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Federico Morelli, L' archivio di Senouthios anystes e testi connessi. Lettere e documenti per la costruzione di una capitale

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Federico Morelli, *L'archivio di Senouthios anystes e testi connessi. Lettere e documenti per la costruzione di una capitale*. Corpus Papyrorum Raineri 30. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010. x + 281 pages + 24 plates. ISBN 978-3-11-022887-8.

This is the first of two projected volumes whose purpose is to gather together, reassemble, select, and present Greek documents from the Greek-Coptic archive of the *notarios* Senouthios, *anystes* of the northern *skelos* of the Hermopolite nome just after the Arab conquest. Most of the 32 documents in this volume are assigned by prosopographical associations, subject matter, and so on (“diversi elementi”) to ca. 643/4, based on a pivotal second indiction (see *Introduzione*, pp. 22-27), in other words, on the very cusp of the new Arab administration. The papyri are all Viennese. They are also all Hermopolite in provenance, but after they had been purchased and come to Vienna they were mistakenly thought to have originated, like so many other papyri on the market in the 1880s, from the first and second “Fayyum Finds.” A riveting section of the *Introduzione* (“L’archivio: tentativo di una storia,” pp. 2-9) reconstructs how this happened. The papyri are from a period until now underrepresented in the documentary record. One may compare what was available thirty-plus years ago as presented in P.M. Fraser’s “Additional Bibliography” to A.J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt* (reprint 1978), with the recent surveys by S.J. Clackson, P.M. Sijpesteijn, and T.S. Richter in A. Papaconstantinou (ed.), *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the Abbassids* (2010).¹ Not only has the material – Greek, Coptic, Arabic, even Pahlevi – increased; it is now better organized and for that reason more accessible.

The volume’s thematic focus is derived, broadly speaking, from administrative correspondence explicitly or implicitly concerned with the requisition of materials (brick, mortar, lime, dung) for construction of the new capital at Babylon, and for their downriver transport by ship, perhaps part of a massive, Egypt-wide effort rather than a merely local enterprise (p. 96). Related issues are the impressment of laborers by the new state and requests for release from such impressment (see pp. 238-239 for an orientation to these). As such the archive’s concerns, while earlier in date, are similar to those of *P.Apoll.* and

¹ A.J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt* (2nd ed.; Oxford 1978) xlvi-xlviii and lxxvi-lxxx. S.J. Clackson, “Coptic or Greek? Bilingualism in the Papyri,” P.M. Sijpesteijn, “Multilingual Archives and Documents in Post-Conquest Egypt,” and T.S. Richter, “Language Choice in the Qurra Dossier,” in A. Papaconstantinou (ed.), *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the ‘Abbāsids* (Surrey, UK, and Burlington, VT 2010) 73-104, 105-124, and 189-220.

some of the correspondence and lists of the Qurra archive. The longest and most important single document is **1**, a sensational piece for the administrative topography of the northern Hermopolite (for which see pp. 96-127; cf. **31** and **32** as well as *P.Col.* 9). Also individually significant is **16**, with its list of ships harbored in a particular (though unnamed) port. The remaining pieces, various kinds of correspondence and lists, are important for their associations with the archive and their cumulative contribution to its range and substance. With rare exceptions (e.g., **20 recto**) they are fragmented, lacunose, tattered, and in difficult hands, including the standard seventh-century “corsiva inclinata.” For these reasons, the editor’s readings, though they often seem to border on the miraculous, are obviously based on an exceptionally deep familiarity with his documents’ palaeography and contents.

As mentioned, the central figure in all this (Introduzione, p. 18; cf. **3.15** note), the recipient of most of the documents, is one Senouthios, a notary by training and current *anystes* (“manager”?) of the northern *skelos* (“leg”) of the Hermopolite nome. Both administrative terms, though not new, are rare; thus it is hard to say whether they are carryovers from the end of Byzantine administration or were newly minted under the Arabs, and whether they were particular to certain nomes or used countrywide. The *anystes* was obviously an official operating above the level of the village but below that of the pagarchy. The Hermopolite’s northern *skelos* implies a southern counterpart with its own *anystes*, each *skelos* amounting to roughly half the pagarchy (cf. p. 153).

Senouthios’ functions as *anystes* were extensive enough to warrant their own *officium*, whose home the editor locates (pp. 18, 112, 198) at Tlethmeos, a port town north of Hermopolis on the Bahr Yusuf (see map, p. 116). Senouthios’ papers were there archived separately from those that came to reside in the central pagarchal office in Hermopolis and also separately from those that we imagine came to reside with the *officium* of the southern *skelos*. Some of Senouthios’ correspondence was with the pagarch, though this is rarely clinched by surviving *verso* addresses. Addresses do not always survive in any case, and when they do, they tend to be in poor condition. Nevertheless, senders and recipients can be reasonably surmised from contents, handwriting, and tone or style (registers of discourse?), the last marked, for example, by the pagarch’s bald imperatives and telling adverbs (see, e.g., p. 184). At the very least the evident power differentials between senders and recipients, in an archive where the *dramatis personae* are few and circuits of communication rather limited, are reasonable indicators as to who is who (see in particular pp. 208-210 and 219). An especially interesting feature in a half-dozen pieces is the marking of time of their dispatch (ἀπελύθη) at such-and-such an hour (1st, 2nd, 6th), or even sunset (**8.6**). These indications are taken by the editor as

clues that the documents in question emanated from the office of the pagarch (p. 160, note to 6.21; further on times of the day, pp. 154-156, in reference to 5). 13 is unique in also noting the place where it was written (Telbonthis). Unfortunately there are no notations of days or times of receipt or specific notations for purposes of ancient archival referencing. See, nevertheless, the editor's reconstruction (p. 215) of how 18-19 came to rest in Senouthios' archive.

Apart from Senouthios, important as second and third actors in the record are Athanasius the pagarch, directly responsible to the central government, and his staff employee, Taurinos. A landlord named Menas, a *scholastikos*, figures prominently in documents concerned with gaining release of his laborers from state-imposed *corvée* (see 17-19, perhaps 21, with relevant editorial discussions). The new Arab overlords accordingly hover over but do not directly participate in the communications published here.

Like other recent editions (C. Zuckerman's *P.Aphrod.Reg.* of 2004, where the text edition seems to stand as a coda to the work as a whole; A. Verhoogt's *P.Tebt.* 5 of 2005, with its descriptive introduction and contextualized "dramatic reading"), Morelli's volume also experiments with format. The *Introduzione* impressively occupies 47 folio-sized pages, but it is the ratio of commentary to text that is after all the volume's most stunning feature. The most extreme case is 1, with its 81 pages (pp. 57-138) of commentary to 99 lines of account-style text, occupying roughly four pages (pp. 50-54). The commentary falls into two parts. The first surveys the contents of the text (pp. 57-127), amounting in effect to a series of technical and historical essays, with the pages on ship construction and Nile transport (78-92) being of special interest. Although such surveys in all cases follow the text, critical apparatus, and translation, the editor in his index of names and notable things (pp. 267-273) refers to them as "introd." The second part of the commentary for 1 is the line-by-line commentary on readings and points of detail (pp. 127-138).

The descriptive introductions prefixed to the individual documents set a new standard for comprehensiveness, precision, and consistency of presentation. The usual template seems to be: papyrus color, quality, and completeness; presence of *kolleseis*; style and direction of writing, color of ink, on *recto*, then *verso*; identification of folds and intervals between; information on acquisition and inventorying – but of course each papyrus will call for its own, variable, particular description. Such meticulous attention to each material papyrus is matched by corresponding sections of the volume's *Introduzione*. Especially noteworthy there are the pages (pp. 31-38) on what might be called the economy of the papyrus roll: it turns out that the archive's documents were commonly written *transversa charta* on papyrus rolls that, in the pagarch's office (p. 158), had before use been sliced so as to create half rolls (as pictured, pp. 38-39).

This is a magnificent edition. Blemishes are rare. In 5, it is not clear why open brackets are not supplied at the beginnings of lines 1, 2, 4, and 10, or why in 15 and 17 (e.g., the end of line 3 and the corresponding lemma in the commentary) some of the line ends do not have closing brackets. In Tav. 9 the image of 10 is upside down. There is a reversal of identities between the physical description of 26 *recto* and *verso* and the corresponding images on Tav. 20. I mention such items not to carp, but to prove that I have read this volume with due care, not to mention profit and pleasure. The editor's style is personable, witty, and honest. The volume's layout requires, however, some perhaps unnecessary repetitions, particularly when content summaries closely paraphrase translations just given. There is a negligibly irksome tendency to double dip when references are given using both "ad esempio" and "etc." The indices include the welcome index of names and subjects mentioned above as well as an index of symbols and abbreviations (pp. 275-277) that seems a quaint but useful throwback to some papyrus editions of old. These include *P.Lond.* 4, to which *CPR* 30 is now an eminently worthy companion.

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