

THE CHARIOTEERS FROM ANTINOE

(PLATES III-IV)

It is with great pleasure that I contribute a note on a papyrus of late Antiquity to a scholar whose studies have done much to elucidate the attitudes and thought processes of this troubled period. The papyrus, found by John Johnson in his excavations at Antinoe (Sheik-el-Abada) in 1914, contains a coloured illustration of a group of charioteers. It is a beautiful object in itself, easily the most artistic of illustrated papyri from the ancient world, and is of interest for the development of the ancient book and the transmission of texts.¹

The fragment (see PLATES III (colour) and IV (black and white)) shows five charioteers standing in a closely-massed group. Parts of the side, arm and leg of a sixth are visible at the left. A curved bow coloured with yellow wash under which the two right-most figures stand is possibly intended to indicate an arcade (so Gasiorowski). The charioteers wear an under tunic and an outer jacket with skirts which reach to just above the knee. These jackets are in the standard colours (red, blue, green) of the four Roman circus factions. Actually three men wear green outer jackets, one a red jacket, one a blue; in one case the head alone is visible, and no jacket colour can be discerned. No member of the 'white' faction is actually illustrated.² Over the jacket a rope is passed some six times right round the body to serve as protection in case of accident.³ Further equipment consists of a yellow belt and a yellow crash-helmet. One man is raising his right hand and arm in an emphatic gesture, another holds a whip. The one whose arm is raised is looking to the right, the others, each with his head slightly differently inclined, are looking to the left, as if at some object not now visible to us. The quality of the drawing, its sureness of line and suggestion of movement as well as the vividness of the colouring, have been much admired since the first publication in 1931. Above the drawing are the ends of four lines of writing in large rounded capitals. The fibres run in a horizontal direction. I read them as follows:

¹ *Short bibliography.*

S. J. Gasiorowski, 'A fragment of a Greek Illustrated Papyrus from Antinoe', *JEA* xvii (1931) 1-9.

R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Hellenistic-Byzantine Miniatures of the Iliad* (Olten, 1955).

A. Bauer-J. Strzygowski, 'Eine alexandrinische Weltchronik' (*Denkschriften d. kais. Akad. in Wien* li), Vienna, 1905 (hereafter called 'Alexandrian chronicle').

Erich Bethe, *Buch und Bild im Altertum* (Leipzig, Vienna, 1945).

A. Calderini and others, *Ilias Ambrosiana* (complete colour facsimile) (Olten, 1953).

G. Cavallo, *Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica*, 2 vols., Florence, 1967.

H. Gerstinger, *Die Wiener Genesis*, 1931.

K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*, Princeton, 1947 ('W. 1'). (A 2nd edition in 1972).

idem, *Ancient Book Illumination*, Cambridge, Mass., 1959 ('W. 2').

On the charioteers' dress, in addition to the article of H. Schöne cited in n. 3, see also R. Hanoune, *MEFR* 81 (1969) 250; G. Becatti, M. P. Tambella and others, *Mosaici antichi in Italia: Regione settima:*

Baccano: Villa Romana, Rome n.d. [1969], plates XXII-XXV and pp. 71-9. I am indebted to Professor Alan Cameron and Mr W. E. H. Cockle for these references. The subject will be further discussed by Professor Cameron in his book *Porphyrus the charioteer*, to appear in 1973.

The papyrus has been cleaned expertly by Mr W. E. H. Cockle, and the excellent photographs are the work of Mr Eric Hitchcock of University College London.

I am grateful to the Provost and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of University College London for a grant towards the cost of the coloured reproduction.

² It is disconcerting to us, but presumably not to the contemporary race-going public, that the long sleeves of the under-tunic are of a different colour from the outer jacket. The red-jacketed driver has light blue sleeves; two green-jacketed drivers have red sleeves, the blue-jacketed driver also has red sleeves.

³ For the manner of the girding see the passages of Galen and Soranus explained and illustrated by H. Schöne, *JDAI* xviii (1903) 70. They show clearly also in the mosaics from Baccano.



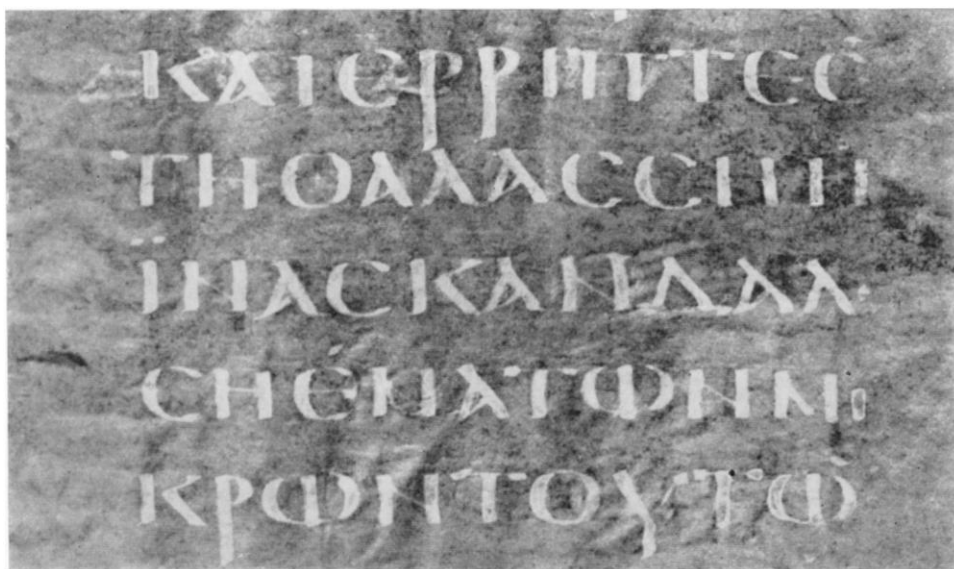
THE CHARIOTEERS FROM ANTINOE (1.86:1)



(a) → Side of papyrus (exact size)



(b) ↓ Side of papyrus (exact size)



(c) Purpureus Petropolitanus ('N')

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→ 1 8/9 letters].
 2]. . .
 3]. ε̣
 4]. ι̣

- Notes: 1. Possibly an offset of ink. The possibility also that it is a page number in an upper margin is unlikely but cannot be absolutely excluded.
 2. The first letter may be *o* or *ω*.
 3. The first letter may be *τ* or *π*; *ε* is rubbed and has lost a part of the lower arc, most of the cross-bar and the upper arc.
 4. There is a high link to *ι*, which would suit, e.g.]*ει*.

The first editor of this fragment states that he published it from a photograph, not from inspection of the original. His description is unfortunately incomplete, no doubt for this reason, and its incompleteness has suggested to others an interpretation which is erroneous. K. Weitzmann has disregarded the original editor's specific statement that 'the fragment is part of a leaf of a papyrus book' in favour of the hypothesis that it is part of a roll, advancing as a reason⁴ 'the fact that the back of the fragment does not contain any writing makes it more likely a part of a roll, since in a codex, at least normally, both sides of a leaf are written upon'.

Weitzmann was relying on Gasiorowski's statement that 'the verso of the fragment does not contain any visible matter, either written or painted'. I suspect that this sentence is a false inference which Gasiorowski drew from the silence of his informants. One has only to turn the fragment over to see that the back contains writing. At its right-hand edge there are the beginnings of some thirteen lines in letters of the same size as those of the front, and sufficiently similar to them to suggest that the same scribe copied them. One must not be dogmatic when no unexceptionable letter survives complete on the front, but ink, size and general style are in favour of the identification of the hands. If they are identical it follows that the fragment is part of a codex, and that it was in fact a piece of a particularly beautiful illustrated book on papyrus. Moreover, some inferences may be made about the date and size of the original leaf; the subject of the book concerned and the rest of the missing illustration may also be guessed at.

I read the text of the back, in which the fibres run in a vertical direction,⁵ as follows:

↓

.
 . [.
 ο [.
 ε [.
 . [.
 5 ε̣π [.
 ηλα [.
 μω [.
 πω [.
 κα [.
 10 τε [.
 πρo [.
 κα [.
 φ [.

- Notes: 5. The paragraphus implies that a new section began with line 6.
 7. ω [rather than α [.
 9. ? και [.

⁴ W. I, p. 53.

⁵ See Plate IVb.

The handwriting, which is strictly bilinear, belongs to that mixture of 'Biblical majuscule' and 'Coptic uncial' recently discussed by G. Cavallo (p. 113). ϵ , κ , π even τ could pass for forms current in majuscule; but the upright α is like that of the 'Coptic' P. Oxy. 2258⁶ or to P. Vindob. K15. The letter κ is split into two halves. In the second half the upper oblique is thickened so as to align itself horizontally with the scribe's upper notional line. This κ (like the λ) is made in the same way in Codex 'N' of the Gospels, the so-called Purpureus Petropolitanus.⁷ I should agree with Cavallo in assigning Codex 'N' (and the Antinoe fragment also) to the sixth century. The date for the papyrus 'about A.D. 500' given by John Johnson to Gasiorowski on archaeological grounds (i.e. the find context) agrees with the date suggested by morphological analysis of the letter forms. This date is in conflict with the date allocated by the art-historians to the drawing.⁸ In the light of this conflict the art-historians must think again. As a palaeographer I could not reconcile myself to a date earlier than A.D. 450 for the letter forms of the manuscript, and would prefer a half century later; and both C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat have backed my opinion. The use of some letter-forms current in the 'Coptic uncial' type of hand may suggest that this manuscript was written (and therefore also illustrated) in Egypt. But this argument is not to be pressed.

I have not succeeded in identifying the text in question; and indeed an identification could only be made plausible if it could be shown that the successive line beginnings on the back were the beginnings of verses known to have occurred in the given order. That they are such beginnings seems to me, in itself, not unlikely.⁹ Perhaps some other scholar will have more success in locating them than I have had. I cannot place them in *Iliad* XXIII, in Apollonius Rhodius or in Quintus of Smyrna (note that in the chariot race which took place at the funeral games of Achilles narrated by Quintus IV 500 ff. there is a lacuna estimated by its latest editor F. Vian at 48 verses).¹⁰ The number of at least six charioteers has been taken by Weitzmann to exclude a reference to *Iliad* XXIII where the competitors number five, as they also do in Quintus.¹¹ It must be admitted that the number does not well suit the Roman *factiones* either, which call for four, or a multiple of four. There is on iconographic parallel to tell us what the charioteers are doing. Are they preparing for the race, acting as a jury during the course of it or to hear complaints after it? The Ambrosian *Iliad* has only one miniature (LV) relating to the chariot race, and it does not help with the interpretation of the present scene. But it may be noted in passing that its charioteers also are dressed as if they were members of the Roman *factiones* and they drive a pair of horses (a point in which Homer's charioteers agree with the teamsters of Antinoe, as shown in an unpublished papyrus from Oxyrhynchus written by a victorious driver of a *κυνωρικός* in A.D. 275), not a team of four; in both miniatures LV and LVI the Achaeans sit in a group, in a sort of special grandstand behind a table as if they were 'presidents'.

Gasiorowski guessed that the original dimensions of the Antinoe fragment 'may well

⁶ E. G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, no. 47.

⁷ See Plate IVc taken from *New Pal. Soc.* I 151.

⁸ Gasiorowski p. 9, first half of the fifth century A.D. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rendiconti Accad. Lincei* vi (1951) 430 and *Hellenistic-Byzantine Miniatures of the Iliad* 25 n. 6 and 110 n. 2 gives the date as '4th cent.' without discussion.

⁹ $\eta\lambda\alpha$ suggests $\eta\lambda\alpha[\epsilon]$, $\eta\lambda\alpha\tau\omicron$ as well as a variety of articulations with $\eta\lambda\alpha$. $\gamma\mu\omega$ is more difficult. Neither $\mu\acute{\omega}\nu\eta\chi\epsilon\varsigma$ $\lambda\pi\pi\omicron\iota$ nor $\mu\acute{\omega}\lambda\omicron\nu$ $\text{'}\text{A}\rho\eta\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ occur at this *sedes*. $\pi\omega$ suggests, e.g. $\pi\acute{\omega}\lambda\omicron\iota$, $\iota\iota$ $\pi\rho\omicron$ e.g. $\pi\rho\omicron[\phi\rho\omicron\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega\varsigma]$.

¹⁰ Similarly I cannot place verse 6 ff. in the Anthology from the index of the first verses of

epigrams in the Didot edition or in that of Beckby. Mr W. E. H. Cockle tells me he has not found a corresponding series of line-beginnings in Nonnus. These searches have been made by hand and eye. The negative result is confirmed by a search of the computer tapes of the whole of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, of Hesiod and of Apollonius Rhodius conducted by means of a programme devised by the Rev. A. Q. Morton and run at the Computing Centre of the University of Edinburgh.

¹¹ Pindar, *Pyth.* v 45 ff. (this reference I owe to Professor P. Corbett) must mean a field of 41 charioteers at Delphi, in the race won by Alexibiades. In the pretended race in Soph. *El.* 700 there were ten starters.

have been of considerable size, judging by the analogy of the illustrations in the Alexandrian chronicle, the only other illustrated papyrus book of this period'. Its editors estimated its size as about 24 cm. B \times 30 cm. H; I would estimate that it was larger, say 22 cm. B \times 32 cm. H or even 25 cm. B \times 33 cm. H. Gasiorowski's guess seems now to be confirmed. Even if the subject matter of the text turns out to be prose, the lines on the back are likely to have contained at least fifteen letters. On the back they begin on a vertical alignment which, if transferred to the front, would pass through the head of the second charioteer from the left, and would of course continue farther to the left. Given the letter-size and spacing, a line of fifteen letters would have required an additional 6 cm. (minimum) to contain the writing, and an additional 5 to 6 cms of margin—a total of 18 cm. But if the lines were hexameters the written width will have reached 15 to 18 cms, giving a total width of 28 cm. The shape of two other illustrated books (admittedly made of parchment, not papyrus) would appear to support the higher figure. The dimensions of the Ambrosian *Iliad* are estimated by Bianchi Bandinelli at 28.8 cm. B \times 32.6 cm. H. The Vienna *Genesis* is at least 27 cm. B \times 33.3 cm. H, and some leaves are bigger than that. In these two manuscripts the illustrations occupy the full width of the page, and may even stray slightly outside the margins observed by the written page. From the written text they are separated by a coloured border in the *Iliad*. In the *Genesis* they are not separated from it by any outward mark. There seems to have been no separator in the Antinoe manuscript either. And the tendency of this examination is to suggest that in the Antinoe manuscript the illustration was not a marginal one, like the drawings in the Alexandrian chronicle, but occupied the complete width of the page, and part of the margin as well. If this view is accepted, it also follows that the greater part of the scene is lost. The charioteers who are gazing to the left have their eyes focussed on what was no doubt its principal subject, and there is no reason for thinking with Gasiorowski that the charioteer whose right hand is raised is the centre of the picture. Its scene may well have been quite other than an illustration of the contemporary factions of the circus.

The principal purpose of this republication has been to extirpate two serious errors which have established themselves, and to show that the papyrus depicting the charioteers (1) was part of a codex and (2) cannot be dated earlier than A.D. 450. It will be a splendid bonus if it enables someone else to establish the identity of the work it contains.

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