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The Ptolemaic Trierarchs

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IT has been nearly a half-century since the publication of the Zenon papyrus (*P. Cairo Zen.* 59036) which lies at the root of modern discussions of the means by which the Ptolemies supplied ships for their fleets. During this time, the view of the editor of the papyrus, C. C. Edgar, that the trierarch mentioned in the papyrus was a liturgical appointee ⁽²⁾, has been universally accepted together with Wilcken's contention, in his fundamental article on the trierarchy ⁽³⁾, that the trierarch was a citizen of Halicarnassos and that the Ptolemies therefore depended on liturgies in the Greek cities of their empire to supply part of their fleet. These interpretations are to be found in all works of the last half-century that touch upon the subject. Representative of the general conclusions drawn from this hypothesis are the words of Rostovtzeff ⁽⁴⁾:

Still heavier were the obligations of the cities in respect of the royal navy. A large part of the fleet was supplied by the cities of the empire, Greek and Phoenician, on the method of the Greek trierarchy. The burden was not limited to provincial cities: Alexandria and Naucratis had an important share in it.

Despite the universal agreement on the existence of such a system, it appears to me an untenable idea in the light of the evidence from papyri and an inscription; it is my purpose here to set forth this evidence and my interpretation of it.

(1) I am indebted for criticism of drafts of this article to Wallace E. McLeod, Alan E. Samuel, and Paul R. Swarney. James H. Oliver made it possible for me to present the paper to an informal gathering at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, from which much interesting discussion arose. The research and writing of the article were made possible by a Canada Council Doctoral fellowship.

(2) This papyrus was first published by Edgar in the *Annales du Service des Antiquités d'Égypte* 22 (1922), pp. 210-217, which remains the fullest and most satisfactory publication and translation of the text. It appears also as *Select Papyri* II 410. Edgar's final publication reported favorably Wilcken's suggestion that Xanthippos was a citizen of Halicarnassos.

(3) « Zur Trierarchie im Lagidenreich », *Raccolta Lumbroso* (1925), pp. 93-99.

(4) *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, p. 334, with note 130 on p. 1399. Rostovtzeff does not cite any evidence for Alexandria and Naukratis, but he is evidently thinking of *BGU* 1744, 1745, and 1746, discussed below.

Let us begin by reviewing the contents of *P. Cairo Zen.* 59036. The papyrus contains a covering letter from one Apollodotos (1) to his agent Charmides, located across the sea from him, together with letters from Apollodotos to Xanthippos, which are being sent separately to Xanthippos but whose contents Apollodotos wants to transmit also to Charmides. Three transactions are enumerated in the letters. Apollodotos directed Straton, the ἐν Ἀλικαρνασσῶι γαζοφύλαξ (2) to disburse via Perigenes to Antipatros, the sum of 2000 drachmas from collections of *iatrika* (3). Further, Apollodotos advanced a second payment of 465 drachmas, 2 obols, 2 chalkoi to the same Antipatros through Hekatonymos. The source of these funds is not specified. Finally, Apollodotos paid, again to Antipatros, through the bank of Sopatros, 3000 drachmas given to the king as a crown by the city of Halicarnassos and paid into Sopatros' bank by the city tamiai, for which a receipt was issued by Apollonios to one Epikydes, evidently a city official.

The recipient of these 5465 drachmas, Antipatros, is described in the letter to Xanthippos as τῶι παρὰ σοῦ τριηραρχοῦντι τὴν θ'. The purpose of the payments appears to have been the maintenance of a ship under Antipatros' care. In the letter to Charmides, this

(1) Evidently the same man attested in the Zenon documents from 261-257 (references under *Pros. Ptol.* 16346) as an agent of Apollonios and companion of Zenon. I find no reason to see in him the epistates of Thera (*OGIS* 44), who was operating in a very different field.

(2) The use of the term gazophylax here is of great interest, as the sole Ptolemaic attestation of the title of which I am aware. Rostovtzeff, in *Anatolian Studies Ramsay*, pp. 386-387, presents the evidence for the term, suggesting that it was generally used in the kingdoms of Alexander, Lysimachos, the Seleucids, and later monarchies like the Pontic and late Bosporan ones, which saw themselves as successors to the Achaemenids. The Ptolemies and the Attalids, on the other hand, used the term ῥισκοφύλαξ for the corresponding function. Apollodotos' direct control of Straton makes it quite unlikely that he was a civic official; the tamiai are specifically mentioned as filling the analogous functions for the city. The term is in any case one of the royal economy.

(3) This, in turn, from Straton's position, seems to be a royal tax collected from the people of Halicarnassos. Confirmation comes from the nature of the tax in Egypt, of which the most complete study is Nanetti's in *Aegyptus* 24 (1944), pp. 119-125. But *P. Hamb.* 171 vitiates the conclusion of this scholar that the tax was not really used for medical care, for the papyrus shows a doctor being paid from the *iatrikos logos*. The arrangement probably resembled modern government « trust funds ».

ship is described as τὴν ναῦν ἣν τριηραρχεῖ Ξάνθιππος. The purpose of the letters is to extract repayment from Xanthippos. There is some uncertainty about the person to whom the payments are ultimately to be made, but clearly Charmides is envisaged as a desirable agent through whom to make them. The *iatrika* funds are to be paid to Medeios, the 465 drachmas to Medeios or back to Apollodotos, and the crown money to Apollonios the dioiketes. Edgar, in his commentary, took the instructions to mean that Apollodotos was in Halicarnassos (or elsewhere in the Ptolemaic possessions in that area), while Charmides, Xanthippos, and the other eventual recipients of the repayments were in Alexandria. His reasoning appears sound to me, and we may certainly expect that Apollonios was in or near Alexandria. In short, royal funds formerly in Halicarnassos and, it would seem, waiting to be transported to Alexandria, are being transferred there indirectly through the repayment to be made there by Xanthippos.

Wilcken's argument that Xanthippos was a native of Halicarnassos rested on the premise that taxes collected in Halicarnassos would not have been used to help an Alexandrian or other alien discharge his liturgy: « Es müssen doch irgend welche Beziehungen zwischen Halikarnass und dieser merkwürdigen Finanzoperation der Reichsvorschüsse bestanden haben »⁽¹⁾. This conclusion seems to me inadmissible. The money had all passed into the hands of crown officials at the time it was turned over to Antipatros by Apollodotos (or by his orders), and it was expended on the ship because the ship was in Halicarnassos and needed it. In any case, the funds were only lent, mostly to be repaid to the royal treasury in Alexandria; no city funds are involved. There is nothing in the text or elsewhere to justify a belief that the crown acted at any time out of sentimental interest, whatever Greek cities might have done. The transaction seems to me perfectly comprehensible within the framework of the complicated workings of royal finance in Egypt and abroad⁽²⁾. One further consideration against Xanthippos' Halicarnassian citizenship is that at no time is he spoken of as being in Halicarnassos or planning to be there in the future.

(1) *Raccolta Lumbroso*, p. 97.

(2) Apart from the numerous papyri involving royal finances in Egypt, for the external possessions there is *P. Teb.* 8 and a number of inscriptions, which I plan to discuss elsewhere.

If Xanthippos cannot be demonstrated to have been a citizen of Halicarnassos, our evidence for liturgies in the foreign possessions of the Ptolemies disappears. The more fundamental problem, however, remains, that of the meaning of trierarchy here: was it a liturgy as we know it from Greek cities or was it a rank? For if there could be liturgists providing ships from Greek cities in Egypt, there could be the same manner of liturgists in cities outside Egypt as well. Here again, however, I think another explanation is more probable.

First, let us return to the terminology in *P. Cairo Zen.* 59036 itself. The verb *τριηραρχεῖν* is used of both Xanthippos and his subordinate or agent Antipatros in the phrases quoted above. It is unlikely that in the same papyrus and quite indistinguishable contexts the word has two quite different meanings. It is not possible for two men to be trierarchs of the same ship in the liturgic sense and yet at the same time have one subordinate to another, as is clearly the case in the papyrus. Nor can we without compelling reason assign one meaning to the verb applied to Xanthippos and another when it refers to Antipatros. Consistency and context demand that the verb have here its fundamental meaning of commanding a ship — one more important than a trireme in this case.

If we do not accept Xanthippos as a liturgic trierarch, however, we must account for his seeming responsibility for paying advances made for his ship. The apparent shift of duties of financing the ship from the government to Xanthippos needs explanation. A brief survey of the other papyrological attestations of trierarchs will suggest that in fact the commanders of Ptolemaic ships normally exercised a wide range of responsibility over the activities of their ship and crew.

Perhaps the most interesting example is *P. Petrie* III 43 (3). 21, a papyrus in which there is discussion of a crew of a ship who are restless because they have had to work in a quarry longer than had been agreed (1). The men say that if their trierarch were present, this sort of thing would not happen. Apparently, the trierarch had agreed to let them be used for some time in the quarry work; such a decision reveals considerable discretion. The same power over crews, this time in connection with an appointment, is presented in an undated private

(1) For a fuller discussion of the terms and meaning of this document, see my remarks in *BASP* 6 (1969), pp. 86-87 (where, however, I repeat the false distinction between types of trierarchs).

letter of the third century whose contents are, like so many private letters, not entirely clear (1).

Another Petrie papyrus, *P. Petr.* III 64b. 7-8, attests a hypotrierarch Horos, on whose behalf some *λεία* due to a woman (from her deceased husband's military service) is to be paid. Although the details of this transaction, too, must escape us for the present, the clear indication of the document is that the trierarch's subordinate was in charge of distributing spoils and that the trierarch hence had some autonomy in this matter (2).

From some banker's accounts of daily transactions in *P. Teb.* 890.93 comes a debit to the account of one Simaristos, a trierarch, for payments (made to Menches?). Line 34 of the same papyrus records payments made to two men from the ship of the same trierarch (though the rank does not appear in this line with his name). Here is another type of financial transaction, perhaps not so far removed in type from that of *P. Cairo Zen.* 59036, in which payments made to men in the service of a trierarch are debited to his account.

Finally, an interesting series of Berlin papyri from the Herakleopolite Nome and datable to 64/3 B. C. (3) presents copies of lists of disbursements to various men. Among them is a *τριηράρχου Χαρισ[σ]ανδραγαθ[άθου]*. In the initial publication of the first two texts, W. Kunkel argued that we have here evidence of a liturgy involving citizens of Alexandria, Naukratis, and Canopus; he based his opinion on the presence of some names followed by those ethnics after the name of Charisandragathos and elsewhere in the lists. As we have seen earlier, Rostovtzeff apparently accepted this interpretation. It seems to me, nonetheless, to stumble against certain serious obstacles. Kunkel thought that the word trierarch applied to all of the men

(1) Originally published with commentary in *JJP* 13 (1961), pp. 76-77, no. 2, and reprinted as *SB* 9780.

(2) It may be speculated that this was booty from the third Syrian war, since the papyrus is dated to the eighth year of Ptolemy III, 240/39 B.C.

(3) *Archiv* 8 (1927), pp. 193 ff., was the first publication, but they are republished with improved readings (but less commentary) as *BGU* 1744, 1745, and 1746. The later edition substitutes the name Charisandragathos for the nonsensical *χάρι[ν] ἀνδραγαθ[ίας]* of Kunkel, which led him to think that the first named man was a trierarch for military prowess and a captain, while the others were liturgists. Schubart, in making the change, reasoned that a name otherwise unknown (though Andragathos was known) but of reasonable formation, was preferable to a nonsensical phrase.

listed, among whom were two Naukratites and two Canopites. Since the list was preceded by the word ἀφράκτου, Kunkel reasoned that all of these men could not be commanders, but they certainly could be donors. The word τριηράρχου, however, is quite certainly singular in BGU 1744.11 (though elsewhere restored), and I know of no reason to apply it to all those who follow it. It is more plausible to argue that the names that follow are other crew members of the ship, the list of whom is quite naturally headed by that of their commander.

Kunkel's thesis that Canopos would be included in the list of Greek communities goes quite a bit beyond any liturgical application to Greek cities; Canopos was not, as Kunkel himself pointed out, a Greek city like Alexandria, Ptolemais, and Naukratis. Kunkel points out the purely Greek names here and argues that they are those of liturgists, while arguing also that the hypotrierarch Horos mentioned above must be a native and hence a different type of trierarch, but I can see no reason to accept this tortuous reasoning. Whatever the status of the trierarch in the Berlin document, the transaction does not appear to go beyond the competence in provisioning, finance, and disbursement seen in other papyri. That his men receive money or goods is no indication that the man is a liturgist.

If the papyri fail to demonstrate that the wide competence of the trierarchs is to be assigned to their liturgical status, there is an inscription that decisively shows that they were not. The text is a decree of Ios honoring one Zenon, a subordinate of the nesiarch Bacchon, the Ptolemaic governor of the league of the islanders in the reign of Ptolemy II (1). Zenon was commander of some ἄφρακτα πλοῖα that had made a stop at Ios and on which some ἀνδράποδα belonging to the Ietans had escaped. Ambassadors came to Zenon to seek the slaves, and he [ἀν]ακαλεσάμενος [τ]ο[ὺ]ς τριηράρχους καὶ ἐξέτασας ἀνέσωσε τὰ ἀνδράποδα [μ]ετὰ πάσης φιλοτιμίας. The men whom Zenon summoned in order to recover the slaves can be only the captains on whose ships the slaves had escaped and were now hiding or enrolled. There can be no question of calling a congress of liturgists from all over the Mediterranean.

(1) IG XII 5 1004 = OGIS 773. Zenon (*Pros. Ptol.* 15043) is also attested in *Syll.*³ 367, an Athenian decree of 286/5 where he is also called a commander of undecked ships; this text provides an approximate date for Zenon's appearance on Ios.

One final consideration that works against the possibility that the trierarchy was a liturgical system spread throughout Egypt or the empire is the very nature of the application of compulsory service in Egypt under the Ptolemies. A perusal of the material collected by Naphtali Lewis in his *Inventory of Compulsory Services* (1) makes this point clear. For the Hellenistic period in Egypt two types of compulsory service to the state are attested. The first is labor required from large classes of residents — « forms of service owed to a monarch by his populace », as Lewis puts it. They include labor and surveillance on irrigation and cultivation, as well as transport, billeting, and other services. The second class consists of a group of liturgic services known only from the Greek cities and communities of settlers in Egypt. All of these are local; that is, they are liturgies owed by a man to the city or town or village in which he lived. There are no examples of such liturgies owed by an individual in a city to the monarchy as a whole or to any unit beyond his home community. The trierarchic liturgy, then, would be an example of an unattested breed of demands put on the individual by the crown. Liturgy is a civic and not a royal institution.

The various strands of evidence converge to show the trierarchs as men of importance, the captain of a « 9 » more so than that of an undecked ship. But whatever the size of his command, he had wide-ranging powers and responsibilities for his ship. He may have been allotted a block grant for maintaining his ship for a year and been expected to work within this sum, managing according to his own lights. Such a system would not be unexpected in the Ptolemaic mentality, where delegation of responsibility (but under close checks) was common. The evidence of the papyri and inscriptions, and perhaps more importantly of the whole Ptolemaic system, precludes the possibility that they were trierarchs in the liturgic sense, merely paying the bills for their ships. On the contrary, they were very active commanders.

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(1) *American Studies in Papyrology* III (1968), introduction to the Ptolemaic section. Lewis also accepts *P. Cairo Zen.* 59036 as attesting a liturgy, but sees its peculiarity and does not include it in his regular catalogue of liturgies.