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CHARLES BRADFORD WELLES

(1901-1969)

ROGER S. BAGNALL

CHARLES BRADFORD WELLES (9 Aug. 1901-8 Oct. 1969), [Pl. XXI]¹ began his academic career with a doctoral dissertation on the vocabulary of the Hellenistic royal letters, a project supervised by Austin Morris Harmon² for which he received the Ph.D. at Yale in 1928. He was thus by first training a philologist, and despite his later distinction in documentary studies and ancient history his work never lost the strong impress of that philological background. Already while he was a graduate student, however, the decisive event of his scholarly career occurred with the arrival at Yale in 1925 of M. I. Rostovtzeff, then 55, who was to transform Yale's Department of Classics into a center of archaeological, historical and documentary studies. It was Rostovtzeff, as Welles records in the preface to the published version of his dissertation, who led to the transformation of that dissertation from a study of the language of the letters of Hellenistic kings into a corpus with historical commentary of those letters, with the original dissertation turned into an appendix (still of fundamental value in the study of Hellenistic inscriptions). This book is Welles' famous *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period* (New Haven 1934).

That Rostovtzeff would remain a decisive influence was ensured by Welles' continuation at Yale through appointment as instructor in 1927; on his return from a year's research leave (1930-1931) in Europe, he was named assistant professor, and he spent the remainder of his teaching career at Yale until his death in 1969, from 1940 on at the rank of professor. He was Rostovtzeff's favourite pupil and a surrogate son for the childless Rostovtzeffs.³ Throughout the 1930s he was much involved with Yale's excavations at Dura-Europos in Syria (1928-1938) in collaboration with the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres,



PL. XXI: Charles Bradford Welles (1901-1969).

under Rostovtzeff's general direction, although Welles apparently visited Dura during the excavations only once, in the spring of 1931 at the end of his European research trip.⁴ It was Dura that brought Welles into

¹ For biographical information, see my article *Charles Bradford Welles*, *American National Biography*, 23, New York 1999, pp. 4-5; J. F. OATES, *Biographical Dictionary of North American Classicists*, Westport, Connecticut 1994, pp. 677-678 and *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 62, Clifton, N. J. 1984, p. 127. A list of publications up to 1966, compiled by Kent J. Rigsby, appeared in A. E. SAMUEL (ed.), *Essays in Honor of C. Bradford Welles*, New Haven 1966, pp. ix-xxii. Short obituaries appear in «BASP» 6 (1969), pp. 59-60 (with portrait) (A. E. Samuel); «JJP» 18 (1974), pp. 7-8 (A. Swiderek); «APF» 21 (1971), p. 216 (F. Uebel); «New York Times», 9 Oct. 1969; «Proceedings of the American Philological Association» 100 (1969), pp. xix-xxi (A. E. Samuel). Cf. also R. W. WINKS, *Cloak and Gown*, New Haven 1987, pp. 136-38, on Welles' intelligence service during World War II. Welles was one of my teachers during my undergraduate education at Yale, as were his pupils John Oates and Alan Samuel, to both of whom I owe some information.

² Hillhouse Professor of the Greek Language and Literature at

Yale; best known for his Loeb Classical Library edition of Lucian. His daughter Martha married Howard N. Porter, whom Welles mentions as part of a seminar in which the Archive of Leon was studied (below, p. 285 n. 4); Porter, who inherited Harmon's library, was later my senior colleague in Classics at Columbia.

³ Welles' account of Rostovtzeff, based in part on personal papers and on Sophie Rostovtzeff's recollections, was published in *Architects and Craftsmen in History. Festschrift für Abbott Payson Usher*, Tübingen 1956, pp. 55-73. Although he says little of his own relationship to Rostovtzeff, his appreciation of his teacher's qualities is strongly expressed, and Rostovtzeff's «aversion to theorizing» was certainly part of what Welles valued, along with the universality of his interests.

⁴ See C. HOPKINS, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, New Haven 1979, p. 62: «At the close of the fourth season, C. Bradford Welles came out from Yale for a month to make a special study of the graffiti». Welles also visited Syria in 1946 while still in government

the study of the papyri, and it was in the edition of parchments and papyri from Dura that he made his most lasting contributions to papyrology.

That is not to say that Dura led Welles away from epigraphy. If what I have to say below is centered on Welles as papyrologist, it must be stressed that he also remained active in epigraphy and professed to love it best. Dura produced an abundance of inscriptions as well as parchments and papyri, and every volume of the *Dura Preliminary Reports* from the fourth season through the ninth contains an epigraphic contribution by Welles. Altogether, his epigraphic publications concerning Dura, totalling more than 250 pages,¹ practically constitute another book; only the fact that the volume of the Dura final report containing the inscriptions has never appeared has tended to obscure this contribution.² Nor was Dura his only epigraphic project; the inscriptions from Yale's joint excavation project at Gerasa in Jordan, edited by Welles, occupy some 180 pages of the final report published in 1938,³ another virtual book. In addition there is an epilogue to *Royal Correspondence* in an article of 1938 on new texts from the reign of Philip V,⁴ as well as a scattering of later articles. Still, in the postwar years it was papyrology, rather than epigraphy, that remained more central in Welles' activity.

What papyrology was to mean in the context of Rostovtzeff can be seen from the earliest articles in which he and Welles jointly published the most remarkable of the Dura finds. The first of these was the antichretic loan of A.D. 121 on parchment, later republished as PDura 20. It was communicated (apparently only in writing) to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, cosponsor of the excavations, in 1930, with the communication being printed in the *Comptes Rendus* (1930, pp. 158-181). A fuller version appeared in 1931 in «Yale Classical Studies» 2, pp. 1-78. The text is said to be the joint product of the editors, who thank others, particularly Arthur Hunt, for advice on difficult passages. Welles prepared the 25 pages of line notes, and although he was not solely responsible for their contents, the "I" of the extended discussions is certainly Welles. These notes are remarkably full on matters of the legal language of the text, and Harmon's influence appears in numerous citations of his views. After the notes comes a detailed discussion of the contents and context. Rostovtzeff prepared

service, according to stamps in his passport (I thank David Welles for this information), but I do not know if he was able to visit Dura during that trip.

¹ Aside from the sections of the *Preliminary Report*, there is a long article (with collaborators) in «YCLS» 14 (1955), pp. 127-213.

² Welles' early death cut short the preparation of that volume. J. Frank Gilliam, my predecessor in papyrology at Columbia and subsequently professor at the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), who inherited this project, also died before it could be completed.

sections on the documentary evidence for the Parthian empire, the historical importance of the parchment, chronology, geography, the provincial administration of the Parthian empire and currency, amounting to nearly another thirty pages. Another dozen pages, by Welles, are devoted to the legal transaction. Other articles through the 1930s presented detailed first editions and discussions of Dura parchments and papyri; their characteristics are much the same, with detailed historical and legal analysis. Rostovtzeff's preoccupation with other work left Welles to prepare these texts on his own, although he consistently acknowledges his older colleague's contributions.

The defining characteristics of Welles' scholarly character, as developed under the dual influences of Harmon and Rostovtzeff, are visible even in this early work.⁵ Like Louis Robert, he seems fully formed right at the start of his scholarly activity. On the one side there is enormous philological exactitude, plentiful citation of ancient texts, and a rigorous attention to legal traditions and forms. On the other there is a broad sweep and an inclination to look at the widest possible context for the new document. At the time of its discovery, of course, documentary evidence for the Roman Near East was a small fraction of what it is today,⁶ and it would be impossible today to recover the freshness with which Rostovtzeff and Welles seized on this document from a world otherwise very poorly known. It is also striking, reading the commentary, how immediate and extensive was the editors' recourse to specialists in adjoining disciplines, something visible throughout the Dura publications. Scholars working in Semitic and Persian philology are cited regularly, and no boundaries of language and culture were allowed to interfere with the painting of either the broad picture or its details. The publication of the *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* lay a decade in the future at this point, but even in the commentary to a single papyrus something of the sweep of Rostovtzeff's interests in that book can be seen. That Welles was equally seized by the breadth of his approach is immediately obvious from the opening of the legal commentary: «When Phraates the eunuch and Barlaas the son of Thathaeus drew up their contract of loan in the year 121 of our era, they had behind them precedents which today we can trace for nearly four thousand years». He goes on to

³ C. H. KRAELING (ed.), *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*, New Haven 1938, pp. 355-494, 575-616.

⁴ *New Texts from the Chancery of Philip V of Macedonia and the Problem of the 'Diagramma'*, «AJA» 47 (1938), pp. 245-260.

⁵ Welles records, in the preface to PYale 1, that Harmon and Rostovtzeff jointly conducted a seminar in papyrology in 1928.

⁶ See H. M. COTTON-W. E. H. COCKLE-F. G. B. MILLAR, *The Papyrology of the Roman Near East: A Survey*, «JRS» 85 (1995), pp. 214-35, extending to more than 600 numbers.

cite Akkadian cuneiform loans as far back as year 23 of Rim-Sin (king of Larsa, 1822-1763 B.C.) and then from the Persian period; but equally he points out that «the language and the phraseology of our document are Greek, and the facts of the case may also, at least in great part, be explained by Greek law», going on to invoke the papyri of Egypt and Alexandria.

When the papyrus was republished in 1959, the commentary was much shorter, the edition altogether occupying a mere eight (large) pages. Welles distinguished between the treatment appropriate to a separate article and the more evenhanded discussion suitable for a final publication in a volume of papyri. In the interim, of course, more evidence had become available from the other Dura texts, and the introduction to the volume as a whole reflects something of the range of interests visible in the 1931 article, including substantial sections on law, language and personal names. Today such detailed introductions to volumes with contents that form a coherent geographical or archival unit are not uncommon, although far from universal. At the time the foundations were laid for PDura in the early 1930s, however, this was by no means the case. Few volumes of papyri could claim significant introductions; the template was perhaps *UPZ I*, which had appeared just a few years earlier (1927), and in any case Wilcken (whom Welles thanks in the preface to *Royal Correspondence* as also in his edition of one of the Dura parchments, now PDura 18, «ZRG» 56, 1936, pp. 99-135) was certainly the other important instance of the union of deep historical interests and first-rate philology in the older generation (eight years Rostovtzeff's senior). William Linn Westermann,¹ Rostovtzeff's younger contemporary (and predecessor at Wisconsin), although philologically far from the equal of Wilcken or Welles, shared the concept of extensive exploitation of individual documents, as PCol i (1929) already showed.

At the same time that the Dura excavations were going on, Yale was also buying papyri, mainly through the consortium headed by H. I. Bell, beginning in 1927. Welles published one of these in 1936, in his first foray into literary, or perhaps semiliterary, papyrology, namely a fragment of one of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*.² The fragment, although bought on the market, joined a papyrus found during Grenfell and Hunt's first season of excavations at Oxyrhynchos (POxy i 33). The commentary sets out clearly the composition of the entire corpus and shows how the new fragment raises more questions about the Acts of Appian than it solves. Welles speaks directly of the role of

antisemitism in the Alexandrian opposition to Rome, and it is hard not to feel that one is hearing echoes of the contemporary developments in Nazi Germany that were bringing increasing numbers of academic exiles to the United States. One documentary papyrus from the Yale collection also saw the light of day before the war, a remarkable and unparalleled text giving extracts from an audience before the prefect of Egypt. The commentary is notable for the very wide variety of classical and Christian literary texts cited, and indeed bears the impress of Welles' work on the Hellenistic royal correspondence.³ Without this broadly literary and philological strain, indeed, the text would hardly have been capable of full explanation, given the lack of parallels in the papyri for many of its usages. At the same time, the possible wider historical background is sketched, with even a bit of speculative reach, unusual in the early Welles.

Welles was a military officer throughout World War II, serving both as a professor in military training programs and in intelligence work (in Cairo), where he headed the Counter Espionage Section of the Office of Strategic Services. Nothing scholarly with his signature appeared between 1941 and 1946, and his publications between his return from war and his recall to service during the Korean War are historical and epigraphical rather than papyrological. It was only after Korea that he was again able to turn back to his dual track in papyrological studies: editing the final report on the Dura papyri and continuing to publish Yale papyri. Robert O. Fink and J. Frank Gilliam took the major role, from 1950 on, in preparing the Latin papyri concerning the Roman army, but the three-author collaboration on the volume as a whole began in earnest only in 1953 when Welles was back at Yale. Work on the massive volume was finished by 1957 and it appeared in 1959. A number of historical articles subsequently brought Welles back to consideration of these documents, but only in a brief note in «BASP» 3 (1965), p. 28 did he come back to the texts themselves, in that case to report the readings of a small fragment not included in the volume.

At the same time that work on Dura had resumed, Welles began again to edit Yale papyri. The most substantial of the articles that followed was that containing the first edition of the *Archive of Leon*, done jointly with J. A. S. Evans.⁴ Here, to my knowledge, he first alludes to the project of a volume of Yale papyri; this did not follow as soon as he had hoped, but it is in light of this expectation that the several additional articles of the next dozen years publishing Yale papyri

¹ See the biographical notice by W. V. HARRIS, *American National Biography*, 23, New York 1999, pp. 80-81.

² *A Yale Fragment of the Acts of Appian*, «TAPhA» 67 (1936), pp. 7-23.

³ *The Immunitas of the Roman Legionaries in Egypt*, «JRS» 28 (1938), pp. 41-49.

⁴ *The Archives of Leon*, «JJP» 7-8 (1953-4), pp. 29-70. Allan Evans was responsible for a section on wine production and wine trade, Welles for the text editions. Welles here makes one of his rare references in print to his Egyptian stay during the war, in noting that he had been able to discuss the archive with Octave Guéraud while in Cairo.

are to be seen. When *PYale I* itself finally saw the light in 1967, it was a joint product with two of Welles' doctoral students of the 1950s, John Oates and Alan Samuel. In the preface, Welles describes the papyrus collection as having been created principally for teaching and study rather than for publication; he says «Only in the past ten years did we think seriously of publishing a series of *Papyri Yalenses*», but perhaps the remark is an unrevised carry-forward from earlier drafts, as the first edition of the *Leon papyri* suggests. He also notes that «the commentaries are more extensive than is usual in editions of *papyri*».

The postwar decade and a half of Welles' career had two other related foci, the Loeb Classical Library volume of Diodorus Siculus books 16.66-17, covering Alexander the Great, and a brief history of the Hellenistic world, composed for a general audience. The first of these led to several additional articles on Alexander and the sources, including perhaps most notably the important study of Ptolemy as historian.¹ Welles intended to follow it up with a detailed study of Antigonos Monophthalmos, but this book remained unwritten at his death. The Hellenistic history was composed in 1960-1961 for publication in the *Propyläen-Weltgeschichte*; an English version appeared in a private printing at the time, but a published English edition appeared only in 1970, after Welles' death (the preface is dated just six weeks before his death).² The book is less successful as a textbook than might have been hoped, but it sparkles with aphorisms and gives a good sense of Welles' distinctive take on many issues about which he otherwise wrote little or nothing. The articles of the last fifteen years indeed took Welles into many areas of history and literature that one might not have expected from the main body of his published work – Pindar, Isocrates, and the Peloponnesian

War all make cameo appearances. In considerable measure these reflect Welles the teacher, who taught a wide range of subjects and could not read a text without bringing original questions and thoughts to it, and whose seminars came to periodic halts while he thought about some point he had not considered in advance. The same range of interests can be seen even more clearly in his numerous book reviews, where hardly any period or region in ancient history is altogether lacking. His archaeological interests, which show up in the bibliography only to a limited degree otherwise, are perhaps most visible between the two wars, when he edited newsletters on archaeological activity and publication for the «*American Journal of Archaeology*».

This enormous range of interests and inability to think of any aspect of antiquity as disconnected from the rest was indeed one of Welles' most salient characteristics. It is hard not to see something of Rostovtzeff here again, but Welles' interests in philology, literature, and religion were far deeper and more extensive than Rostovtzeff's. That he never wrote a synthetic work on a Rostovtzeffian scale is not, I think, surprising to those who knew him; his style was different. But the range of interests was not less. He would not specialize in one area, and as a result is probably less prominent in any one domain than some others. For example, he edited fewer *papyri* than his younger contemporary Herbert Youtie, who did nothing except papyrology. But Welles never saw himself as that kind of specialist, and the mixture of disciplines in his *Festschrift* bears witness to the range of scholarship that he practiced as classicist and ancient historian.

Columbia University, New York

¹ *The Reliability of Ptolemy as an Historian*, in *Miscellanea di studi alessandrini in memoria di Augusto Rostagni*, Torino 1963, pp. 101-116.

² *Alexander and the Hellenistic World*, Toronto 1970.