



Review: THEADELPHIAN ARCHIVES: A REVIEW ARTICLE

Reviewed Work(s): Das Archiv des Soterichos. Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Sonderreihe: Papyrologica Coloniensia, Vol. 8 by Sayed Omar; The Archive of Aurelius Sakaon. Papers of an Egyptian Farmer in the last Century of Theadelphia. Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen, Band 23 by George M. Parássoglou

Parássoglou

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Source: *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, Vol. 17, No. 3/4 (1980), pp. 97-104

Published by: American Society of Papyrologists

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24518888>

Accessed: 14-04-2017 21:07 UTC

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THEADELPHIAN ARCHIVES: A REVIEW ARTICLE*

Of all the opportunities that only papyri offer to the ancient historian, scarcely anything is so important as what historians of most other times and places can take for granted—the ability to study intensively the social and economic life of communities on the basis of massive archival evidence. In the last quarter-century papyrologists have increasingly recognized the importance of archives, and volumes collecting the papyri of one archive come periodically to enrich our studies. One thinks for example of the *Archive of Aurelius Isidorus*, *Les Archives de Sarapion et de ses fils*, *L'Archivio di Kronion*, *The Abinnaeus Archive*, and the *Papyri of the Tiberii Iulii Theones*.

The Arsinoite village of Theadelphia is one of the richest sources of all, and we are nearing the time when a social history of the village over four centuries will be possible. The extensive archives, mostly of official documents, from the second century published mainly in *P.Col.* II and V, *P. Berl. Leihg.* I and II, and *BGU* IX have been much exploited for technical subjects but little

*This article reviews two recent volumes: Sayed Omar, *Das Archiv des Soterichos*. *Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Sonderreihe: Papyrologica Coloniensia*, Vol. 8. Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1979. Pp. 154, p11. 15. [Price not given]; and George M. Parássoglou, *The Archive of Aurelius Sakaon. Papers of an Egyptian Farmer in the last Century of Theadelphia*. *Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen*, Band 23. Bonn, Rudolf Habelt, 1978. Pp. xx + 263, p11. 15. DM 140.

for social history. The third-century archive of Heroninus, of which new texts still continue to appear, needs to be gathered from its numerous places of first publication and studied in detail (I understand that Rosario Pintaudi and George Parássoglou are planning such a publication). For the late third and early fourth century the archive of Sakaon has been known since the publication of the bulk of it by P. Jouguet in *Papyrus de Théadelphie*, but it too has been augmented by scattered publications.

The volumes under review here add to our evidence in two ways: G. M. Parássoglou has collected and reedited the Sakaon documents, and Sayed Omar has made a substantial contribution to the latter first and early second centuries with a small archive of 28 documents, previously unpublished. Both of these volumes are possible because of the work of the International Photographic Archive of Papyri in photographing the Cairo Museum's collection. Omar (p.6) gives full and gracious acknowledgment to his dependence on this enterprise; Parássoglou nowhere even mentions it.

The archive of Soterichos is made up principally of routine business documents: five leases and twenty receipts (mostly for rent) make up its bulk. This material, if isolated, would be of limited interest and little novelty. But in an archive and in skilled editorial hands, it has much to offer. Sayed Omar's volume is a first-rate contribution in every respect. A detailed introduction (pp. 17–45) describes the persons of the archive, the business relations and agricultural activities, and the types of documents. The section on the business dealings of the main character and his family is full, acute, and clear, and its main conclusions deserve some prominence.

Soterichos was principally a lessee, not a landowner, and he seems to have been always in debt for the capital needed for his ventures in farming wheat land, vineyards, and gardens. These ventures were sometimes in partnership with other farmers. At his death he left large debts, which it took his widow and children years to pay off. Omar argues convincingly that these debts were normally paid off at the harvest and that their catastrophic effect was simply a matter of Soterichos' death and the family's consequent loss of the normal means of paying the loans back, Soterichos' work. Omar summarizes (p.23), "Soterichos wirtschaftete von einem Tag zum nächsten, und er konnte wohl kaum Rücklagen bilden. Das ist die typische Situation des damaligen Bauern. Zu einem armen Mann in den Massstäben der damaligen Zeit macht ihn das nicht." Soterichos thus existed on credit based

on his future earning power; so also do many people today. Omar's picture of him helps illumine the enormous documentation of debt in other places and centuries in the papyri and should lead to a reassessment of the extremely gloomy view of debtors often given by papyrologists.¹

The agricultural side of the discussion is also interesting. Soterichos, like Sakaon and probably other substantial farmers, was not a one-crop man. Certainly wheat was his main crop. Omar has a chart—not quite conclusive but instructive nonetheless—of the relationship of Soterichos' promptness or arrears in paying rent to the quantity of the Nile flood: usually behind, he seems to have made it up in every case (pp.31–33). Unfortunately the receipts—the bulk of the archive—rarely tell us the rate at which rent was charged and we therefore lack what would have been interesting information to compare to crop yields elsewhere, e.g. in the archive of the descendants of Laches (in *P.Mil. Vogl.* I–IV and VI). Soterichos was also an active lessee of vineyards (“eine besondere Spezialität”), sometimes combined with orchards; there is one example (no.4) of a *καρπωνεία* of a palm grove.

Fortunately, Omar's discussion is built on a good foundation. The editions of the 28 texts are well-done, with solid texts of well-known types, translations, and very full commentaries. These are full of apposite references and very much up-to-date. Obvious slips are few, and the proofreading has been done well.² The integration of the text edition and the introduction is particularly good: a model of what is needed to extract the information from an archive.

George Parássoglou's reedition is a welcome addition to the list of archival volumes, for it collects one of the most important archival masses for the early Byzantine period and at the same time provides new versions of papyri of which the texts are capable of considerable improvement in the light of almost seven decades of publications of similar material and study of their milieu.

¹ My own remarks in *J.R.B.S.* 18 (1977) 95–96 on Aurelia Tetoueis, for example, may be too negative, though in Tetoueis' case I think the evidence points to pyramiding of debt rather than revolving it.

² A few trifles I have noticed: p.50, n.6, read G. M. Browne; p.59, n.9, read ἦ (I do not know if this is a misprint or a misunderstanding of Mandilaras); p.70, n.36, read Liddell; p.89, no.6.23, the photo shows ἐβζώνου clearly; p.91, no.7.2, read Θεαδέλφεια.

The volume also testifies to the continuing renewal of papyrology's earliest works. When Ulrich Wilcken brought together in *Urkunden der Ptolemäers* the Ptolemaic papyri published before the appearance of the Petrie papyri, he signalled a retrospective division between the early publications of papyri and the development in the 1890's of the modern discipline of papyrology. In the last two decades, another important milestone has been reached with the recognition that a papyrology come of age must reexamine and in many cases refashion the fundamental works of the first generation of papyrologists. Jean Bingen's new text of the Revenue Laws was a harbinger of the trend which has brought us Sijpesteijn and Worp's reedition of the Hermopolite land registers and a whole series of projects for reediting the Petrie papyri, the Grenfell papyri, and Wilcken's *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie*.

We have here 98 texts (99 if one counts the duplicate no.45a), including not only Sakaon's papers but all that the editor has found of contemporary documents from Theadelphia (the earliest text is evidently no.36, of A.D. 280, the latest securely dated one no.48, of A.D. 343). About 40 per cent of the papyri come from volumes other than *P.Thead.*, a good measure of the service performed by the editor in gathering these texts.

For each document the editor gives the usual information (dimensions, date, place of keeping, editions, bibliography) and text, with critical apparatus, followed by a translation. There are no introductions, no line notes, and no general introduction to the archives. The editor's own statement of his aims is clear and must be quoted in extenso: "The sole aim of this new collection and edition has been to offer an improved and more reliable text. I have not thought it necessary to present a collation with the previous editions of the documents, although I do not wish to minimize the very great benefit that I have derived from the labors of my predecessors. The reader who wishes to follow the history of the efforts of my colleagues towards the improvement of the text will find all the pertinent references known to me under the heading 'Lit(erature).' above each document. Lastly, in an effort to be as brief as possible, and at the risk of becoming oracular and unconvincing, a considerable amount of work has had to be ruthlessly jettisoned; I hope that I shall be given the opportunity to classify some of it and present it in a companion volume of notes."

Because much of what I will say about both the plan of the book and its execution must perforce be negative, I think it only just to emphasize in the first place that to a large degree the editor's purpose has been fulfilled: the state of the texts in *P.Sakaon* is in most places an improvement over their previous state, in some cases a great improvement. A reader wishing confirmation of this statement need only compare texts such as nos. 13, 14, 19, 27, 28, 65, and 67 with the earlier texts to see how great the advance made on the photographs of the Cairo papyri has been. The physical condition of these papyri is not always very good, and anyone who has worked with similar materials will know how much effort has gone into the attempt, often successful, to make connected sense out of what were previously batches of disjointed words and phrases. This work of improvement, and the very act of collecting the material, will make this volume a prime tool for the social and economic historian of late antiquity.

It is particularly for this reason that the absence of commentary is deplorable. Every user will wish the editor well in his hopes of a companion volume. But the papyrologist who has seen this wish disappointed again and again in the history of our discipline may have cause to fear the worst. Some of papyrology's finest scholars have broken just this promise. It may be that Parássoglou has in mind the famous sentence of H. C. Youtie, "[the editor of papyri] knows that if he could guarantee the perfection of his transcriptions, he could hope to be forgiven even the total omission of all the rest."³ Unfortunately, while the "omission of all the rest" is all too often found, the "perfection of his transcriptions" is never achieved. While the world waits for the promised commentary, scholars may be reluctant to exploit the archive here collected as fully as they might, so that the purpose of the volume will be thwarted by the volume itself.

The absence of a commentary has in some instances made it impossible to know why the editor has adopted a doubtful dating of a text. No.92 (= *P. Warren 7*), for example, is dated to 321/2, 336/7, or 351/2; the editor does not decide. But, in fact, *P.Sakaon* 44, of 331/2, brings us Heron and Kanaoug (the taxpayers of no.92), acting with Sakaon, and *P.Sakaon* 35 has the same trio in ca A.D. 332 (on Parássoglou's own date). This date is confirmed by

³ *Scriptiunculae* I (Amsterdam 1973) 13.

an examination of the amounts paid, 300–400 talents. In 321/2, 300 T. would suffice to purchase about 240 artabas of cumin (we lack any closely contemporary wheat prices).⁴ This is clearly an impossible sum. In 336/7, on the other hand, 300 T. is a realistic amount: in 338 wheat was 24 T. per artaba, and 300 T. would buy 12.5 artabas approximately. By 351/2, prices were much higher, and 300 T. was a fairly insignificant sum. The prices, like the prosopographical connections, thus point to 336/7. A proper commentary would have revealed this.

In no.28, a document in which summary receipts for chaff are collected, concerning an indiction 9, the editor dates to a choice of 320/1, 335/6, or 350/1. The signer of all these receipts, one Ophel(l)ios, appears again in no.91, an ostrakon receipt for chaff also for indiction 9, and dated by the editor firmly to 320/1. The payment *may* even be that summarized in 28.14–16. Prosopographical study would once again have disclosed this anomaly.

The bibliography of editions and comments has been prepared with little concern for its utility to the reader. The lemmas are not genetically constructed (with editions which are mere copyings of predecessors distinguished from those resting on consultation of originals or photographs); and the bibliographical references never indicate the subject of the contribution. This is a matter of saving the reader from having to redo the editor's work, and no mere triviality of typographical presentation.⁵

The principles on which the apparatus has been established are also bad. The reader will find in many cases that discovering what Parássoglou's contribution is to the establishment of the text can be very time-consuming. This is a labor the editor, who has presumably had to do it himself in order to establish his text, should spare his readers; and it is a matter of justice to give credit to those who have contributed to the improvement of a text: a matter of justice, for that matter, even to the editor of the present volume.⁶

⁴ See *ZPE* 24 (1977) 117 for the prices.

⁵ See e.g. *Phoenix* 27 (1973) 220 n.22 for references to full statements of proper principles. It is curious that in no.35 we find no bibliography for so-called "Narratio" documents later than 1933; cf. now *BASP* 15 (1978) 115–23 (on p.117, line 31 of this article, read *προγονικῶν*) and *P.Col.* VII 174 introd. for bibliography and discussion.

⁶ On these principles cf. e.g. U. Wilcken, *UPZ* I, p.iii; L. Robert, *AntCl* 4 (1936) 462–63 = *Opera Minora Selecta* III (Amsterdam 1969) 1617–18.

It is unfortunate to have to record that the texts themselves, improvements as they are, do not always give the reader confidence in details. The original edition of *P.Sakaon* 1 (*P.Stras.* I 42) recorded carefully the diacritical marks found on the original (trema over *νιόν* in lines 8, 10, 13 and 15; apostrophe in *προστάγ'ματι* in 4), but these are all “jettisoned” in *P.Sakaon*, found neither in text nor in apparatus. In line 12, Parássoglou prints *Καῆτ* instead of *Καήτ(εως)* of ed.pr. The name is found both declined and without ending, but in this instance there is an apostrophe after the name (recorded in Preisigke’s note); similarly in *P.Sakaon* 8.9, where Schwartz printed *Καητ'*, Parássoglou has *Καητ*. These trifles are not uninteresting for the philologist concerned with the trend in this period for lesser use of Greek terminations and declension in the writing of Egyptian names. The replacement of *ηS/* etc. in *P.Stras.* I 45.3 by *η (έτους)* etc. in no.5 does, to be sure, provide the needed sense. But it also, in the absence of an apparatus recording the state of the papyrus, robs the user of evidence for the development of the ways of marking years and numerals in this period.⁷

A bizarre novelty is found in no.11. Parássoglou recognized correctly that the reading of the emperor’s name as *Δομτίου [Δομι]τιανοῦ* by Jouguet did not take account of all the traces, that there seemed to be an additional letter before tau in each name. Reading this as gamma in one case, he read it as gamma in both, producing the phonetically unlikely *Δομγτίου Δομγτιανοῦ*. Worse still, in no.82.2, where Maehler had printed *Δομ . τιανοῦ* (commenting that the unread letter was likely to be either nu or tau), Parássoglou has read and restored *[Δομγ]τίου Δομγτιανοῦ*. Now it takes only the briefest of investigations to discover that Domitianus (like other Latin names with intervocalic t) is written in Greek very often with double tau (examples can be found, e.g., in Gignac, *Grammar*, 255), and consulting *P.Thead.*, pl.ii, we can see that in fact the scribe wrote *Δομτ'τίου Δομτ'τιανοῦ*. Double tau should thus be read in all of these cases, and this novelty of Greek phonetics expunged from the record.⁸

⁷ In 75.13, the entry *ξ// πάγον* is found: one supposes a mistyping for *ζ*. The index, which lists this reference under “πάγος (the 8th of the Arsinoite)” on p.234, does not help much.

⁸ The omission of *Λουκίου* in 82.1–2 does not seem justified; *RFBE* 28 shows that it is normally found, and the space seems sufficient: Maehler included it in the first edition.

An unwonted example of a pre-293 consular date in no.37.22 is removed in favor of a regnal date in the addenda and corrigenda on p.263. It is not, however, acknowledged that this correction was communicated by K. A. Worp in a letter to Parássoglou, nor that Worp subsequently noticed (and informed Parássoglou) that the same correction had been made long ago by A. Stein, *Untersuchungen zur Verwaltung Aegyptens* (Stuttgart 1915) 200 n.1 (not in *BL*). This failure to acknowledge others' work is of a piece with the character of the apparatus.

In 7 6.15 the editor inserts <τὸ β/> into the consular date (298) after the name of Faustus, though no other papyrological witness includes any numeral (cf. *CSBE* 104, s.a. 298), and there is no reason to accuse this scribe of an omission. In 65.21, on the other hand, Φλ(αουίου) is omitted in the restoration before the name of Januarinus (cos. 328), although it is found in the other witnesses (*CSBE* 109 a.328).

I must also protest against the insistence of a Greek on printing εἰμή and εἶδεμή in modern fashion rather than in the normal practice of editors of ancient texts, εἰ μή and εἰ δὲ μή (55.15 etc., cf. index, p.245). The alternation of accents between ἰνδικτίωνος and ἰνδικτιῶνος betrays a remarkably naive view of the distinction of the *ο* vowels in the fourth century as well as a curious theory of Greek accentuation.⁹

The greedy publisher has brought us this book of under 300 pages, produced from camera-ready typescript and shoddily bound, for the disgraceful price of DM 140, more than twice the maximum that could conceivably be regarded as reasonable. It is clear that as usual Habelt has appropriated to his own purse the savings realized by the use of an inexpensive method of reproduction, rather than passing them on to scholars and libraries.¹⁰

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⁹ Cf. *P.Vindob.Worp* 8.25n. on this point. The quantity of *ο/ω* was clearly not observed in Greek in this period; this shows that the word was pronounced like a Greek word, with the accent on the preceding syllable, not like a Latin one.

¹⁰ For the reader's convenience I append a list of various corrections to *P.Sakaon* published elsewhere by K. A. Worp and myself. *P.Sakaon* 7, date is Mesore 30, cf. *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* (Zutphen 1978) 108 a.320. *P.Sakaon* 17, see *Regnal Formulas of Byzantine Egypt* (Missoula 1979) 32 for the correct date. *P.Sakaon* 78 and 79, see "Chronological Notes on Byzantine Documents" II 31 in *BASP* 16 (1979) 237. Dates in *P.Sakaon* 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 43, 51, 65 and 73: "Chronological Notes" IV 47, *BASP* 17 (1980) 12. Date of *P.Sakaon* 19: "Chronological Notes" IV 48, *BASP* 17 (1980) 13. The phantom Philadelphos alias Athanasios and vice-versa is exorcised from nos. 11, 12, 82 and 86 in *Aegyptus* 58 (1978) 162.