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The Bibliophile Ecumenism of the Lagid Dynasty

PhD Thesis Summary

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	p.5
CHAPTER I: <i>Library of Alexandria - establishment și existence</i>	p.12
I.1. The cultural evergetism of the Lagid Kings	p.12
I.2. The symbolic function of the Alexandrian Library in its founder's vision	p.29
I.3. Testimonies of ancient writers about the establishment and importance of this library	p.35
I.4. Destruction and re-establishment of the famous library	p.40
CHAPTER II: <i>Aspects of Lagid Kings' policy of enriching Alexandrian Library book fund</i>	p.49
II.1. Book acquisitions.....	p.49
II.1.1. Designation of special agents for purchasing books from the book markets.....	p.52
II.1.2. Confiscation of books found aboard foreign ships in the port of Alexandria	p.56
II.1.3. Requesting books in correspondence with foreign sovereigns	p.57
II.2. Writing books by kings' order	p.57
II.3. Ancient and modern estimates of the number of manuscripts in the Alexandrian Library	p.63
CHAPTER III: <i>Greek book fund</i>	p.65
III.1. Inventory and classification of Greek books in the Alexandrian Library	p.65

III.2. Typology of Greek books in the Alexandrian Library	p.68
III.3. Philological activity of elaborating critical editions of the Greek writings	p.71
III.4. The beginnings of the "Homeric problem"	p.77
CHAPTER IV: <i>Foreign book fund</i>	p.83
IV.1. Greek translation of the Old Testament	p.84
IV.2. Berossos' <i>History of Babylon</i>	p.94
IV.3. Translations from the Persian Zarathustra (gr. Zoroástrés)	p.105
IV.4. Translation of sacred Buddhist texts	p.111
CHAPTER V: <i>Alexandrian scholars' scientific work</i>	p.117
V.1. Lagid Kings' policy to encourage scientific research	p.117
V.2. The contribution of Alexandrian scholars in various scientific fields	p.123
V.2.1. Mathematics – Eukleides' work	p.123
V.2.2. Geography - Eratosthenes' work	p.132
V.2.3. Medicine	p.148
V.2.4. Astronomy	p.164
V.2.5. Grammar -The contribution of the grammarians Aristophanes of Byzantium and Dionysios Thrax	p.171
GENERAL CONCLUSIONS	p.190
BIBLIOGRAPHY	p.199
Gallery	p. 217

INTRODUCTION

I. *The current state of research for the approached subject*

Although the establishment of the Library of Alexandria, as well as the contradictory theories about its destruction, have been the subject of numerous volumes and studies, there are still issues that have not been sufficiently researched or written about concerning this library. Among them is the subject of the present thesis, which, according to its title, aims to bring into discussion the amazing bibliophile passion of Lagid dynasty kings, researching, based on the testimonies of that time and modern exegesis, the ways to which the kings resorted in order to collect as many books as possible, to which fields the books belonged and to what extent one can speak of a bibliophile ecumenism, knowing that in the Library of Alexandria there were not only books written by Greek authors, but also books written by foreign authors in Greek or translated into this language.

In order to write this paper, I consulted ancient sources as well as modern sources, which I compared, trying to reach to the most accurate information possible. Regarding the primary sources, most of them refer to the city of Alexandria's foundation by Alexander the Great and to the conflicts between the *diadochi*, the historiography on this topic being very rich. There are available also various primary sources describing Alexander the Great's descent into Egypt on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, choosing the place where the city that would bear his name was to be built and the plan for the future metropolis. Among these we mention Arrian's work (1st - 2nd century AD), *The Campaigns of Alexander (Anabasis Alexandri)*, which, although was written more than four hundred years after Alexander's death, is one of the most credible sources on his life and achievements. Other important sources should be mentioned, such as the biography dedicated by Plutarch (1st - 2nd century AD) to the Macedonian king, in the extensive work *Parallel Lives (Βίοι παράλληλοι)* and the one belonging to the Latin writer Curtius Rufus (1st century AD), *Books of the history of Alexander the Great Macedon which survive (Historiarum Alexandri Magni Macedonis libri qui supersunt)*. However, these books provided my work only with the historical context and not with information on its main subject. As for the sources concerning the establishment of the Library and the Alexandrian Mouseion, they are quite few and late, dating after the end of the Lagid dynasty. The earliest source for the founding of the

Alexandrian Library is the *Letter of Aristeas to Philokrates* (*Ἡ ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ Ἀριστείου πρὸς τὸν Φιλοκράτην*), a text most probably written by a Jewish author under the Greek pseudonym Aristeas. The letter attests Ptolemy II Philadelphos' decision to hire 72 Jewish scribes in Jerusalem to translate the Old Testament into Greek. This work is dated to the beginning of Philadelphos' reign and is a true apology to the Jewish religion. However, many researchers doubt the authenticity of the letter, while others believe that it was written at least a hundred years after the date on which it was originally dated. In fact, the letter contains some inconsistencies regarding the association of Ptolemy II Philadelphos with Demetrios of Phaleron, the initiator of the idea of founding the Mouseion and the Library. The collaboration between the two is controversial, given that some sources, as we will show in Chapter I claim that on his accession to the throne, Philadelphos sent Demetrios to prison, then exiled him to a town in the Nile Delta for dynastic reasons. If the letter was indeed dated incorrectly and was written a hundred years later, then it is very possible that the author may have confused Ptolemy I with Ptolemy II. Despite these inaccuracies, the *Letter of Aristeas* is a valuable work, being the oldest preserved document that mentions the Ancient Library of Alexandria and the initiative of its establishment attributed to Demetrios of Phaleron.

One of the most important sources for the study of the Hellenistic era, in general, and for the Library of Alexandria and Mouseion, in particular, are the papyri from Oxyrhynchos and Fayoum. These include texts of law, edicts, sale-purchase or rental contracts, receipts, etc., written mostly in demotic Greek and are a reliable source, based on which historians have been able to reconstruct the socio-economic life in Ptolemaic Alexandria. Regarding the Library of Alexandria however only one papyrus has been preserved, *P. Oxy 1241*, which mentions the names of the chief librarians in an apparent chronological order, but this list is incomplete, lacking even the names of Demetrios and Callimachos, the first librarians of the Alexandrian Library. Another important source for this paper is the seventeenth book of Strabo's work *Geography* (*Γεωγραφικά*), in which the ancient author refers to the city of Alexandria, where he lived between 20 and 24 BC. Strabo's description of Alexandria is based on his personal observations, written in a detailed and systematic way, and to him belongs the only description of the Mouseion that has been transmitted to us. Regarding the methods of purchasing books for the library, as well as the description of some physicians' contributions to the Hellenistic period progress in medicine, the works of the physician and historian Galen of Pergamum (2nd century BC), including the most important *Hippocratis*

Epidemiorum et Galeni in illum Commentarius, proved to be a source of great value. The work *On the Lives and Doctrines of the Philosophers* (*Βίοι καὶ γνῶμαι τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ εὐδοκιμησάντων*), which belongs to Diogenes Laertius, proved to be an important source as well for some philosophical and scholarly information on those who contributed to the establishment and development of the Library and the Mouseion in the first years of activity of this project, such as Demetrios of Phaleron, Stratos of Lampsakos and others.

My research has also benefited from the contribution of well-known historians of the Alexandrian Library and the support given by the Lagid kings for its establishment and existence, including: Mostafa El-Abaddi, a well-known Egyptian classicist and Hellenist, who deals with the context of establishment and development of the Mouseion and the Library, describing also aspects of life in Hellenistic Alexandria, the cultural and religious variety of its inhabitants and last, but not least, the hypotheses of the disappearance of these institutions (*Life and fate of the Ancient Library of Alexandria*, UNESCO / UNDP, 1990); Jenö Platthy, *Sources on the Earliest Greek Libraries with the Testimonia*, Amsterdam, A. M. Hakkert, 1968; Lionel Casson's work, *Libraries in Ancient World*, which describes how the Library of Alexandria and other ancient libraries worked; Pfeiffer, Rudolf, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age*, Oxford, 1968; the exhaustive work of the famous historian of science George Sarton, *Hellenistic Science and Culture in the Last Three Centuries B.C.*, Dover Publications, INC., New York, 1993; Guglielmo Cavallo (éd.), *Le Biblioteche nel mondo antico e medievale*, 6^e éd., Bari, Laterza, 2002; Luciano Canfora's book, *The Vanished Library*, which provides important information about the Library of Alexandria, a "non-fiction novel" that deals with the cultural evolution of Hellenistic Egypt at a time when kings choose to exercise power and influence by supporting and controlling scientific and cultural research; *La Véritable histoire de la bibliothèque d'Alexandrie*, trad. Jean-Paul Manganaro et Danielle Dubroca, Paris, Desjonquères, 1988; *La Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie et l'histoire des textes*, Liège, Éd. de l'Université, 1992; *Il Viaggio di Aristeia*, Bari, Laterza, 1996; the article *Culture and power in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Museum and Library of Alexandria* (1995) signed by Andrew Erskine and the chapter *Ptolemaic Patronage: the Museum and the Library*, from the work of P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (1972), both works referring to Ptolemies' patronage over the Library and the Mouseion and to the Hellenistic patronage, in general; Roy MacLeod's book, *The Library of Alexandria. Center of*

Learning in the Ancient World, is a collection of articles and essays by distinguished researchers dealing with the theme of the Library of Alexandria from several perspectives.

The establishment of the Alexandrian Library and the Mouseion by Ptolemy I Soter as well as their development by all the kings of the Lagid dynasty were the main reason why Alexandria stood out among the capitals of the other kingdoms ruled by the *diadochi* of Alexander the Great. It is often referred to as the place where all the science of antiquity was gathered, as the Lagid kings made great efforts and devoted large sums of money to the purchase of all books hitherto written in Greek and other languages, out of a desire to consecrate the name of their new capital as the most prestigious Hellenistic cultural center by building unique study and research institutions at that time.

II. *Objectives and working method*

In this paper I aim to prove the bibliophilia and the passion for knowledge of the Lagid Kings, who initiated and developed a large-scale cultural project: the Library of Alexandria and the Mouseion, unprecedented in the ancient world. The main objective of the thesis is to present the policy of book acquisition for the royal library, a policy carried out throughout the Lagid dynasty, but which, as recorded by ancient sources, was more widespread during the reign of the first three kings of this dynasty. Another objective that I pursue in this paper is the detailed presentation of the acquisition methods used by the Lagid kings and the observation of the motivations that determined them to develop such a policy. These objectives will be analyzed in the social-historical context of that time, which without a doubt influenced the evolution of the library.

This paper comprises five extensive chapters, as follows:

In **Chapter I**, entitled *The Library of Alexandria - establishment and existence*, I will present evidence of the cultural evergetism of the Lagid kings, highlighting the ways in which they, beginning with Ptolemy I Soter and continuing with the other kings of this dynasty, supported the grandiose cultural project, gathered in the Alexandrian Library all the books written until that time in the known world and tried to attract and engage the most enlightened minds within the Mouseion. In the subchapter *The symbolic function of the Alexandrian Library in the vision of*

its founder, I will argue that the founding and development of an exhaustive library, as well as the support of cultural and scientific progress by the king, established Alexandria as the cultural capital of the Hellenistic world and ensured Egypt's supremacy over the other Hellenistic kingdoms. I will then review the testimonies of ancient writers about the establishment and importance of this library, which, even though are just a few, are of great importance. At the end of this chapter I will present the most well-known and pertinent theories related to the destruction of the ancient Library, showing my position on these events. Last but not least, should be presented here the initiative of the Egyptian government to re-establish the famous Alexandrian Library, a project carried out between 1998 and 2002, which resulted in a modern library, comprising six specialized libraries, four museums, a planetarium, an exploratorium, twelve academic research centers and an arts center, to mention only a few of the facilities mentioned on the site of the prestigious institution, which is an emblem of modern Alexandria, as was the ancient Library emblem of Ptolemaic Alexandria.

In **Chapter II**, entitled *Aspects of the Lagid Kings' policy for enriching the book fund of the Alexandrian Library*, I will first refer to the first book purchases made by Ptolemy I Soter for the Alexandrian Library. Translating and studying the Greek texts related to the fate of the manuscript collection of the Athenian Peripatetic School, which included the writings of the illustrious philosopher Aristotle and his disciples, including Theophrastos, I found that at least part of this collection was one of the first book acquisitions of the Library, Aristotle's manuscripts reaching the possession of Lagid King in several ways, which we will present in detail in the respective subchapter. I will show below other ways of enriching the book fund of the Library by the Lagid kings: the appointment of special agents for the purchase of books in the book markets, the confiscation of books aboard foreign ships in the port of Alexandria, requesting books in correspondence with foreign sovereigns and the writing of books by order of kings. At the end of the chapter, using the comparative method of different sources, I will present the ancient and modern estimates of the number of manuscripts in the Alexandrian Library.

In **Chapter III**, the *Greek Book Fund*, I aim to discuss about the activity of inventory and classification of Greek books in the Alexandrian Library, an activity carried out by the illustrious Alexandrian scholars, who systematized, organized and cataloged the ancient works, developed grammars, comments and summaries. I will also present here the typology of Greek books in the

Alexandrian Library and the philological activity of elaborating critical editions of Greek writings by the librarians of the famous Library. At the end of this chapter, I will show that in the Hellenistic era, as a result of the in-depth study of Homeric epics and the realization of valuable critical editions, takes place the initiation of the "Homeric problem", which has been perpetuated until the eighth century.

In **Chapter IV**, entitled *Foreign Book Fund*, I will show Ptolemies' interest in non-Greek books, arguing that in the Alexandrian Library there were also books belonging to foreign cultures, which in order to be exhibited in the library were first translated into Greek. Studying the oldest document on the Greek translation of the Old Testament, namely the *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*, as well as excerpts from the work *Jewish Antiquities* by Josephus Flavius, I will present in detail the script of the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek as it emerges from ancient texts, but also from the perspective of modern exegesis. I will try to argue further that Berossos' *History of Babylonia* (*Βαβυλωνιακά*) was also part of the foreign book fund of the Alexandrian Library. Although written in Greek, the work presented Babylonian history and traditions, so it did not fit into the Greek scriptural tradition. Other texts of foreign origin, which I will try to prove existed in the Alexandrian Library are the translations from the Persian Zarathustra (gr. Zoroástrés), to which ancient authors such as Pliny the Elder and Arnobios of Sicca referred in their writings. At the end of Chapter IV, I will argue that there was a translation of Buddhist sacred texts in the Library, as well. Translating some passages from the Greek edicts of King Ashoka of India and interpreting their message to the Hellenistic kingdoms, I will show that there were bridges and embassies between the Ptolemaic kingdom and King Ashoka's kingdom, which facilitated Ptolemy II's access to the Buddhist texts.

In **Chapter V**, on the *Scientific Work of the Alexandrian Scholars*, I will first deal with the Ptolemaic policy of encouraging scientific research and the contribution of the Alexandrian scholars in various scientific fields, especially with the achievements of that period in the field of mathematics. I will highlight the particularly important contribution of Eukleides to the development of this science, which resulted in his preparation of the most widely used mathematics textbook in the history of science. Next, I will deal with the field of geography, which thanks to the contribution of Eratosthenes, has become a branch of science in its own right, with a name and terminology created by the great geographer. The field of medicine was one of the scientific fields

in which was made amazing progress in the Hellenistic period, under the patronage of the Lagid kings, which is why I will present the achievements of the most important physicians, including Herophilos, Erasistratos, Andreas of Carystos and Dioscurides Phakas. Also in this chapter, I will address the field of astronomy and the particularly important discoveries of famous astronomers and mathematicians, such as Eudoxos of Knidos, Timocharis of Alexandria and Aristarchus of Samos. At the end of the fifth chapter, I will present the contribution of the Alexandrian grammarians Aristophanes of Byzantium and Dionysios Thrax to the development and consecration of the field of grammar as an independent science, through their innovations and the elaboration of the first grammar textbook of the Greek language.

Another very important aspect, which I will address in this paper, is the influence that these two institutions had in transmitting all the classical Greek science and teachings to future generations, because, although a large part of the existing books in the Library were lost with its destruction, many of the existing writings in the scrolls of the Alexandrian Library have been preserved in the works of later authors, so that made it possible for them to be passed on to the next generations.

I have to mention also the fact that, although the modern bibliography dealing with various aspects related to the Alexandrian Library is really extensive, the information provided is often repeated, historians' favorite subjects being the establishment of the library and the hypotheses regarding its destruction. In order to obtain new or lesser-known data, I resorted to careful study of ancient Greek and Latin sources, which, in most cases, provide reliable information. I should mention also the fact that, when I did not specify the author of the Romanian translation of an ancient quote, the translation belongs to me.

The *methodology* used in designing and writing this paper consists in consulting, translating and commenting on ancient sources, as well as studying and comparing the opinions of modern historians, after which I resorted to their critical commentary and to the formulation of personal opinions on the topics discussed. The main working method used in my research is the analysis of ancient literary sources, and to obtain the most accurate data, I used the comparative method of primary and secondary sources. Finally, I processed the information provided by these sources and gathered them in an original synthesis.

General Conclusions

As descendants of Alexander the Great, who following his conquests created a vast empire, the Lagid Kings nurtured the same ambition of universality, transferred mainly to the cultural field. They wanted to make Alexandria, the capital of the Egyptian kingdom, a second Athens and channeled all their efforts to achieve this goal. At the heart of this project was the establishment of the largest and most complete library in the world, intended for a much more ambitious goal than collecting manuscripts: to initiate a broad program of cultural imperialism, to become the very image of the intellectual prestige of the Hellenistic world. However, the Egyptian kings had to compete with famous libraries of the ancient world, such as the library at Nineveh, established during the reign of Ashurbanipal (seventh century BC), which contained 22,000 tablets, thanks to which the Mesopotamian literary creation was known. In the second century BC, King Eumenes II Soter of the Attalid dynasty set up a library at Pergamum, which became the most serious competitor of the Alexandrian Library.

Laying the foundations of the Alexandrian Library at the advice of his counselor Demetrios of Phaleron, Ptolemy I Soter wanted it to be the largest library of all times and to include all the books written in the known world (oikoumene). To carry out this grandiose project, the king allocated generous amounts in order to purchase books and manuscripts belonging to Greek or foreign authors, the latter being then translated into Greek. According to ancient sources, the same bibliophile passion characterized his successors to the throne, Ptolemy Philadelphos and Ptolemy Evergetes. Such an exhaustive library, along the Mouseion, which housed a large number of scholars and scientists, who carried out their research under royal patronage, gave great prestige to the Ptolemaic kingdom, making Alexandria the most famous cultural center of the Hellenistic world. Founded by the Ptolemy son of Lagos and developed by his successors to the throne, the Mouseion and Library of Alexandria were two of the largest and most important centers of scholarship in the ancient world.

The patronage exercised by the Lagid Kings over the Library and the Museion was essential and decisive for the fate of the two Alexandrian cultural institutions. They benefited from the Ptolemies' evergetism, whose generosity motivated politically as well materialized in the

acquisition of an impressive collection of books and in the creation of a community of scholars, who distinguished themselves in various scientific fields. According to modern exegetes, the Library of Alexandria has been a landmark in the history of libraries and far surpassed the fame of other ancient and Hellenistic libraries due to its attributes, including: the **tendency to exhaustiveness**, because it had a very rich collection of original ancient writings, belonging to different cultures and gathered from all over the world known at that time; the **ingenuity** to set up a system for organizing and classifying volumes; the **dissemination** of literary works and scientific discoveries made by scholars and librarians working within it and, last but not least, the **quality of political instrument of propaganda**, which ensured the cultural domination of Alexandria over all Hellenistic kingdoms for centuries.

After studying excerpts from ancient authors, among which the physician Galen of Pergamum and Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, I found the methods used by the kings of the Lagid dynasty to enrich their library: 1. **purchasing** books from the book markets in Egypt and abroad through agents appointed by the king, who provided them with a generous budget to carry out their task; 2. **confiscation** of books found aboard ships arriving at the port of Alexandria, in exchange for the original owners receiving their copies written on papyrus of the highest quality and being financially rewarded for the original confiscated books; 3. **requesting books in correspondence** with foreign sovereigns; 4. **the writing of books by kings' order**, such as the work of the Egyptian priest Manethon, *History of Egypt (Αἰγυπτιακά)*, and the treatise of the Cypriot physician Apollonius of Kition, entitled *Study of Joints (Περὶ ἄρθρων πραγματεία)*.

Regarding the number of volumes collected in the Alexandrian Library following these endeavors, the earliest source is the *Letter of Aristaeus to Philokrates (Ἡ ἐπιστολή τοῦ Ἀριστέου πρὸς Φιλοκράτην)*, in which it is reported that Demetrios of Phaleron informs King Ptolemy Philadelphos that he has already collected about 200,000 volumes and that no less than 500,000 volumes will be collected soon. According to the testimony of Epiphanius of Salamis, the library numbered about 54,800 volumes. Seneca (*De tranquillitate animi*, IX, 5) mentions a number of 40,000 volumes in the library, Orosius estimates a total of 400,000 volumes (*Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri*, VII), Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae*, VII.17.3) and Ammianus Marcellinus, a number of 700,000 volumes and Isidorus of Seville only 70,000 volumes. The historian Robert Bagnall looks with skepticism at the ancient testimonies concerning the number of books in the Alexandrian Library, considering them exaggerated. Trying to find the figure

closest to the truth, he makes some calculations including all the works written by ancient authors known until the end of the 3rd century BC, the result proposed by him being 31.250 scrolls.

Valuable is the information provided by ancient sources and modern historians regarding the **activity of inventory and classification of Greek books** in the Alexandrian Library, a laborious and not negligible activity. The first chief librarian of the Alexandrian Library, Zenodotos of Ephesus, developed an efficient system of organizing the library and a classification of works belonging to the main literary genres was made by Callimachos of Cyrene in his extensive work *Πίνακες τῶν ἐν πάσῃ παι συνέγραψαν* (*Tables of all those who excelled in any discipline and of the works written by them*). Regarding the typology of Greek books in the Alexandrian Library, I found that the richest was the Greek book fund, containing the works of ancient Greek literature, well known in Egypt, as evidenced by the frequency of the names of important authors such as Homer, Menandros, Pindaros, Sappho, in the papyri discovered at Oxyrhynchos at the beginning of the 20th century by the British archaeologists B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt. Along with the actual literary works, in the Library there were also works from different scientific fields, such as mathematics, medicine, geography and astronomy.

The foreign book fund consists of works written by foreign authors and translated into Greek. The most important of them was the translation of the Hebrew Bible, considered one of the major achievements of universal history. The reasons why the sacred writings of the Jews were translated into Greek as *Ἡ τῶν Ἑβδομήκοντα μετάφρασις* (literally *Translation of the Seventy*), also known by the Latin title *Septuaginta*, were many, one of which was the king's desire to enrich the library with a valuable work, another, frequently invoked, was the need of the Jews of the Alexandrian diaspora to have access to the Bible, because they had lost the knowledge of the original language in which it was written. According to the first ancient source to record this translation initiative, *Letter of Aristeas*, Demetrios of Phaleron suggested to King Ptolemy that there were texts "worthy of the king's library" belonging to other cultures that could be translated and included in the library. The *Letter of Aristeas* records that Demetrius made this suggestion to Ptolemy II, but modern exegetes considered this an "inadvertence", arguing that according to sources Demetrios collaborated in the great project of the library with Ptolemy I Soter and that a collaboration between Demetrios and Soter's successor to the throne would have been ruled out due to dynastic problems. Ancient sources though indicate dates very close to 280 BC, the

translation of the *Pentateuch* being most surely completed during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphos.

Another foreign culture whose religious texts have been translated in order to be displayed in the Alexandrian Library is the Persian culture. Ancient sources such as Pliny the Elder and Arnobios of Sicca state that Hermippos of Smyrna, an Alexandrian scholar and disciple of Callimachos, translated two million verses containing the teachings of the Persian prophet Zarathustra (gr. Zoroaster), as well as other texts belonging to his disciples.

A work belonging to another culture than the Greek, about which I argue that it existed in the Library of Alexandria, is Berossos' *History of Babylon* (*Βαβυλωνιακά*). He was the High Priest of the Babylonian High Temple of Esagila and his work reflects the Mesopotamian history and traditions while it is written in Greek.

I argued in of my thesis the possibility that the Indian Buddhist texts existed in the Library, after studying the testimonies of some ancient authors, among which Epiphanius of Salamis and translating excerpts from the edicts of the Indian king Ashoka, published in Aramaic and Greek, a king with whom Ptolemy Philadelphos had close diplomatic relations.

The presence of foreign books in the Alexandrian Library was of major importance in spreading knowledge about faraway civilizations and cultures throughout the Greek world.

It seemed important to me, in the context of the bibliophile ecumenism of the Lagid Kings, to mention and comment on the works representing *the scientific activity of Alexandrian scholars*, possible due to the Lagid policy of encouraging scientific research. The historian George Sarton believes that scientists and grammarians were free to research the subjects that they were interested in, making the most of the knowledge gained by their predecessors, not only Greeks but also foreigners. This freedom to research and choose the right methods, as well as to provide the necessary tools and materials, made possible the scientific progress of that period.

The fields to which the Alexandrian scholars devoted their scientific interest were mathematics, geography, medicine, astronomy, grammar. In the *field of mathematics*, a significant contribution was made by Eukleides, the author of at least ten works dealing with geometry and algebra. His most representative work is *Elements* (*Στοιχεῖα*), the best-known treatise on mathematics of antiquity and, at the same time, the oldest mathematics textbook used for an uninterrupted period. The merit of Eukleides is to have organized the mathematical knowledge up

to him and those of his time, in a logical and coherent manner. The apogee of his scientific activity occurred in the first half of the 3rd century, at the Court of Ptolemy I, his works being among the first to appear in the Alexandrian Library.

In the *field of geography*, Eratosthenes of Cyrene elaborated the work *Geography* (*Γεωγραφικά*), preserved in fragments, which proves the author's familiarity with the entire previous history of geography and his creative ability, being considered, both, in his time and in posterity, the father of this discipline. He was the first to call this branch of science "geography" (*γεωγραφία*) and created terms specific to it. In another work, entitled *Measurement of the Earth* (*Ἀναμετρήσεις τῆς γῆς*), the scholar of geography presented a method of calculating the circumference of the Earth, a remarkable achievement for that time, he estimated the distances between the sun, moon and Earth and the dimensions of planets, his measurements proving to be of surprising accuracy.

During the Hellenistic period, important progress was made in the *field of medicine*, with the contribution of valuable physicians and researchers, such as Herophilos of Chalcedon, Erasistratos of Keos, Eudemos of Alexandria, Andreas of Carystos, Apollonius of Kition and Dioscurides Phakas. Alexandria thus became the most prestigious medical center in the Hellenistic world, mainly due to the conditions created by Lagid Kings, who offered freedom of research to physicians and liberated them from the constraints of religious taboos that existed previously. I refer to the fact that they lifted the interdictions concerning the dissections on the human body. In this way, following the multiple dissections, performed for the first time by the physician Herophilos and his collaborator Erasistratos, unknown information was obtained and a much deeper knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the human body was reached. Ancient authors attribute to Herophilos no less than eleven treatises, seven of which have been cited with the corresponding titles. These are: *Anatomy* (*Ἀνατομικά*), an extensive work in three books, *On Pulses* (*Περὶ σφυγμῶν*), *Obstetrics* (*Μαιωτικόν*), *Therapeutic* (*Θεραπευτικά*), *Dietetics*, (*Διαιτητικά*), *Contrary to common beliefs* (*Πρὸς τὰς κοινὰς δόξας*) and *About the eyes* (*Περὶ ὀφθαλμῶν*). Erasistratos has written at least eight papers on physiology, pathology and hygiene, the titles of which are: *General Principles* (*Οἱ καθόλου λόγοι*), *On Blood Sputum* (*Περὶ αἵματος ἀναγωγῆς*), *On Paralysis* (*Περὶ παραλύσεως*), *On swallowing* (*Περὶ καταπόσεως*), *On stomach* (lat. *De ventre*), *Hygiene* (*Ὑγιεινά*), *Divisions* (*Διαιρέσεις*). Herophilos and Erasistratos carried out their activity in

Alexandria during the time of Ptolemy I Soter and Ptolemy II Philadelphos and, considering that their works were written during the heyday of the Alexandrian Library, I believe that they could not miss from the Alexandrian Library.

In the *field of astronomy*, in the Hellenistic period the transition was made from astronomy as part of philosophical thought to astronomy as a branch of science, primarily through the contribution of Eudoxos of Knidos, a renowned mathematician and astronomer. Some of his works, whose titles have come down to us, are *On Solar Eclipses* (*Περὶ φανισμῶν ἡλιακῶν*), *The Eight-Year Period* (*Ὀκταετηρίς*), which deals with an eight-year cycle of the solar calendar, *Phenomena* (*Φαινόμενα*) and *Mirror* (*Ἔνδοπτρον*), treatises on the astronomy of spheres, written after observations made in Egypt and in the Knidos observatory and *On speeds* *Περὶ ταχῶν*, a treatise on the motion of the planets. It is very possible, in my opinion, that the works of Eudoxos also existed in the Alexandrian Library. Other astronomers, whose works were able to enrich the book fund of the Alexandrian library, were Timocharis of Alexandria, Aristyllos of Samos, Aristarchus of Samos, Hipparchus of Nicaea.

The last field of reference for the scientific activity patronized by the Lagid Kings is the *field of grammar*, to which the famous grammarians Aristophanes of Byzantium and Dionysios Thrax contributed greatly.

Among the innovations of Aristophanes of Byzantium in the field of grammar are:

- identifying the eight parts of speech;
- establishing grammatical rules and paradigms of verb conjugation and noun declension;
- establishing the system of accentuation of the classical Greek language;
- elaboration of a system of diacritical marks (accents, spirits) of the Greek language, in order to clarify its pronunciation.

Aristophanes' contribution covered a wider area than that of grammar itself, consisting in:
1. critical editing of literary works, by elaborating critical editions of classical Greek texts, belonging to Homer, Hesiod, lyric and tragic poets; 2. the study of language, which includes his extensive lexicographical work, *Λέξεις* (*Words*), as well as *Περὶ ἀναλογίας* (*On analogy*).

Another scholar of the time, who exerted a major influence in the field of grammar was Dionysios Thrax, who showed interest in several fields of culture, without devoting himself only to linguistic study. His best-known writing, which has remained in history, is the treatise *The Art*

of *Grammar* (*Τέχνη γραμματική*), which was partially transmitted to us. The manuscript includes basic grammatical elements, especially of a morphological nature, such as: classification of nouns and verbs, modes, cases, tenses, analysis of articles, pronouns and other parts of speech. Regarding the authenticity of the treatise and whether or not it marks the beginnings of grammar as an independent field, a real controversy broke out between several modern exegetes, some claiming that Dionysios Thrax's treatise is not authentic, being in fact a compilation of several authors and dating from the 3rd-4th centuries AD, others being followers of the opinion that this treatise, written around 100 BC, really marks the beginnings of grammar as a discipline of study. In my opinion, *The Art of Grammar* (*Τέχνη γραμματική*), is a very important work, in which Dionysios Thrax took over, systematized and developed some notions of grammar, belonging to the Stoic philosophers.

The end of the Library and the Mouseion was a favorite subject for both ancient and modern authors. The first and probably most widespread theory is that the Alexandrian Library was destroyed in 48 BC by a fire caused by Julius Caesar, who was trying to save his fleet from the attack of the Alexandrians. As Plutarch relates in his work *Parallel Lives* (*Βίοι παράλληλοι, Caesar's Life*, 49, 6), the fire spread and destroyed the library. However, there are several testimonies that confirm the existence of the Alexandrian Library and the Mouseion a few centuries after 48 BC, including an inscription in Latin, discovered in the Greek city of Ephesos, which certifies that Tiberius Claudius Balbillus, prefect of Egypt between 55- 59 pC he held the position of director of the Alexandrian Library.

According to the historian Lionel Casson, the library ceased to exist around 270 AD, when the Roman emperor Aurelianus, trying to quell a revolt of the kingdom of Palmyra, engaged in a fierce battle in Alexandria, resulting in the complete destruction of the royal palace area, where the Library was located. Another opinion, formulated, among others, by the historian Edward Gibbon, is that, under the leadership of the Roman emperor Theodosius I, who had ordered that all pagan institutions in the empire to be destroyed, in 391 AD, Patriarch Theophilos of Alexandria decided the demolition of the largest and most wonderful temple in the city, the Serapeion, inside which was the library-daughter of the great one. There is also the hypothesis of a 12th century medical historian, Abd El-Latif El-Baghdadi, that the Library was destroyed by order of Caliph Omar in 642 AD, when he annexed Egypt. According to many historians, because this statement is very late, dating back about 600 years from the date of the alleged destruction, because the

speculative style in which the historian presents the events and the Caliph's reputation for being a tolerant person, the theory raises serious doubts about its veracity.

To compensate for this great historical loss that was the destruction of the Library of Alexandria, whatever the circumstances and perpetrators of its disappearance, in 1989 the Egyptian government organized an architectural competition for the design and execution of a new and vast library in Alexandria, ambitious project, but necessary for a city like Alexandria in Egypt, which, two millennia ago, had been the cultural capital of the world.

The new library opened its doors on April 23, 2002 and on October 16, the same year, the Science Museum was inaugurated. Perfectly integrated into the library, the museum (which today has the capacity to house up to eight million volumes) aims to be a place of education and culture, whose role is to spread the contribution of the forerunners to the development of contemporary science.

Archaeological excavations carried out by a mixed Polish-Egyptian team in the Bruchion region have led to the discovery of possible reading rooms or amphitheaters of the old Library in Alexandria, thirteen in number, which could have accommodated up to 5,000 students. The historic announcement was made on May 12, 2004 by Zahi Hawass, president of the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt, at a conference held at the University of California.

Closing these general conclusions, I think it is worth quoting the opinion of Ariana Bălașa: “Meditating on the birth, destruction and resurrection of the Library in Alexandria, we cannot only perceive it as an architectural monument and a «Museion» unique in the world, but also as a spread between the past and the future, between the imaginary and real, between the civilization of Greek – Latin antiquity and other great civilizations and cultures that marked the universal history”. According to this statement, the Library of Alexandria proved to be the fulfillment of a universal dream of immortality, nurtured and fulfilled by the most *bibliophile* and *evergetes* kings of the Lagid dynasty. The death and resurrection of the famous library show that Alexandria and the cultural institutions it housed were never considered part of the past, but of an eternal present of human spirituality.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that this paper, whose main objectives are to demonstrate the bibliophile passion of the Lagid dynasty's kings and the presentation of the acquisition policy established by them, brings up a new topic, thus differing from other theses about the Alexandrian

Library. The novelty element of my thesis is the discussion of Lagid Kings' policy of acquiring books for the library, the detailed presentation of methods they used and the explanation of the motivation they had in instituting such a policy, in different social-historical contexts created during their reign in Hellenistic Egypt.

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