

SHORT STUDY

A Non-Manuscript of Papias of Hierapolis

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Abstract

Uncertainty has attached to a medieval library catalogue entry mentioning *Papias cum sermonibus diversis* at Stams Abbey. Most recent editors of Papias have suspected that it refers to the medieval lexicographer rather than the second-century Christian author of the same name. This note calls attention to a marginal citation in a Stams manuscript from the lexicographer that helps put to rest the hypothesis of a full Latin manuscript of Papias of Hierapolis.

Keywords: Papias of Hierapolis; Papias the lexicographer; Stams Abbey

In 1879, Gustav Bickell published an article in which he called attention to a medieval manuscript catalogue from the year 1341 of the holdings at Stams Abbey, a Cistercian foundation in Tyrol in modern-day Austria.¹ On the basis of a line in that catalogue – *Papias cum sermonibus diversis* – he hypothesised a full Latin manuscript of the early second-century Christian author Papias of Hierapolis, author of ‘five books on the oracles of the Lord’, otherwise lost except for fragmentary quotations. Bickell was unable to find the manuscript, and some years later, Adolf von Harnack spent a week in the Abbey looking for the manuscript but did not find anything.²

J. B. Lightfoot had already pointed to the possibility of confusing Papias of Hierapolis with the eleventh-century grammarian and lexicographer Papias (sometimes referred to as Papias of Lombardy, though the geographical designation is not secure, and for that matter the name itself might be a pseudonym).³ Otto Bardenhewer suggested that Bickell made precisely this confusion:

¹ Gustav Bickell, ‘Ein Papiashandschrift in Tirol’, *ZTK* 3 (1879) 799–803.

² Bickell, ‘Ein Papiashandschrift in Tirol’, 803; Adolf von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius. I: Die Überlieferung und der Bestand* (2nd ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1958) 1.69: ‘Ich habe eine Woche hindurch in Stams nach dieser Handschrift gesucht, sie aber nicht gefunden’; cf. Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, *Adolf von Harnack* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1936) 289: ‘Harnack war auf der Suche nach einer Papias-Handschrift in die Stamsener Klosterbibliothek gekommen; und da sein Begleiter, Oskar von Gebhardt, mit dem er nach Italien weiter reisen wollte, sich um einige Tage verspätete, so blieb er dort und fertigte auf Bitten des Abtes einen Katalog der in der Bibliothek befindlichen Handschriften an’; Ulrich H. J. Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des frühen Christentums* (FRLANT 133; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 36; Stephen C. Carlson, *Papias of Hierapolis Exposition of Dominical Oracles: The Fragments, Testimonia, and Reception of a Second-Century Commentator* (OECT; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) 94–5, 103–4.

³ J. B. Lightfoot, *Essays on the Work entitled Supernatural Religion* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1893) 211. On Papias and his project, see, inter alia, Lloyd W. Daly and B. A. Daly, ‘Some Techniques in Medieval Latin Lexicography’, *Speculum* 39.2 (1964) 229–39, here 229–35; *Papiae Elementarium, Littera A* (3 vols.; ed. V. de

Bickell zweifelte nicht daran, daß unter „Papias“ eine lateinische Übersetzung der Erklärungen von Aussprüchen des Herrn zu verstehen sei; ich möchte eher glauben, daß es sich um den lateinischen Grammatiker Papias vom Jahre 1053 gehandelt hat. Von einer lateinischen Übersetzung des alten Papias ist schlechterdings nichts bekannt, abgesehen etwa davon, daß Hieronymus sich veranlaßt sah, dem Gerüchte entgegenzutreten, er habe „sanctorum Papiæ et Polycarpi volumina“ übersetzt (Ep. 71, ad Lucin., 5).⁴

In his recent magisterial collection of Papias testimonia and fragments, Stephen Carlson agrees and classifies the reference among the spuria (Z4 in his enumeration). As Carlson notes, Bickell argued that the reference to Papias could not have been to the lexicographer because it was bound with theological material and because the dictionary itself would have been too large to bind with other material, but he demonstrates that neither consideration is persuasive. He concludes, ‘Without any other identifying information, then, the probabilities are that an unadorned “Papias” is a reference to the popular dictionary.’⁵ This note calls attention to a piece of information that might supply a bit of ‘adornment’ and tip the balance further in favour of identifying the Papias of the catalogue with the lexicographer rather than the early Christian author.

In a typewritten inventory of the Abbey’s manuscripts produced in 1966 but now posted online, the cataloguer, Maurus Grebenc, calls attention to the presence of a marginal note on Codex 31a, fol. 72v (in modern foliation, fol. 79v), which he partially transcribes, which mentions Papias explicitly.⁶ Codex 31a is a manuscript of sermons (described by Grebenc as *sermone diversi*). A full transcription of the note from the bottom margin reads as follows:

Cristus super Mattheum. Testimonium studiosi agricole est messis fecunda assidui doctoris ecclesia plena negotiatoris multiplex theca. Theca dicitur ab eo quod aliquid receptum tegat.c. littera per.g. posita alii greco nomine thecam uocari asserunt quod ibi reponatur aliquid unde et bybliothea librorum repositio dicitur ut dicit Papias.⁷

The final sentence here, mentioning Papias, recalls the lexicographer’s entry for *biblioteca* in his *Elementarium doctrinae rudimentum: Bibliotheca librorum reconditio: nam bibli libri dicuntur: quia ex biblis quasi iuncis fiebant: ide bibliotecarius repositio librorum*.⁸ Papias, in turn, seems to have derived his information at least partially from the *Liber glossarum*, one of his major sources, which offers as one of its glosses for *biblioteca*, ‘librorum

Angelis; Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1977– 1980) 1.i–vi; *Papiae Ars Grammatica* (ed. Roberta Cervani; Bologna: Patron, 1998) iii–vi; Giuseppe Cremascoli, ‘Su luoghi e tempi del lessicografo Papias’, *Studi Medievali* 54.2 (2013) 797–806; Filippo Bognini, ‘Papias’, *La trasmissione dei testi latini del medioevo. Medieval Latin Texts and Their Transmission*. (Te.Tra. 4; ed. Paolo Chiese and Lucia Castaldi; Firenze: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012) 413–30; Anne Grondeux, ‘Comment définir un “dictionnaire latin”? Du *Liber glossarum* (VII^e s.) à l’*Elementarium* de Papias (XI^e s.)’, *Histoire, épistémologie, langage* 45.2 (2023).

⁴ Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur: Erster Band, vom Ausgang des apostolischen Zeitalters bis zum Ende des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (2nd ed.; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1913) 450; F. Wotke, ‘Papias 2’, *PW* XVIII, 3 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1949) cols. 966–76, here 967.

⁵ Carlson, *Papias of Hierapolis*, 104.

⁶ Maurus Grebenc, ‘Handschriften Verzeichnis’, (1966): https://manuscripta.at/Ma-zu-Bu/ki/stams/stams_kat-maurus-grebenc.pdf.

⁷ I record my gratitude to my colleague, Dr. David Gura, for lending his skill in Latin palaeography to produce this transcription. I also express my sincere thanks to archivist OStR. Prof. Mag. Karl Palfrader and to Anna Pinter of the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Tirol for their kind help in securing an image of this folio.

⁸ Here taken from the *editio princeps*: Papias, *Vocabularius* (Milan: Dominicus de Vespolate, 1476) fol. 27r.

repositio', and also cites Isidore, *Etym.* 6.3, who gives the etymology, 'Biblio, librorum, Teca, repositio interpretatur'.⁹

So we have a manuscript of sermons from Stams that has a marginal citation of Papias the lexicographer. The most natural assumption is that a reader based at the Stams monastery used the materials at their disposal, probably a copy of the *Elementarium*, to comment on the sermon. Although the Stams collection no longer contains a manuscript of Papias' dictionary, this seems to be relatively clear evidence that it once did. This also makes sense with what we know about the circulation of manuscripts of Papias' *Elementarium* in the medieval period. As Violetta de Angelis writes on the basis of her survey of numerous manuscripts of the work,

I numerosi segni di possesso che ancora restano sui codici dell'*Elementarium* indicano che un libro di questo sfarzo, sovente in due, e persino in tre volumi (Paris. lat. 7610), era accessibile quasi esclusivamente alle comunità monastiche o ai capitoli delle cattedrali e talvolta ai più facoltosi vescovi. Con buona frequenza fra le note di possesso troviamo le abbazie cistercensi e i canonici regolari, ma anche i Domenicani e i Benedettini.¹⁰

Note that she specifically points to the presence of Cistercian abbeys, like Stams, among the types of institutions that had manuscripts of Papias' *Elementarium*.

This marginal citation of Papias, therefore, seems to offer confirmation of the judgement of Carlson, et al., that the Stams catalogue refers to the lexicographer rather than the commentator on the oracles of the Lord.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

⁹ See Anne Grondeux and Franck Cinato, ed., *Liber Glossarum digital* (Paris, 2016: <http://liber-glossarum.humanum.fr>).

Papias mentions Isidore as one of his sources in his preface; see Georg Götz, 'Papias und seine Quellen', *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-philologischen und der historischen Klasse der K. B. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München, Jahrgang 1903* (München: Verlag der K. Akademie, 1904) 267–86, here 275; Daly and Daly, 'Some Techniques in Medieval Latin Lexicography', 233.

¹⁰ Violetta de Angelis, 'Papia, *Elementarium*. Tradizione manoscritta ed edizione del testo: alcuni problemi' in *Bandhu: Scritti in onore di Carlo Della Casa in occasione del suo settantesimo compleanno* (ed. R. Arena, et al.; Turin: Orso, 1997) 2.695–715, here 698–700.

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