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*Les papyrus de Zénon: L'horizon d'un grec en Égypte au III<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J. C.*

By CLAUDE ORRIEUX. With a foreword by ÉDOUARD WILL. Paris: Éditions Macula, 1983. Pp. 159; maps, tables, and lexicon in text. Fr. 80.

The last decade has seen a resurgence in studies of the archives of Zenon, the largest archive (Orrieux counts about 1750 "usable" texts) of papyri found so far. Zenon was a business agent of Apollonius, the finance minister of Ptolemy II, in the middle of the third century B.C., then an independently wealthy resident of the Fayûm village of Philadelphia where he had worked for Apollonius in the development of the latter's large estate. The archive was divided among various purchasers in the years after its clandestine discovery in about 1914, and publication was spread over the course of several decades. Already in 1922 M. I. Rostovtzeff published first impressions of the archive in his *A Large Estate in Egypt in the Third Century B.C.* (Madison, 1922), a very influential work; and the impress of the papers of Zenon is everywhere in Rostovtzeff's *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford, 1941), and in C. Préaux's *Economie royale des Lagides* (Brussels, 1939).

A short (86 pages) synthesis for the general reader was published in 1947 by Préaux (*Les grecs en Égypte d'après les archives de Zénon* [Brussels, 1947]), written with its author's customary acuteness, clarity, and passion. This book has been out of print for years and was never widely read (except, ironically, by papyrologists) in nonfrancophone countries. In any case, studies of the archive—either specific or general—were relatively few in the decades after *SEHWW*. The London portion—the last published—of the archive had not yet appeared, and any major work thus risked obsolescence.

Two major events changed this somnolent state. J. Bingen, who had devoted an (unpublished) thesis to the contemporary Revenue Laws papyri, began publishing a series of sophisticated and profound articles reexamining the archive

and contemporary documentation as evidence of social relations.<sup>1</sup> And the London papyri were published in exemplary fashion in 1974 by T. C. Skeat (*Greek Papyri in the British Museum (now in the British Library)*, vol. 7: *The Zenon Archive* [London, 1974]).

The scholar's confrontation with Zenon has, moreover, now been revolutionized by the work of P. W. Pestman and his colleagues at Leyden, who have published *A Guide to the Zenon Archive* (Pap. Lugd. Bat. 21 [Leyden, 1981]) in two volumes, with a prosopography, lists, indexes, and corrections to the archive, and a companion volume, *Greek and Demotic Texts from the Zenon Archive* (Pap. Lugd. Bat. 20 [Leyden, 1980]), collecting and republishing scattered members of the archive.

It is in the context of new evidence, new approaches, and new tools that O. publishes this account of the world of Zenon. O., who has already published several articles on Zenon, and whose Thèse d'État on it is announced as forthcoming (see p. 152 of this book), offers a readable and nontechnical survey of aspects of the archive and of the life of Greeks and Egyptians in Zenon's milieu. He does not claim universal applicability for what he finds; indeed, E. Will's foreword explicitly disclaims any such. Zenon, it is axiomatic in contemporary historical writing about Ptolemaic Egypt, was not typical. Not entirely, no doubt; but O. makes a good case for the view that Zenon and his circle embody many characteristics of the Greek immigrants and their Egyptian milieu which were widely visible.

The book's title is accurate. O. almost never strays from his subject to wonder about comparisons with other periods of Egyptian history, although once in a while (e.g., pp. 149–50) he ventures into comparisons with European history. (This caution is just as well, to judge from his astonishing remark [p. 16] that the Egyptian language has not been spoken for fifteen centuries now, or his repetition [p. 150] of the long-discredited claim that the Copts welcomed the Arabs.) Moreover, even within the archive, O.'s focus is on Zenon himself, his activities, and his friends, not on the Apollonian world of which he was a part (although the latter is not ignored). This emphasis comes from O.'s conviction, to be defended in his thesis, that the archive was collected by Zenon with an eye to self-protection in an eventual settling of accounts after the end of his employment by Apollonius (and the latter's subsequent death and the end of the *dorea* estate). It is as well to reserve judgment on this view until its justification is published, but it will surely not explain the full diversity of Zenon's papers. Some people just don't like to throw things away.

There are eight chapters. The first concerns monetary problems: there was, O. argues, a perennial shortage of metal currency in an era when bookkeeping money (most of our "money supply") did not exist. Circulation was slow; money was used as reserve; not all coins could be used in all situations. Most of this discussion seems to me very realistic on the level of the "quotidieneté" which is central to O.'s purposes (p. 18). But his claim that the Alexandrians were wrong

1. For Bingen's articles, see the references in *CW* 76 (1982–83): 16, nn. 20, 22; add his article in *Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Congress of Papyrology*, Amer. Stud. Pap. 23 (Chico, 1981), pp. 3–18.

in preferring the new money to old (in 270; p. 31) is problematic. My studies of fourth-century A.D. currency and prices have led me to the conclusion that the ancients could know *very* exactly the metallic content and value of money and take account of it in actions and prices. An interpretation based on the Alexandrians' error in such a crucial matter is not to be accepted too lightly.

Chapter 2 deals with the Ptolemaic empire, chapter 3 with the links between the Greeks of Egypt and the Mediterranean world from which they had come. There are good observations here on the way men like Zenon served as informal channels between a city and the upper levels of the Ptolemaic administration (p. 51), the time involved in travel (p. 56), and the role of informal ties generally in making an apparently rigid system work more effectively and responsively (p. 58). On the other hand, O. seems (p. 59) still to believe in the existence of a liturgic trierarchy in cities under Ptolemaic rule (see *CE* 46 [1971]: 356-62 for my demonstration of the contrary).

Chapter 4 is about the corresponding influence-peddling at home. O. treats the essential points: the control of access to Apollonius (p. 61), the informal, personal commerce between Alexandria and the countryside (p. 70), customs barriers (p. 72), and shortages (p. 76). One may at times find the portrait overdrawn, but the realities to which O. points are on the whole accurately and sensitively depicted. Chapter 5 describes the development of Apollonius' estate at Philadelphia and the activities and mentality of the "pioneers" who worked it. O. reveals (p. 88) that the estate grew many nonindigenous plants imported from the Mediterranean, although no evidence indicates any new discoveries in agriculture, as opposed to such borrowings. Philadelphia was, he notes, built on the plan of a Greek city, even though it lacked civic status in the political sense (it did have Greek institutions like a gymnasium).

The conflicts and contrasts of administrative centralization ("geometry," O. calls it) and local needs and initiatives form the subject of chapter 6. This longest and richest of the chapters treats a wide variety of topics—water management, royal justice, administration, Greek and Egyptian views on agricultural labor, debtors' prison, Zenon as arbitrator and judge, and the collaboration of privileged Egyptians. That these all make a unified chapter I do not see; but O. is probing throughout for the way things really worked. The shortage of reliable labor and the interaction of Greek and Egyptian in the economic sphere are treated in some detail and with many good insights.

Greek culture is treated in the brief chapter 7, both the evidence of literary interests in the archive and the social character of Philadelphia as a Greek "city." O. then proceeds in 8, "Le hasard et la fortune," to deal with Zenon's own attempts to build a fortune, to extricate himself after the dissolution of the *dorea*, and to spend his remaining years as a wealthy local notable—all of which he seems to have succeeded in doing. The chapter closes with some more ethereal remarks about Greek and Egyptian concepts of time and space and about Greek social dynamism.

The strength of this book is O.'s gift for reading documents carefully and imaginatively, finding the human realities behind the surface. The reverse side of this gift, however, is a lack of any real control on the operation of that imagination. For every document of which my understanding was sharpened by his

analysis, there was another where "How does he know?" was the instinctive response. O. has a conspiratorial view of history, and he is probably right in many cases. But in others, what is merely "superficial" may at the same time be true. And often there is no way to tell whether we are reading an interpretation or an overinterpretation.

Professionals, at least, can make allowances for such uncertainties. But who is the intended audience? Will's foreword indicates that this is a work of popularization, and the style and subject should in many ways make it a good example of that genre (despite occasional lapses like a pointless calendaric digression [p. 82]). So also, one might think, the lack of elaborate scholarly apparatus. But second thoughts cause a reconsideration. The endnotes are mainly just references to the papyri: to what end? These could have gone into the text, and most nonprofessional readers will not need or wish to look up *PSI 502*, let us say: O. translates it for the reader, after all. What a reader might well like is suggestions for more reading, and these are mostly lacking. A handful of specific points are backed up by references to articles, but it is not clear why these and not others (only one is in a language other than French, to be sure; but why then omit articles on which O. is directly dependent, like Bingen's on *PSI 502*?). As a work of "vulgarisation," then, it seems essentially limited to monoglot francophone audiences. This is rather a pity.

And yet copies were sent for review to this journal and other scholarly organs in the United States. The papyrologist experienced in the Ptolemaic period will find it (as I did) a fascinating and revealing work, even with some of the irritating aspects I have mentioned. But the readership to whom the papyrologist would like to recommend the book—ancient historians and classicists wanting to learn something of what the papyri have to offer—will, in the absence of a decent bibliographic apparatus, find it hard to follow up any interest which the book awakens. The superb bibliography in Pestman's *Guide* will help, although it has no critical comments or subject indexing.

In sum, a book of remarkable qualities and great attractions which could have been improved by some thought about its prospective readers.

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