

P. OX. NO. 2330<sup>1</sup>  
AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE STUDY OF  
NICOLAUS OF DAMASCUS<sup>2</sup>

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One of the prime considerations in evaluating the merits of a historian is to assess his technique – not only to discover his sources, where this is possible, but also to analyse the way in which he uses them, and thereby gain a rational idea of his literary and historical approach. This article is concerned with trying to establish what methods Nicolaus adopted. A certain amount of work has been done on this question and different answers suggested, but this papyrus, as will be shown later, enables us for the first time to study the actual process and not merely to attempt to deduce it.

This second century A.D. papyrus of 28 short lines records part of a letter allegedly written by a Median general called Stryangaeus to Zarinaea<sup>3</sup>), the defeated queen of the Sacae, with whom he had become infatuated. The letter is preceded by 4 ½ lines of fragmentary dialogue between Stryangaeus and an unnamed individual, and the whole breaks off in mid-sentence<sup>4</sup>). The authorship of the papyrus is not disputed. The anonymous “De Mulieribus” traces in the story prior to the fragment, and quotes Ctesias as the author of it<sup>5</sup>). More important, Deme-

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1) Pap. Ox. XXII (1954), No. 2330, p. 83, ed. C. H. Roberts = F. Gr. H. 688 F 8b.

2) c. 64 BC – at least 3 BC. Tutor to Antony and Cleopatra’s children (F. Gr. H. 90 T 2), friend and adviser of Herod the Great (90 TT 1, 3–7, 12), acquaintance of Augustus (90 TT 1, 10), historian, philosopher, diplomat.

3) For variant readings of these two names see: Nicolaus, 90 F 5; Demetrius “De Eloc.” 213 = 688 F 8a; Tzetzes “Chil.” 12.897; Suidas, s. v. Στρυγγαῖος; P. Ox. 2330; Anon. “De Mul.” 2 = 688 F 7; Diodorus 2.34.3.

4) For fuller details of the story see: Anon. “De Mulieribus quae bello claruerunt” 2 = 688 F 7; Nicolaus, 90 F 5; Diodorus (2.34.1–5 = 688 F 1, pp. 451–453), though not mentioning this particular incident, testifies to the influential position of Zarinaea among her own people.

5) See n. 4.

trius<sup>6</sup>), while discussing the means of achieving *ἐνάργεια*, cites this particular part of Ctesias to exemplify his point and quotes the actual beginning of this letter, which differs only in one negligible detail from the papyrus. As Roberts points out<sup>7</sup>), there can thus be little doubt that the papyrus fragment contains not another version of the Ctesias original, but the text of Ctesias himself. Nicolaus also has the same story and records a letter which parallels that of Ctesias, and it is generally accepted that in 90 FF 1-5 at least he was using the Cnidian as his source<sup>8</sup>). Disagreement arises, however, on exactly how Nicolaus treated this material. The papyrus' importance lies in the fact that it allows a direct comparison to be made between the two historians, and an assessment of Nicolaus' methods of using part of the "Persica"<sup>9</sup>).

There are basically two views. Jacoby believed that in Nicolaus' narrative could be seen Ctesias' artistry in story-telling<sup>10</sup>), but several have opposed this. Laqueur maintained that Nicolaus himself was mainly responsible for his lively style of narrative by "imposing a style of his own" on the Ctesias' material<sup>11</sup>). He seems to be supported by Roberts, who states that Nicolaus "rewrote and elaborated" this part of Ctesias<sup>12</sup>). Wacholder too feels that Laqueur's thesis is probably correct, and bases his argument on two points: (i) Diodorus' and Photius' excerpts from Ctesias reveal the latter's lively style, but Nicolaus' "dramatic presentation" is not found in either<sup>13</sup>); (ii) There

6) Demetrius "De Eloc." 209-213, 215-216 = 688 T 142; 213-214 = 688 F 8a. The exact words are *ἐγὼ μὲν σὲ ἔσωσα, καὶ σὺ μὲν δι' ἐμὲ ἐσώθης, ἐγὼ δὲ διὰ σὲ ἀπωλόμην* (F. Gr. H IIC, p. 452, col. 2, lines 25-27). There is *no μὲν* after the *σὺ* in the second clause of the papyrus.

7) Op. cit. (n. 1), p. 82.

8) See F. Jacoby, F. Gr. H. IIC (Comm.), p. 235; R. Laqueur, PW XVII.I, col. 389.

9) This papyrus is virtually the only source material that has survived. 90 F 80 = Athenaeus 6.54, p. 249A shows that Caesar B. G. 3.22 was used, but it is impossible to say with any certainty to what extent. It is omitted in the present review because its use by Nicolaus involved translation from the Latin into Greek, with inevitable changes in vocabulary and style.

10) F. Jacoby, F. Gr. H. IIC (Comm.), p. 235, lines 26-27, (Berlin 1926).

11) R. Laqueur, PW XVII.I, s. v. "Nikolaos" No. 20, col. 389 (1936). Cf also J. Gilmore, "The Fragments of the 'Persika' of Ktesias", p. 107 (London, 1888).

12) Op. cit. (1954), p. 82, lines 15-18.

13) B. Z. Wacholder, "Nicolaus of Damascus", (California, 1962), p. 68 and p. 122f, nn. 21 and 44.

is no evidence that Ctesias used dialogue for dramatic purposes<sup>14</sup>); Nicolaus' experience of writing tragedies was thus used "to heighten interest in a story"<sup>15</sup>). The second point is shown to be wrong by both Photius and Demetrius preserving pieces of dialogue from Ctesias<sup>16</sup>). As for point (i), it can reasonably be argued that it would be very unlikely for any historian given to highly-coloured descriptions, as Ctesias was, to avoid using the technique of speech and dialogue. Demetrius commends him for the interesting and dramatic quality of his writing, and this theme is elaborated by Photius<sup>17</sup>). Furthermore, it is not surprising that there is little indication of dialogue in Diodorus' and Photius' excerpts from Ctesias. Their aim seems to have been to make a fairly general précis of Ctesias, and consequently dialogue would be the first "luxury" to be dispensed with in any such process. For Ctesias to achieve these vivid qualities in his writing without the use of direct speech would be both difficult and unnecessary. It is therefore not a question of whether, but of how far he went in his utilisation of this medium, and how much Nicolaus modelled his source, for which this papyrus is of crucial importance:

*Ctesias* (P. Ox. 2330)

"[.] α. σ. [.] λε. απανρ. τες δ' ἐ[σ]τιν οτι ἄγος ἐνέλειπες". ὁ δ' εἶπεν· "Φέρε τὸ γοῦν πρῶτον [γ]ράμματα [γ]ράψω πρὸς Ζαρειναίαν". καὶ γράφει· "Στραυγαῖος Ζαρειναίαι οὔτω λέγει· ἐγὼ μὲν σὲ ἔσωσα, καὶ σὺ δι' ἐμὲ ἐσ[ώ]θης, ἐγὼ δὲ διὰ σὲ ἄπω-

*Nicolaus* (90 F 5).

... πρὸς τε τὸν εὐνοῦχον ᾧδύρετο. τέλος δὲ γράψας εἰς διφθέραν ἐξώρκασε τὸν εὐνοῦχον, ἐπειδὴν αὐτὸν διαχρήσεται, μηδὲν προκατειπόντα τὴν διφθέραν ἀποδοῦναι Ζαρναίᾳ. ἐγγράπτο δέ· "Στραυγαῖος Ζαρναίᾳ λέγει τάδε· ἐγὼ μὲν σε ἔσωσά τε

14) *Ib.*, pp. 68f and 123, nn. 46-47. Wacholder cites 90 FF 3-4, 44 and 66 as examples of this technique, but these beg the question.

15) *Ib.*, p. 69. Nicolaus wrote τραγῳδίας... καὶ κωμῳδίας εὐδοκίμους according to Suidas, s.v. *Νικόλαος* = 90 F 132.1.

16) Demetrius "De Eloc." 216 = 688 F 24; Photius "Bibl." 72, 37b, p. 111 (ed. R. Henry, Brussels, 1947) = 688 F 13.13, p. 460. It is also worth noting that these extracts, from Ctesias' original, take the same question-dialogue form as 90 F 3 (conversation between Arbaces and Belesys), cited by Wacholder (p. 69) as an example of Nicolaus' dramatisation.

17) Demetrius "De Eloc." 209-213 = 688 T 14a; Photius "Bibl." 72, 45a, p. 133, lines 12-15 = 688 T 13. Cf also 688 TT 11b-11e and 11h. Ctesias' "Persica" was in 23 books.

[λ]όμην, και ἀπέκτεινα αὐτὸς ἐμαντόν· οὐ γάρ μοι σὺ ἐβούλου χαρ[ί]σασθαι. ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦτα τὰ κακὰ και τὸν ἔρωτα τόνδε οὐκ αὐτὸς εἰλόμην, ὃ δὲ θεὸς οὐτό[ς] ἐστιν κοινὸς και σοὶ και ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποισιν. ὅτωι μὲν οὖν εἴλεως ἔλθῃ, πλείστας γε ἡδονὰς δίδωσιν, και ἄλλα πλείστα ἀγαθὰ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν, ὅτωι δὲ ὀργιζόμενος ἔλθῃ(ι) ο[ἷον]περ ἐμοὶ νῦν, πλείστα κ[ακὰ ἐρ]γασάμενος τὸ τελευταῖον πρόρριζον ἀπώλεσεν και ἐξέτ[ρ]εψεν. τεκμαίρομαι δὲ τῷ ἐμῷ θανάτωι. [ἐ]γὼ γάρ σοι καταράσομαι μὲν οὐδέν, ἐπεύξομαι δὲ σοὶ τὴν δικαιο[τ]ά[τ]ην εὐχὴν· εἰ μὲν σὺ ἐμὲ [δ]ί[κ]α[ι]α ἐποίησας, πολ-

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και τῶν νῦν παρόντων ἀγαθῶν αἴτιος γέγονα· σὺ δὲ με ἀπέκτεινας και πάντων ἀνόνητον πεποίησας.

εἰ μὲν οὖν σοὶ ταῦτα πέπρακται δικαίως, σὺ δὲ πάντων τύχους τῶν ἀγαθῶν και εἰς μακαρία· εἰ δὲ ἀδίκως, σὺ δὲ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πάθους ἐμοὶ πεῖραν λάβοις· και γάρ μοι παρήγγεσας τοιοῦτον γενέσθαι.”

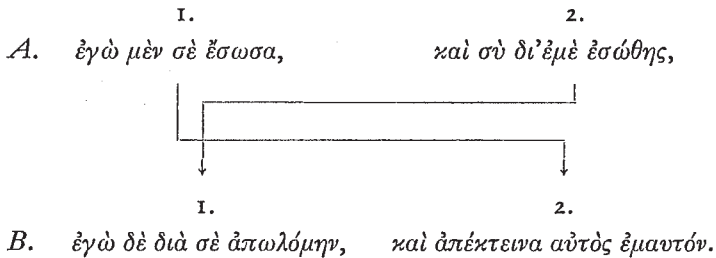
The difference between the two introductions is particularly striking: (i) To convey the feelings of Stryangaeus Ctesias used dialogue; Nicolaus abbreviates the conversation to “he poured out his troubles to the eunuch”. (ii) The Greek of the first five lines of the papyrus fragment is short and simple, but Nicolaus has woven the dialogue into more flowing language; his clauses are subordinated rather than coordinated, and the repetitive *γράφματα γράψω ... γράφει* is not adopted. (iii) For no apparent reason the perfectly acceptable *οὕτω λέγει* is changed to *λέγει τάδε*. (iv) According to Nicolaus, the eunuch was made to swear that he would say nothing about Stryangaeus’ suicide when he gave the letter to Zarinaca<sup>18</sup>), but there is nothing about this in Ctesias. This injunction can not have been found earlier than the beginning of the papyrus fragment, since Stryangaeus’ decision to write a letter is found within the compass of the

18) 90 F 5, p. 336, lines 20-22.

papyrus. Nicolaus says it happened after the writing of the letter. Ctesias must have inserted this order when the Mede had finished writing the letter; Nicolaus then transposed the order of his source and inserted it before he gave the contents of the letter.

The contents of the papyrus letter fall into two main parts – Stryangaeus reminds the queen of his good services to her and criticises the treatment she returned (lines 7–11, 24–27); secondly, he attributes the impasse between them to the influence of *ὁ θεός* (lines 11–24)<sup>19</sup>. Nicolaus in his version makes no reference to this second section, perhaps because he thought it spoilt the effect of intimate talk which had been established at the opening of the letter. The ten lines contain 42 words, and if the full argument is taken (*ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦτα – θανάτω*) 59, i.e. well over half the total number of words extant in the papyrus letter. This seems to suggest that Nicolaus was in the habit of dispensing with those parts of his source which detracted from the main lines of the story.

The verbal arrangements of Ctesias and Nicolaus make interesting comparison. Ctesias himself was clearly influenced by rhetoric, especially by the use of antithesis. In his first sentence (*ἐγὼ μὲν σὲ ἔσωσα . . . , ἐγὼ δὲ διὰ σὲ ἀπωλόμην*), the *μὲν* and *δέ* do not directly contrast opposing ideas but emphasise the same person, the clauses as a whole being juxtaposed, but this is not repeated by Nicolaus who writes *ἐγὼ μὲν σὲ ἔσωσα . . . , σὺ δὲ με ἀπέκτεινας*, and thereby draws attention to the two parties involved. Ctesias seems to have the antithesis here to help the chiasmic and symmetrical effect of the four lines, as:



<sup>19</sup> Probably Eros. The *οὔτος* qualifying *ὁ δὲ θεός* would then aptly refer back to *τὸν ἔρωτα τόνδε* of the sentence before.

The four clauses and the individual words in them are carefully balanced. Not only is the active-passive sequence of the first two verbs reversed in the last two, but their meanings are also contrasted. Stryangaeus begins by laying especial emphasis on his own role towards the queen – that of saviour (*ἐγὼ ... ἔσωσα, καὶ σὺ... ἐσώθης*). She on the other hand has been the cause of his disillusionment and death (*ἐγὼ δὲ διὰ σὲ ἀπωλόμην*). The other words were then arranged inside this chiasmic structure, the *σὲ ἔσωσα* of A 1 balancing *ἀπέκτεινα... ἐμαντόν* of B 2, and the *σὺ δι' ἐμέ* of A 2 set against the *ἐγὼ... διὰ σέ* of B 1. Even the number of words in the clauses balances – the two sets of clauses (A and B) have eight words, A 1 and B 2 having four each, and A 2 and B 1 five each, and both sets are linked internally with the pivot word *καί*. Once Ctesias had decided on a basic arrangement of contrasts, the tautology of A 1 and A 2 was admitted on artistic grounds<sup>20</sup>).

Nicolaus has several deviations in arrangement from Ctesias. The *ἐγὼ μὲν σὲ ἔσωσα* of F 5 is taken over completely from Ctesias A 1 and *σὺ δέ με ἀπέκτεινας* matches B 1. The two other clauses (*καὶ τῶν νῦν – γέγονα; καὶ πάντων ἀνόνητον πεποίηκας*) give no new information but are merely extensions of the ideas contained in the two clauses to which they are appended. This strongly suggests that Nicolaus purposely retained the four-part structure of his source, and added his second and fourth clauses as “filling” in the same way as Ctesias. In the process he removed Ctesias’ *σὺ δι' ἐμέ...*, *ἐγὼ δὲ διὰ σέ...* and his remarkable combination of antithesis, chiasmus and symmetry, put his own four verbs into the active voice, and reduced the number of contrasted words and clauses. The repetition of *ἐγὼ* and the changes of subject were then avoided. The resultant writing has rather more meaning by interpreting and replacing the vague words “saved” and “ruined” found in Ctesias. The use of *ἐγὼ μὲν σε* and *σὺ δέ με* as contrasts conveys Stryangaeus’ complaint more clearly, and this antithesis is stronger because it is not confused by others. Nicolaus’ version is less striking, reads smoother and appears less artificial.

There is only a very small amount of text available for directly comparing the vocabulary used by Nicolaus to cast his

20) Demetrius (“De Eloc.”, 212 = 688 T 14a) specially selected these nine words to exemplify the means of achieving *ἐνάργεια*, claiming that they gave *ἔμφασιν πλεονα* to the narrative.

version with that of Ctesias<sup>21</sup>). 9 out of the 31 words (ignoring *καί*) of Nicolaus are taken directly from Ctesias, 10 are drawn from or suggested by his version but changed in form (person, voice, case, etc), and the remainder are substituted by Nicolaus to avoid Ctesias' repetitions or to improve clause balance. But the introduction to the letter is in contrast. Here Nicolaus has departed from the order of Ctesias' narrative and converted the conversation of Stryangaeus and his adviser from direct to indirect speech. Yet despite his reshaping, he did not allow himself to produce a letter full of rhetorical devices which would be incongruous with the Medea's emotions. The clauses are well-balanced, and the simple style of Ctesias is maintained<sup>22</sup>). Nicolaus found a fairly straightforward but vivid style in his source, and on to this put his own literary polish, but was not himself responsible for the dramatisation of the story. The absence of more source material with which Nicolaus can be compared makes it difficult to say whether the same treatment was applied to all the "Histories"<sup>23</sup>). But a similarity of style in the longer fragments<sup>24</sup>), and Nicolaus' boast that he "took more trouble over writing history than anyone else had ever done" and "by sheer hard work finished it"<sup>25</sup>) point to the probability that this same process was adopted where personalities and anecdotes took up a large proportion of his writings, and where his source also had a leaning to this style of composition<sup>26</sup>).

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21) I. e.: Papyrus, lines 5-10, 26-27; and Nicolaus, lines 6-12, 26-27 (Jacoby, F. Gr. H. IIA, p. 336, lines 22-25). As mentioned earlier, Nicolaus in his version misses out a considerable part of the papyrus, where Stryangaeus muses on the influence of *ὁ θεός*.

22) Ctesias has 14 one-syllable and 9 two-syllable words in the contrasted sections, and Nicolaus 14 and 5 respectively (in two cases with four one-syllable words in sequence).

23) The "Histories" was written in 144 books (Athen. 6.54, p. 249A = 90 T 11), a universal history from the early Orient to c. 4 BC.

24) E. g. 90 FF 3 and 66, both from Ctesias.

25) 90 F 135, p. 422, lines 28-29. The claim is somewhat conventional. The words *μέγαν τε πόνον ὑποστάς* are taken by Wacholder (op. cit., p. 68) to refer to the actual amassing and selection of sources, but Nicolaus had already mentioned this in the clause before - *πᾶσαν ἀθροίσας τὴν ἱστορίαν*. The reshaping and rewriting of his material is surely more probable.

26) It was obviously easier to do this when dealing with legendary history. Yet many FF in Nicolaus are treated more prosaically than would have been expected, if his usual technique was in fact to dramatise his sources (Cf. 90 FF 25, 34, 36). This makes it almost certain that Nicolaus' alleged dramatisation merely reflects the characteristics of his source.

Ctesias recorded Assyrian and Median history in the first six books of his "Persica"<sup>27</sup>); Nicolaus covered the same field in not more than two<sup>28</sup>). What criteria did Nicolaus use to reduce Ctesias to perhaps a third of its original bulk? The Stryangaeus letter shows that Nicolaus omitted a considerable proportion of the original which he thought unnecessary to the main line of the story, and there were doubtless other occasions when the same thing was done. On the other hand, it would be difficult to add more detail and expand some parts of his narrative. This is demonstrated admirably by the Parsondes-Nanarus story in 90 F 4, where the feminising process to be carried out on the manly Parsondes by his enemy – to be shaved, have his hair plaited, skin bleached, etc. – is described on three occasions<sup>29</sup>). Nicolaus did not therefore contract his source in a uniform manner. Secondly, all the first five fragments of Nicolaus, which deal with Assyria and Media, have a web of intrigue in them and are treated in a melodramatic fashion<sup>30</sup>). Thirdly, when compared with Diodorus, Nicolaus deals with a markedly narrower field but goes into much greater detail<sup>31</sup>). Consequently, if these historically unimportant stories are treated by Nicolaus in such great detail relative to the total amount of space he devoted to these two empires, his account of the period would seem to have consisted mainly of the more romantic, intriguing and unusual episodes he found in Ctesias, held together by a linking narrative.

The foregoing examination of the Ctesias fragment strongly suggests that Jacoby was correct in his view that Nicolaus was largely indebted to Ctesias for the basic dramatisation of these fragments. Two further observations give support to this. Firstly, it has been shown that Nicolaus found Stryangaeus' letter already couched in rhetorical direct speech and a dialogue preceding it, and yet he reported this conversation in indirect speech, so actually toning down the more vivid and dramatic aspects of his source. In the second place, the use of direct speech to record conversations and sentiments is prominent in the sections

27) Photius "Bibl." 72, 35 b, p. 105, lines 36–37 = 688 T 8.

28) Books 1 and 2.

29) 90 F 4, p. 332, lines 30ff.; p. 333, lines 2–7, 8–14. Athenaeus (12.40, p. 530D = 688 F 6) shows conclusively that this story was told by Ctesias.

30) 90 FF 1–5, pp. 328–336.

31) Diodorus also followed Ctesias in covering the same ground (Book 2, 1–34). His account seems to be more of a *précis*, and is always more sober than Nicolaus'.



treating the Orient and Lydia<sup>32</sup>), but there is only one instance in all the other fragments<sup>33</sup>), even though there were many excellent opportunities to do so<sup>34</sup>). This contrast of usage suggests that Nicolaus was dependent for his composition in dialogue, direct speech and narrative on his sources. It would be much easier to copy or recast the conversations of Ctesias than to invent them where they were not already in his source. The same would apply to the general narrative. The vast length of his work must have made him follow the language and tone of his sources to a very large extent.

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32) Source: Ctesias and Xanthus.

33) 90 F 56. The story is also told by "Plutarch"? in "De Liber. Educ." 4, and in "Apophth. Lacon." 225 F, with direct speech at the same points in the narrative. It was obviously a well-known story, and the similarity of "Plutarch" and Nicolaus shows almost certainly that the latter took the direct speech from his source.

34) E.g. 90 FF 7, 8, 10, 54, 61.