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## Egypt's "Special Place"

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

### EGYPT'S "SPECIAL PLACE"<sup>1</sup>

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One who has sailed by these places for a distance of one hundred stadia arrives at the city of Arsinoë. Earlier it was called Crocodile City, for the people of this district greatly esteem the crocodile, and there is one there that is sacred and fed by itself in a lake, and it is tame to the priests. It is called Souchos, and it is fed on grains and meats and wine that the foreigners who go there for sightseeing provide. In any case, our host—he was one of the officials introducing us to the mysteries there—went with us to the lake carrying from dinner a flat cake and some roasted meat and a small jug of honeyed wine. We found the beast lying on the shore. The priests went up to it; and while the rest of them opened its mouth, one of them put in the cake, then the meat, and then poured down the honeyed mixture. And the beast, leaping into the lake, swam to the other side. And when another foreigner arrived, likewise carrying offerings, the priests took them, went around the lake at full tilt, grabbed the animal, and in the same way fed it what had been brought.

So reports Strabo as eyewitness in the 17<sup>th</sup> book of his *Geography* (17.1.38), a quote I use because it is a hallowed Jesuit tradition, or so I have gathered over the years, to start even serious presentations with a joke or some light touch, and this passage has always struck me, whatever

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<sup>1</sup> This contribution is a revised and slightly expanded version of a paper delivered at the conference "At the Edges of Empire: Interpreting the Marginal Areas of the Roman World," organized by Ari Bryen, Fanny Dolansky, and Phil Venticinque under the auspices of the Program in the Ancient Mediterranean World and held at the University of Chicago, February 17–19, 2006; the light tone of the original is retained here. I am grateful for the invitation to speak on that occasion and for the lively discussion that followed. Three paragraphs in this contribution are essentially drawn from Keenan forthcoming; see the list of Works Cited below and relevant footnotes (9, 19, 23) in the present article.

Strabo's intent, as one of the most hilarious in all of classical literature. It is a cinematically Chaplinesque sequence whose truth claims one might be inclined to doubt were they not partly validated by a famous Ptolemaic papyrus from Tebtunis (*P.Tebt.* 1 33 = Hunt and Edgar, *Select Papyri* II 416, 112 BC). The letter in question instructs a local official to see to the reception of a Roman senator with a variety of entertainments, one of which will require providing snacks for Petesouchos and the other sacred crocodiles. What the Senator Lucius Memmius thought of this carefully orchestrated, and, as it seems, rather sportive diversion is something we'll never know. But this loose end aside, the Strabo passage, with its papyrological addendum, serves a serious purpose that might also have been served, though somewhat less amusingly, by extracts from other writers who marveled at the crocodile, Herodotus, for example (2.68–70), or Ammianus Marcellinus (22.15.15–20);<sup>2</sup> or by reference to the now much considered Romano-Egyptian practice of brother-sister marriage;<sup>3</sup> namely, to illustrate that from the perspective of the classical world Egypt with or without its emblematic reptile stood out as a place apart—exotic, wondrous, different, Other. And this ancient impression has influentially carried over into the classical tradition of western historiography, but with a significant difference: where the ancients saw Egypt's peculiarities as positive reasons to write about it, even if in negative terms, some modern Roman historians have used them as justifications for its exclusion. I propose briefly to explore some of the reasons why.

The beginning of an explanation perhaps should be sought in the classical training and presumed bias of most ancient historians. This coincides neatly with an idea presented by Joe Manning and Ian Morris in the "Introduction" to their edited volume, *The Ancient Economy: Evidence and Models* (2005), consisting of collected papers that amount to a retrospective on Moses Finley's *The Ancient Economy* (1973). This "Introduction," written against a backdrop of globally-oriented historiography, holds that ancient historians have developed and abide by what Manning and Morris call "the divided-Mediterranean model." Historians, they write, "draw a line through maps of the Mediterranean basin. On one side of it are the Greek and Roman worlds, on the other, Egypt and the Near East." This is a practice they identify as both conventional and "long-established."<sup>4</sup> Manning and Morris accept this as a

<sup>2</sup> Ammianus (22.15.21–4, cf. Hdt. 2.71) also has interesting things to say about the hippopotamus: hunted to extinction in Egypt, it had been "driven to migrate to the Blemmyes," no doubt the Nilotic Sudan.

<sup>3</sup> Recently, Strong, "Incest Laws and Absent Taboos," with relevant bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> Manning and Morris, "Introduction," 1 ("conventionally"), 42 ("long-established").

given; they do not trace its origin and development, nor do they point to divide-crashing exceptions like Eduard Meyer or Michael Rostovtzeff. It is nonetheless undeniable that most ancient historians favor the classical—I hesitate to say “Eurocentric”—side of the Great Divide, while on the other side most Egyptologists, with their overwhelming interest in the Pharaonic Kingdoms (with a capital K), let go of Egyptian history with the advent of Alexander and the Ptolemies if not before (i.e. with the “Late Period”). They leave Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt to historically-inclined papyrologists and a few renegade demotists trained at places like Leiden, Leuven, and Chicago.

But I have also lately noticed that even when non-Egyptologists have gone across the divide to consider the Roman East, Egypt has not simply been shortchanged: it has been ignored. I have in specific mind three big books, all fairly recent. One is Warwick Ball's predominantly archaeological *Rome in the East* (2000), another, Maurice Sartre's broadly political and, in its English incarnation, misleadingly entitled *The Middle East under Rome* (2004). Neither author explains why he leaves Egypt aside, so one is reduced to guessing that Egypt, let us say, with its peculiar archaeological history and its unusual Greco-Roman ruins,<sup>5</sup> would not find an easy fit with Ball's Syrian and Jordanian monuments, or that Sartre's exhaustive and primarily Levantine interests simply left no room for Egypt. At the same time one suspects that Egypt was never a glimmer in either author's eye, that is, neither thought to include Egypt in the first place.

This is why the case of the third book, Fergus Millar's *Roman Near East* (1993), is the most telling. In his preface (at xi), Millar defines his Roman Near East in geographical terms to include “all those areas which lie between the Taurus Mountains and Egypt...[a region which] overlaps the territories of eight modern states: Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.” But there is barely a peep about Egypt in Millar's more than 500 pages of text and notes. “Egypt” correspondingly makes not a single appearance in his “General Index.”

Millar's position on Egypt in this book therefore seems contradictory in practice if not in theory. This is because, near the end of his preface, Millar, after praising Michael Rostovtzeff, affirmed (xviii) that he himself had always “seen Rome and its Empire from a Rostovtzeffian perspective, in other words from the Greek East.” I in turn have always been sure that Rostovtzeff would *not* have omitted Egypt from *his* Roman Near East, partly for conceptual reasons, but also because, as Bradford Welles once

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<sup>5</sup> For which see Bagnall and Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Copts*.

remarked years ago in conversation, the unevenness of geographical coverage in Rostovtzeff's historical oeuvre was a function of personal preference.<sup>6</sup> There were just some places that he studied more enthusiastically than others and wrote about more extensively. Egypt, along with places like Pompeii, South Russia, and Dura, was simply one of them.

The reason why Egypt gets tacitly side-stepped in Millar's *Roman Near East* is perhaps a consequence of its evidence, for the book is, as its author states (xiii), "primarily based on inscriptions." Egypt, of course, does have its inscriptions, but Egypt's inclusion would have demanded incorporation of a vast array of documentary evidence on papyrus. Not that this would have been impossible for Millar, whose encyclopedic grasp of the ancient evidence demonstrably includes the papyri—but not so for many if not most ancient historians for whom the papyri are a proverbial black hole.<sup>7</sup> Of course, there are problems famously generated by the papyri themselves, and boringly recited on every supposedly appropriate occasion: the papyrological evidence as it stands is voluminous, especially for the Roman period; it is also seemingly endless in its future prospects. What is out there is widely scattered in its publication, often difficult of access, largely undigested, frequently subject to correction. The papyri are almost always fragmentary, rarely relevant to political history, and geographically biased thanks to their Egyptian provenance.<sup>8</sup> For reasons like these, the papyrological evidence tends to be disdained as unimportant or—much worse—irrelevant.

This is a phenomenon that has a long and lasting history going all the way back to and beyond the earliest edition of a volume of papyri in 1826–1827 by Amedeo Angelo Maria Peyron, S.J., "Greek Papyri of the Royal Museum at Turin" (*Papyri Graeci Regii Taurinensis Musei Aegyptii*). The volume presents fourteen substantial Ptolemaic documents concerned with litigation between Egyptian mortuary priests and two Hellenized Egyptians. Based on his edition, Peyron is acclaimed by today's papyrologists for his editorial skill and sure grasp of what his papyri had to say about history from below. Nevertheless, his achievement was eclipsed by the expectations raised by the recent decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs. In contrast to what the new decipherment augured, the contents of documents like Peyron's were dismissed as negligible even by

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<sup>6</sup> Keenan, Review of Fergus Millar.

<sup>7</sup> Note the absence of a chapter on the papyri in Crawford, *Sources for Ancient History*, as pointedly noted in Bagnall's review, *The Classical Outlook* 1986: 136.

<sup>8</sup> On the very last point: Millar, "Epigraphy," 82.

those engaged in their editing. This is a prejudice against which papyrologists continue to struggle down to the present moment.<sup>9</sup>

I can exemplify this from personal experience based on a chance meeting several years ago when I was re-introduced to an eminent senior Hellenist, a renowned textual critic and literary scholar, in the claustrophobic confines of the Seminary Co-op Bookstore at the University of Chicago, a subterranean environment featuring some 100,000 mostly academic books, tightly packed and tightly shelved, just across the street from the Oriental Institute. Our conversation quickly turned to papyrology and papyrologists, reaching at one point an amusing crescendo when the Hellenist maintained that the papyrological dissertations completed at a certain Ivy League university (mine), under a certain director (again, mine), during a certain period (yes—again—mine) “were all about dung receipts!”

But even where you would think dung would merit consideration, for example, in economic history, Egypt still gets left out. In C. R. Whittaker's excellent edited collection of articles on *Pastoral Economies in Classical Antiquity* (1988), with its occasional concerns about “manure loss,” there was no contribution on Egypt despite the abundance of significant papyrological evidence. Under the circumstances—I refer to the fairly eclectic and unsystematic nature of the collection—this omission might be taken as a relatively harmless, aberrant exception. But in the larger field of economic history as a whole, the stakes are much higher and the dismissal of Egypt, and its papyri, seemingly more systemic. So, if you have been paying close attention, you may have noticed that it has lately become conventional among papyrological historians to lay blame for Egypt's exclusion from ancient economic history at the revered doorstep of Sir Moses Finley.

Among other things, in the landmark Sather Lectures that became the famous and influential book on *The Ancient Economy* (1973), lectures that I was privileged to witness in their delivery, Finley was inclined to dismiss Egypt as an “extreme and untypical” case.<sup>10</sup> More generally, as Joe Manning has indicated in a paper delivered in Chicago at a Symposium, January 19–20, 2002, on Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), it was Finley's view that the economic institutions of Egypt and the Near East, with their temple and palace complexes, centralized, autocratic administrations, complex bureaucracies, and hydraulic agriculture, had little or nothing in common with those of the Greco-Roman world, where

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<sup>9</sup> Keenan, forthcoming.

<sup>10</sup> Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 98.

private ownership and private production prevailed.<sup>11</sup> It was, according to Finley, the historian's task to "concentrate on the dominant types, the characteristic modes of behaviour,"<sup>12</sup> which for *The Ancient Economy*—by that I mean not the topic but the book, which is a classic of the divided-Mediterranean model—were obviously not Near Eastern much less Egyptian.

When one turns, as Roger Bagnall did in his contribution to the Stanford retrospective, from Finley's *Ancient Economy* to his *Ancient History: Evidence and Models* (1985), that is, from considering Finley's assessment of Egypt to his appreciation of the papyri as historical evidence, the problem doubles in curiosity. For Finley, the documentary papyri were, in a scintillating phrase, "a paperasserie on a breathtaking scale and an equally stupendous illusion."<sup>13</sup> They were too miscellaneous to be useful, did not provide data, had no analytical character.<sup>14</sup> A papyrologist might be inclined to conclude that Finley was almost pathologically opposed to the papyri. Todd Hickey, for example, in his University of Chicago dissertation, drolly notes that for proprietary attitudes on landholding Finley devoted more lines in *The Ancient Economy* to I. A. Goncharev's *Oblomov* (1859), a tragi-comic novel on serfdom, than to relevant papyrological evidence for actual Egyptian landholding.<sup>15</sup> Of more general importance, Bagnall in his Stanford chapter includes an endnote<sup>16</sup> recording a biographical reminiscence provided by the late Naphthali Lewis (letter of 9 February 1998). Finley, according to Lewis,

was for a few years in the '30s W[illiam] L[inn] W[estermann]'s favorite, prize student [at Columbia], before the relationship soured. Moc, Meyer Reinhold and I were the [total] student body in WLW's 1932 papyrology seminar on the Zenon papyri. We taught ourselves to decipher, which is easy enough in that script where the writing is intact; but what we did with our deciphered texts was rudimentary and uninspiring—little more than explication de textes and search for parallels. Much given [all his life] to

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<sup>11</sup> Manning, "Egypt and the Mediterranean Model." Note (perhaps ironically) Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History*, II, 1031, distinguishing "between the Greek economic system, based on freedom and private initiative, and the State economy of the East, supervised, guided, and controlled."

<sup>12</sup> Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 28–29.

<sup>13</sup> Finley, *Ancient History*, 33–34.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bagnall, "Evidence and Models for the Economy of Roman Egypt," 187–88.

<sup>15</sup> Hickey, "A Public 'House' but Closed," 7 and n. 30, cf. Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 109–10.

<sup>16</sup> Bagnall, "Evidence and Models for the Economy of Roman Egypt," 201 n. 1.

snap judgments, Moe must have decided then and there, I suspect, that this stuff was unimportant—out of the mainstream and therefore negligible.

Finally, though perhaps not as “profoundly hostile, almost allergic to quantification” as renowned Marxist historian E. P. Thompson,<sup>17</sup> Finley was nevertheless dubious about ancient statistical possibilities. One of his own greatest gifts was his nose for the telling, archetypal anecdote. One wonders what he would have made of the Gini indexes and decile distributions derived in more recent times from Romano-Egyptian land registers; or of the data in Bagnall and Frier’s *Demography of Roman Egypt*, based on census returns on papyrus; or of the data and graphs deployed in Walter Scheidel’s many demographic studies.<sup>18</sup>

Anyway, papyrologists, as mentioned, have been prominent, albeit respectful, critics of Finley; non-papyrologists, even among Finley’s critics, seem unconcerned about the missing papyri. But, ironically, papyrologists themselves seem to be the ones responsible for inventing and propagating the notion that Egypt was “untypical.”<sup>19</sup> Central to this is the landmark synthesis of documentary papyrology’s early years that was published in four volumes by Ulrich Wilcken and Ludwig Mitteis in 1912. This is the famous *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde*. Mitteis was responsible for the juristic half of the project, Wilcken for the historical. For present purposes it is enough to remark that in the Introduction (*Einleitung*) to his *Grundzüge* volume (at xv), Wilcken maintained that a deeper understanding of Egyptian conditions, with proper methods, could teach much about the general ancient world; that the papyrological evidence could drive the historian to ask entirely new questions, and that comparisons between Egyptian and non-Egyptian conditions could shed light on both. But these opportunities were in fact Wilcken’s response to his own restrictive assessment of the larger applications of papyrological evidence. “The value of the papyri,” he wrote,

is limited because they almost exclusively concern the land of Egypt. Since Egypt in the Ptolemaic period within the Hellenistic world,...as also later in the Roman period within the Roman world empire, always held a *Sonderstellung* [i.e. the “Special Place” of my title], one must be wary of drawing hasty generalizations [sc. from them].

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<sup>17</sup> Sewell, *Logics of History*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> Bowman, “Landholding in the Hermopolite Nome”; Bagnall, “Landholding in Late Roman Egypt”; Bagnall and Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt*; e.g. Scheidel, “What’s in an Age?” and *Death on the Nile*.

<sup>19</sup> On what follows, see Keenan, forthcoming.



Wilcken's magisterium was so extraordinary that it's no surprise to see in the next decade a then very young Belgian papyrologist, Marcel Hombert, lifting this sentiment verbatim from Wilcken, incorporating it into his inaugural lecture on papyrology in Brussels on 27 October 1925, and there referring to Egypt in the Hellenistic world and under the Roman empire as having "une position toute particulière."<sup>20</sup>

The steps by which this view reached canonization, its *Grundzüge* precursors in earlier papyrological writings (I'm sure they exist)<sup>21</sup>—these I have not yet been able to trace. The problem is that once the view became traditional among the specialists themselves, it was easier for non-papyrologists to adopt it, sometimes with exaggeration. To give one random example: in a page from his well-known retrospective on Michael Rostovtzeff, Arnaldo Momigliano referred to Wilcken as a scholar who "chose to study [as if the papyri gave the great papyrologist much choice] that province of the Roman Empire, Egypt, that was *least typical* of the Roman Empire as a whole."<sup>22</sup> It was "a remote province," says Momigliano a few lines down, perhaps thinking of a phrase in Tacitus (*provinciam aditu difficilem*—*Hist.* 1.11.1)—more remote than Arabia or Armenia or Mesopotamia? one wants to ask.

But what may be called the "Sonderstellung problem" is also, I hasten here to add, inextricably bound to the problem of Egyptian historical continuity, especially that from the Ptolemaic period into the Roman.<sup>23</sup> Simply and schematically put,<sup>24</sup> the problem may be formulated thusly: if the Romans simply adopted Ptolemaic forms, then Egypt remained as peculiar under the Romans as it had been under the Ptolemies. Let us for the moment call this "the continuity model." But if the Romans innovated and introduced their own forms, that is, if there was discontinuity, then

<sup>20</sup> Hombert, "La papyrologie grecque."

<sup>21</sup> Wilcken's earlier writings would be an obvious place to look, beginning with his 1885 dissertation (*non vidi*). From a constitutional standpoint, the notion of Egypt's uniqueness within the imperial provincial system is owed to literary sources, especially Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.59.3, *Hist.* 1.11.1), and was early and prominently voiced by Mommsen in his *Römisches Staatsrecht*. I owe this observation to Andrea Jördens both in conversation and in her Habilitationsschrift (2001), currently under revision. For now, see Geraci, "L'Egitto romano nella storiografia moderna," *passim*, esp. (for Mommsen, with the relevant references) 60–66.

<sup>22</sup> Momigliano, "M. I. Rostovtzeff," 35. The bracketed insert and the stresses are mine.

<sup>23</sup> On this and what follows in this paragraph, see Keenan, forthcoming.

<sup>24</sup> Reality must of course allow for "the coexistence of continuity and change" in varying degrees: Lukacs, *At the End of an Age*, 3–44 (31, 33).

Egypt's place in the Roman scheme was not so "special" after all. In consequence, the wider applicability of its particular evidence, as least for the Roman period, cannot be so casually set aside.

In the past long generation, criticism of the model of continuity was pronounced specifically in papers read by Naphtali Lewis at the international congresses of papyrology in Ann Arbor (1968) and in Naples (1983).<sup>25</sup> These, though more concerned with dismantling the notion of Ptolemaic-to-Roman continuity, also questioned the "Sonderstellung" model. Since then the most important and detailed attempt at revisionism along both these lines has been Alan Bowman and Dominic Rathbone's long article in the *JRS* on "Cities and Administration in Roman Egypt." There, among other things, innovations usually thought to have been later are backdated to Augustus, Roman law proves to have been more influential than previously thought, while certain elements of Egypt's provincial and municipal administration are seen to place it in comfortable relationship with the rest of the empire, or at least with its eastern half.<sup>26</sup> Of course, the discontinuity as it is presented in "Cities and Administration" was not the result of a single revolutionary burst; it was rather an accumulation of revisions of varying magnitudes over a relatively short term.<sup>27</sup> Even if such a moderated picture of discontinuity eventually generates a new consensus among papyrological historians, one does expect even more lag time between such specialist acceptance and its practical emergence in general works.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, it might be an interesting exercise to collect and compare the justifications advanced by Roman historians, past and present, who have excluded Egypt from their empire-wide studies.<sup>29</sup> I predict the linguistics of rejection would soon become monotonous. An example from an important book on *Fairs and Markets in the Roman Empire* is sufficiently illustrative. Its author excludes Egypt from consideration "because [he writes] there is the perennial problem of the atypical nature

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, "Greco-Roman Egypt," "The Romanity of Roman Egypt."

<sup>26</sup> Bowman and Rathbone, "Cities and Administration in Roman Egypt." References to earlier, sporadic revisionism along these lines: Geraci, "L'Egitto romano nella storiografia moderna," *passim*. See now also Rathbone, "Ptolemaic to Roman Egypt," (change over continuity) and "The Ancient Economy and Graeco-Roman Egypt" (general importance of Egypt for study of the ancient economy).

<sup>27</sup> I use language adapted from Sewall, *Logics of History*, 226–28.

<sup>28</sup> Geraci, "L'Egitto romano nella storiografia moderna," 79–81, cf. 76 and n. 160.

<sup>29</sup> Egypt's tacit exclusion from Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, is of a different order.

of many Romano-Egyptian conditions and institutions. Of course every Roman province was to some extent idiosyncratic, but I would maintain that Egypt was far more so than were other parts of the Empire."<sup>30</sup> Like other such disclaimers, this one is sincere; it is, moreover, graced by a gentle twist, a major concession, and a blunt estimation "that a thorough examination of the papyrological evidence would have expanded this study to unmanageable proportions."

This particular formulation clearly indicates the double nature of Egypt's *Sonderstellung* problem, with one of its halves vesting in the supposed special nature of Egypt as a place or province, the other in its demanding and extensive papyrological evidence.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, as a papyrologist I sometimes wildly dream that just one historian of the Roman empire would for once by way of preface write something like this:

My book on *Chopped Liver in the Roman Empire from Augustus to Diocletian* is the result of ten years' unceasing drudgery and was largely responsible for my recent, tempestuous divorce. I do nevertheless thank my ex-wife for her constant support over the years—well, except maybe for the last two or three. My book makes no reference whatsoever to Egypt because I'm personally and professionally exhausted. I never learned about papyri in graduate school, and I'm not about to start now. And why should I? After all, how often do papyrologists leave their Egyptian comfort zone to venture into the larger Roman arena?

And our chopped liver-expert would, of course, be dead right. On top of this, papyrologists themselves, besides owning some responsibility for the programmatic marginalization of their own material, have contributed to the neglect of their own evidence in other ways as well. In addition to adopting particular but necessary codes of reference, they have often used unattractive editing formats, with texts lacking translations and adequate commentaries. Even more congenial editorial formats, inspired by the example of Grenfell and Hunt in the very first volume of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, pursue a taut and particular style that is dominated by the text-

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<sup>30</sup> De Ligt, *Fairs and Markets in the Roman Empire*, 57 n. 3, but obviously as yet without usable access to Bowman and Rathbone, "Cities and Administration in Roman Egypt."

<sup>31</sup> The point seems obvious once it is made, but I confess to owing this clarification to Christopher Faraone in conversation after this contribution was presented at the University of Chicago conference (above n. 1). When the topic is grain, however, neither Egypt nor its papyri can be ignored: Erdkamp, *The Grain Market in the Roman Empire*, *passim*.

based interests of philology and typology. The style does not normally allow for extension into the wider social or historical ramifications of individual texts or groups of texts. Archaeological context is either unknown or, if known, rarely mentioned in helpful ways.<sup>32</sup>

Although this last-named tendency is changing, thanks to recent commitments at Michigan to reconnect the papyrology and archaeology of the village of Karanis,<sup>33</sup> and more generally thanks to what is now known in the discipline as "museum archaeology,"<sup>34</sup> there abides in papyrology the chronic tension between the essential task of editing texts and a less intense dedication to their historical application. This is a dualism in America that has been roughly and respectively typified by Herbert C. Youtie and the Michigan tradition and C. Bradford Welles and the Yale tradition of papyrology. Recent experiments with publication formats seek to heal this split by both editing the papyri *and* applying the results in historical terms (broadly speaking). Gagos and Peter van Minnen's *Settling a Dispute: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Late Antique Egypt* (1994), Constantin Zuckerman's *Du village à l'empire* (2004), and Arthur Verhoogt's *Regaling Officials in Ptolemaic Egypt* (2005), each in its own way, incorporate text editions as components of monographic studies. They all seek thereby to address audiences wider than the papyrological-elect.

In a different but in a sense related endeavor, papyrologists on occasion publicize the extra-Egyptian value of the documentary papyri. Alan Bowman's *JRS* survey on "Papyri and Roman Imperial History," though now thirty years old, should be required reading especially for those who dismiss the papyri from Roman historical studies.<sup>35</sup> Also valuable is the much more recent *JRS* survey by Hannah Cotton, Walter Cockle, and Fergus Millar on "The Papyrology of the Roman Near East," introducing and listing papyri *not* from Egypt.<sup>36</sup> A special session on "Papyrology and Ancient History" at the 1981 meeting in Ann Arbor of

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<sup>32</sup> Gagos *et al.*, "Material Culture and Texts of Graeco-Roman Egypt," esp. 176–7, 183–7.

<sup>33</sup> Most recently: Stephan and Verhoogt, "Text and Context"; earlier: van Minnen, "House-to-House Enquiries."

<sup>34</sup> The attempt to reconstitute what papyrologists loosely refer to as archives (Hedrick, *Ancient History*, 99–103) from papyri that were discovered together but subsequently scattered through the antiquities market; and the effort, to the extent that this is possible, to replace the papyri, virtually, in their original archaeological settings.

<sup>35</sup> Bowman, "Papyri and Roman Imperial History."

<sup>36</sup> Cotton *et al.*, "The Papyrology of the Roman Near East."

the Association of Ancient Historians led to the publication in *The Classical World* of short articles on “Papyrology and Ptolemaic History” and “Papyrology and Roman History.”<sup>37</sup>

A much more systematic venture was the 1987 colloquium in Bologna on “Egitto e storia antica,” whose papers were published in 1989. Two of these are especially important for my present theme, one by Heinz Heinen on Egypt and the historiography of the Hellenistic world, the other by Giovanni Geraci on Roman Egypt in modern historiography. Interestingly, and apparently coincidentally, both launch their long contributions with extensive leading quotations. Heinen, whose entire paper is an engaged apologia for the importance of Egypt and the papyri for the wider Hellenistic world,<sup>38</sup> opens with an extract from Alfred Heuss, for whom the papyri were a sensational disappointment soon after their discovery, useless as evidence for conditions outside Egypt—they of course represented what was “untypical”—while what Heuss calls historical papyrology was, according to him, dead in the water shortly after World War I. “The discovery of the papyri,” wrote Heuss,<sup>39</sup> in an extreme statement of the anti-papyrological position,

constituted...an exception and was felt at the time [sc. of their discovery] as a sensation. But the papyri could not acquire for history the significance that they had for philology, since they only illustrate Egyptian conditions. But these conditions are without value for knowledge of countries other than Egypt and should most often be considered untypical for these. Here is why historical papyrology was already practically extinguished after the First World War, that is to say, in reality, at the end of the generation of discoveries.

Geraci,<sup>40</sup> unlike Heinen, takes as his opening text an interestingly supportive statement, the largely forgotten assessment by A. H. M. Jones from his chapter on “Egypt and Rome” in the first edition of Oxford University Press’s *The Legacy of Egypt*. Jones, while still alluding to Egypt’s peculiarity, suggests that this is “easily exaggerated.” He stresses the need to bring together the unfortunately separated subjects of history and papyrology; he hints at papyrology’s generous contributions to Roman historical evidence; he grants the papyri a significance that transcends the oft-invoked particularities of place, if only sometimes by way of fruitful

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<sup>37</sup> Bagnall, “Papyrology and Ptolemaic History”; Keenan, “Papyrology and Roman History.”

<sup>38</sup> Heinen, “L’Égypte dans l’historiographie moderne du monde hellénistique.”

<sup>39</sup> Heuss, “Vom Unbehagen des Althistorikers,” 86.

<sup>40</sup> Geraci, “L’Egitto romano nella storiografia moderna.”

analogies.<sup>41</sup> These are terms with which Wilcken would have agreed. Jones, of course, often practiced what he preached, in numerous articles but especially in the great volumes of his *Later Roman Empire*.<sup>42</sup> It is puzzling why his confidence in the papyri was not more influential among Roman historians generally, or—because some earlier paragraphs of my contribution make the question relevant—why it did not register with Moses Finley, his immediate successor at Jesus College, Cambridge.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Jones 1942: esp. 286–287.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Jones, "Egypt and Rome"; Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602*.

<sup>43</sup> See now, on the contrary, the full incorporation of Egypt in Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean*.

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