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Brill's New Jacoby

(Ps.-)Petosiris (663)

T 1

Suda, s.v. Petosiris (Πετόσιρις) = Translation
Riess T1

Subject: **genre: mythology**Source Date: **10th century AD**Historian's Date: **Unknown**Historical Period: **Unknown**

Αἰγύπτιος, φιλόσοφος. Καθὰ Ἑλληνας καὶ
 Αἰγύπτιοι τὰς¹ περὶ θεῶν διετάξατο²
 ἐπιλογὰς ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν βιβλίων·
 [[Ἀστρολογούμενα]]· καὶ Περὶ τῶν παρ'
 Αἰγυπτίοις μυστηρίων.

Egyptian, philosopher. Just like the
Greeks and the **Egyptians** (?), he drew
 up **Selections about the gods** from the
 sacred books, [[Astrological matters]],
 and **On the Mysteries among the**
Egyptians.

Commentary

I have not followed Jacoby's reading here, who supposed that the text was corrupt, that a lacuna after διετάξατο should be filled with e.g., φήμας ('tales'), and that a new sentence then began: [he wrote] 'Selections...'. On **Petosiris**, see the discussion in the **Bibliographical Essay**.

Biographical Essay

During the first centuries AD, several Greek texts relating to divination and astrology circulated under the Egyptian name **Petosiris**, meaning 'Gift of **Osiris**': see the fragments published by E. Riess, *Nechepsonis et Petosiridis fragmenta magica* (1891-93) *Philologus Suppl.* 6, 327-94. These apocryphal texts seem to have been ascribed to a legendary character, probably the famous high priest of **Thoth** (fourth century BC). This gathering of texts under a pseudonym can be compared with the establishment of the **Corpus Hermeticum**, a collection of astrological, cosmological and initiatory texts attributed to **Hermes Trismegistus**, the Greek version of the god **Thoth**. It should be stressed that none of **Petosiris**' alleged fragments concern historical matters. Likewise, none of the titles given by the **Suda (T 1)** are historical in character. We should reject this pseudonymous author of astrological writings as a 'Greek historian'.

Bibliography

W. Kroll, 'Petosiris', *RE* 19.1 (1937), col. 1165

A. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'Astrologie grecque* (Paris 1899)

D. Pingree, 'Petosiris, Pseudo-', C.C. Gillispie (ed.), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* 10 (New York 1974), 547-9

Notes

1. τὰς; τὰ Gutschmid
2. διετάξαντο G; <φήμας> (or similar) Bernhardt

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