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CONTENTS

What Caesarea Has to Do with Alexandria? The Christian Library between Myth and Reality

Sabrina Inowlocki Meister*

Abstract: This article critically reevaluates the available sources concerning the library of Caesarea, commonly known as the first Christian library established towards the end of the 3rd century CE by the martyr Pamphilus, who was the teacher and close associate of Eusebius of Caesarea. The main contention is that Jerome's portrayal of the library and its founder in Epistle 34 has exerted a profound and enduring influence, often leading to an exaggerated view of the size and status of the library. By contextualizing Jerome's depiction within the broader late ancient cultural discourses on bibliography, the article also explores how it was received and transmitted throughout the pre-modern period.

Keywords: ancient libraries, book history, Jerome of Strido, Eusebius of Caesarea, Pamphilus of Caesarea, Origen.

INTRODUCTION

The Western notion of literary culture is largely built upon the concept of the library. From Hecateaus of Abdera to Justus Lipsius, they have been widely considered as authoritative repositories of knowledge.[1] The Library of Alexandria is the most renowned instance in Greek and Roman antiquity. Yet in spite of its fame, very little is in fact known about it. Towards the end of the second century CE, the scholar Athenaeus describing the fame the library had achieved in the ancient world, writes: 'What reason is there for me even to speak of the number of books, the establishment of libraries, and the collection in the Museum, considering how they are all the memories of everyone?'[2] As often, information which seemed well-known to the ancients was not deemed worth repeating and is therefore lost to us. Much of the scholarship has attempted to fill the blanks, thereby 'monumentalizing' and inflating the size and importance of the library. Roger Bagnall,

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1 The bibliography on ancient libraries is immense. Important references include Cavallo (1988a); Fedeli (1988); Canfora (1989); Baratin and Jacob (1996); Gamble (1999); Casson (2001); Perrin (2010); Dix and Houston (2006); Too (2010); Blumenthal and Schmitz (2011); Jacob (2013); Meneghini and Rea (2014); König, Oikonomopoulou, and Woolf (2013); Hendrickson (2014); Houston (2014); Johnstone (2014).

2 Athenaeus, *Deipn*. 5.203e (transl. C.D. Yonge).

pointing out the wide gap between the image of the monumental library and the lack of reliable sources, declared in 2010: 'The disparity between, on the one hand, the grandeur and importance of this library, both in its reality in antiquity and in its image both ancient and modern, and, on the other, our nearly total ignorance about it, has been unbearable.'[3] This ignorance, and the frustration it generates, has often led scholars to fill the void.[4]

A similar phenomenon is at play with the Christian library of Caesarea. Even though we have very little direct, reliable evidence, much of the scholarship has accepted monumental representations of this collection.[5] In this paper, I intend to debunk some of the myths that have surrounded the library of Caesarea since Eusebius and Jerome, showing that some of the key sources have often been over-interpreted. I will show that a misleading representation of the library of Caesarea is largely due, not to Isidore, as is sometimes argued,[6] but to the influence of Jerome's testimony. I will argue that under his impetus, the actual library of Pamphilus of Caesarea was turned into a cipher for 'the Christian library,' perceived not only as a physical collection of books, but also as the *idea* of Christian bibliography. Jerome monumentalized the Christian library at Caesarea by connecting it to the Alexandrian library and Pisistratus' collection. His narrative was passed on through Isidore's Etymologies, from where it spread to the Western Middle-Ages and Renaissance. By reconsidering the historicity of the library of Caesarea as well as its representation in late ancient Christianity, I suggest it is time to correct our representations not only of the library of Caesarea, but also perhaps of ancient libraries in general.

CONTEXT

Before delving into the subject of the library of Caesarea, the use of the term "library" in this paper requires clarification. Indeed, a *bibliothēkē* or *bibliotheca* can be different things: some literary works were entitled *bibliothēkē*, as is the case of Diodorus Siculus' work, but a *bibliothēkē* is first and foremost a place where books are stored: it can be a simple box, cases, or shelves, and—not necessarily but potentially—a monumental place; it can also refer to a collection of books; and finally, it can refer to the *ideal* collection of books of a specific culture, occasionally identified with books considered sacred, i.e. the Bible (e.g. Jerome's use of the *bibliotheca sacra*).[7] These various definitions can all be applied to the Christian library of Caesarea and it is occasionally difficult to untangle the various meanings it carries in the sources.

The library of Caesarea was established by Pamphilus, a martyr of one of the last waves of Diocletianic persecutions (310 CE) and Eusebius' teacher and companion.[8] Pamphilus was active as a teaching scholar working on textual projects related to Origen's

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3 Bagnall (2002), 348.

4 See Jacob (2013).

5 Carriker (2003), Grafton and Williams (2006)j are the most significant, recent instances of this tendency, as we shall see below.

6 E.g., Woolf (2013), 4.

7 E.g., *Vir. Ill.* 75.

8 On Pamphilus' biography, see most recently Amacker-Junod (2002), Carriker (2003), 12–16, Grafton-Williams (2006), Kofsky (2006), 53–62, Morlet (2011), 208–19, Schott (2013), Hartog (2021), 22–34, and Inowlocki (under contract with Cambridge University Press).

corpus, as well as on Scriptures. Born and raised in Berytus in an aristocratic family around the middle of the third century CE, he apparently studied in Alexandria under the presbyter Pierius, known as "the Younger Origen."[9] From there, he seems to have come to Caesarea, where he opened a Christian "philosophical" school and created the famous library, in fact a book collection centered on Origen's works.[10] There was, however, no continuous succession of teachers at Caesarea between Origen and Pamphilus, although Eusebius implied otherwise in Book 6 of his *Historia ecclesiastica* (*HE*).[11] During the Diocletianic persecutions, Pamphilus did not interrupt his work, even from prison, while he awaited death as a martyr.[12]

Although it is less famous than the library of Alexandria, it has been the subject of much attention in the early 21st century when book history became the focus of scholarly attention.[13] Even though scholars who deal with the library only have a restricted amount of sources at their disposal, as we shall see now, one can say that they certainly made the most of it.[14]

PRE-MODERN SOURCES ON THE LIBRARY

From the fourth century on, the library of Caesarea became the subject of cultural claims on the part of illustrious Christians such as Jerome and Isidore. They initiate a tradition of representing the library as the primary and first locus of Christian bibliography.

Ancient Sources

While we might expect Eusebius, Pamphilus' *protégé* and famous bibliophile, to provide us with the most detailed account of the library, it is in fact not the case. The little information he provides is given incidentally when he speaks about Origen's bibliography (*HE* 6.32.3):

> τί δεῖ τῶν λόγων τάνδρὸς ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος τὸν ἀκριβῆ κατάλογον ποιεῖσθαι, ἰδίας δεόμενον σχολῆς; ὃν καὶ ἀνεγράψαμεν ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ Παμφίλου βίου τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱεροῦ μάρτυρος ἀναγραφῆς, ἐν ᾗ τὴν περὶ τὰ θεῖα σπουδὴν τοῦ Παμφίλου ὁπόση τις γεγόνοι, παριστῶντες, τῆς συναχθείσης αὐτῷ τῶν τε Ὠριγένους καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐκκλησιαστικῶν συγγραφέων βιβλιοθήκης τοὺς πίνακας παρεθέμην.
>
> But why is it necessary for a precise catalogue of the man's [Origen's] works to be made in the present work, which would require its own study? I did transcribe one in my description of the life of the holy martyr of our time, Pamphilus, in which, showing how great was

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9 Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 76 and Photius *Bibl*. 118 and 119.

10 Morlet (2021) raises the question whether "the library of Caesarea" is that of Origen and in this case whether it includes only his own writings or also the books he owned.

11 See Penland (2013).

12 This is when he composed with Eusebius the *Apology for Origen*. The subscription to Esther in Sinaiticus also seems to attest to this. See Gentry Forthcoming (2024).

13 Starting, e.g., with Gamble (1999).

14 This criticism includes Inowlocki (2011), in Inowlocki-Zamagni.

> Pamphilus' zeal for divine matters, I cited the tables of the library of the writings of Origen and of other ecclesiastical writers assembled by him.[15]

While it can be argued that Eusebius might have provided more information in the lost *Vita Pamphili*, it would be surprising not to see him re-use this material here as he does with other texts on many other occasions. As happens with many of our sources on ancient libraries,[16] Eusebius is apparently not eager to delve into the contents of his own library, to our great disappointment. It is in fact Jerome who provides, about sixty years later, in *Ep*. 34.1 the most striking picture of the collection:

> *Beatus Pamphilus martyr, cuius uitam Eusebius Caesariensis episcopus tribus ferme uoluminibus explicauit, cum Demetrium Phalereum et Pisistratum in sacrae bibliothecae* ***studio uellet aequare*** *imaginesque ingeniorum, quae uera sunt et aeterna monumenta, toto orbe perquireret, tunc uel maxime Origenis libros inpensius persecutus Caesariensi ecclesiae dedicauit.*
>
> Blessed Pamphilus the martyr, whose life Eusebius bishop of Caesarea unfolded in about three volumes, when he wanted to equal Demetrius Phalereus and Pisistratus in his zeal for the sacred library sought images of talents which are true and eternal monuments, through the whole world, then, having eagerly pursued the books of Origen at great cost, he gave them to the church of Caesarea.[17]

The epistle 34, written in Rome between 382–384 CE,[18] goes well beyond simply reusing Eusebius' account of Pamphilus' collection of Origenian works in the *HE* 6.32.3. By associating the creation of Pamphilus' collection with the legendary libraries and bibliographic endeavors of Demetrius Phalereus and Pisistratus the Athenian, Jerome is establishing the status of the library of Caesarea as the first institutional Christian library. The reference to the *Letter of Aristeas* is unmissable, but it has clearly been mediated by Tertullian's *Apologeticum* 18.5:[19]

> *Voces eorum itemque uirtutes quas ad fidem diuinitatis edebant, in thesauris litterarum manent, nec istae latent. Ptolemaeorum eruditissimus, quem Philadelphum supernominant, et omnis litteraturae sagacissimus, cum studio bibliothecarum Pisistratum, opinor, aemularetur, inter cetera memoriarum, quibus aut uetustas aut curiositas aliqua ad famam patrocinabatur, ex suggestu Demetri Phalerei grammaticorum tunc probatissimi, cui praefecturam mandaverat, libros a Iudaeis quoque postulauit, proprias atque uernaculas litteras, quas soli habebant. Ex ipsis enim et ad ipsos semper prophetae perorauerant, scilicet ad domesticam dei gentem ex patrum gratia. Hebraei retro qui nunc Iudaei. Igitur*

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15 Text by Schwartz, *Eusebius' Werke* 2 (GCS 1903–1909). Transl. ANF, slightly revised.

16 See Woolf (2013), 4.

17 Some mss add: *quam ex parte corruptam Acacius, dehinc Euzoius, eiusdem ecclesiae sacerdotes, in membranis instaurare conati sunt*: 'since they were partly destroyed, Acacius, and then Euzoius, priests of that church, tried to restore them in parchment.' See Klostermann Reprint (2021), 856 n.3.

18 Kelly (1979), 95–96.

19 Text Edition: Glover (1931). Transl. by the Rev. S. Thelwall, ANF.

et litterae Hebraeae et eloquium. Sed ne notitia uacaret, hoc quoque a Iudaeis Ptolemaeo subscriptum est septuaginta et duobus interpretibus indultis, quos Menedemus quoque philosophus, prouidentiae uindex, de sententiae communione suspexit. Adfirmauit haec uobis etiam Aristaeus. Ita in Graecum stilum exaperta monumenta reliquit. Hodie apud Serapeum Ptolemaei bibliothecae cum ipsis Hebraicis litteris exhibentur. Sed et Iudaei palam lectitant. uectigalis libertas; uulgo aditur sabbatis omnibus. Qui audierit, inueniet deum; qui etiam studuerit intellegere, cogetur et credere.

Their [the prophets'] words, as well as the miracles which they performed, that men might have faith in their divine authority, we have still in the literary treasures they have left, and which are open to all. Ptolemy, surnamed Philadelphus, the most learned of his race, a man of vast acquaintance with all literature, emulating, I imagine, the book enthusiasm of Pisistratus, among other remains of the past which either their antiquity or something of peculiar interest made famous, at the suggestion of Demetrius Phalereus, who was renowned above all grammarians of his time, and to whom he had committed the management of these things, applied to the Jews for their writings—I mean the writings peculiar to them and in their tongue, which they alone possessed, for from themselves, as a people dear to God for their fathers' sake, their prophets had ever sprung, and to them they had ever spoken. Now in ancient times the people we call Jews bare the name of Hebrews, and so both their writings and their speech were Hebrew. But that the understanding of their books might not be wanting, this also the Jews supplied to Ptolemy; for they gave him seventy-two interpreters-men whom the philosopher Menedemus, the well-known asserter of a Providence, regarded with respect as sharing in his views. The same account is given by Aristaeus. So the king left these works unlocked to all, in the Greek language. To this day, at the temple of Serapis, the libraries of Ptolemy are to be seen, with the identical Hebrew originals in them. The Jews, too, read them publicly. Under a tribute-liberty, they are in the habit of going to hear them every Sabbath. Whoever gives ear will find God in them; whoever takes pains to understand, will be compelled to believe.

In Tertullian, Ptolemaeus attempts to emulate Pisistratus,[20] while in Jerome, Pamphilus tries to equal both Pisistratus and Demetrius, no less. Jerome has associated Pisistratus and Demetrius in order to create a lineage in which Pamphilus appears as the continuator of the two great bibliophiles-officials. The association between Pisistratus and Ptolemaeus/Demetrius is not new: Jed Wyrick has investigated the conflation made in Greek scholarship between Ptolemaeus II and Pisistratus.[21] According to him, both rulers provided competing origins for literary imposture.[22] The focus of their legends has to do with "textualizers" but also with libraries: 'Evidence suggests that the story of

20 On Tertullian's and Isidore's sources, see Veltri (2006), 84: 'In quoting Philadelphos' emulation of Pisistratus and comparing the library of Alexandria with that of Athens, Tertullian should have read a notice on libraries which we find for example in Aulus Gellius and later in the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville, who, according to Augustus Reifferscheid, must have taken this from *De Viris inlustribus* of Suetonius.' The reference to Reifferscheid is Frag. 102; Reifferscheid (1860), 130. See also Veltri (2006), 86 n. 206.

21 Wyrick (2004), 204–80.

22 Wyrick (2004), 204; 276–80.

Peisistratus…eventually became an aetiological myth that glorified the city of Pergamum and its library.'[23]

The motif of the zeal to outdo a bibliographic rival is not only Christian:[24] it is found in Strabo[25] and Galen[26] in passages on the rivalry between Pargamene and Alexandrian kings. Thus Pisistratus does not only stand as a cipher for the Greek library at Athens but also for the Pergamene library. Yet with the christianization of these traditions, this cultural subtext got lost in translation.

Moreover, Jerome's description of Pamphilus is not without precedent in Greek literature: Athenaeus' portrayal of Larensis is quite telling in this respect:[27]

> ἦν δέ, φησί, καὶ βιβλίων κτῆσις αὐτῷ ἀρχαίων Ἑλληνικῶν τοσαύτη ὡς ὑπερβάλλειν πάντας τοὺς ἐπὶ συναγωγῇ τεθαυμασμένους, Πολυκράτην τε τὸν Σάμιον καὶ Πεισίστρατον τὸν Ἀθηναίων τυραννήσαντα Εὐκλείδην τε τὸν καὶ αὐτὸν Ἀθηναῖον καὶ Νικοκράτην τὸν Κύπριον ἔτι τε τοὺς Περγάμου βασιλέας Εὐριπίδην τε τὸν ποιητὴν Ἀριστοτέλην τε τὸν φιλόσοφον καὶ Θεόφραστον καὶ τὸν τὰ τούτων διατηρήσαντα βιβλία Νηλέα· παρ' οὗ πάντα, φησί, πριάμενος ὁ ἠμεδαπὸς βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος, Φιλάδελφος δὲ ἐπίκλην, μετὰ τῶν Ἀθήνηθεν καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ Ῥόδου εἰς τὴν καλὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν μετήγαγε.
>
> [Larensis] who had possession of so many ancient Greek books that he surpassed all who have been admired for their collections, including Polycrates of Samos, Peisistratus the tyrant of Athens, Nicocrates of Cyprus, the kings of Pergamum, Euripides the poet, Aristotle the philosopher, Theophrastus, and Neleus who preserved the books of the two last named. From him, he says, our own King Ptolemy, surnamed Philadelphus, purchased them, and he transported them, along with the books from Athens and Rhodes, to our fair city of Alexandria.

Mutatis mutandis, Jerome's representation of Pamphilus has a lot in common with that of Athenaeus: not as a Christian Larensis (which he is in fact likely to have been historically), but as a Christian Neleus, handing a private, philosophical personal collection (that of Origen) over to an institutionally run library.

In the *interpretatio Christiana* of these bibliographic traditions, however, the narrative of the *Letter of Aristeas* constitutes an essential subtext: Jerome's choice of Demetrius, not Ptolemaeus, as the representative of the library of Alexandria is significant: it is the *Letter of Aristeas* that made him the central character in the translation process.[28] While Jerome does not mention the translation of the Jewish scripture, it is implicitly present in

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23 Wyrick (2004), 214.

24 See Eus., *PE* 8.1.8 and 8.2.1 and Wyrick (2004), 241–42

25 Strabo, *Geog*. 13.1.54 C 609.

26 *Comm. In Hippocratis De natura hominis* 1.44 { L.}, p. 55 and 57 cited by Wyrick (2004), 235.

27 Athen. *Deipnosoph*. 1.4 text ed. Kaibel, transl. Nagy.

28 *Letter of Aristeas* 302. See Wright (2015), 433.

the text.[29] He does represent Pamphilus as a new Demetrius of Phaleron, on a universal quest for knowledge.[30] The culmination of this quest, which is related to the *sacra bibliotheca* i.e. biblical writings, however, is not the translation of the Jewish scripture, but the collection of Origen's works. The implication, one can surmise with some confidence, is that Pamphilus' library at Caesarea is a new, Christian Museon.

Overall, Jerome elevates the status of Pamphilus' library by carving a place for it within the grand narrative of Greek intellectual history. Needless to say, this 'Museonification' of Pamphilus' library is the fruit of Jerome's tendency to exaggerate, mostly for self-serving purposes. Indeed, in Eusebius' passage, Pamphilus' library was presented as an individual collection centered on the figure of a teacher-philosopher Origen, comparable to that of Aristotle in Strabo[31] or Plotinus in Porphyry' *Life of Plotinus*. Jerome, in contrast, presents the library of Pamphilus in continuity with the greatest intellectual centers of the Greek world, Athens (and Pergamum) and Alexandria.

Jerome's appropriation and aggrandizement of Eusebius' somehow unremarkable description of the library at Caesarea is not only due to a desire to glorify the Christian library. In fact, the portrayal of Pamphilus as the driving force behind the library suggests a parallel with Jerome himself: the monk too collected Origen's works and this project must have started as early as 384 CE when he listed Origen's bibliography in Epistle 33. Later on, in Epistle 84.3 (c. 400 CE), he even reports that he has been accused of collecting Origen's works more than all other men. It is clear that if his exegetical model was Origen and even though he was keen to self-fashion as a second Origen before the Origenist controversy, as Mark Vessey has shown,[32] Pamphilus provided a more accessible template for crafting his own scholarly persona as an Origenian scholar.[33] It was therefore worth embellishing it.

Notably, Jerome's epistle 34.1 has other implications: Pisistratus and Demetrius Phalereus embodied the Greek cultural past. The picture of Pamphilus' rivaling their achievements was tantamount to portraying not only the competition between the Greek library and the Christian library but perhaps also the replacement of the former by the latter. It might not be coincidental that the years 382–384 CE, during which the letter was most likely penned, are the years which saw the controversy over the altar of Victory between the Senate of Rome and the emperor Gratian.[34] This passage may translate a certain sense of victory over "Pagan" culture. The end of the *De uiris illustribus*, published in 393 CE, might reflect the same thing when Jerome lists, just before his own entry, his

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29 Eusebius, in particular, had bended the narrative in an anti-Jewish, supersessionist direction: in *PE* 8.1.6, he uses citations of the Letter of Aristeas in order to apparently glorify the "Hebrew" tradition from which Christianity stems. Going one step further than Tertullian, he did not only present that translation of the Jewish scripture in Alexandria as open and unlocked, but suggested that this opening to the Greek-speaking world was intended as a *praeparatio* (εἰς προπαρασκευήν), that liberated the scripture from Jewish hiding.

30 Cf. *Letter of Aristeas* 9.

31 See Strabo, *Geogr*. 13.1.54.

32 cf. Vessey (2005).

33 See Inowlocki (2024a)

34 There is a tremendous amount of bibliography on the subject. See recently Gassman 2020 and his bibliography.

friend Sophronius' work on the destruction of the Serapeum in 391 CE, a place which probably included an important library.[35]

In parallel to these literary texts, some late ancient paratexts support the authority of the library of Caesarea as a locus for the preservation of the Origenian library. For instance, a document dated to the late fourth century bears as a title:

> Τοῦ ἁγίου ἱερομάρτυρου Παμφίλου ἑκ τῆς ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τῶν ἀποστόλων συνόδου τουτέστι ἑκ τῶν συνοδικῶν αὐτῶν κανόνων μέρος τῶν ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ εὑρεθέντων είς τὴν Ὡριγένους βιβλιοθήκην.
>
> By the holy martyr Pamphilus, from the synod of the Apostles in Antioch, this is a part of their synodical canons, which were discovered by him [Pamphilus] in Origen's library.[36]

While this attribution is not authentic and the work a forgery, this title suggests that it is as the library of Origen/Pamphilus that the library of Caesarea enjoyed authority and prestige among late ancient readers. Jerome himself calls it the 'library of Origen and Pamphilus' in *Vir. ill.* 113. The "library of Origen" is mentioned in various Syriac colophons, serving as an authenticating device in some manuscripts of the Syro-hexapla.[37] Pamphilus' work in preserving the library in Caesarea is also attested in a colophon in a Greek Manuscript of the Letters of Paul, dated to the sixth Century.[38] Even though other colophons refer to "the library of Eusebius" or "the library of Caesarea" for the same purposes,[39] these examples suggest that it is mainly as a locus of preservation of Origenian knowledge that the library of Caesarea was appreciated by late ancient readers and writers, not as a new reservoir of universal knowledge.

The early Middle Ages and beyond

Isidore of Sevilla's testimony in the *Etymologies* certainly manifests Jerome's influence:[40]

> *Qui apud nos bibliothecas instituerunt. Apud nos quoque Pamphilus martyr, cuius vitam Eusebius Caesariensis conscripsit, Pisistratum in sacrae bibliothecae studio primus adaequare content. Hic enim in bibliotheca sua prope triginta voluminum milia habuit. Hieronymus quoque atque Gennadius ecclesiasticos scriptores toto orbe quaerentes ordine persecuti sunt, eorumque studia in uno voluminis indiculo conprehenderunt.*

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35 See Rohmann (2022); Chin (2010).

36 Pitra 1864, 88–95. My transl. On this text, see Stewart (2016).

37 E.g. in BL, Or 8732, Fol. 136b; Bibl. Ambrosiana, C 313 inf., Fol. 193r. For all references, see Gentry (2024), forthcoming.

38 BnF Coisliniana 202.

39 See, e.g., Scheide Library M150, Fol. 18a; Scheide Library M150, Fol. 138b. See also BL Add 14,437, Fol. 122a that refers to 'i.e., the "Six Columns" of the Library of Caesarea, Palestine.' See also BnF, syr. 027 [Ancien fonds 5] eighth century colophons appended to Fourth Kingdoms: Colophon A – Folio 87a: References from Gentry, forthcoming.

40 On Isidore's sources for this passage see Canfora (1989), 126–31, and Veltri (2006), 85–90; Bibliophobia: Cummings (2022), 81.

> Those who established libraries among us: Among us also he martyr Pamphilus, whose life Eusebius of Caesarea wrote, first strove to equal Pisistratus in his zeal for a sacred library. He had about 30,000 volumes in his library. Also Jerome and Gennadius, searching systematically through the whole world, hunted down ecclesiastical writers, and they enumerated their works in a one-volume catalogue.[41]

The Library of Alexandria, as well as Demetrius Phalereus have disappeared from this passage, to the profit of Jerome himself, together with Gennadius, whose own *De viris illustribu*s, two *literary* libraries, are conceived as the continuations of the physical library of Caesarea. Isidore in fact handled the library of Alexandria and the translation of the LXX later, in 6.3.3–4.[42] It is in that passage that he refers to the emulation of Pisistratus by Ptolemy. Where Isidore found the information that it included 30,000 volumes is unclear but it does not seem historically reliable.[43] Interestingly, as Jacob has noted, according to the *Suda* (s.v. "Epaphroditus"), Nero's freedman, who was also Epictetus' master, owned a personal library of 30,000 books as well.[44]

The tradition started by Jerome and continued by Isidore made its way to the Renaissance, when the history of libraries re-emerged as a literary genre.[45] From the fifteenth century onwards, various *litterati* include the library of Caesarea in their works. Johannes Trithemius, as Grafton and Williams have pointed out, spoke about Pamphilus the presbyter, claiming that he created a great library in Caesarea, 'so that in all the world, there was no more celebrated library' and that Eusebius took part in 'restoring the ecclesiastical library' with Pamphilus.[46] Trithemius, as well as other Renaissance scholars, conveyed to our time the hieronymian portrayal of the library of Caesarea, as well as that of its architect, the martyr Pamphilus.

When Sixtus V renovated the Vatican Library in 1590, he added the *Salone Sistino*, showcasing a genealogy of ancient libraries in the form of a succession of frescoes. Among them was the *Bibliotheca Caesariensis*, depicted in a single painting with Pamphilus, apparently copying down manuscripts, presumably of Origen, as well as Eusebius or perhaps Origen himself, and Jerome, reading, flanked by his lion. It was surrounded by the *Bibliotheca Hierosolimitana*, a single painting of Alexander, student of Origen, and the *Bibliotheca Apostolorum*, with Peter as its founder. The *titulus* of the fresco reads: *PAMPH. PRESB. ET MART. ADMIRANDAE SANCTITATIS AND DOCTRINAE CAESAREAE SACRAM BIBLIOTHECAM CONFICIT MULTOS LIBROS SUA MANU SCRIBIT* ('Pamphilus presbyter and martyr of admirable holiness and doctrine, he made the sacred library at Caesarea, he copied books in his own hand').[47] It was thus clearly inspired by Jerome *Vir. ill.* 75, the entry on Pamphilus.

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41 Text ed. Linsay. Transl. Barney slightly modified.
42 For more on these passages of Isidore, see Hendrickson (2017), 12–15.
43 See Frenschkowski (2006), 59–60.
44 Jacob (2013a), n.7.
45 Varro had authored a *De bibliothecis* but it is lost: see Casson (2001), 79.
46 See references in Grafton and Williams (2006), 5 and n.9.
47 See details and bibliography in Nelles (2016).

In his *De bibliothecis*, Angelo Rocca (1545–1620), an Italian humanist, librarian and bishop, founder of the Angelica Library at Rome, also gives a prominent place to the library of Caesarea:[48]

> *Bibliothecam insignem magno studio construxit, opera Eusebii episcopi, cui maxima familiaritate conjunctus erat adjutus, Pisistartum in sacrorum codicum ingenti coacervatione adaequare contendens. Hic enim sua in bibliotheca ad triginta voluminum millia habuisse, suaque manu maximam partem librorum Origenis descripsisse narratur.*
>
> Pamphilus built a famous library with great zeal, with the help of the bishop Eusebius' efforts, with whom he was associated by the greatest friendship. He attempted to equal Pisistratus in accumulating huge quantities of sacred books. He is said to have owned in his library about 30,000 volumes, and to have copied with his own hand most of Origen's works.

A conflation of Isidore and Jerome, this testimony, like the previous ones, sheds light on the transmission of the image of the library from late antiquity down to our time.

MODERN SCHOLARSHIP ON THE LIBRARY

The tradition started by Jerome, continued by Isidore, and carried on by Renaissance humanists reached the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the 21st. More than one modern scholar rather uncritically accepted Jerome's monumentalization of Caesarea and even occasionally amplified it. For instance, R. Blum explained that Pamphilus modeled his collecting of Christian literature on Demetrius' attempt to collect all pagan Greek literature.[49] Carriker, in spite of his criticism of Blum, writes in his *Library of Eusebius*: 'Like Origen, or, as Jerome more aptly puts it (Ep. 34.1), like Pisistratus and Demetrius of Phalerum, Pamphilus sedulously acquired books for the library at Caesarea.'[50] Murphy-O'Connor, in an article on Pamphilus, declared that 'by adding to the manuscript collection of Origen he [Pamphilus] created a library second only to that of Alexandria; in 630 it had 30,000 volumes.'[51] Likewise, Joseph Patrich, a specialist of the archeology of Caesarea, accepts Isidore's number of 30,000 books.[52] Grafton and Williams, in their important work on Origen, Eusebius and the codex, claimed that 'the library became so famous in later antiquity that it was described, with some exaggeration [they concede], as the Christian equivalent of the library of Alexandria.'[53]

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48 *De bibliothecis* in Rocca (1719), 195–96. My translation.

49 Blum (1983), cols. 86–86 and 216, noted and criticized by Carriker (2003), 13, n.39.

50 Carriker (2003), 13.

51 Murphy-O'Connor (2008), 241.

52 Patrich (2011), 4. Morlet (2021), 466 drew my attention to this passage. Patrich's claim is based on Isidore.

53 Grafton and Williams (2006), 179.

In many instances, they qualify it as 'massive' or insist on its size.[54] Clearly Jerome and Isidore have been taken at face value.

Obviously, the influential description by Carriker and Grafton and Williams of a massive, multicultural library at Caesarea was not only based on Jerome's claims. Their arguments are built on a solid analysis of Origen's Hexapla, Eusebius' *Chronicle* and his citations in the *PE,* among others. Yet I would contend that Jerome's narrative of Pamphilus' library and its tremendous influence from Isidore, up to the Renaissance and beyond, continued somehow to haunt the work of these eminent scholars. In particular, claims about the library's size, its institutional character, and the imperial patronage that supposedly supported it, should be revisited. Although this article is constrained by scope and cannot delve deeply into extensive details, it can still furnish several points to advocate for a more nuanced understanding of the Library of Caesarea.

The size and the scriptorium

In 2003, Carriker, who, as we have seen, largely accepted Jerome's claims, produced an influential study on the library of Eusebius. His reconstruction of the contents of the library suggested the existence of a large collection: Based on the citations and references made by Eusebius in his various works (especially the *PE* and *HE*), Carriker estimated that his library amounted to between 288 and 400 works, at least.[55] His results stem from his assumption that the texts from which Eusebius quotes were generally at his disposal. Grafton and Williams, who accepted Carriker's conclusions, claimed that 'it seems to have been Eusebius, more than Pamphilus, who made the library the sort of collection that challenged comparison with the most famous examples in the Mediterranean world.'[56] Yet, if we take into account the numbers of Carriker, depending on the length of each work, we could reach a few thousand volumina, but hardly the 30,000 ascribed to the library by Isidore. This number, at any rate, would be relatively low compared to the 700,000 volumes vindicated by Isidore for the Museon, for instance.[57]

However, the assumption that the bishop of Caesarea owned a massive book collection and that it could serve as a "research library" is questionable because it relies on the assumption that Eusebius had first-hand access to, or even owned, everything he read and cited. But he might well have used certain sources second-hand. For instance, it is possible that he quoted some of the Philonic material from *PE* 11 not directly but from some kind of collection of citations.[58] Morlet has also suggested that Eusebius makes a specific use of Philo in *PE* 11–13 which could derive from an indirect reading (possibly Origen's lost *Stromata*) and also questioned the connection between Pamphilus' library and Eusebius' own collection of books.[59]

54 Grafton and Williams (2006), 135, 180, 207–208.
55 Carriker (2003), 299.
56 Grafton and Williams (2006), 208.
57 See Frenschkowski (2006).
58 Inowlocki (2006 and 2023).
59 See the cases of Plutarch and Philo in Morlet (2019 and 2021 respectively).

Moreover, the bishop was well-traveled and well-connected: he certainly visited the *bibliothēkē* in Jerusalem,[60] he was in Egypt,[61] Constantinople,[62] he might have visited the archives in Edessa[63] and probably borrowed and exchanged books with his peers, as was often the case in that time.

Frenschkowski, in his turn, has highlighted the lack of evidence regarding not only the library itself, but also its use after Eusebius,[64] as well as its disappearance.[65] If the library was such a massive reservoir of books, it must have been dedicated to the kind of research to which Origen, Pamphilus and Eusebius dedicated themselves. Yet as Frenschkowski notes, we have practically no evidence about anyone using such a research facility after Eusebius.[66] Even more strikingly, Eusebius himself never stressed the importance of the physical library. What he did was to draw the contours of the Christian library through citations, *as a bibliographic panorama*.

In addition, the idea of the presence of a significant scriptorium coextensive to the library is widespread in secondary literature. Even though some scholars have remained cautious,[67] the idea of the library and its scriptorium is still popular.[68]

It is based both on the famous order of fifty biblical copies from Constantine to Eusebius (*Vita Constantini* 4.36 which I briefly examine below), and on the description of the team of shorthand writers and female calligraphers put at Origen's service and briefly mentioned by Eusebius in *HE* 6.[69] The influential article of Skeat on the Caesarean origin of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus has contributed to spread the idea of the scriptorium stemming from *VC* 4.36. Yet as we shall see, this was a one-time order for which Constantine had to provide material means, suggesting that Eusebius did not have on a regular basis the necessary means for this operation.

As for Origen's copyists mentioned in Eusebius' *HE*, the bishop is neither describing 'the scriptorium of Caesarea' nor even *a* scriptorium at Caesarea: he only mentions the large means by which Ambrose, Origen's patron, was ready to support his protégé's exegetical work. In other words, this team was meant to copy down the biblical commentaries Origen dictated, it was by no means destined to copy works for the library and there is no reason to believe that this arrangement subsisted after Origen.

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60 *HE* 6.20.1.

61 *HE* 8.7.2.

62 Barnes (1981), 266.

63 *HE* 1.13.5 seems suggestive in that respect.

64 Cadiou (1936), 477–78, suggested that Eusebius of Vercelli and Hilary of Poitiers used the library. But Gamble (1995) 160 and Frenschkowski (2006) have been more reticent.

65 Frenschkowski (2006), Morlet (2021).

66 Yet as one of the reviewers of this article notes, referring to Balensiefen (2011), 123–59, there are often long periods of silence between literary mentions of a library and almost never an indication when it ceased to exist.

67 Skeat (1999), 607; Haines-Eitzen (2000), 89–91; Carriker (2004), 16, quoting the former.

68 A few instances: Roberts (1970), 65; Cavallo (1988a); Hollerich (1999), 2 and (2021), 207; Rapp (1991), 21–22; Gamble (1999), 158; Schironi (2015), 181–223; Böttrich (2017), 469–78.

69 *HE* 6.23.1–2. See notably Haines-Eitzen (2000 and 2012) and the bibliography herein.

Grafton and Williams' argument that an endeavour such as the Hexapla necessitated a large infrastructure and important human resources is not necessarily incorrect.[70] The role of slaves in such scholarly programs has been put into light in recent studies[71] and it is likely that Origen also employed enslaved workers. However, this should not translate into the idea that a formal scriptorium existed from Origen (or Pamphilus) on, subsisting to the time of Eusebius. Scribal knowledge and know-how were certainly part of the Caesarean tradition initiated by Origen, but it does not mean that an institutional complex was set up in the precinct of the Church.

To sum up, there is too little evidence to conclude either that the library of Caesarea was "massive" or that it had a significant scriptorium. Certainly, the ancients had a different idea of what a massive library meant, and our modern standards need not apply here but the moderns themselves should be more cautious in their assessment of the size of the library. The evidence derived from Origen and Eusebius does not allow us to conclude that the famous library was comparable to Alexandria, for instance (whose own size might well have been just as exaggerated). In the case of Eusebius, his numerous citations only evidence his desire to map Christian and non-Christian bibliography, and to establish Christian bibliography not as a physical collection, but as a bibliographic landscape. Jerome, on the other hand, innovated by doing something Eusebius did not, but that we keep doing: locating authority in the library specifically, as an institutional "lieu de savoir."[72]

The institutional character of the library

In addition to the size of the library, Jerome's ep. 34 also claims that Pamphilus transferred the ownership of the library to the Church of Caesarea. Karl Mras, Gamble, Carriker, to name only a few scholars, accepted the idea of an episcopal institution preserving the books within the precinct of the Church under the jurisdiction of the bishop.[73]

In 2001, the hypothesis was made by Kalligas that Eusebius' collection of platonic quotations in books 11–13 of the *PE* derived from the library of Longinus, which the philosopher would have brought along with him when he settled in Palmyre at Queen Zenobia's court.[74] Due to his status as bishop, Eusebius would have been able to acquire the collection after the defeat of Zenobia and Longinus' assassination. Whether this hypothesis is right or wrong matters little here. What is noteworthy is Kalligas' assumption that Eusebius' institutional connections would have enabled him to annex other libraries to his own, in an imperialistic gesture paralleling that of emperor Julian, for instance, looting the library of George of Cappadocia after his death.[75]

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70 One wonders at times to what extent Grafton perhaps did not read too much of the Renaissance library, and notably the infrastructure around the *Magdeburg Centuries,* into Caesarea. See Grafton*, What Was History?*, 112, cited in Hollerich (2021), 207, n. 74.

71 E.g., Moss (2021, 2023, 2024); Coogan, Howley Moss (2024 forthcoming).

72 The term has been coined by Christian Jacob, inspired by Pierre Nora's "lieux de mémoire."

73 Carriker (2003), 21; Gamble (1999), 159–60. Karl Mras' depiction of Eusebius sitting on his throne in the "diocesan library" and dictating to his deacon-scribes is exemplary in this respect, and influenced Grafton-Williams (2006), 212–13; cf. Mras (1954), lviii.

74 Kalligas (2001).

75 Julian Emperor, Epistle 108 To Ecdicius (362 CE).

However, there is no evidence to support the institutional character of the library, apart from Jerome's statement. Moreover, it has been pointed out that in his presentation of Acacius in *HE* 4.23.2, Sozomen claimed that Acacius 'could boast of Eusebius Pamphilus as his teacher, whom he succeeded in the episcopate, and was more honorably known than any other man by the reputation and succession of his books.'[76] This passage suggests that Eusebius was the personal owner of the library. Sozomen, a lawyer of Gaza c. 400–450, was probably just as well-informed as Jerome. Therefore, once again, Jerome's testimony cannot be taken at face value. It is possible that after Eusebius the collection passed to the episcopal authority, as the "renovation" of the collection by Euzoius seems to indicate.[77] But there is no certainty that it became an "episcopal library" under Pamphilus or even Eusebius.

Many have also endorsed the long-held assumption that Eusebius' library/scriptorium benefited from Constantine's patronage.[78] The iconic passage which lies behind this idea, i.e., the famous letter of Constantine to Eusebius ordering fifty biblical copies for Constantinople (*Vita Constantini* 4.36), an important text on which much ink has been spilled.[79] Yet if we look at this passage from the vantage point of the library, what Eusebius proudly exposes is not imperial patronage. Constantine certainly does not provide any means to enlarge the collection of the library. On the contrary, he asked to export books prepared at Caesarea towards Constantinople. What we see is a material transaction, a subsidized order addressed to a specialized "copy center" represented by the local bishop.

We know from Jerome's *Adv. Ruf.* 1.9 that, according to Eusebius' *Vita Pamphili*, Pamphilus was preparing biblical copies that he distributed to the needy. Caesarea, Jerome also tells us, was renowned for its biblical copies whose text type was used throughout Palestine.[80] This letter tells us nothing about the library itself as a repository of knowledge. It only sheds some light on the scribal work performed there manifestly started by Pamphilus, whose capabilities the subsidies provided by the emperor were meant to enable to expand. But this was apparently a one-time business deal, restricted to fifty copies. Even though Constantine's order would have doubtlessly impacted the prestige of "Eusebius' lab", one would be mistaken to consider it as the patronage of the library itself, in the same fashion as Ptolemaeus was the patron of the Alexandrian library.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, therefore, it seems that a common picture of the library of Caesarea as a massive book repository and scriptorium has resulted from two kinds of anachronism. On

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76 Frenschkowski (2006), 66.

77 Jerome *Vir. ill.* 113 and the famous "cross of Euzoius" preserved in the Codex Vindobonensis Theol. Gr. 29; see photo and discussion in Runia (1993), 20–22.

78 E.g. Grafton and Williams (2006), 221, 231.

79 See most recently Letteney (2023), 132–33.

80 *Alexandria et Aegyptus in Septuaginta suis Hesychium laudat auctorem, Constantinopolis usque Antiochiam Luciani martyris exemplaria probat, mediae inter has prouinciae Palaestinos codices legunt, quos ab Origene elaboratos Eusebius et Pamphilus uulgauerunt; totusque orbis hac inter se trifaria uarietate conpugnat. Praefatio in Paralipomena,* see De Bruyne (2015), 30.

the one hand, scholars have had a tendency to project onto it the medieval idea of the scriptorium; on the other, following Jerome, there has been a tendency to consider it as a Christian Alexandrian library, i.e., the Hellenistic library of Pseudo-Aristeas' Ptolemaeus.

Yet there is a wide gap between, on the one hand, the way Eusebius and later scribes in the Syriac-speaking world of the sixth–eighth century represented the library of Caesarea, and, on the other, the depiction produced by Jerome and his followers, Isidore, Johannes Trithemius and other scholars after him. While the former emphasized the Origenian character of the library, the latter (mainly after Jerome) depicted it as the first iconic reservoir of Christian bibliographic knowledge. In the early twenty-first century, based on a meticulous study of Eusebius' sources, it was argued that the library also included an important number of non-Christian Greek works (Carriker), which consolidated the Hieronymian idea of Caesarea as a new, Christian, Alexandria. Scholars who supported the idea of a massive, multicultural library at Caesarea did not do so based directly on Jerome. Nevertheless, it can hardly be denied that the long-standing Christian tradition initiated by Jerome continued to haunt modern work on the library of Caesarea.

The idea that Jerome initiated and which proved to be so influential to this day was not simply that the library of Caesarea was a massive library, but also that it constituted a Christian landmark in a lineage of libraries, starting with Pisistratus' library at Athens, continued by Ptolemaeus and Demetrius in Alexandria, and culminating at Caesarea. Yet Jerome's vision was likely inspired by the sheer number of citations (and their length) which Eusebius produced rather than by the physical collection itself. In the *Vir. ill.* 75, Jerome had the opportunity to extol the library of Pamphilus and yet he did not, preferring to focus on his handwritten copies of Origen.[81]

As we have seen, the idea of the *bibliothēkē* is less central in Eusebius than it is in Jerome. While Eusebius placed Caesarea on the Christian map by claiming the blood of its martyrs,[82] including Pamphilus his beloved master, Jerome endowed Caesarea with the glory of its books through the same Pamphilus. Thus Jerome ushered in a tradition that envisioned libraries in a succession that unfolded according to both revelation and intellectual lineages.[83] In all likelihood, the library of Caesarea was no Christian Museon. But as the alleged first Christian book collection outside of the *bibliotheca sacra* or congregational libraries, Jerome made it enter the pantheon of libraries. Isidore, in turn, played a major role in conveying the authority of the library of Caesarea as the first Christian library. Isidore's own influence carried on Jerome's innovative tradition throughout the centuries to the Renaissance and beyond, perhaps to this day.

In the sixteenth-century, the history of libraries became the focus of attention in the context of controversies between Catholics and protestants.[84] As authoritative repositories of knowledge, they came to play an important role in these religious debates.[85] Safeguarding the transmission of religious tradition, they allegedly proved the authority of Christian doctrine. In some sense, the modern scholars' search and fascination for the

81 See Inowlocki (2024, forthcoming).
82 See Osnat Rance and Oded Irshai (forthcoming).
83 Strikingly Lipsius broke up with this tradition by excluding Christian libraries from his *De bibliothecis*: See Hendrickson (2017).
84 See, e.g. Hollerich (2021), 191–237.
85 See Hendrickson (2017), 20.

Christian library of Caesarea is still dependent on these models. While they no longer consider the library as the depository of Christian truth, they still carry on the idea that the library at Caesarea embodied the encounter of Hellenism and Christianity. Supplanted by this Palestinian icon, the representation of the library of Alexandria as the *locus* of the encounter between Greeks and Jews, between Athens and Jerusalem, receded. These representations and traditions of "the Christian library" as a physical place, a book collection, and a bibliographic idea have shaped our representations of the cultural roots of Western culture to this day.

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