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## Papyrology, Ptolemaic Egypt and Byzantine Palestine<sup>1</sup>

Papyrologists, Friends:

Ludwig Mitteis predicted in April 1900 that the 20<sup>th</sup> century's research in ancient history would be dominated by papyri just as historical research of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by inscriptions<sup>2</sup>. By analogy and with a shift of parameters, we may safely expect that chips will hold sway over research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The great law-historian was right in that ever more edited papyri have given us thousands of pages of new literature and of professional writings from various walks of life as well as an enormous number of documents that became difficult to control and manage with traditional tools. But difficulties aside, because of the growing and shifting evidence, our professional and human knowledge has grown and has challenged us to confront old and new questions on a new basis. Hereafter, neither classical philology nor the broader study of ancient literature nor history, epigraphy, papyrology and Roman law will ever be the same.

Because of papyrology's successes and the promise of growing importance the new and still young discipline has become respected in the fields of Classical studies ("Altertumskunde"), today much more so than 50 years ago, but it has never dominated the historical research of the ancient world. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, papyrologists appeared to be indispensable in much of the research on the ancient world. To continue the comparison, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century computer technology is becoming ever more indispensable, and at times technology seems to dominate our days. But the chips do not dominate the core of our research. Technology has given us the capability to ask ever more complex questions, store and handle ever more evidence, send images of papyri in seconds around the globe, and make use of ultraviolet and infrared photography as well as of highly sophisticated multispectral imaging techniques that, if the circumstances are right, literally make the invisible visible. The Duke Data Bank of Documentary Papyri and now APIS and the Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis der Papyrusurkunden Ägyptens have changed the way how we read and research papyri, but they have replaced neither the older tools like the *Wörterbuch*, *Sammelbuch*, and *Berichtigungsliste* nor different kinds of invaluable instruments like the *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* and "Pack", which in their respective electronic dress have become even more useful. However, as in the past, deciphering, analyzing and synthesizing in an almost circular process, will remain at the core of our discipline.

Looking around the audience, I realize that papyrology is flourishing, probably more than ever. But the joyfully hyperbolic claim for dominance in historical research has not been, and will not be, realized. By its very nature, papyrological discovery is a multi-disciplinary process. "Multidisciplinary" and "cultural" are words *en vogue* but, in papyrology, they refer to the daily reality of our research. A papyrologist is also a philologist and a scholar of several branches of history and, as such, both a humanist and a social scientist. In our research the *unitas scientiarum* is still present. Rooted in the tradition and exemplary past of our discipline, we will learn what we need to know to do our job; and precisely this experience is the source of our excitement and the continuing youth of the discipline.

For a while, before, during and after World War II, papyrology appeared to be dying or, in some parts of Europe, to be practically dead, as many of its practitioners had died. It took a new beginning over two or three generations to reestablish papyrology and to rejuvenate it. From my German experience of that postwar period, I may add that this would not have been possible without the *amicitia papyrologorum* who opened their arms and mind to the young adepts. Exempli causa, I mention here just three scholars

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<sup>1</sup> Published here with minor changes from the talk delivered at the opening of the Congress. I had hoped to add a fuller documentation in footnotes, but was not able to do so. I thank R. Ch. Caldwell for reading the paper and correcting mistakes.

<sup>2</sup> Alain Martin has recently shown that L. Mitteis was the author of this prediction, not Th. Mommsen (APF 46 [2000] 1f.), as many believed.

who may stand for many: Sir Eric Turner in London, Herbert C. Youtie in Ann Arbor and Claire Préaux in Brussels<sup>3</sup>.

The new enthusiasm of the field was fed by new papyri that were found and published. Whenever we thought that the age of new finds was over, something sensational came to light, and new technologies and new ingenuity enabled us finally to read what hitherto we had been unable to read and understand. I mention only one of the great triumphs that are still unfolding: back in the sixties nobody would have imagined how many of the papyri from Herculaneum could still be opened, read, edited or re-edited. It became possible especially through M. Gigante's vision, endurance and diplomacy as well as through the support, work and collaboration of many scholars including D. Obbink, who on the basis of painstaking observations developed a new method to discover the sequence of the columns of two wrongly separated half-rolls so that we finally can read Philodemos' *De pietate* as an understandable and reasonable text. The newly edited texts, and reeditions of texts that we had believed to know, have altered our picture of both Hellenistic philosophy and ancient literary criticism.

Many of our methodologies have changed. In some areas, where the evidence allows quantification, a good part of us in many countries have learnt even to use demography and other modern methods of history and the social sciences. Moreover, the evidence taught us to join forces: Hellenists, Demotists, Coptologists, Aramists, Arabists, and even Nubiologists work together<sup>4</sup>, and a growing number of practitioners, particularly the Leiden and the Leuven schools of papyrology, embrace several of these disciplines. In part by looking beyond the Greek literary and documentary papyri, the picture of Egypt under Greek and Roman rule has changed. We no longer talk about the Greco-Roman period of Egypt, because we have learnt to see how, from the beginning of the Roman rule in Egypt, the Romanization unfolds and results in something new<sup>5</sup>. The farmers of the crown are no longer simply the serfs of the system, but an economically quite diverse group. It no longer makes sense to talk about a mixed Greek and Egyptian culture, which was idealized by some, but despised by most classicists as a culture in decay. Nor is the opposite picture sufficient. Egyptians and Greeks did neither ignore nor mutually resist each other and live without much contact side by side in the same places and in the same kingdom. Indeed, both these people were proud of their traditions and culture and, in many regards, maintained their ethnic and religious traditions. We are learning to distinguish between different areas of cultures and people in different geographical areas and with different interests. I once used the image of two partially overlapping circles, where some areas stay apart from others, but where the middle is taken by mutual engagement. Excavations sometimes found Demotic and Greek papyri in the same house. Egyptians participated in the Greek gymnasium and Greeks in the Egyptian temple, and the same person could participate in both. Ptolemaic kingship is now seen as a Janus head, in different dress looking in both directions.

Here I pause to engage with two examples, both often seen as a reflection of the mutual disdain and hostility between Greeks and Egyptians.

## I.

I begin with a few lines from Theokritos' *Adoniazousai*, which are better understood in the context of their contemporary culture as seen by the eyes of a papyrologist<sup>6</sup>. I have long argued that Alexandrian poetry adapted Egyptian ideas of kingship, but dressed them in Greek traditions so that a reader, unfamiliar with the underlying Egyptian ideas, does not easily recognize them. Among classicists such ideas used to be taboo, and they are still not mainstream; and in today's world many Egyptologists have the reciprocal urge to deny any literary and artistic engagement of Egyptians with Greek poetry and art.

<sup>3</sup> In Germany, it was R. Merkelbach who kindled my enthusiasm for the discipline that I had never heard of.

<sup>4</sup> A good signpost for the importance of the collaboration of papyrologists working on papyri in different languages around the Mediterranean is now L. H. Schiffman, ed., *A Climate of Creativity: Semitic Papyrology in Context. Papers from a New York University Conference Marking the Retirement of B. A. Levine*, Leiden 2003.

<sup>5</sup> This was, of course, N. Lewis' groundbreaking idea.

<sup>6</sup> See now S. A. Stephens, *Seeing Double. Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2003, with interpretations from Kallimachos, Theokritos, and Apollonios of Rhodes.

In the *Adoniazousai*, a literary mime with shifting scenes, two Syracusan women beat the crowd and arrive at the court of the palace to marvel at the artistic spectacle of Aphrodite and Adonis' love. The groom's annual death is close. In the early morning hours of the next day, a mourning procession will carry his body to the waves of the sea. He will, of course, return to life at next year's celebration of love and death. The underlying Egyptian story of Isis and Osiris' love and the death of Osiris has long been recognized. With the Nile flood, Osiris is carried into the sea in order to be found and resurrected by Isis. Theokritos, or rather Arsinoe II, the queen, gave this story another oriental myth of a dying god: that of Adonis, known to the Greeks at least since Sappho.

The performance of this spectacle turned the myth into a Greek celebration, arranged and presided over by the Queen on the grounds of the palace. In Theokritos' poem, one of the high points is a song by a woman who connects the event with the death and deification of Berenike, the mother of the ruling couple, a symbol of the powers of death and resurrection, immanent in the concept of Egyptian kingship. The singer begins, however, his song of Aphrodite's great love of Adonis with another story: she tells how Aphrodite sprinkled drops of ambrosia on Berenike's breast making her at her death immortal (106–108), as once Pindar's Horai and Gaia made Aristaios immortal by putting nektar and ambrosia on his lips and the Homeric hymn's Demeter burned Demophon and anointed him with ambrosia, again in order to make him immortal. This is the Greek version of how the deceased queen at her death is deified or how, in Egyptian terms, she becomes Osiris. The living queen performs the ancestral rites for her and the king's mother. The singer artfully weaves the two Greek stories together, and thus points to the centrality of the Aphrodite and Adonis story for the reigning queen. Greek myth, and probably ritual, served to understand Egyptian beliefs closely connected with kingship.

Earlier in the *Adoniazousai*, when the two women had just gone out into the streets populated by an ant-like crowd, one of them speaks up (46–50):

“Ptolemy, you have done many noble deeds, since your father is among the immortals. No criminal sneaks up to you in the street the Egyptian way (Αἰγυπτιστί, 48) and does you a mischief, as they did in former times when men, all total fraud, played their tricks, one like the other, evil cheats, an execrated bunch”.

One would be hard pressed to believe that under Ptolemy Soter, contrary to the present rule, it was so dangerous to walk the street. But this is not the point. Rather, by his accession, the Egyptian Horus-king restores the order that had collapsed by the death of his predecessor. The high theme is underlined by the use of the mostly tragic word ἄραῶι, “execrated”, at least if the passage, corrupt in the manuscripts as well as in a papyrus, has been correctly restored, mostly with the help of the papyrus. However, Theokritos plays with the Greek idea that the king is recognized by his “good deeds”, his εὐεργεσία, and thus functions in a divine role. For the Greek view, this idea is the center of divine kingship. At the same time, the ideological theme is deflated. For the Syracusan women the grandiose beliefs amount to nothing more than that there are no longer pickpockets in the streets. The women's own anxiety of being caught in the mass of people, all streaming to the palace, undercuts even that. Their anxiety breaks out in the slur: “the Egyptian way”. The Egyptians are the thieves in Alexandria's streets! Thus the Egyptian side of the theme is turned on its head, into a joke — but a joke that takes nothing away from the underlying ideology. Theokritos' few lines catch the atmosphere of Alexandria's streets full of ethnic and probably even more social tension, mistrust and discrimination, but also the ideology that tries to decipher Egyptian thought patterns by Greek myth and understanding. The light-hearted tone with its revealing humor makes acceptable what otherwise would not be so.

## II.

This ethnic tension was surely real, but it appears rarely in documentary papyri. Thus, I shall use a second example to add a *caveat*. In my first talk on an International Congress of Papyrology, at Ann Arbor in 1968, I presented the *Oracle of the Potter*, on one level, as evidence of national Egyptian opposition against the Greeks in the last third of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. To a certain extent, this common opinion is right and still very much alive today<sup>7</sup>, but in my view it needs qualification<sup>8</sup>. Written in Egyptian ideological and political tradition and in the Egyptian literary form of *Königsnovelle*<sup>9</sup> and characterizing itself as a translation from Egyptian, the story reports first a prophetic act: when the potter, presumably a priest of Hermes/Thot, was burning pottery on his god's order, people protested, pulled something, probably the unfinished ware, out of the kiln and presumably destroyed it by this act. This deed is a variation of a known Egyptian magical ritual, in which red pottery, symbolizing the evil god Seth, was smashed to pieces<sup>10</sup>. In the subsequent apology, the potter defends himself before Amenophis, a legendary king of the past. The apology understands *expressis verbis* the preceding prophetic deed at the kiln as a prophecy of the destruction of Alexandria and the beginning of a new rule by a king, the son of Re installed by Isis. The evil-doers and foes are the "girdle-bearers"<sup>11</sup>, Typhonians, i. e. the followers of the destructive Egyptian god Seth, and consequently these people destroy themselves: *ἑαυτούς ... ἀνελοῦσιν*. The prediction of evil times, however, is focused on Alexandria, the City on the Sea, the "city of the aliens", alias the "City-Being-Founded" (*ἡ κτιζομένη πόλις*) or, in a more concrete translation, the "City-Under-Construction" as she is called in a jesting translation of Egyptian *r'-kt*, Rakotis<sup>12</sup>. This city will be entered by somebody, either Alexander or the god Sarapis, and will remold the gods and create its own idol (*πλάσμα*, sc. Sarapis; P<sub>3</sub> 1–3). The self-destruction will happen, "because the Great God Hephaistos had decided to return to his city" (P<sub>2</sub> 12f.) and similarly: "Then the Agathos Daimon will leave the 'City-Being-Founded' (Rakotis) and go to Memphis. The city that had been founded as the city of the aliens will be emptied" (28–30). Or, in the other version, "Then, the Agathos Daimon will leave the 'City-Being-Founded' (Rakotis) and go to 'god-bearing' (*θεότοκος*) Memphis. She (sc. the City-Being-Founded) will be emptied" (P<sub>3</sub> 50–53). Or, a little later: "Egypt's statues of gods that have been brought to that place (in the context: to Alexandria) will again return to Egypt, and the City-on-the-Sea will be a fishermen's drying place, because Agathos Daimon Kmēphis (or in the other version: Agathos Daimon, namely Knēphis, *καὶ Κνήφης*) will go to Memphis. Hence the travelers will say: 'This was the city that has nourished all, where every race of men (*πᾶν γένος ἀνδρῶν*) settled'" (P<sub>3</sub> 57–62/P<sub>3</sub> 34–38).

Here is certainly tension between Egyptian and Greek religion and hostility against Sarapis, the god not mentioned by his name. This god had been meant to express the Egyptian essence of Osiris, Apis, and the son-god Re, but in Greek dress looked like Zeus and, in theological construction, became almost an all-gods-in-one<sup>13</sup>. However, he was never embraced by Egyptians who preferred their Apis and Osiris (Osir-Apis of Memphis).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, W. Huß, *Der makedonische König und die ägyptischen Priester* (Historia Einzelschriften 85), Stuttgart 1994, 165–179.

<sup>8</sup> For the following see L. Koenen unter Mitarbeit von A. Blasius, 'Die Apologie des Töpfers an König Amenophis' oder 'das Töpferorakel', a new German translation of the oracle based on revisions of the text and an accompanying essay, in: *Apokalyptik und Ägypten*, eds. A. Blasius and B. U. Schipper, OLA 107 (Leuven, Paris and Sterling VA, 2002), 113–187. The revision of the text of the introductory story found only on P.Graf (= P.Vindob. G 29787) was much helped by Frau Andrea Donau, the conservator of the Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, who further cleaned the papyrus and joined a small fragment with the main fragment, when during the Congress I spent some time on rereading the original. H. Harrauer provided me with photographs of this papyrus as well as of P.Rainer (P.Vindob. G 19813).

<sup>9</sup> For the *Oracle of the Potter* as literary *Königsnovelle* see now Koenen with Blasius, *loc. cit.* (above n. 8) 172–179.

<sup>10</sup> R. K. Rittner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (SAOC 54), Chicago 1993, 144–153.

<sup>11</sup> The "girdle-bearers" are still an enigmatic expression; see W. Claryssee, *The City of the Girdle-Wearers and a New Demotic Document*, *Enchoria* 18 (1991) 177f.; Koenen with Blasius, *loc. cit.* (above, n. 8) 155 n. 46.

<sup>12</sup> M. Depauw, *Alexandria the Building Yard*, *CdÉ* 75 (2000) 64f.; Koenen with Blasius, *loc. cit.* (above n. 8) 152 n. 25.

<sup>13</sup> On Sarapis see now Ph. Borgeaud, Y. Volokhine, *La formation de la légende de Sarapis: une approche transculturelle*, *ARG* 2 (2000) 37–76. R. Merkelbach, *Isis Regina — Zeus Sarapis*, Stuttgart and Leipzig 1995, §§ 126–141.

The prophecy clearly attacks the new city Alexandria, and it does so from the point of view of the old Egyptian city of Memphis, although the priests of Memphis, in general, accommodated the Greek lords of the land. Memphis is the city that has given birth to the gods. This is an Egyptian *theologoumenon*. Moreover, Hephaistos, the Egyptian Ptah, the creator god and city-god of Memphis, is identified with Agathos Daimon in his capacity as Kmēphis or, as he is called in the other version, as Knēphis. This god, better known to Hellenists as Knoubis, a central god in magical gems, is the creator god of Theban theology. In this function, he is a meaningful equivalent of Hephaistos/Ptah, but also the right competitor of Sarapis<sup>14</sup>. This Kmēphis, like Sarapis, appears as snake, and this appearance makes him in Egypt exchangeable with Greek Agathos Daimon.

Thus goes the Egyptian side of the story, which perfectly suits the Egyptian tradition behind the prophecy of the potter. But there is also a Greek side to this story, intrinsically woven into the Egyptian one. Agathos Daimon is the god who, in the myth of the foundation of Alexandria, extant in the *Alexander Novel* (I 32.5–13 Kroll), appeared when workers had begun to build the new city. They killed the snake and built a *heroon* for him. At the dedication of the *heroon* many snakes exited it and entered the houses. They were venerated as protective deities, Agathoi Daimones. While the victory over the original large snake at the foundation of Alexandria, for Egyptian ears repeated Horos' victory over Seth, it reflects for the Greeks their own stories. Kadmos killed a dragon (snake) when he founded Thebes, and Apollo did so with the Python dragon, when he built his temple and oracle in Delphi. But the story is twisted. At the foundation of Alexandria the large snake must be killed, as the evil must be routed so that the protecting house gods (ἀγαθοὶ δαίμονες) can appear. This emergence, too, of the smaller snakes from the heroon is deeply rooted in Greek beliefs<sup>15</sup>. Egyptians and Greeks saw snakes both as protectors and evil. The image is shifting from the evil to the good snake. From the point of view of the *Oracle of the Potter* the κτιζομένη πόλις is illegitimate, in truth nothing more than a construction site. Kmēphis belongs to Memphis and will return to Memphis, thus revoking Alexandria's foundation. As snake, he is even Sarapis, i. e. the god whom the oracle does not name, but regards as a πλάσμα. Going back to Memphis, Sarapis is again Kmēphis or, in the words of the other *theologoumenon*, becomes again Osir-Apis, the Memphitic deity, the Apis who through his death has become Osiris. Here a host of images appears that in our eyes are contradictory. However, each of them tells its own part of the story.

There are other Greek elements woven into the *Oracle of the Potter*: I quoted the travelers who after the destruction of the city would say: "This was the city that was nourishing all and where every race of men (πᾶν γένος ἀνδρῶν) settled". The sentence echoes two iambic lines of an oracle again in the *Alexander Novel* that prophesied Alexander's foundation of Alexandria: "And everyone will enter her (the city) to stay, forgetting the land that before has born him" (I 33. 11. 18f.). This idea is taken up by Herodas, probably indirectly as a piece of the royal propaganda. In his first mime, he describes Alexandria as the city of Egypt where "everything is that exists and will be produced somewhere in the world, riches, wrestling grounds", shows, philosophers, the sacred place of the king and the queen, the Sibling-Gods, the museum, wine and beautiful women beyond count. A young man sailing to Egypt forgets home and his lover at home (26–36). Moreover, what in the *Oracle of the Potter* I translated as "every race", is in Greek πᾶν γένος ἀνδρῶν. The unexpected γένος ἀνδρῶν is ultimately Homeric.

Finally, in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* the end of the heroic age is marked by many events including the appearance of a snake and her three young (fr. 204. 129–143) and "the beautiful leaves", that "sank down from tall trees and were poured on the ground" (fr. 204. 124f.). Here, the snake marks the end of the old age and the beginning of the new one. Another sign for the end of the evil age and the coming of the new king in the *Oracle of the Potter* is expressed by the "defoliation of the alien men arriving in Egypt" i. e. "when the alien men fall like leaves from the trees". The passage is based on a Greek pun: φύλλα, "foliage", and φύλα, "tribes of men". Thus, along with its Greek language the *Oracle of the Potter* employs Greek thoughts and images in an Egyptian environment.

In sum, while the roots of this prophecy are firmly grounded in the Egyptian tradition, the intellectual soil that produced it is not a single culture. This fact should caution us to see the *Oracle of the Potter* as unqualified evidence for Egyptian intellectual resistance against the Greeks.

<sup>14</sup> H. J. Thissen, Κμηφ – *Ein verkannter Gott*, ZPE 112 (1996) 153–160. Koenen with Blasius, *loc. cit.* (above, n. 8) 155 n. 45, 159 n. 52 and 165f.

<sup>15</sup> For the Greeks see M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* II, HdAW 5.2.2, München<sup>3</sup> 216f.

The contrast between evil men identifiable with the Greek government, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Egyptians and their ancient gods is epitomized by contrasting the new city Alexandria with the old city of the Egyptian gods, Memphis. We certainly hear also of a number of concrete and historically identifiable events and of a total collapse of the social order and power structure that mixes language and thoughts of Hesiodic progeny and Egyptian antecedents with contemporary historical suffering<sup>16</sup>. Farmers have to pay taxes for what they have not sown and leave their *idia*, the latter, as it often happened in Ptolemaic and still in Roman Egypt. But the suffering population is not identified in ethnic terms. Even the word “Greeks” occurs only in what I regard as an interpretative addition that, by its language, can easily be recognized (*loc. cit.* [n. 8] n. 51f.). Hence, the opposition is, I conclude, not between the Greeks and Egyptians per se, but, on the one hand, between Alexandria, the seat of the government and its privileged citizens, and, on the other hand, the rest of the country, the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$ , including its Egyptian temples and priests.

Towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., the Egyptian  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$  was also the home of Greeks and their descendants from mixed marriages. Take the well-known family of Dryton, a cavalry officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century serving in Thebes a generation before the *Oracle of the Potter*. The family of his second wife was for at least three generations using Greek and Egyptian names, and so did his own children from this wife. In his documents, Dryton is styled as Cretan, his second wife as Cyrenean, but we cannot determine whether she came from an originally Greek family or her Egyptian family of soldiers had assumed a Greek designation in the military service. The documents are partially in Greek and partially in Demotic. Dryton’s wife seems to have made use of Demotic in business transactions partially to avoid the need for a  $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ . On the back of one of his contracts, Dryton copied the moving *paraklausithyron*, in which, for a change, the woman is outside the door, thrown out and pleading with her lover<sup>17</sup>. We may note that this genre of love poetry was practiced in Egyptian poetry as well as in Greek. Ethnicity and national resistance could hardly flourish in this kind of milieu, but social tensions between Alexandria as seat of power and the rest of the country existed and might have in certain moments assumed ethnic camouflage. The social tensions seem to be reflected in the *Oracle of the Potter*. There is no hope in the *Oracle* that a mighty pharaoh may rise and bring the hated Greek rule down, but the new time will come when the Typhonians, the evil people, will kill themselves — as once the men did who grew from the teeth of the dragon killed by Kadmos when he founded Thebes. The self-annihilation of the potter’s Typhonians was destruction of their own city, Alexandria. Hence, the *Oracle* is hardly a political pamphlet intending to induce active resistance. It rather is primarily a piece of traditional Egyptian literature, a *Königsnovelle*, that is shaped in the multi-cultural milieu of Egypt and echoed part of the social tension of its times.

At the end of one of the two Vienna papyri of the *Oracle of the Potter* is a colophon marking the text as a translation from Egyptian. Linguistic observations show some influence of the Egyptian language (*loc. cit.* [above, n. 8] 180–183) leading to a certain amount of “creolization”. But we ultimately cannot determine whether the text was translated from Demotic or composed by someone who spoke Greek as second language. Similarly, we cannot determine whether the text was translated or written for a Greek audience or whether the text was distributed in Greek because a Greek text would reach a larger audience even among “Egyptians” than any Demotic text would. While the versions that we read in the two main papyri, P.Vindob. G 19813 and P.Oxy. XXII 2332, reflect the cultural milieu of the last third of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., the bicultural milieu continued into the Roman period. The papyri of the *Oracle of the Potter* date from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. At that time and in the continuing bicultural milieu, the text was still interesting to read as a piece of enjoyable literature, particularly as at the same time such prophecies were turned into apocalypses like the Apocalypse of Asclepius (24–26) in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (II 326–331 Nock & Festugière).

Taking the *Oracle of the Potter* as a literary creation, we may also compare and contrast it with Manetho’s history, which uses Egyptian elements of storytelling, most importantly again the *Königsnovelle*, to combine it with the Egyptian form of lists of kings. In this way, Manetho created a new form of historiography that wishes to be Greek, as John Dillery argued in a recent article (ZPE 127 [1999] 93–116).

<sup>16</sup> L. Koenen, *Greece, the Near East, and Egypt: Cyclic Destruction in Hesiod and the Catalogue of Women*, TAPA 124 (1994) 1–34.

<sup>17</sup> I am referring to the famous “Fragmentum Grenfellianum”, Wilamowitz’ “Des Mädchens Klage” (J. U. Powel, *Collectanea Alexandrina*, Oxford 1925, 177–180; I. C. Cunningham, *Herodas Mimiambi*, Leipzig 1987, Append. I).

So far, I have chosen two examples for the overall bicultural milieu of Egypt, one a well known Hellenistic poem on an Alexandrian festival, the other, a piece of what we once called semi-literature, a pamphlet if you wish, that in reality, however, is a story primarily written in old Egyptian tradition. Today, however, we should likewise stress that papyrology has ceased to be exclusively aimed at Egypt. In fact, it never was. Not only literary papyri, but even documentary papyri and similar texts have outgrown the conceptualization of papyrology as a subdiscipline of Egyptian history. The provenance of our texts spans a geographical area from the Hadrian's wall in Britain to the Euphrates and beyond<sup>18</sup>.

### III.

With this remark, I start updating earlier reports about the carbonized Petra papyri found in an excavation by the American Center of Oriental Research in December 1993. The first report was given at our Congress in Berlin in 1995; and the Congress in Florence in 1998 saw a seminar with 8 papers. The research on this family archive of landed property documents from 537 (or a bit earlier) to 593/4 (or possibly a little later) is carried out by two teams, one Finnish, the other American<sup>19</sup>. While both teams focus on the edition of individual papyri and their connection to each other, a synthetic overall picture of Petra and its Southern Transjordan background is emerging and bears witness to the economic, social, and political situation in the century before the Muslim Conquest in the years after 630. It differs from what historians had thought. We had expected to find a society with Arabic culture and migrating and trading tribes that had lost, or were about to lose, any political, economic, administrative and legal ties with Byzantium. As it turns out, however, Petra was throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> century a functioning part of the Byzantine Empire. It was pretty much in the same circumstances as other Byzantine cities in the East. In that period the legal, administrative and architectural language in and around Petra was, despite many and sometimes difficult peculiarities in terminology, on the whole very similar to contemporary language in Egyptian and in Nessana. When I now will sketch some significant evidence for this picture<sup>20</sup>, I will depend thoroughly on the decipherments by the members of both teams and on the Michigan dissertation by R. Ch. Caldwell<sup>21</sup>, now a member of the Michigan team.

1. Official dating is in quadruple fashion, (a) by regnal years, as Justinian had ordered in *Nov.* 47 of August 31, 537, (b) by the Roman consuls, (c) by the provincial era, and (d) by the indiction. The first papyrus that includes the regnal year is P.Petra 2 of May 10<sup>th</sup>, 538, while in Egypt, according to extant evidence, the regnal year was not introduced before 539. It seems that the administration in Petra was much more eager to follow Justinian's order. Also a remission of owed taxes and a reduction of subsequent taxes, issued by Justin II and Tiberius II in 575 (*Nov.* 163), is found in a small group of summary tax receipt<sup>22</sup>.

2. As we expect for people of the Byzantine Empire, honorific titles decorate the names of people of elevated standing according to their rank. They are best known from Egypt. For example, the status symbol "Flavius" precedes the name of the elite, in Petra as well as in Egypt. In a sale of land, a certain Flavius Ailianos son of Monaxios, known also from other transactions and, together with his brother a party of the contract, is called ὁ μεγαλοπρεπέστατος κόμης τοῦ θείου κωνιστορίου, hence *illustris comes sacri consistorii*, or "Illustrious Member of the Imperial Cabinet". He clearly acts in private capacity. While the title at the time and in the circumstances is merely honorary, it presumes a continuing interest in the Byzantine state on part of people living and acting in and around Petra. They and their families made use of the prestige of their titles. Flavius Patrikios, the son of the mentioned Comes, was called λαμπρότατος, *clarissimus*.

<sup>18</sup> With regard to papyri from the Near East, it is sufficient to remind the reader of the comprehensive survey by H. M. Cotton, W. E. H. Cockle and F. G. B. Millar, *The Papyrology of the Roman Near East*, JRS 85 (1995) 214–235.

<sup>19</sup> In 2002, the first volume was published by the Finnish team: *The Petra Papyri (P.Petra I)*, edd. by J. Frösén, A. Arjava and M. Lehtinen (ACOR Publications 4), Amman 2002; recent surveys are by L. Koenen in collaboration with R. Ch. Caldwell, R. W. Daniel and T. Gagos, *The Decipherment and Edition of the Petra Papyri: Preliminary Observations* in Schiffman (above, n. 4) 201–226; L. Koenen, R. W. Daniel, and T. Gagos, *Petra in the Sixth Century: The Evidence of the Carbonized Papyri*, in: G. Markoe, ed., *Petra Rediscovered: Lost City of the Nabataean Kingdom*, forthcoming New York 2004, 250–261 plus endnotes.

<sup>20</sup> This as well as most of the examples given below are more fully discussed in the two surveys mentioned in n. 19. For the official titulatur of Petra, which provides another good example for the continuing interest in confessing ties with Constantinople, is discussed in these surveys (208–210 and 253, respectively).

<sup>21</sup> *Between Steppe and State: New Evidence for Society in Sixth-Century Southern Transjordan*, Diss. Univ. of Mich. (Ann Arbor 2001).

<sup>22</sup> P.Petra I 7–10 with introd. by A. Arjava, M. Vesterinen, p. 102; the reduction is attested in P.Petra I 10.

3. Some people are πολιτευόμενοι, *curiales*. In Petra as well as elsewhere in the empire, this title appears to denote members of the leading families that once sat in the βουλή of the city and even after the demise of the city councils served in such administrative capacities as the collection of taxes<sup>23</sup>.

4. Likewise, the Byzantine military remained present, as is attested by the collection of taxes for the maintenance of the military, especially the οινόκρεον. Moreover, a few people occurring in the Petra papyri have military ranks, mostly that of *prior*, an non-commissioned officer, and ἐμβαθμός, recruit, all from Kastrā Zadakathōn, modern Şadaqa, some 28 km SSE of Petra. Also a former military prefect of the camp at Hammatha, modern Hamman, some 28 km SE of Petra, seems to be mentioned. A noncommissioned military officer, Flavios Thomas, who around 591 was a recruit in the military camp of Zadakathōn, a bit later is said to belong to the Loyal Domestics of the same camp (τῶν ἰκαθωσιωμένων δομ]εστι(κῶν) [τοῦ Κάστρου Ζαδακαθων). “Loyal Domestics” are probably local troops named after the *Domestici*, guard troops in Constantinople under the command of a *comes*. While these troops may have been connected with the *dux* in Caesarea, their name is an expression of their direct loyalty to the emperor. The document attesting the *domestici* settles property issues connected with the marriage of Flavios Thomas, as his name shows, a member of an upper class family, to Kyra, possibly a granddaughter of Theodoros, the main owner of our family archive. The military and the landlords were on close terms, if this generalization may be allowed.

5. The largest group of documents are requests to the body of ὑποδέκται, committees that are responsible for the local collection of land-taxes. They were often led by πολιτευόμενοι, the already mentioned members of the bouletic class. Thus they came from respectable, relatively well-to-do families (above, #3) who, as in other places of the empire, would guarantee the collection of taxes with their own money. In the new papyri, ὑποδέκται of Petra were responsible to keep both the tax schedules of Petra and Augustopolis, now Udruh, some 17 km east of Petra. These schedules were tax lists of the total land (ὁμάς) that was assigned to each of these cities. When land changed hands, the old and the new owners requested in a joint letter that the amount of the land in *iugera* or in the Hebrew measures of kor, se’ah, and kab be subtracted from and, respectively, added to the total amount of land for which each landowner was responsible. Special census are not mentioned.

6. One receipt among the Petra papyri used the word *iugatio* (P.Petra I 10.10), which, as R. Caldwell recognized (see n. 19), refers to the Diocletianic tax system. The *iugum* was a uniform and theoretical measure of landed wealth that took size, quality, and possibly local conditions into account and became the unit for the calculation and assessment of taxes. In this system, the land was divided into different categories according to productivity: vineyards, sown land, lower qualities of land and unfertile land. For each of these categories one *iugum* equaled a different number of *iugera*. For example, in one of our sources<sup>24</sup>, one *iugum* was defined as the measure of landed wealth that was the basis for calculating the tax obligation resulting either from a 5 *iugera* vineyard, or from 20 *iugera* sown land or from 40 *iugera* mountainous and unfertile land. The relationship of these numbers allowed also for a *iugum* containing a mixture of land categories, and the numbers varied according to time and province. When the annual taxation request were sent from Constantinople to the provinces, the governor’s office divided the requested amount of taxes by the total amount of *iuga* registered in the province, thus arriving at the amount of taxes to be paid *per iugum*. Then easy multiplications with the number of *iuga* on the books of each taxing community led to the tax obligation that each of them had to collect for all land registered to it (in Petra called ὁμάς)<sup>25</sup>. In the same way, each city calculated the amount of the taxes to be paid by each individual landowner. The districts for which cities were responsible were relatively large. Nessana was in the district of Elusa, some 33 km away.

In 535, Justinian ordered that receipts by tax collectors should state the *iuga* or any other unit by which the taxes had been calculated (*Nov.* 17.8 of 535). The law left room for local measures and procedures. In Egypt, for example, the *iugum* was not used in local offices, although it was the basis for the overall assessment. Therefore, with one exception, it does not appear in papyri<sup>26</sup>. In Petra, however, we have found a series of four very damaged tax receipts that acknowledge to a landowner that he has paid for 9¼ ⅙

<sup>23</sup> See the two surveys quoted in n. 19, 211f. and 253f.

<sup>24</sup> *The Syro-Roman Lawbook*, FIRA II 795f. §121.

<sup>25</sup> Ὀμάς is likewise used for the total land for which each individual landowner was responsible (see above #5).



*iugera*), i. e.  $9\frac{3}{8}$  or 9.375 *iugera*, the full taxes on  $\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{3} \frac{1}{10} \frac{1}{175} = \frac{493}{525}$  or 0.939 *iugum* for land registered in Petra and Augustopolis (Udruh) for the years 568–581. The amount is the same in all years, because the annual multiplier, not the *iuga* changes from year to year. Thus the receipt seems to list both the *iugera* and the resulting *iugum*, calculated at the rate of 10 *iugera per iugum*<sup>27</sup>.

7. One of the rare sources for the use of *iugum*, the 42<sup>nd</sup> letter of Theodoret, illustrates how the classification of unfertile land to tax-bearing status led to a rural exodus that was met by Theodoret's request for a survey of the land that would reduce the tax burden on the land. In this context, Theodoret also refers to a division of land into two categories, one that pays to the *fiscus*, the personal treasury of the emperor's house, the other to the communal administrations. The terminology varies. The terms ζυγά ταμιακά, οἶκος βασιλικός, or in Petra ιούγερα πατριμωνάλια (patrimonial land) in inv. 8 pl. 38) characterize payments on account of the *fiscus*. On the other hand, ζυγά ἐλευθερικά, sc. *iuga libera*, or ἐλευθέρα ἀπογραφή or, in Petra, ἐλευθερικὴ κοριαία, “free Kor”, or other Hebrew units, or ιούγερα ἐλευθερικά or συντέλεια ἐλευθερικὴ, all refer to land under communal schedule<sup>28</sup>. In Petra, but probably also elsewhere, both branches were administered by the same local offices.

The details of the taxation were different from Egypt, but thoroughly Byzantine. This result, together with the other evidence I mentioned, clearly indicates that Petra and its rural environment, throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> century, were totally romanized and fully incorporated in the Eastern empire. Moreover, Roman law was the legal basis of the society, albeit it was interpreted so as to leave space for local traditions<sup>29</sup>. At least moderately wealthy people constituted the local governing class that had its interest in this state. Yet, this is only one site of the story. Local geographical and topographical names are derived from Semitic, mostly from Nabataean, i. e. pre-islamic Arabic. The language that was spoken in the streets was probably a form of Arabic<sup>30</sup>. Once, we hear that Abu Karib, the phylarch of the allied *foederati* and, at his peak, part of the complex power structure of Third Palestine, engaged in settling a property dispute in Zadakathōn, now Ṣadaqa (see above). Thus Abu Karib exercised also civil authority, probably within the Arabic traditions. In short, as much as I stressed the Byzantine character of Petra and its *hinterland*, we must not forget that the population at least dominantly was Arabic, although by now well adjusted to Constantinople's ways. We should expect that there were tribes and nomads in the area, but they were not part of the political and administrative structure, which firmly remained in the hand of the landowners, the military, and probably the church.

I could not forgo the chance today to speak about what excites me. Indeed, papyrology has matured and has become much more sophisticated in the course of its history, but it is still a youthful discipline, where new evidence demands new responses and new finds turn into lies what yesterday still sounded true. This excitement has turned papyrology also into a vigorous discipline, and we still have mountains of work before us. So let us go to work, *hic et nunc* at the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Congress of Papyrology, in a papyrus collection where the first papyri were published 175 years ago (Pettretini, 1826) and which has become an exemplar of papyrological rejuvenation, international collaboration, and *amicita papyrologorum*.

<sup>26</sup> R. Bagnall, *P.Oxy. XVI 1905, SB V 7756 and Fourth-Century Taxation*, ZPE 37 (1980) 185–195.

<sup>27</sup> The use of the *iugum* was recognized in the Michigan dissertation by R. Ch. Caldwell (s. n. 21); his additional article on the reading of P.Petra I 9.2 and 3 and another similar receipt (inv. 60.2) is forthcoming in ZPE; cf. Koenen, *The Decipherment* (above, n. 19) 212f. For a full discussion see P.Petra I, Introd. to 7–10 by A. Arjava and M. Vesterinen who hesitate to accept the use of the *iugum*, because roughly the same abbreviation is used for *iugerum* and *iugum*: a iota at its lower part crossed by a long diagonal and a iota towards its top crossed by a less steep diagonal stroke, respectively. Some abbreviations or symbols used in papyri from Egypt have different meanings in different context. Similarly, a scribe or official familiar with the subject matter of the Petra receipts and not hampered by a damaged papyrus, would easily distinguish between *iugera* and *iugum*.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. now T. Rankinen and M. Vierros in the introd. to P.Petra 3–5, p. 78f.; J. Gascoü, *Les grands domaines, la cité et l'état en Égypte byzantine*, Travaux et Mémoires 9 (1985) n. 229; Cf. the two surveys mentioned in n. 19, 213f. and 254, respectively.

<sup>29</sup> This needs to be explored at a later occasion after all publishable Petra papyri have been published.

<sup>30</sup> R. W. Daniel, *Petra and its Arabic*, in: Atti XXII Congr. (Florence 2001) I 331–341 and the two surveys mentioned in n. 19 (pp. 216–223 and 254–256).