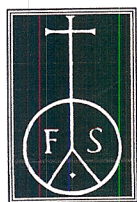


HERMAE  
SCHOLARS AND SCHOLARSHIP  
IN PAPYROLOGY

II.

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MMX

## NAPHTALI LEWIS

(1911-2005)<sup>1</sup>

ROGER S. BAGNALL

THE death of Naphtali Lewis [Pl. ix] on 11 September 2005, at the age of 93, brought to an end a generation in American papyrology and even on the larger scene leaves hardly anyone who can remember the papyrological world of the 1930s that he so memorably evoked at the Assemblée Générale of the Florence Congress of Papyrology in 1998, where he enjoyed playing Nestor to the younger generation.<sup>2</sup>

Lewis was born on 14 December 1911 in New York. With undergraduate training at City College (A.B. *magna cum laude*, 1930) in Classics and French, Lewis entered the Master's program at Columbia University. He remembered the teaching as generally mechanical and uninteresting. Its high point was a papyrology course in the History Department with William Linn Westermann in the spring of 1932, in which the other students were Meyer Reinhold and Moses Finkelstein (later Finley), both to have distinguished careers. The course focused on the Zenon papyri in the Columbia collection, and Lewis took naturally to the text editing, Westermann's weaker side. Prospects for continuing to the doctorate at Columbia after his M.A. that year were nonexistent, for Lewis had no money (and was offered no fellowship), and in any case the department was so uninspiring that he looked elsewhere. There was nowhere in the U.S. at that point where he could get the papyrological training he needed (the young Herbert Youtie's appointment at Michigan was as a researcher), and a providential fellowship from the American Field Service sent him to France.

In France, where he received a certificate at Strasbourg in 1933 and his doctorate in Paris in 1934, Lewis was taught by Paul Collart, whom he remembered as paternal and solicitous, for papyrology and by Gustave Glotz for history. His dissertation on the papyrus industry was publicly defended (with a grade of *très honorable*) before these two luminaries and André Piganiol; in its published versions (first in French, later in English as *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity*, 1974) it has become a classic monograph. His fluent French, on display on that occasion, was to serve him well throughout his career, including three terms as president of the Association Internationale de Papyrologues (1974-83).

After the defense, Lewis held a fellowship at the American Academy in Rome for two years, and he was also a member of IFAO in the winter of 1934-35, with Pierre Jouguet



PL. xx. Naphtali Lewis (1911-2005).

and Octave Guéraud for mentors and Jean Scherer, his contemporary at the Sorbonne, as company. They all worked together on the Fouad papyri. That spring, Lewis traveled in the Levant and Eastern Mediterranean, including Palestine and Lebanon. Memories of a bus trip to Baalbek in a spring snowstorm, in the middle of which a train of camels appeared, were still fresh more than six decades later. He then went on to Istanbul, Athens, and Italy, culminating at the Florence papyrological congress of 1935.

The great depression was not an easy time to enter academic life, and Lewis pieced together part-time and visiting posts for two years until he found an instructorship from 1938 at New York University, where Lionel Casson, who was to be his lifelong friend, had been hired not long before. The department head, Casper Kraemer, persuaded Westermann to let Lewis edit the Karanis fourth-century papyri in the Columbia collection. A few of these appeared in articles over the years, the remainder only years later in PCol VII, which we published jointly after I came to Columbia.

During the second World War, Lewis worked in the War Department as a translator for the Corps of Engineers and as director of war research at Columbia. He continued

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this notice was first published in «BASP» 43 (2006), pp. 5-8. The second part was delivered (in a shorter version) at the Assemblée générale of the Association Internationale de Papyrologues, Ann Arbor, 4 August 2007. A bibliography of Lewis's works compiled by Ralph Keen appeared in «BASP» 15 (1978), pp. 2-8; a supplement down to 1993 appears in Lewis's *On Government and Law in Roman Egypt: Collected Papers of Naphtali Lewis*, American Studies in Papyrology 33, Atlanta 1995, pp. xi-xiii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Reminiscences*, in I. ANDORLINI-G. BASTIANINI-M. MANFREDI-G. MENCÌ (edd.), *Atti del xxii Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia*, Firenze 23-29 agosto 1998, II, Firenze 2001, pp. 1343-1344. Some of the information in this memorial derives from conversations with Toli (the nickname by which he was universally known) in Croydon, New Hampshire, 20-22 August 1999. I am also indebted to Judith Lewis Herman for a brief curriculum vitae from Toli's files.



at Columbia after his war service, teaching classics until he found his permanent position at Brooklyn College, where he taught from 1947 until his retirement in 1976 as Distinguished Professor, taking an active role also in the City University's Graduate School in midtown Manhattan. In retirement he and his wife, Helen Block Lewis, a distinguished psychologist and psychoanalyst with a doctorate from Columbia, lived in Connecticut, with Lewis doing some teaching at Yale, summering as they had since 1945 in their house in Croydon, New Hampshire. Later still, Cambridge, Massachusetts, where their two children (Judith Lewis Herman and John B. Lewis) lived, became their winter home. After Helen's death in January 1987, Toli suffered a heart attack and came back to normal activity only slowly, but he was eventually remarried very happily to Ruth Markel and, despite significant arthritic difficulties, traveled quite a bit, with Jerusalem and Santa Barbara favored haunts. Like his contemporary T. C. Skeat, he continued to write to the end and remained unceasingly interested in the work of others. Ruth's death in November 2004 was a great blow, and when I last visited him in Cambridge, four months before his death, he complained mostly of being unable to manage the trip to the Harvard library to keep up his work.

Lewis's voluminous work ranged widely, as can be seen from the bibliographies in «BASP» 15 (1978), pp. 2-8 (prepared by Ralph Keen) and in Lewis's *On Government and Law in Roman Egypt* (American Studies in Papyrology, 33, Atlanta 1995), pp. xi-xiii. Its core, apart from the editing of papyrus texts, is well described by the title of the latter book, in which many of his articles are collected, but one could say above all that Lewis was a student of administration, particularly of the ways in which the Romans used compulsory public service instead of professional bureaucracy. This work took final form in *The Compulsory Public Services of Roman Egypt* (second edition, Papyrologica Florentina, 28, 1997), an indispensable work for anyone concerned with the liturgical system. His shrewd understanding of human nature, particularly in its administrative manifestations, enabled him to see the real functioning of the people and institutions behind the bland prose of official documents.

Another side of Lewis's work is represented by his two books aimed at a wider audience, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule and Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt*, as well as sourcebooks: the sweeping and voluminous *Roman Civilization* (2 vols., 1951 and 1955, with his old Columbia classmate Meyer Reinhold) plus smaller volumes of translated texts on the fifth century B.C., the Roman principate, and the interpretation of dreams. Despite the seemingly parallel character of the two books on Egypt, the Roman book is much more thematic in nature, the Ptolemaic one more episodic and microhistorical, as a series of case studies. With their clear and graceful style, plus the teacher's gift of fastening on interesting details, both have reached the intended broad audiences and brought the papyrologist's work to a general public and to undergraduates (both have been translated into French).

Given his long study of administration, it is not surprising that Lewis was also a capable administrator and leader,

serving as associate dean of Brooklyn College for seven years and then as executive officer of the classics program at the City University's Graduate School and University Center. He was the ASP's second president (1965-69) and in that role a strong supporter of the program of summer seminars held between 1966 and 1970. He was, indeed, deeply devoted to nurturing younger generations of scholars, whom he treated as colleagues, and unstintingly generous of his time in reading work and offering advice. He was treasurer of the Society at the time I became Secretary (1974) and expeditiously handed over the treasurership to me as well. My files from that era are full of his sage advice, typically written in the margins or on the back of my bureaucratic memoranda – with depression-era thrift, he never wasted a good sheet of paper. They also show the other traits that his friends will remember, his charm, sense of humor, interest in colleagues' families, and pride and affection for his own.

#### I. TOLI FROM THE ARCHIVES

For a papyrologist to talk about another papyrologist, there can be no better place to start than with the archives. Toli came to email fairly late and never with a great deal of conviction; his preference for the Selectric typewriter lasted at least until 2001 as well.

My Lewis archive begins with a four by six inch piece of paper, torn from a cheap pad, handwritten *transversa charta* with nine lines on 9/22/68, when I was all of 21 and a first-year graduate student, promising to get back to me shortly about a question I had sent him concerning a liturgical post in an *Oxyrhynchus* papyrus I had edited during the summer seminar in papyrology that year. And he did, two days later, with a concise typed letter giving useful advice. I had met Toli at the Ann Arbor Congress in August. He had given the keynote address, and I was surely the youngest person there. Most of the characteristics that the archive reveals later are here in a nutshell: efficiency, brevity, economy with materials, openness to the young, and generosity.

There is then a gap until the winter of 1974, when I had agreed to become Secretary of the American Society of Papyrologists. Toli, then Treasurer, fired off a broadside to the ASP directors on February 26 proposing – and assuming concurrence in the proposal – that the office of treasurer be recombined with that of secretary: that is, that he hand over this job to me. Nine days later, on March 7, after learning that I was going to come to Columbia that fall as an assistant professor, he wrote to me proposing that I take over his file of transcripts of the Columbia papyri from fourth-century Karanis and that we publish them jointly. This was an extraordinary gift, to which I have referred in the preface to *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton 1993). I can hardly think of a parallel act of generosity in the history of papyrological scholarship. It is true that he might well never have got around to publishing them himself, but that consideration has not deterred any number of other scholars from sitting complacently for decades, even a whole professional life, on material kept unavailable to everyone else. I cherish also a parenthetical remark that begins «Without in any way meaning to put myself in Wilcken's class ... ».



Toli the ASP director figures heavily in the early years of the archive. He loved to respond to my bureaucratic communications with marginal notes, the skinflint at work as ever. He turned one letter over and typed a four-line reply about the efficacy of self-stick address labels. One marginal note probably saved me from taking on the job of distributing the ASP's monographs; he wrote, «You should not take it – it is a commercial, not an academic, activity».

After Toli's retirement from CUNY, when he was settled in Connecticut and attached to Yale, his letters become longer. One from February, 1977, when I was in the Netherlands, recounts the collapse of the Phelps Hall heating system during the second worst recorded winter for that area, «exceeded only by that of 1918, the winter of the dreadful, lethal flu», he says. Two months later, economical as ever, he notes caustically the printing of the same two dozen pages of edition of Tebtunis papyri in two different text volumes: «What a waste of two dozen precious pages – and in these times of astronomical printing costs!».

In late May, for reasons I do not recall – perhaps the need to enlist his cooperation to make sure his bibliography was complete – Helen told Toli about the *Festschrift* for him that Michael Browne and I were in the process of putting together. He wrote to Michael; after thanks and some words about the bibliography, he started offering suggestions for additional contributors and proposing that the collection be a first volume of a new supplements series rather than a volume of the *Bulletin*. Chutzpah, perhaps; but in a world where the self-organized *Festschrift* is not unknown, manageable. When the volume appeared, however, the letter (from Croydon) is nothing but gracefully-expressed thanks: «In the world of fact today is overcast, gloomy and raining; but in the glow cast by the *festschrift* it is bright, sunny and warm».

Toli's experience of the world of papyrology was particularly valuable when I had to organize the international congress in 1980. A note from February of that year includes «Re: chairmen of sessions. Avoid using (experience has shown that they have not the stomach for interrupting windbags): [here follow the names of five eminences, after the last of whom he remarked, "he looks frightening but is in reality a very tame, gentle creature"]». And he was right about all of them, of course. He also offered some positive suggestions.

By 1981 health began to make its way into the letters, something absent before except for one bad case of flu. A letter in May telling me he planned to step down from the presidency of the Association Internationale de Papyrologues says «and I also think a septuagenarian, which I will be if I live till Xmas, should make way for "younger blood"». Probably the arthritis about which he wrote in more detail in October, causing him to walk with a cane,

lay behind this caveat. By February, despite a bad winter, he was doing better, but all of his friends know how much Toli's joints interfered with his enjoyment of life in the coming two decades, and by November he writes about his impending first surgery. He was hoping to be mobile again by early spring to come to a colloquium I was organizing – to «rejoin the human race, or at least the papyrological part of it», as he put it. The surgery was delayed, but on the Ides of March, 1983, he was jubilantly mobile. In the summer of 1984 he spoke of himself as «the standard picture of the retired professor, except that I'm not writing my memoirs» – that is, he was busy at his desk and in the garden.

That fall he wrote almost lyrically about the simple life in Croydon, but concluded, «Who could ask for more? We could». Therewith he announced that they were taking up residence in Cambridge for the winter months, apart from a stay in Santa Barbara. A year later, however, he was complaining about the inadequacies of the Harvard library and asking for a photocopy of an article from *The Irish Jurist* that they lacked. Those gaps were to plague him for the rest of his life, at least until the last year when he couldn't go to the library at all; that was worse.

Next in the archives are the moving pages that Toli sent out as a circular letter in February, 1987, talking about Helen's illness and death and his own heart attack and recovery: photocopied, with characteristic thrift, back to back. By April the postcards were flowing, by fall theerox requests. Even becoming a dean a couple of years later didn't save me from them. But Toli's pleasure at being back at work repaid all. A letter from June 1991, records his pleasure also at being elected a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy.

Although mobility remains a perennial theme, ranking with photocopies and reactions to publications I sent him, a letter from fall, 1997, shows Toli making plans to get to the Florence congress the following summer – which he did, as I have noted above. He took on the role of Nestor with much self-awareness and enjoyed it thoroughly. The same letter talks at some length about his children Judy and John, with enormous pride in their accomplishments, even in the parts he could make little of; he mentions a recent paper of John's «of which I understood occasional words, like the and lemma». Toli's notes over the years are in fact full of interest in the progress of our children.

There is more. These scraps of paper are aids to memory, calling the man back to mind, with all his delight in life, work, family, and friends. There are many gaps, only some of which I can fill in from what else I knew and know. It is all much like bringing people to life from the papyri, that craft at which Toli had no equal.

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