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Excerpt

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PART I  
TESTIMONIA

## LIFE AND INFLUENCE

**Τ1α, b** Suda, *s.v.* Ποσειδώνιος, 2107–10; *s.v.* Πολύβιος, Codex A, *in marg.*

The Suda appears to have taken material from Hesychius of Miletus (6th c. A.D.) some of which in turn derived from Demetrius of Magnesia, the friend of Atticus (1st c. B.C.) (Adler, *RE* IV A (Suidas), 706f; Leo, *Griechisch-römische Biographie*, 30f, 39ff; Schühlein, *Studien zu Posidonius* 4f, *zu Posidonius Rhodius* 2). But the Suda article is extremely garbled and confused.

It is arranged under four entries:

(i) **1–4** Posidonius the Stoic philosopher from Apamea in Syria or Rhodian citizen. The double designation was significant, and both or either is used as identification (T2).

**2** His nickname was ἄθλητής. This occurs nowhere else, but we have no reason to doubt it. It has been taken literally, that Posidonius was an athlete before turning philosopher (F. A. Wright, *History of Later Greek Literature* 415), presumably from such anecdotes on Cleanthes (πύκτης, D.L. VII.168), Chrysippus (δόλιχον ἤσκει, D.L. VII.179), Pythagoras (D.L. VIII.48), or Hierocles of Hyllarima (Steph. Byz., p. 647 Meineke). But ἐπεκλήθη refers to a nickname, and nicknames were common, like Eratosthenes' Beta. I suspect that the Chrysippus anecdote may derive from a nickname which would well suit him. The comparison or metaphor of ἄθλητής for philosophers goes back at least to Plato (*Phil.* 41b 8). Strabo uses the metaphor of Posidonius himself: τῷ . . .

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περὶ πρωτείων ἀγωνιζομένῳ (F49.292f). It probably means something like ‘The Champion’.

**2–3** That Posidonius taught for most of his life in Rhodes is borne out by the other testimonies (T<sub>2</sub>). He was a pupil of Panaetius at Athens (T<sub>9</sub>), but to say that he was the διάδοχος of Panaetius is at the least confusing. He was not Panaetius’ successor as head of the School at Athens. The tradition may have meant that after Panaetius’ death, Posidonius was the spiritual διάδοχος as the most important Stoic. Presumably the shift of power in the School moved at this time from Athens to Rhodes.

**4–5** ‘He also went to Rome in the consulship of Marcus Marcellus.’ The old conjecture of Μαρίου for Μάρκου arose from Posidonius’ embassy in 87/86 B.C. (T<sub>28</sub>); but Μαρκέλλου remains. Wilamowitz (*Der Glaube der Hellenen*, II.397 n. 1) held that it refers to M. Cl. Marcellus (*RE* no. 226), Marius’ legate in 102 (Broughton, *Magistrates*, 1.569), and the legate of the consul L. Iulius Caesar in 90 (Broughton II.28; cf. *Add.* p. 16) (F258 comm.). But the date should have some significance for Posidonius’ life. Also ἐπί should imply ‘in the consulship of’. The consulship of M. Claudius Marcellus (*RE* no. 229) was 51 B.C. (Broughton, II.240), which was also the date when Rhodes reaffirmed her treaty with Rome (*Cic. Fam.* 12.15.2), in connection with which Posidonius may have been at Rome (F86e, F258). If so, he was at least 80 (T<sub>4</sub> comm.). But it must also have been about the time of his death (T<sub>4</sub> comm.), so it has been conjectured that a verb of dying has been omitted: Ῥώμην <ἐπὶ Μαρίου καὶ ἐτελεύτησεν> ἐπὶ Jacoby; Ῥώμην <ἅμα τελευτήσας> ἐπὶ Reinhardt (*RE* col. 564); Μαρκέλλου <καὶ ἐπανιῶν ἐτελεύτησε>. Theiler.

**4** ‘He wrote much.’ But surprisingly no titles are given, and worse, two of his major works are assigned to other Posidonii below.

(ii) **5–10** Posidonius of Alexandria; Stoic philosopher and pupil of Zeno of Citium (so also D.L. VII.38). But he is credited with the impossibility of writing a *History* continuing

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Polybius. However, the epitomator opines that the books assigned to the Alexandrian should be credited to Posidonius of Olbia in the next entry. That this includes not only the rhetorical works but also the *History* is supported by his entry under *Polybius* (T1b). Nevertheless, despite the doubts of Bake and others (*Posidonii Rhodii Reliquiae Doctrinae* 250f; cf. Pozzi, *RFIC* 41 (1913), 58–67), the *History* is certainly that of Posidonius of Apamea. The coincidence that two Posidonii wrote a continuation of Polybius' *History* on that scale (of which we only know one) is too outrageous to contemplate. That the *Suda* defines the *History* as τὴν μετὰ Πολύβιον, while Athenaeus always refers to it simply as 'The History', is not surprising; he is giving an indication of its beginning, size and extent. Strabo can refer to his own *History* in the same way (F282). Our evidence for the content of the *History* supports the claim that it began from where Polybius finished (146/145 B.C.). The *Suda* adds that it consisted of 52 books and continued 'to the Cyrenaic war and Ptolemy'. This latter phrase is devoid of meaningful significance. On the difficulties arising from the number of books and from the reference of termination, see F51 comm. The emendations arising out of these difficulties in no way solve the problems. Pozzi argued that ἕως τοῦ πολέμου τοῦ Κυρηναϊκοῦ καὶ Πτολεμαίου should be referred to the Λιβυκὰ of Posidonius of Olbia; but this is not convincing.

(iii) 11–14 Posidonius of Olbia (at the mouth of the Hypanis or Bug and near that of the Borysthenes or Dnieper), sophist and historian. Jacoby, *FGrH* 279 puts him in the 2nd c. A.D. This writer, clearly popular with the epitomator, is also credited with Περὶ τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ καὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτόν. This again must be the Περὶ ὠκεανοῦ of Posidonius of Apamea, which Strabo knew (F49). To debate whether the fuller or shorter form of the title is the 'correct' form (Malitz, *Die Historien des Poseidonios* 6 n. 12) is a modern preoccupation.

(iv) 15–17 Another Posidonius (about whom the epitomator knows nothing: only the proper name, ὄνομα κύριον, is

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given) wrote a work on augury or divination based on involuntary twitching (παλμικόν). See F86b, F113 comm. for the evidence as to whether or not Posidonius of Apamea may have written on this subject.

The confusion of the Suda article is a salutary warning that even the ancients at a later period had difficulty distinguishing different Posidonii, and deciding who wrote what. It should not be forgotten that Posidonius was a common name. Even in the surviving literature, we can pick out several more in addition to those listed by the Suda: (1) the Spartan at the battle of Plataea (Hdt. ix.71, 85); (2) the engineer who constructed a siege engine (ἐλέπολις) for Alexander (in Biton's *Instruments of War*); (3) the Posidonius who turns up in Lycon's will (3rd c. B.C.; D.L. v.73); (4) the distinguished pupil of Anniceris (early 3rd c. B.C.; Suda, s.v. Anniceris); (5) Aristarchus' reader (2nd c. B.C.; T109, T110); (6) Posidonius Λαμπτρέυς and (7) Posidonius Πειραιεύς (both in *I.G.* II<sup>2</sup>, 1938, 59, 60; Cichorius, *RhM* 63 (1908), 198; mid-2nd c. B.C.); (8) the legate of Nicanor, the general of Demetrius Soter (Bake, *Posidonii Rhodii Reliquiae Doctrinae* p. 255); (9) Posidonius of Corinth, who wrote on angling, and was probably a grammaticus about the end of the 2nd c. B.C. (Athenaeus, I.13B); (10) Posidonius of Ephesus, a distinguished silver chaser at the time of Pompey (Pliny, *NH* 33.156; 34.91); (11) probably a doctor and fellow-pupil of Zopyrus with Apollonius of Citium, i.e. 1st c. B.C. (but see T112); (12) certainly other doctors of the name Posidonius (T113, T114; Christ-Schmidt-Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, II.925); (13) Posidonius Ἀπολλωνιάτης (Tzetz. *Comm. on Iliad* Δ. 10); (14) a minor Latin poet (T115); and (15) a friend of Apsyrtus, the veterinary surgeon at the time of Constantine (*Corpus Hippiatricorum Graecorum* I.198.12).

In addition the name continually appears in inscriptions, for example: *SEG* VIII.574 (Egypt), 794 (Egypt); IX.102, 103, 132, 478 (Cyrenaica), 908; XI.414 (Epidauria); XII.101

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(Attica), 128, 176 (Attica), 230 (Macedonia); XIII.497 (Ionia); XIV.631 (Trieste); XV.697 (Ephesus); XVIII.36A (Attica), 456 (Ionia), 512 (Ionia); XIX.459 (Moesia), 736a, b (Pisidia), 734; XX.741a.51 (Cyrene), 740b; XXI.480 (Attica), 603 (Attica), 614 (Attica), 884 (Attica).

**T2a, b; T3** Strabo, XIV.2.13; Athenaeus, VI.252E; Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, V.107

Posidonius was born at Apamea on the Orontes in Syria. There has therefore been speculation about ‘oriental’ origins and influences (Pohlenz, ‘Stoa und Semitismus’, *Neue Jahrb.* 2 (1926), 257–69; cf. *Die Stoa* I.208, II.116; Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* II.403; Cumont, *CAH* XI.642; cf. Wendland, *Die hellenistisch-römische Kultur* 84f). But Apamea had a strong hellenic element of population including Macedonian colonists (Strabo, XVI.2.10; A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* 241–3). Posidonius had a Greek name, wrote in Greek, had his higher education in Greece, and lived the whole of his adult life in Athens and Rhodes, where he clearly felt at home. He retained an unsentimental and critical view of his birthplace (F54). Whether his philosophy or writing betrays any influence from the environment of his early unformed boyhood years is likely to lead to circular argument, but there is nothing in it which cannot be explained by the hellenistic intellectual, philosophical and scientific background of his time (see also Reinhardt, *RE* 628, 36ff; Laffranque *Poseidonios d’Apamée*, 49ff; Malitz, *Die Historien des Poseidonios* 8).

After an education in Athens with Panaetius, he settled in Rhodes, became a citizen (ἐπολιτεύετο, T2a.1), indeed an active one (T27, T28), made his living there (χρηματίσας, T2b), and, according to Cicero, never returned to live in Apamea (T3). This is hardly surprising. Syria remained very

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unsettled, and although the hellenistic intellectual world was cosmopolitan, Syria did not feature highly in it (Bevan, *House of Seleucus* 1.224ff). But why not Athens? Possibly because he wanted to set up on his own, and the Athenian Stoa was dominated by Panaetius until his death, c. 110 B.C., and Panaetius was succeeded by Mnesarchus as Head of the School in Athens. Also, Rhodes was a free city, prosperous, and above all had become one of the major intellectual centres in science (Hipparchus) as well as philosophy (Strabo, xiv.2.5ff). But we do not know precisely when he settled there and was awarded citizenship.

T<sub>4</sub> Ps.-Lucian, *Longaevi* 20, 223

The *Longaevi* (Μακρόβιοι), falsely ascribed to Lucian, gives Posidonius' age as 84.

This compilation, whose Greek suggests a period certainly later than Lucian, is of uncertain reliability, and the compiler's figures do not always tally with other estimates, even those given by authors to whom he refers. We have no control over the statement.

Our dates for Posidonius' birth and death are conjectural. The last certain datable reference to him alive is 60 B.C. (T<sub>34</sub>). He was dead by 43 (the siege of Rhodes by Cassius; see Scheppig, *De Posidonio Apamensi* 12) and most probably by 45 (the date of Cicero's *Tusculans* (T<sub>3</sub>)). He was a pupil of Panaetius (T<sub>9</sub>, T<sub>10</sub>) who died c. 110 B.C. (van Straaten, *Panétius*, 23–5), so it is unlikely that he was born much if at all later than c. 130 B.C.

*If* ἐπὶ Μάρκου Μαρκέλλου (T<sub>1a.4</sub>) refers to the consulship of M. Claudius Marcellus in 51 B.C., and *if* this contained an allusion to Posidonius' death (T<sub>1a</sub> comm.), and *if* Ps.-Lucian reported his age correctly, then Posidonius was born in 135 B.C. This sort of chronological bracket is at least consonant with all our other evidence. But the dates 135–51 B.C. have

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passed into the vulgate of Posidonian literature. It is important to remember that the precise dates rest on very hypothetical and insecure evidence.

**T5** Strabo, VI.2.11

There are two possible dates for this event:

(i) 126 B.C.; Pliny, *NH* 2.203; Julius Obsequens 29. In this year Titus Quinctius Flaminius (cos. 123 B.C.) was almost certainly praetor (Broughton, *Magistrates*, 508f; *RE* xxiv, Quinctius (47), 1100). It would be an easy change in line 6 to read Φλαμινί<ν>ον. Compare Nissen, *Italische Landeskunde* I.251; JACOBY, *Kommentar* 202.

(ii) 90/89 B.C. (cf. Holm, *Geschichte Siciliens* III.521; *RE* VI Flaminius (5), 2502) when Pliny, *NH* 2.238 records a similar eruption in the Social War, *donec legatio senatus piavit*. These words recall F227.15–17. But Titus Flaminius, the supposed praetor of Sicily as given in Strabo's codices, is otherwise unknown and does not fit into the praetor list of that time (Broughton, *Magistrates*). Also the praenomen Titus suits a Quinctius better than a Flaminius.

Unfortunately the phrase κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μνήμην used of Posidonius is ambiguous. It might mean either 'in his own lifetime' (a Latinism? cf. *maiorum nostrorum memoria*, F228.1), or 'in his own memory'. The second seems more likely in Greek. If so, it would be an odd phrase for c. 90 B.C., when Posidonius was well over 30. On the other hand, in 126 B.C. Posidonius would only be a young boy, probably still in Apamea.

μνήμη does not imply autopsy, and the story may have been one of his early memories. Joannes Lydus, *De mensibus* IV.115 (p. 153 Wuensch), in a passage on volcanic and seismic activity mentions Panaetius for the sea area between Lipara and the mainland (van Str. F136); Posidonius may have



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picked up further details from him (cf. Grilli, *RFIC* 84 (1956), 266–72). Although Pliny assigns purificatory rites to the later eruption, it is unlikely that formal rites were not also performed on the earlier occasion.

On balance, the reference to 126 B.C. and to Titus Quinctius Flaminius seems more likely. Therefore in line 6 Du Theil's emendation Φλαμινί<ν>ον should be adopted, and we may suppose an early recollection on the part of the young Posidonius, to be fully documented later (F227).

**T6** Athenaeus, VI.275A

Posidonius says that 'even in my time still' Roman parents brought their sons up frugally (F267). But καὶ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἔτι is a vague statement. Athenaeus' chronology in his context for Frs. 265–7 is so confused (see comm.) that we have no clear indication of when Posidonius thought the decline of ancient Roman virtues began or became prevalent. K. Bringmann (*A & A* 23 (1977), 37–40) argued that Posidonius dated it to the time of the Cimbric war, but his case is unproved. The form of the phrase, καὶ . . . ἔτι, suggests an early date in Posidonius' life, but then presumably he could not himself have observed such frugality in Italy. But the phrase does not demand personal observation, and on the whole an early date is likely. See Frs. 265–7.

**T7** Athenaeus, XII.549D–E

Athenaeus confused Posidonius with Panaetius as the companion of Scipio Aemilianus on the famous diplomatic visitation to Egypt in 140/139 B.C. See F58.

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**T8** Athenaeus, xiv.657E

The passage occurs in Athenaeus' section on hams (πέρραι).

The only thing certain about this garbled account is that Athenaeus repeats (5f) the same mistake, confusing Posidonius and Panaetius, that he committed in T7.

Athenaeus refers to Strabo iii.4.11, reporting on the excellence of Spanish hams, adding ἀνήρ οὐ πάνυ νεώτερος (1–2). This is followed by an explanatory parenthesis, λέγει γὰρ . . . τὴν Καρχηδόνι ἐλόντι (2–6). Athenaeus (or his epitomator) then resumes (δ' οὖν) with a supposed quotation from Strabo, which in fact wrongly conflates the end of iii.4.10 on Pompelon (or Pompeiopolis) with the end of iii.4.11 on comparison of ham regions, incidentally confusing the proper names in each case. This simply confirms the total unreliability of the whole passage.

The parenthesis (2–6) appears to maintain that Strabo says, in Bk vii of the same work (F58b Meineke, F60 Jones), that αὐτόν (3) knew Posidonius. But who is αὐτόν? Kaibel suggested Pompey who was mentioned in Strabo, iii.4.10. But that depends on further conflation of Bk iii; the parenthesis refers to Bk vii. Gercke (*RhM* 62 (1907), 116.1) inserted <Πολύβιος καὶ> Στράβων in line 1, but not only does the book objection hold, but it makes nonsense of the reference to hams. R. Philippson (*RhM* 78 (1929), 340 n. 2) rewrote the passage extensively to bring in a reference to Panaetius, than whom Posidonius is younger, and whom Posidonius said he knew. But this is no more than imaginative guesswork.

Editors have therefore followed Schweighaeuser in emending to αὐτός. ἀνήρ οὐ πάνυ νεώτερος would then have to mean, 'not belonging to recent times', explained (γὰρ) in the following sentence: Strabo himself says that he knew Posidonius who accompanied Scipio. But could Strabo have known Posidonius? Not in Rome, because that would extend Posidonius' life into the later forties. Is it conceivable that