> (Jos. *AJ* 1.198–199), one reads on the left margin ὄρα περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀγγέλων (“Look at the three angels”), which is clearly a reference to a subject (the three angels sent by God to punish the Sodomites according to Josephus’ report) rather than to a volume of the *Excerpta*. At f. 62<sup>v</sup>, ὄρα (ὥρα T) τὴν πολιτείαν Ἰωσήπου is a reference to a work, Josephus’ Autobiography: cf., just above it, ἐκ τοῦ λόγου τοῦ ἐπιγραφομένου περὶ γένους Ἰωσήπου καὶ πολιτείας αὐτοῦ, written by the first hand and introducing the compiled work itself. By contrast, at ff. 27<sup>r</sup>, 32<sup>r</sup>, 62<sup>r</sup>, 80<sup>r</sup>, 123<sup>r</sup> ὄρα appears in the margin without any apparent cross-references, and at 36<sup>r</sup> ὄρα καλῶς even fills vertically the whole right margin. So ὄρα seems to belong to a system of pointers to the text itself of the *Excerpta de virtutibus*, adopted by a more recent hand who used it to draw attention to some items. Accordingly, ὄρα τὰ περὶ Κροῖσον τῶν Λυδῶν βασιλέαν could be a device to point out the topic dealt with in the section of text referred to by the note (the story of Croesus’ pyre). Less probably it could be a reference either to a subject reported elsewhere (for instance, the Herodotean passage on Croesus’ life and rescue as abridged by the compilers of *De virtutibus* and copied at ff. 160<sup>r</sup>–163<sup>v</sup> of the

<sup>7</sup> “Scegliere, raccogliere e ordinare. Letteratura di raccolta e trasmissione del sapere,” *Humanitas* 58 (2003) 44–63; U. Roberto, “Byzantine Collections of Late Antique Authors: Some Remarks on the *Excerpta historica Constantiniana*,” in M. Wallraff and L. Mecella (eds.), *Die Kestoi des Julius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung* (Berlin/New York 2009) 71–84.

<sup>7</sup> Büttner-Wobst, *BZ* 15 (1906) 107; Flusin, in *Fragments d'historiens grecs* 544 n.35.

*Turonensis*)<sup>8</sup> or to a work (the content of a lost compilation in the *Excerpta Constantiniana* which preserved some features of the story or a lost History of Croesus which probably also abridged the story of the Lydian king).<sup>9</sup>

*The Turonensis scholion*

The longer scholion on f. 154<sup>v</sup> merits further consideration. This note too is a more recent addition, written by the same hand that added ὄρα τὰ περὶ Κροῖσον τῶν Λυδῶν βασιλείαν and all the other marginal notes introduced by ὄρα. The question is its origin and role, and not only when the scholion was written and by whom, but also where it was derived from. As for the reason why it was introduced at f. 154<sup>v</sup>, indeed it provided both a link between F 67 and F 68 and an introduction to 68—to be exact, more information on the war between Croesus and Cyrus. However, this information is connected to 68 through a problematic formula. Büttner-Wobst read ὀραὶ or ὀραῖ:<sup>10</sup> in fact, on closer inspection of the digital image I read clearly ὀραῖ. It is evidently wrong and needs emendation.<sup>11</sup> Müller (*FHG* III 407) corrected to ὡς ὄρα κάτωθεν, problematically restoring an imperative after ὡς. We shall come

<sup>8</sup> The authors of the *Excerpta* selected nine compilations from Herodotus' Book 1. The excerpts were numbered 1 to 9 by the modern editors in *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis* II (Berlin 1910) 1–5. Compilations 2–3 are devoted to Croesus, the stories of Tellus and of Cleobis and Biton. Compilations 4–5 are also devoted to Croesus, his rescue from the pyre and his fight for power at the time of Alyattes' death. Herodotus' version of the pyre-story (and, of course, its abridgment as well) is slightly different from that of Nicolaus.

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, Büttner-Wobst chose not to give an account of the marginal notes—except for the longer scholion on f. 154<sup>v</sup> and a few further instances (see below)—since he judged them unmeaningful (I XXIX, “marginalia ipsa memoratu digna non sunt, nisi si aut ad originem eclogarum spectant aut ad verba excerptorum genuina revocanda aliquid afferunt”). On the marginalia of the *Turonensis* see also Büttner-Wobst, *SBL Leipzig* 45 (1893) 268–269.

<sup>10</sup> *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis* I 345, in *apparatu*.

<sup>11</sup> For another instance of misreading cf. ὄρα (to be emended to ὄρα) τὴν πολιτείαν ἰωσήπου at f. 62<sup>v</sup> of the *Turonensis*.

back to this point below with a quite different interpretation of the text.

*Herodotus' prose response*

The scholion is very close but not identical to Herodotus' version of the same events, so it has not been derived from it. Both deal with the oracle delivered to Croesus, which is possibly the best-known instance of oracular ambiguity, tragically playing on the identification of the "great empire." Herodotus reports the oracle, the question and the answer, attributing it to both Apollo at Delphi and Amphiaraus at Thebes. Croesus' envoys asked the oracles whether he should wage war against the Persians and whether he should seek an ally. The oracles answered that waging this war he would destroy a great empire, also urging to him to ally with the most powerful of the Greeks. The second part of the response (the alliance advice) of course conditioned the interpretation of the first and Croesus decided to wage this war.

Herodotus' version of the oracle does not mention the river Halys, though he knew it as the eastern boundary of the Lydian kingdom (1.6, 1.72): by contrast, the scholion explicitly refers to crossing the river as the symbolic turning point in Croesus' destiny. Still, Herodotus does not quote the oracle in hexameter form, differently from other responses: he cites it only indirectly, in prose, paraphrasing both the question and, above all, half of the answer (ἦν στρατεύηται ἐπὶ Πέρσας, μεγάλην ἀρχὴν μιν καταλύσειν).<sup>12</sup> The scholion preserves the response in hexameter form, quoted directly, and apparently attributes it only to Delphi. According to H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, who supposed that all responses must have been in verse, Herodotus chose to offer a prose paraphrase in indirect speech even though he knew the verse form. For J. Fontenrose, instead, the oracle probably had only an indirect form in the oral

<sup>12</sup> Hdt. 1.53.3. On the preposing of the adjective μεγάλην and its function in the Herodotean response see D. Goldstein, "Wackernagel's Law and the Fall of the Lydian Empire," *TAPA* 143 (2013) 325–347.

tradition, “though an occasional narrator might choose to express it in direct prose.”<sup>13</sup> So, either the response had its verse form already at the time of Herodotus, who decided however to paraphrase it, or it acquired that form only later, after Herodotus and before Ephorus and Aristotle.

*The reception of the hexameter response*

Ephorus quotes the oracle,<sup>14</sup> and Aristotle at *Rhet.* Γ 5, 1407a39, cites it as a further instance of oracular ambiguity, though making no allusion to Delphi. The question is Ephorus’ source, possibly the very first source of the poetic form of the oracle. One very probable identification is Xanthus of Lydia, the fifth-century author of *Lydiaka*, who dealt with Croesus if Nicolaus of Damascus did derive from him, as it seems, the content of his own F 65 and possibly also of F 68.<sup>15</sup> It was most

<sup>13</sup> H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* 1 (Oxford 1956) 133; J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley 1978) 67, 113–114, on Q100 (but see R. Crahay, *La littérature oraculaire chez Hérodote* [Paris 1956] 197). Ancient prophetesses did not utter responses in verse according to Nino Luraghi, who points to both ancient evidence for oracular practice at Delphi and many inscriptions from the oracular sanctuary at Dodona: “Oracoli esametrici nelle *Storie* di Erodoto: appunti per un bilancio provvisorio,” *Seminari Romani di cultura greca* n.s. III 2 (2014) 233–255.

<sup>14</sup> Diod. 9.31 = 9 fr.42 Cohen-Skalli: ὅτι Κροῖσος ἐπὶ Κῦρον τὸν Πέρσην ἐκστρατεύων ἐπέθετο τοῦ μαντείου. ὁ δὲ χρησμός, Κροῖσος ἄλλυν διαβάς μεγάλην ἀρχὴν καταλύσει. ὁ δὲ τὸ ἀμφίβολον τοῦ χρησμοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ προαίρεσιν ἐκδεξάμενος ἐδυστύχησεν. For Diodorus’ dependence on Ephorus see E. Schwartz, “Diodoros 38,” *RE* 5 (1903) 663–704, at 678–679, who supposes the Ephoran origin of 9.16, 17, 20.1–4, 22–29, 31–37. Cf. Jacoby *ad FGrHist* 70 FF 58–62 (pp.33–34 and 54); G. Parmeggiani, *Eforo di Cuma. Studi di storiografia greca* (Bologna 2011) 298–302; A. Cohen-Skalli, *Diodore de Sicile, Fragments: Livres VI–X* (Paris 2012) 131.

<sup>15</sup> On Xanthus as the source of the scholion see also Seidenstücker, *De Xantho* 35–36 and 62–64. On the relationship between Xanthus and Nicolaus cf. Jacoby *ad FGrHist* 90 F 71 (p.253.38). For the state of the question see M. Dorati, “La storia lidia di Nicolao di Damasco,” in H.-J. Gehrke and A. Mastrocinque (eds.), *Rom und der Osten im 1. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Cosenza 2009) 35–64; and A. Paradiso, “A New Fragment for Nicolaus of Damascus? A Note on *Suda* α 1272,” *Histos* 9 (2015) 67–75, at 71 n.12.

probably Xanthus who provided Ephorus with the hexameter oracle, since the Lydian was his source for what concerned Lydian history and did not derive from Herodotus. Ephorus did read Xanthus and compared him to Herodotus, also assessing their chronological, and literary, relationship.<sup>16</sup>

If it was first transmitted by Xanthus, the response already circulated in verse form in the time of Herodotus, who knew it but deliberately chose to ignore it: Parke and Wormell pointed out that the verbal resemblance of Herodotus' paraphrase to the verse form of the oracle is so close that one cannot doubt that he knew the hexameter version.<sup>17</sup> In any case, Ephorus' source was successful: after Aristotle, the response appeared again—in verse form or, less frequently, very slightly paraphrased, either revered or mocked and criticised, or even blamed—in Apollonius of Tyana's *Epistles* and Oenomaus, in both Lucian and Maximus of Tyre, again in Christian authors of the fourth to the sixth centuries such as Eusebius, Theodoret, Basil of Seleucia, Ammonius, John Malalas, pseudo-Nonnus, in the *Anonymus de scientia politica*, and in Byzantine scholars of the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, namely George the Monk, the author(s) of the *Suda*, Michael Psellus, George Cedrenus, Theodore Prodromus, John Tzetzes, Nicephorus Gregoras, and in several scholia. In Latin, the oracle was also quoted by Cicero.<sup>18</sup>

*The Thoman scholion on Euripides' Orestes*

Where did the later hand of the *Turonensis* read the verse oracle? Theoretically it might derive from a quotation elsewhere in the Constantinian abridgments, more precisely the quotation from Diodorus in the *Excerpta de sententiis* which offers

<sup>16</sup> Xanthus *FGrHist* 765 T 5 (Athenaeus): “the historian Ephorus [70 F 180] states that Xanthus was earlier and provided Herodotus with his sources.”

<sup>17</sup> Parke and Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* I 133.

<sup>18</sup> For the citations see Parke and Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* II 24, no. 53; Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* 302, Q100.



the hexameter oracle. But Diodorus (9.31, from Ephorus: see above) does not offer the exact same report of the story as the whole marginal note of the *Turonensis*. In fact, the marginal note shares not only the response but also its context solely with the scholion to Euripides *Orestes* 165, transmitted by Z, Za, Zb, Zl, Zm, T, Gu,<sup>19</sup> and attributable to the grammarian and rhetorician Thomas Magister, the adviser of Andronicus II (r. 1282–1328):<sup>20</sup>

Λοξίας ὁ Απόλλων καλεῖται, ὅτι λοξὰ καὶ διπλῶς νοούμενα ἐμαντεύετο. καὶ γὰρ τῷ Κροΐσῳ, ὅτε στρατεύσειν κατὰ Κύρου ἔμελλεν, ἐρωτήσαντι εἰ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ περίεσται εἶπε· Κροΐσος βασιλεὺς Ἄλυν ποταμὸν διαβὰς μεγάλην ἀρχὴν καταλύσει. τοῦτο δὲ ἦν παντάπασιν ἄγνωστον, εἴτε τὴν οἰκείαν εἴτε τὴν τοῦ Κύρου. ὅθεν ἀπατηθεὶς ὁ Κροΐσος, καὶ μεγάλην ἀρχὴν τὴν τοῦ ἀντιδίκου ὑπολαβὼν, ἐλθὼν καταλέλυκε τὴν οἰκείαν τοσοῦτον ὡς καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ἐαλωκὼς εἰς πῦρ ἐμβεβλήσθαι, ὃν εἰ μὴ Ζεὺς οἰκτεΐρας ἀφῆκεν ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τὴν φλόγα, τάχ' ἂν ἀπωλώλει, ἔργον πυρὸς γενόμενος. ἦν δὲ ὁ Κροΐσος Λυδῶν βασιλεὺς.

2 στρατεύειν Za; κατὰ τοῦ κύρου Zl || 3 εἰ om. Zm || 4 βασιλεὺς om. T, βασιλέων Zl ut videtur; ἄλυν Z Za Zb, ἄλιν Zl, ἄλιν Gu; ποταμὸν: ποτμὸν Zb, om. T || 5 δὲ ἦν: εἶπε Gu || 7 ἀρχὴν τὴν: τὴν om. Zb; ἀντιδίκου: ἀδίκου Zm Gu; καταλέλυκε: κατέλυμε Zb, κατέλυσε Zl || 8 ὑπὸ: ἀπὸ Zl; ἐαλωκένας καὶ εἰς T || 9 ὁ ζεὺς Gu || 10 ἀπολώλει Zb T, Zl ut videtur

Apollo is called Loxias, since he gave ambiguous and double-minded responses. He answered Croesus, when the latter was planning to fight against Cyrus and asked him whether he would prevail over the enemy: Crossing the Halys, Croesus will over-

<sup>19</sup> Cambridge, University Library *Nn.* 3.14 (Z, first half 14<sup>th</sup> cent.); British Library, *Arundel* 540 (Za: 15<sup>th</sup> cent.); *Vat.gr.* 51 (Zb, 1320–1330); British Library, *Additional* 10057 (Zl, 1340–1350 for the original part, 1350–1375 for most of the replacement pages); *Ambros.gr.* I 47 sup. (Zm, 14<sup>th</sup> cent.); Rome, *Bibl.Angel.gr.* 14 (T, 1300–1325); Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibl. *Gudian.gr.* 15 (Gu, 1320–1330). On these MSS., and the related bibliography, see <http://euripidesscholia.org/EurSchMSS2016.html>.

<sup>20</sup> D. J. Mastronarde's version of the Thoman scholion II 75 Dindorf.

throw a great empire. It was completely unintelligible whether the empire was his own or that of Cyrus. Misunderstanding this, Croesus was convinced that the great empire was the enemy one, so he set out but in fact overthrew his own, so that, once he was captured by the enemy and thrown to the fire, he would have quickly died because of it if Zeus had not pitied him and poured water over the flames. Croesus was king of the Lydians.

The Euripidean scholion provides background information while explaining Apollo's epiclesis Λοξίας in *Orestes* 165. It does reveal close affinities, but not identity, with *Suda* λ 673, which explains the same epithet and quotes the oracle, depending on the scholion to Aristophanes *Plutus* 8b.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the *Turonensis* scholion—which transmits the correct hexameter response—the manuscripts of the Euripidean scholion give a wrong verse form (disfigured by two explanatory words, βασιλεύς and ποταμόν), except for T, the working copy of Demetrius Triclinius. Nonetheless, the *Orestes* scholion is a better version than the *Turonensis*' Nicolaeian note. The former seems to be a syntactically correct, 'original', version, whereas the latter looks like a badly adapted one, since it offers a wrongly syncopated text, strongly resorting to anacoluthon. In fact, the correct dative of the Euripidean scholion (τῷ Κροίσῳ, ὅτε στρατεύσειν κατὰ Κύρου ἔμελλεν, ἐρωτήσαντι κτλ.), perfectly matching the previous nominative ὁ Ἀπόλλων, seems to have been poorly modified to the nominative in the *Turonensis* (ὁ γὰρ Κροῖσος ὅτε πρωτεύσειν κατὰ Κύρου ἔμελλεν, ἐρωτήσαντι κτλ.). The Nicolaeian scholion in fact deals with Croesus rather than Apollo and follows therefore a different syntactical order. The almost complete overlap of the two marginal notes—which do share a large portion of the text—excludes that the *Turonensis* scholion has been extemporarily conceived by a reader. In 1944 Fontenrose asserted the derivation of the *Turonensis* marginal note from a larger scholion, pointing out that it also appears among Thomas' scholia; more recently, Parmentier-Morin argued its

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Adler's apparatus to λ 673.

dependence on an “*épitomè anonyme*.”<sup>22</sup> Clearly, the Thoman *Orestes* scholion cannot depend on the *Turonensis* scholion, since it adds supplementary information to the oracle, with important details about the defeat of Croesus, his capture by Cyrus, his condemnation to the pyre, and the final rescue by Zeus, pitying the king and quenching the fire.

*The dependence of the Nicolaeian scholion on the Euripidean scholion: an adequate hypothesis*

The syntactical adaptation of the common text seems to confirm that the Nicolaeian scholion may be derived precisely from the Euripidean. If we take into account the final words of the *Turonensis* scholion—specifically Müller’s correction to ὡς ὄρα κάτωθεν, where the particle is oddly followed by the imperative—we seem to have a further clue that the scholion may have been copied from the Euripidean. In the *Turonensis* scholion, and precisely in ὅθεν ἀπατηθεὶς ὁ Κροῖσος, δοκῶν τὴν τοῦ ἀντιδίκου ἀρχὴν καταλύσειν, καταλέλυκε τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρχήν, ὡς ὄρα κάτωθεν, the section ὅθεν ... ὡς does seem to have been literally copied, and abruptly cut off, from the identical sentence of the Euripidean scholion, where (τοσοῦτον) ὡς is also found: ὅθεν ἀπατηθεὶς ὁ Κροῖσος, καὶ μεγάλην ἀρχὴν τὴν τοῦ ἀντιδίκου ὑπολαβὼν, ἐλθὼν καταλέλυκε τὴν οἰκείαν τοσοῦτον ὡς καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ἐαλωκῶς (κτλ.). In other words, the scholiast of the *Turonensis*, interested only in the text of the oracle, would have copied and suddenly (hence carelessly) cut off Thomas’ marginal note after ὡς, connecting it to Nicolaus F 68 through ὄρα κάτωθεν. In doing so, he would have gotten rid of Thomas’ pyre-and-rescue story of Croesus by adding a link to F 68, i.e. to Nicolaus’ pyre-and-rescue story

<sup>22</sup> J. Fontenrose, “Varia critica,” *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 12 (1944) 217–224, at 222 (“The note on the Nicolaus extract is obviously part of a larger scholium and was carelessly copied into the margin of the existing manuscript”); Parmentier-Morin, “Les fragments de Denys d’Halicarnasse attribués à Nicolas de Damas. Recherches sur la composition des *Excerpta constantiniens*,” in *Fragments d’historiens grecs* 461–479, at 469–470.

of the Lydian king. He would have copied the Thoman scholion into the upper margin of f. 154<sup>v</sup>, improving the wrong form of the response or else depending either on Triclinius' text or on a manuscript which transmitted the right verse form as well. Of course he would have done it after Thomas Magister had written his own scholion to *Orestes* ca. 1290–1305. The same hand also added ὄρα τὰ περὶ Κροῖσον τῶν Λυδῶν βασιλέων.

This seems the most likely hypothesis. The practice, either by the first hand of the *Turonensis* or by the excerptors, to add some scholia to the compilations seems to support it. This hand (or the compiler himself) added two scholia (to both Thuc. 1.135.3 and 1.136.3 Haase) at ff. 228<sup>v</sup> and 229<sup>r</sup> (which transmit the compilation of Thucydides 1.135.2–137.3). Both scholia are preceded by the explicit mention σχόλιον, which points out their nature. The same hand (or the compiler) also added the scholion to Thuc. 2.37.2 at f. 229<sup>v</sup>. However, he included it mistakenly in the text and not in the margin, between the compilations of Thucydides 2.15.2 and 2.65.4–14.<sup>23</sup> In the same way, the first hand/the compiler included at f. 44<sup>r</sup>.21–23, after the abridgment of Jos. *AJ* 18.64 and before that of 18.117, a text which is likely a scholion and corresponds to Συναγωγή λέξεων χρησίμων s.v. ε 387. According to Wollenberg, this scholion probably commented on ἐνδείξει of *AJ* 18.64.<sup>24</sup> So, the first hand did add scholia to the compilations or else found them in his antigraphon, and probably they had already been added by the compilers of the *Excerpta de virtutibus*. However, either the former or the latter derived those scholia from manuscripts of the same authors as the compilations: for instance, they resorted to a manuscript of Thucydides, supplied with scholia, to comment on Thucydides' excerpta and to a manuscript of Josephus, also provided with scholia, to comment on the latter.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Büttner-Wobst, *SBL Leipzig* 45 (1893) 307–308.

<sup>24</sup> Wollenberg, quoted by Büttner-Wobst, *SBL Leipzig* 45 (1893) 275.

By contrast, the possibility that the later hand of the *Turonensis* resorted to a manuscript of Euripides to comment on Nicolaus and add his only scholion seems more fortuitous, even though one cannot wholly exclude it.<sup>25</sup> In fact, this reader, who draws attention to some points of the texts by the frequent use of ὄρα, may have added this true scholion—the only one he wrote—since he retained a clear memory of Thomas' text, oddly ignoring the hexameter oracle from Diodorus, i.e. from the compilation *De sententiis*.

*An alternative hypothesis: dependence on Nicolaus of both the Nicolaeian and the Euripidean scholia*

There is, however, another possibility. One can also argue the derivation of both the Nicolaeian and the Euripidean scholia from a common source, namely Nicolaus of Damascus himself. To look for Nicolaeian traces in Thomas' text, a linguistic analysis is needed. Indeed, all the information provided by the Thoman scholion looks like an abridgment rather than a quotation, thus a quick summary of a longer story concerning Croesus, his consignment to be burnt on the pyre and final rescue. Yet, I cannot help but notice that this scholion shares a set of four verbal elements with Nicolaus' narrative about Croesus F 68, and especially with the section that deals with the ambiguous oracle delivered to the king. Moreover, the scholion shares the complete linguistic set only with Nicolaus and with none of the other sources which also transmit the metrical oracle. Thus, I wonder whether Nicolaus could have been the (even remote) source of Thomas' scholion.

The linguistic features are the following. (a) The verb οἰκτίρω in ὄν εἰ μὴ ὁ Ζεὺς οἰκτεῖρας ἀφῆκεν ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τὴν φλόγα (schol. *Orestes*) reminds one of the Nicolaeian concept of pity, the empathy which Cyrus feels for Croesus and hopes the Persians may feel as well, which is fundamental in Nicolaus' interpretation of the Persian king: F 68.1, ὅτι ὁ Κῦρος ὄκτειρε Κροῖσον

<sup>25</sup> And the possibility that he resorted to a commentary on Euripides by Thomas in order to comment on Nicolaus seems fortuitous as well.

τὸν Λυδῶν βασιλέα διὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρετὴν (“that Cyrus had pity upon Croesus, king of the Lydians, because of his virtue”); 68.4, ὁ δὲ Κῦρος ταῦθ’ ὀρῶν γινόμενα οὐκ ἐκόλυε, βουλόμενος καὶ τοὺς Πέρσας οἰκτόν τινα λαβεῖν αὐτοῦ (“Cyrus, looking at this, did not obstruct the events, wanting the Persians to pity him”).<sup>26</sup> In the whole of Greek literature, these passages are almost the only ones that associate Croesus with the concept of ‘pity’, felt either by Cyrus or by Zeus.<sup>27</sup> (b) Striking as well are the three identical words that the scholion shares with the speech Croesus makes to Cyrus in F 68, when he quotes the content of the ambiguous oracle delivered to him by Apollo. To Thomas’ scholion καὶ γὰρ τῷ Κροίσῳ, ὅτε στρατεύσειν κατὰ Κύρου ἔμελλεν, ἐρωτήσαντι εἰ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ περιέσται εἶπε· ... ὅθεν ἀπατηθεὶς ὁ Κροῖσος (κτλ.) compare F 68.13 ὦ δέσποτα, ἐπεὶ μέ σοι θεοὶ ἔδοσαν σύ τε χρηστὰ ἐπαγγέλλεις, αἰτοῦμαί σε δοῦναί μοι πέμψαι Πυθοῖδε τὰς πέδας τάσδε, καὶ τὸν θεὸν ἐρέσθαι, τί παθὼν ἐξηπάτα με τοῖς χρησιμοῖς ἐπάρας στρατεύειν ἐπὶ σὲ ὡς περιεσόμενον, ἐξ ὅτου αὐτῷ τάδε ἀκροθίνια πέμπω (δείξας τὰς πέδας) καὶ τί δήποτε ἀμνημονοῦσιν χάριτος οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων θεοί (“Lord, as the gods have given me to you, and you are announcing favours for me, I ask you to let me send these shackles to Delphi, to ask the god what he had suffered from me to deceive me, inducing me by his oracles to make war against you as if I could defeat you. I am sending him these first-fruits (showing the shackles), asking him why the gods of the Greeks are unmindful of gratitude”).

In the scholion, στρατεύσειν, περιέσται, and ἀπατηθεὶς (on the oracle) remind one of Nicolaus’ identical στρατεύειν, περι-

<sup>26</sup> For οἰκτος in Nicolaus see also FF 22, 66.37, 68.6, 130.45, 130.136.

<sup>27</sup> Xen. *Cyr.* 7.2.26 also deals with Cyrus’ pity towards Croesus: καὶ ὁ Κῦρος εἶπε· ... ὦ Κροῖσε· ... οἰκτίρω ... σε. But this passage cannot be Thomas’ source, as it transmits a different story (without the pyre) and does not record the oracle. Neither does the compiled Nicolaus transmit the response: in my opinion, however, the intact Nicolaus had referred to it (see below).

εσόμενον, and ἐξηπάτα (still on the oracle).<sup>28</sup> Each of these words is not meaningful in itself, and, for instance, the most interesting among them, ἀπατάω, is also found in other sources on Croesus; but as a full set, the three are not casual since they concern the same matter (the oracle) and are exclusively found in both Thomas' scholion and Nicolaus. All the other sources which quote the hexameter oracle as deceptive, and so theoretically could be the sources of Thomas, show in fact a partially different context and sometimes modify the response or cut it off.<sup>29</sup> Thus, I do not think that Thomas simply echoed the vocabulary of his (unknown) source and quoted instead the

<sup>28</sup> In fact, verbal analysis reveals that many (not meaningful) elements of the common section of the two scholia, indeed nearly all of them, are also attested in Nicolaus. πρωτεύω is also found in Nicolaus F 24; στρατεύω in 20, 58.3, 65.1, 66.15, 68.13, 79, 103z.14, 127.15 and 21, 136.1. ἐρωτάω appears in Nicolaus 52, 66.15, 71, περίεμι in 68.13. καταλύειν, indirectly associated with τὴν ἀρχήν, is also found in Nicolaus 57.2; οἰκείος appears in 128.33, 130.60, 130.65, 130.117. ἐξαπατάω is attested in Nicolaus 31, 54, 68.13, while ἀπάτη appears in 4.5. By contrast, not attested at all are only ἄγνωστον (but see ἀγνοέω in 30, 47.9, 130.38, 130.111, 130.128) and above all ἀντίδικος, which usually has a juridical meaning but is attested already in Aesch. *Ag.* 41 in the sense of "(military) enemy." As to the section which is transmitted only by the Euripidean scholion, ὑπολαμβάνω is also found in Nicolaus 4.3, 4.4, 93, 103d, 128.29, 130.92, 130.111. ἐμβάλλω appears in 2, 44.2, 54, 59.3, 62. Not φλόξ but the verb φλέγω is attested in 62, even though it is used metaphorically. Still, ἀπόλλυμι is frequently attested in Nicolaus as well (3, 38, 66.33, 79, 130.60, 130.105, 134).

<sup>29</sup> For instance, among the sources that use the verb ἀπατάω in reference to Croesus, only Ps.-Nonnus and the *Anonymus de scientia politica*, both of the sixth century A.D., transmit the correct oracle; but the context is different from that of both our scholia and Nicolaus: Ps.-Nonnus *Scholia mythologica* 4.95, ὁ Ἀπόλλων μαντευόμενος, οὐ σαφῶς οὐδὲ διαρρήδην τοὺς χρησμοὺς τοῖς χρησμοφδομένοις ἔλεγεν, ἀλλ' ἀσαφῶς καὶ λοξῶς· διὸ ἤκουσε Λοξίας, ὡς τάναντία τῶν ἐκβησομένων χρησμοφδῶν. καὶ ἐκ τούτου ἤπατῶντο πολλοί, ὧν μετὰ πάντων ὁ Κροῖσος ὁ Λυδός. ἦν γὰρ αὐτῷ ὁ δοθεὶς χρησμὸς οὗτος· Κροῖσος Ἄλυν διαβάς μεγάλην ἀρχὴν καταλύσει; *Anonymus de scientia politica* p.42 Mazzucchi, ἄλλως τε καὶ ἠπατῶσιν ἐνίοτε αἱ μαντεῖαι τοὺς χρωμένους, ὥσπερ Κροῖσον ἐν τῷ χρησμῷ ἀκούσαντα Κροῖσος Ἄλυν διαβάς μεγάλην ἀρχὴν καταλύσει.

exact hexameter oracle: the identity of four of his words—above all the two involving the concepts of pity and deception—with a short passage of Nicolaus F 68, still on the oracle, may not be merely coincidental. Thus, Nicolaus, already abridged in the tenth century by the Byzantine compilers of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, may have indeed been the source of Thomas Magister for the story of Croesus in the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>30</sup> It seems to me a serious possibility. The very probable identification of Xanthus as the source of Ephorus for the hexameter oracle also seems to confirm, even if indirectly, the derivation of Thomas’ oracle from Nicolaus himself: Xanthus of Lydia was in fact the most important source of Nicolaus of Damascus for Lydian history and even the only one.<sup>31</sup>

*The addition of a missing, Nicolaeian, oracle to the abridged Nicolaus*

It must be pointed out that the *Turonensis* scholion quotes an oracle which is not simply extrapolated from a foreign, and totally different, narrative but is presupposed precisely by Nicolaus F 68.13, where Croesus’ wish to question Apollo about his deceptive oracle is related, along with the bitter proposal of sending his fetters to the god as a sarcastic offering. Those allusions, which appear so suddenly in the compiled F 68 and are not textually ‘prepared for’ from a narrative point of view, presuppose in the complete Nicolaus too, as in Herodotus (1.90.2–91.4), a full treatment of that (misunderstood) oracle, both its delivery and its final explanation. It is an easy guess to suppose that the vocabulary of the response would have been

<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere, Thomas Magister deals with Croesus but depends explicitly on Hdt. 1.78 and 91: *Ecloga nominum et verborum Atticorum* s.v. ὑποκρίνομαι (pp.374–375 Ritschl) on the responses delivered to the Lydian king by both the Telmessus and the Delphic oracles, Ἡρόδοτος ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ· Τελμησέες μὲν ταῦτα ὑπεκρίναντο Κροίσῳ· καὶ αὐθις ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ· ταῦτα μὲν ἡ Πυθίη ὑπεκρίνατο τοῖσι Λυδοῖσι· καὶ πάλιν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ· καὶ τῶν χρηστηρίων τὰς ὑποκρίσιας.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Jacoby *ad FGrHist* 90 F 71 (p.253.38): “N.s quelle für alles lydische ist Xanthos.”



the same on both occasions.<sup>32</sup>

By quoting that oracle, the later hand of the *Turonensis* seems to have provided such a required reference, which did exist in Nicolaus but had been cut out of F 68 by the compilers of the *Excerpta de virtutibus*. If the oracle also appeared in the full Nicolaus, it is possible that the later hand of the *Turonensis* looked for it in Nicolaus himself, already abridged by the compilers of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*. Nicolaus' oracle may have been recorded in some lost *Excerpta*, for instance in a compilation devoted to famous responses. It may have been quoted as part of a very brief abridgment, by the Byzantine excerptors, of Nicolaus' story of Croesus, as indispensable for the reader's understanding. The compilers, who normally quoted full sections of the texts they excerpted, sometimes summarized their models in a few lines, partly exploiting the vocabulary of their authors, partly in their own words.<sup>33</sup>

If the later hand of the *Turonensis* added the oracle to f.154<sup>v</sup>, looking for its context in another Nicolaeian compilation, he did it badly and quickly: he adapted the Nicolaeian abridgment (concerning Apollo and his oracle) to the new context (concerning Croesus) by resorting to anacoluthon and wrongly stopping the text after ὥς, before adding the link ὄρα κάτωθεν. Of course, he added it in order to include an important turning point of the story, though he did not add the final explanation, also needed, viz. the justification of the ambiguous response, another indispensable feature of the story which had been cut out of F 68 by the Constantinian compilers of *De virtutibus*.

According to this hypothesis, Thomas Magister too derived Croesus' response from the same Nicolaeian compilation as the later hand of the *Turonensis*, and copied the hexameter oracle in

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Hdt. 1.53.2–3, 1.90.2–4, and 1.91.4, where Croesus' response is paraphrased and commented on with the same vocabulary.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Nicolaus FF 34, 35, and 36, where the clearly longer stories of Aepytyus, Pheidon, Corinthus, and Sisyphus are severely abridged in a few lines giving accounts of all the events. Other short compilations, drastically abridged by the excerptors, are FF 12, 21, 24, 48, 64, 67.

the correct form and both its introduction and final information. In a transcriptional mistake, the god who rescued Croesus by pouring water became Zeus in place of Apollo, and that lapsus would be better explained if the content of Nicolaus F 68 (where Zeus is also mentioned) had been taken into account by the Nicolaeian compilation.<sup>34</sup> Hence, I think one cannot exclude the alternative hypothesis of a common source for the two marginal notes, that of the *Turonensis* and that of Thomas, and that source could be identified with a compilation of Nicolaus of Damascus. The dependence of the later hand on Thomas' scholion is supported by the shared portion of the two texts and their correspondences. However, this direct dependence may be challenged if one considers that the later hand of the *Turonensis* provides information needed by Nicolaus F 68 but derived from Thomas, who nonetheless draws on

<sup>34</sup> Zeus as a saviour appears neither in Herodotus nor in the versions depending on him. Zeus extinguishes the flames of Croesus' pyre only in Bacchylides 3.17–41, before Apollo carries the king and his daughters to the land of the Hyperboreans, either alive or rather dead; cf. W. Burkert, "Das Ende des Kroisos. Vorstufen einer herodoteischen Geschichtserzählung," in Chr. Schäublin (ed.), *Catalepton, Festschrift für B. Wyss* (Basel 1985) 4–15. However, Thomas Magister is not following the version of Bacchylides, which features a suicide. Elsewhere, Zeus and Croesus are named together with Apollo in a rather short (and so quite obscure) *adespota* fragment of a comic play, preserved in a papyrus, from which nothing can be deduced for our purpose (Austin, *CGFP* fr.244, p.264): Κροισ[ / ὁ Ζε[ῦς. The three characters—Croesus, Apollo, and Zeus—are mentioned together in Nicolaus of Damascus' version of the pyre story, where, however, it is Apollo who quenches the flames and Zeus is only evoked by the Sybil as Ζεὺς ὑπάτος (F 68.8). So the text of the Euripidean scholion reproduces on the whole a close version to those of Herodotus and Nicolaus, as it confirms the well-known sequence of Croesus' capture/his punishment on the burning pyre/his rescue by the pitying divinity pouring water. It only modifies both the oracle, recorded in hexameter, and the author of the rescue, namely Zeus. The name of Zeus cannot have been introduced by Thomas into a textual patchwork, i.e. a conflation of information collected from different sources: for the scholion deals with one complete story (that of Croesus), presumably derived from one source, and the text itself seems to summarize only one report. That name must be an error.

Nicolaus, in an apparently fortuitous transfer of information for which however the role of chance is more difficult to admit. In my opinion, the Nicolaeian origin of Thomas' information allows us alternatively to suppose the common, Nicolaeian, origin of the information on the hexameter oracle delivered to Croesus, transmitted by the two scholia.

To conclude, either the later hand which added the scholion at f. 154<sup>v</sup> of the *Turonensis* C 980 derived it from the Thoman scholion to Euripides' *Orestes* 165 or, as I suggest, the two scholia derive independently from a common source, possibly an abridged version of Nicolaus of Damascus. If so, the later hand found this narrative, transmitting the hexameter oracle, in a Nicolaeian compilation now lost, possibly a section of the Byzantine *Excerpta* devoted to famous responses or even a history of Croesus. Nor can one exclude that the later hand was not so late and derived the scholion from the abridged Nicolaus roughly at the time of the copying of the *Turonensis*, so as to improve the compilation by providing further, and fundamental, information here needed. In fact, it would have been obvious, for a reader of *De virtutibus et vitiis*, to look for further material on Croesus in another volume of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*. Thomas Magister could have done the same. In other words, he could have derived his scholion from the same context as that used by the later hand of the *Turonensis*.<sup>35</sup>

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