

P.Mil.Vogl. I 15, first edited by the historian of ancient medicine Karl Deichgräber, preserves a portion of a single folio of a papyrus codex from Oxyrhynchus dated to the early fourth century AD. It contains a medical text dealing with the subject of acute and chronic diseases. Found on the papyrus are discussions of the acute disease apoplexy and of the chronic diseases sciatica (Greek ἰσχιάς) and elephantiasis. Each is discussed under a number of references to previous medical authorities, including the famous dogmatic physician Asclepiades of Bithynia (second century BC). When read alongside certain other medical treatises, this papyrus offers important evidence for traditions of medical doxography in antiquity.

This paper aims to offer some suggestions as to how these lacunose doxographical sections of the papyrus might be reconstructed, with the aid of some parallels drawn especially from the treatises on acute and chronic diseases by the fifth century AD Methodist physician Caelius Aurelianus and by the so-called Anonymus Parisinus (recently edited by Ivan Garofalo).

I shall also analyse some of the peculiar features of the doxographies contained on this papyrus, not least its explicit references to the Methodists, one of the most successful medical sects of the Roman period. The Methodists arose in the first century BC under the authority of the physician Themison of Laodicea. They sought to introduce a radically simplified system of medicine which was constructed around the removal of two clearly identifiable common states of the body, namely the "constricted" and the "relaxed". It was more important to tailor treatment to these states, rather than the complex procedures of other sects concerned with the individuality of different patients and their illnesses. But according to one of the most central features of their doctrine, speculation about the causes of disease is completely irrelevant to treatment. Yet the Methodists are cited here precisely in the sections of the papyrus devoted to causes. I shall argue that this paradoxical feature may offer some clues concerning the source material of the papyrus text, as well as its manner of composition. I shall then finish with some observations about the evidence we have for the influence of Methodism in Roman Egypt.