
Rosetta

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Katrien Levrie (ed., tr.), 2018. *Jean Pédiasimos: Essai sur les douze travaux d'Héraclès. Édition critique, traduction et introduction*. Leuven, Paris and Bristol: Peeters, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 270. Pp. 149. €86.00(Hbk). ISBN 978-90-429-3557-0.

Reviewed by Silvio Bär

Everyone knows of Herakles' Twelve Labours (the so-called *dodekathlos*), but when asked in which ancient texts they actually appeared, many a classicist may feel sudden embarrassment. Several of the Labours are already mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*, which suggests that they must have been widely known before the composition of the Homeric poems, but the earliest record of the *dodekathlos* in its full canonical order does not stem from a textual source. Rather, it comes from the metopes of the temple of Zeus in Olympia (erected c. 470-457 BC). Important textual milestones are the first stasimon of Euripides' tragedy *Herakles* (lines 348-441) and the extensive mythographical accounts by (Ps.-)Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 2.57-180) and Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca historica* 4.8-53).

Many centuries later, the Byzantine polymath John Pediasimos (c. 1250-1310/4) composed a 'Booklet about the Twelve Labours of Herakles' (*Libellus de duodecim Herculis laboribus*), a compendious renarration of the *dodekathlos* based on (Ps.-) Apollodorus' lengthy account. The text was edited critically for the first time by Leo Allatius (Leone Allacci, 1586-1669) in 1641, and twice afterwards in the 19th century, by Anton Westermann (1806-1869) in 1843 and by Richard Wagner (1860-1937) in 1894. However, it was never translated into a modern language, and therefore has not been known beyond highly specialized circles. Katrien Levrie has now produced a commendable new critical edition with a French translation and a comprehensive introduction to Pediasimos' life and work, the genre and the sources of his *Libellus*, and its textual history.

Levrie's book is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter provides the reader with an overview of what is known about Pediasimos' biography and his oeuvre. An extremely useful synopsis gives the title, genre, number of existing manuscripts, and

the modern edition (where existent) of each piece of writing of Pediasimos in table form. This synopsis is followed by some thoughts on Pediasimos' 'value' ('valeur de Jean Pédiasimos', p.7). Levrie argues that Pediasimos, with his vast oeuvre on a wide variety of topics, deserves to be better known and more appreciated than he has been thus far, both by specialists and the general public.

The second chapter first deals with the genre of the *Libellus* and its relationship to (Ps.-)

Apollodorus' account of the deeds of Herakles. The *Libellus* is one of the relatively rare examples of mythographical accounts from the Byzantine period. Levrie demonstrates Pediasimos' excerption technique through synoptic tables. It appears that Pediasimos sometimes 'plagiarizes' from the *Bibliotheca* by copying its precise wording; in most cases, however, he summarizes and condenses (Ps.-)Apollodorus' narration, while at times he also adds further pieces of information and/or elaborates on certain points. Subsequently, in a (somewhat digressive) section, Levrie discusses an iambic poem about Herakles' *dodekathlos*, dated to the 14th century and transmitted in only one manuscript (Uppsaliensis graecus 15, ff. 128^v-132^v). This poem (edited by Knös 1908) was attributed to Pediasimos by Aubrey Diller (Diller 1935). Levrie (supporting this attribution) argues that the *Libellus* might have served as a preparatory exercise to the composition of the poem, but that, conversely, the poem might also have been written first for school practice ('exercice scolaire', p.28). A third (simple) option is not considered, namely, that both texts might have been composed independently of one another, without one being the model of the other. Unfortunately, however, the text of the iambic poem is not reproduced (and translated) in this edition. Since Levrie discusses its relation to the *Libellus* at such length, the book might have benefitted from having the actual text at hand.

An elaborate and well-arranged discussion of the transmission of the text is provided in chapters 3 and 4. In the third chapter, Levrie describes and discusses all 39 manuscripts which preserve the *Libellus* in ample detail, and includes information on catalogues and further bibliography for each manuscript. There is also a brief discussion of the three existing editions (Allatius 1641; Westermann 1843; Wagner 1894) and a synopsis, again in table form, of the differences between them. The fourth chapter is, then, the logical continuation, namely, Levrie's own *recensio*

codicum. Seven manuscripts do not contain the entire text of the *Libellus* and are therefore not classifiable ('non classables', p.81); twelve manuscripts are accompanied by scholia or interlinear glosses; seven add subheadings to each Labour. The principal result of Levrie's complex *recensio* is that there are three manuscript families (α , β , γ) which all stem from a lost common archetype (see the *stemma codicum*, p.105).

After some brief remarks on the *ratio edendi* (chapter 5) and a full bibliography (chapter 6), which contains all titles and references (including the catalogues) cited in the previous chapters, the Greek text of the *Libellus* is presented together with its French translation (French on the left, Greek on the right) and a critical apparatus. The French translation is a literal (or, rather, documentary) rendering of the original text, and it reads very naturally. The critical apparatus is virtually unequalled in its clarity and comprehensiveness. The only thing which I personally do not like is the bold type of the Greek, since it feels as if the text was 'shouting' at its reader. Apart from that, however, this edition is exemplary for its precision and its attention to detail.

Exemplary for its precision and its attention to detail: this is a quality that applies to Levrie's entire book from beginning to end. It is therefore to be hoped that it be widely read and used (indeed it is of interest and relevance to classicists as well as Byzantinists), and that several more editions of (and studies on) the works of John Pediasimos may follow in the future.

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