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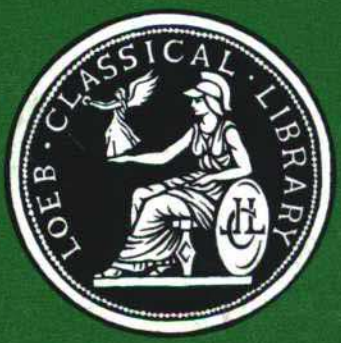

Translated by

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OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

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AND

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SELECT PAPYRI

II

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PREFACE

VOLUME I. of *Select Papyri* published in November 1932 consisted of documents dealing with private affairs; the subject of its successor is public business, illustrated by documents emanating from or addressed to persons occupying official positions. As before, while endeavouring to tap new sources, we have necessarily included a number of texts figuring in other selections. Where English translations were already available these have again been freely utilized, though not without revision. The Explanatory Notes and Glossary of Technical Terms are reprinted with small alterations from Volume I. A selection from the new literary papyri is now in preparation and will follow in due course.

A. S. HUNT

February 1934

INTRODUCTION

THE papyri which are translated in this volume cover a span of nearly a thousand years, during which many changes took place in the government, institutions, customs, and religion of Egypt. It therefore seems desirable to give the reader to whom these matters are not familiar a brief sketch of some characteristic features of the different periods. Whoever wishes to study the subject more seriously will find in Bevan's *Ptolemaic Dynasty* and Milne's *Under Roman Rule* reliable summaries of the information yielded by the papyri and in Wilcken's *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde* a full and masterly survey of the whole material. The most that we can attempt here is to restate a few of the main facts, giving references to the texts which bear on them and confining ourselves to what seems useful for the understanding of the present selection.

Throughout the Ptolemaic period, which ended in 30 B.C., Egypt was an independent realm; and for most of that period the kings, who resided in Alexandria, possessed territory or exercised suzerainty in various other parts of the Near East (see Nos. 267, 410). In Egypt itself the Ptolemies were not only absolute monarchs, but from about the middle of the 3rd century B.C. they assumed in their lifetime, along with their queens, the titles and honours of gods (*e.g.* Nos. 256, 272). They maintained an

army and navy, held effective control over all departments of state, finance, justice, public works, etc., and kept the great native priesthood in strict subjection. Demands for redress, even on the part of humble villagers, were, at least in the earlier period, frequently addressed to the king (Nos. 268-270). Though as a rule these were dealt with by the local authorities, many petitions, as for instance No. 272, were actually examined and subscribed by the king himself and many judicial sentences were submitted to him for approval or modification. He promulgated financial and legal ordinances, the latter of which are referred to in No. 256, p. 195, and issued decrees on the most various subjects whether in the form of a letter or of an official edict. Nos. 207, 273, 411 afford examples of the questions about which he corresponded personally with his subordinates. Probably Philadelphus [a] took more interest in his work than most of his successors ; but whether the king himself was active or idle, the royal chancellery was always busy.

Apart from the palace secretaries, the most important official was the dioecetes, who is frequently mentioned in our texts (*e.g.* Nos. 409-411). He was the king's minister of finance, having as his chief duty the collection of revenue and possessing jurisdiction in matters affecting the Treasury. It was in his office that the regulations concerning the royal monopolies (see No. 203) were revised, and no doubt originally drafted, and it may be presumed that he took a large part in elaborating the details of taxation. The petition addressed to him by a citizen of Calynda, No. 267, shows that his influence was as

[a] 285–246 B.C.

powerful in the foreign cities under his master's suzerainty as in Egypt proper. His headquarters were in Alexandria and he had under him a certain number of sub-dioecetae (see No. 265), who probably had special districts allotted to them.

For purposes of administration the country was divided into districts called nomes, not unlike the modern *mudirias*. Each nome was governed by at least one official bearing the military title of strategus, and a group of nomes, at least in the later period, was probably placed under the authority of an epistrategus. The chief financial functionaries in the nomes were at first the so-called oeconomi (*e.g.* Nos. 203, 273), who were under the orders of the dioecetes and worked in close association with the district bankers appointed by the government; but after the 3rd century B.C. they become less prominent and are overshadowed by the strategus (*e.g.* No. 393). Other important officials were the nomarchs and toparchs, some of whose many functions are described in No. 203, and the royal scribes or secretaries, who assisted the oeconomus and the strategus. In the separate villages we find an epistates (*e.g.* No. 269), acting as head of the local police, a comarch (see No. 203), and a village scribe or secretary (Nos. 275, 276, 339).

The towns of Alexandria, Naucratis, and Ptolemais in Upper Egypt enjoyed an exceptional position, being organized more or less in the manner of autonomous Greek cities. For example, Alexandria had its own code of laws, of which excerpts are given in Nos. 201, 202, and the citizens were enrolled in tribes and demes, styling themselves, even when resident in other parts of Egypt, not Alexandrians,

but members of such and such a deme (*e.g.* No. 253). But though these cities possessed a certain amount of self-administration and certain privileges, they were practically, like the rest of the country, in complete subjection to the king. Citizens of Alexandria could be called upon by him at any time to perform special services such as that of assize judges throughout the nomes in concert with his permanent officials (see No. 264).

The great bulk of the population was of course Egyptian. But, besides the inhabitants of the cities already mentioned, Greeks and Hellenized foreigners were settled in all parts of the interior, some as officials and soldiers in the king's service, others pursuing their private business. The soldiers of whom we hear most were cleruchs, men whom the king paid by grants of unoccupied land, a measure by which he not only increased the prosperity of the country but also held it in firmer domination; No. 412 is one of the many interesting documents on this subject. The Greeks who resided in the nomes kept up their own customs as far as possible, established gymnasia for the training of their youths, and held athletic and musical contests, such as the one referred to in No. 275. Jews are frequently mentioned, as for instance in No. 256, and it is not till the close of the Ptolemaic period that the papyri show any evidence of the prejudice against them which led to violent disturbances under Roman rule (Nos. 212, 298). No. 205 contains some regulations about the sale of slaves; but in fact slaves did not form a large element in the population, manual labour being so cheap that there was no economic demand for them. Power and wealth were almost en-

tirely in the hands of the Greek-speaking foreigners. The Egyptian masses, though nominally free, were exploited for the benefit of the Crown, overburdened with direct and indirect taxation, subject to compulsory labour, and forbidden to migrate at will from their domicile. Their discontent often culminated in a local revolt, such as the one spoken of in Nos. 417, 418. The class of natives which received most consideration was the priesthood, whose property and privileges were respected (see Nos. 210, 411) and whose gods were gradually adopted by the Greeks themselves. As time went on, the lower-class foreigners intermarried freely with the Egyptians, and a Greek or an Egyptian name occurring in a papyrus is not always a guarantee that the person who bore it was of pure Greek or pure Egyptian descent.

On the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 30 B.C. Egypt fell into the hands of Octavian, afterwards known as Augustus, and became a province of the Roman empire, or rather a preserve of the emperor, who was regarded by the Egyptians as the successor of the Pharaohs and Ptolemies. The Roman senate possessed no authority there, even of a nominal kind, and senators were jealously debarred from entering the country without express permission. The visit of Lucius Memmius recorded in No. 416 was merely a sign of the Romans' growing interest in Egypt; that of Germanicus, of which No. 211 is an interesting relic, infringed the imperial regulation and was viewed in Rome with disfavour and suspicion. The country was now governed by a praefect of equestrian rank appointed by the emperor and resident in Alexandria. Though matters of political importance,

such as those dealt with in No. 212, and various other questions (*e.g.* No. 214) were decided in Rome, in practice it was the praefect rather than the distant emperor who took the place of the former king. The petitions which used to be addressed to the king were now presented to the praefect (see Section VII). He commanded the army, presided over the civil administration, and exercised jurisdiction, holding yearly assizes at certain towns. Examples of the cases which he decided, both legal and administrative, are given in Sections V. and VI. A high Roman official called the dicaeodotes or juridicus aided him in this branch of his work and also judged many cases separately (*e.g.* No. 263).

Though the powers of the great Ptolemaic dioecetes were taken over by the praefect, the title and no doubt many of the functions were given to a subordinate but important official (see No. 225) until some time in the 3rd century. The private revenue of the emperor, formerly that of the Ptolemies (see No. 367), was administered by the so-called idiologus, procurator of the privy purse, who was also high priest of all Egypt and exercised control over the temples and their property ; the interesting document No. 206 gives a picture of some of the affairs with which his department had to deal.

As in the Ptolemaic period, the unit of administration was still the nome, over which presided the strategus, assisted by the royal scribe, nomarchs, and other subordinates ; and in the villages the most active functionaries were still the village scribes, until in the 3rd century they were superseded by the comarchs. The nomes again were divided into three groups, each of which was governed by a

Roman epistrategus appointed, like most of the higher officials, by the emperor ; a few records of his activities will be found in Sections V. and VI. The three Greek cities of Alexandria, Naucratis, and Ptolemais continued to enjoy their very limited autonomy, and a new city of similar standing, called Antinoopolis, was founded by the emperor Hadrian (see No. 288). The organization of magistracies, like that of Alexandria, in the nome-capitals brought them a step nearer self-government ; the names of the magistrates, gymnasiarch, exegetes, cosmetes, etc., occur continually in papyri of the Roman period ; and No. 241 contains an amusing account of the election of an unwilling nominee. In A.D. 202 the emperor Septimius Severus made a further innovation : in each nome-capital or metropolis, as well as in Alexandria from which this privilege had been hitherto withheld (see No. 212), he established a senate. The strategus was still governor of the nome, including the metropolis, but the senates now elected the municipal magistrates and also nominated many of the persons required for the performance of government duties, such as the decemprimi who supervised the collection of revenue and other public work throughout each nome (No. 225).

As regards the population, Romans had superseded Greeks as the upper class, though unlike the Greeks they had not imposed their language on the country. This privileged order included not only Romans by birth, who were comparatively few, but also natives of Egypt who had received the Roman citizenship, such as soldiers enrolled in a legion or honourably discharged from the auxiliary

troops (No. 315). Next in standing came citizens of Alexandria and those Greeks throughout the country who were wholly or partially exempt from the poll-tax (see No. 314). Enrolment among the ephebi and membership of a gymnasium (see Nos. 299, 300) were the chief insignia of this class and the passport to a political career of a minor kind. Typically Hellenic were the honours bestowed upon successful athletes (Nos. 217, 306). As regards the lower orders, there was little change in their position ; they were no less oppressed and exploited by the Romans than they had been by the Ptolemies. Though predominantly Egyptian, they included more and more families of mixed nationality ; such names as Ptolemaeus son of Petosorapis (No. 316) or Tapesouris daughter of Isidora (No. 313) exemplify the fusion of the two races. In A.D. 212, by a decree of the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, known as Caracalla, the Roman citizenship was granted to all provincials of a certain standing, which in Egypt meant all persons exempt from payment of the full poll-tax, but not the subject masses whether they bore Egyptian or Greek names. The reader will notice how many individuals in the later documents call themselves Aurelius and Marcus Aurelius ; all these belong to the new class of Roman citizens, though they do not style themselves Romans.

The reforms of Diocletian at the end of the 3rd century introduced a new system of administration, and in the reign of Constantine the capital of the empire was transferred from Rome to Byzantium. Of this new system and of the changes which it underwent in the course of three hundred years we need only mention the few points that concern the

texts selected for this volume. Egypt now formed part of the province of the praetorian praefect of the East, though not as a separate diocese until A.D. 381. The praefect of Egypt was deprived of his military command, but retained his former powers of administration and jurisdiction (*cf.* Nos. 227, 295). The country was divided into several large districts, which varied both in name and in extent at different periods (see Nos. 250, 333), and each of these was governed by a praeses who was subordinate to the praefect but transacted most of the business which the latter used to deal with in his former assizes. The Treasury was put under the charge of an official called the catholicus or rationalis (Nos. 227, 239, 294), who replaced the former dioecetes and idiologus and was independent of the praefect. In the reign of Justinian the main districts of Egypt became separate provinces, directly subject to the above-mentioned praetorian praefect. For instance Upper Egypt, called the Thebaid, was no longer under the control of a praefect in Alexandria, but was ruled by its own Dux et Augustalis, who exercised both military and civil powers, the praeses being subordinate to him. The important texts Nos. 218 and 363 belong to this phase of government, and No. 408 gives some idea of the pomp in which this great dignitary travelled.

Under the Byzantine system of government the strategus, so prominent in the former centuries, loses his importance and gradually disappears. His financial functions were taken over by the exactor, who was appointed for this service from among the members of the local senate, and the nome became the territory of what was formerly called its

metropolis. No. 240 is an interesting record of the proceedings of a senate in the Byzantine period, showing how the district was administered through the senate, no longer taking orders from a strategus as in No. 226. The most important magistrates were now the logistes or curator, to whom was entrusted much of the administrative work formerly done by the strategus (Nos. 227, 333), and the defensor, to whom appeals for justice, as for instance No. 297, were now addressed. Another noticeable innovation is the division of the nome into numbered districts called pagi, each administered by a praepositus appointed by the senate. One notes the use of Latin alongside Greek in the official terminology of this period, as also in the minutes of legal proceedings (Nos. 250, 263).

The character of the population also changed. In Greek circles Hellenic culture gave way before Christianity ; ephebi and gymnasia were things of the past. Roman citizenship was granted to Egyptians and Graeco-Egyptians more and more freely, the Flavii becoming as common as the Aurelii, until finally the distinction between Romans and subjects vanished. But if the peasant masses were no longer stigmatized as a subject race, many of them were actually in stricter bondage than before. In the 4th and 5th centuries large tracts of land which formerly belonged to the state and to small owners had become the property of local magnates, and the peasants who had put themselves under their protection were reduced to the position of serfs tied to the soil ; see for instance Vol. I. No. 26. Many of these great land-owners held the office of pagarch, which in its later form was one of great

authority and in particular gave them the right of collecting the public taxes in the districts which they ruled ; in No. 218 we have a striking example of the arrogance with which they sometimes exercised their powers.

The latest documents in this volume, Nos. 432-435, were written about seventy years after the Arab conquest, at a time when Greek was still in use as one of the official languages. Once more a ruling race was seated in Egypt ; but this time its claim to superiority was based not on nationality but on religion, and the cleavage between Moslem and Christian was more lasting than that between Greek and Egyptian in the Ptolemaic age or between Roman and non-Roman under the empire. Egypt was now administered by an Arab governor, who was appointed by the caliph and resided in the new city of Fustat at the south end of the modern Cairo. The Byzantine division of the country into provinces independent of each other had been swept away ; the municipalities had disappeared ; but the pagarchs, better suited to the actual conditions of the country, were still retained, and the pagarchy, like the nome of old, had become the unit of administration. The governor corresponded directly with the pagarchs ; for Basilius, whom he addresses in these letters as dioecetes or administrator, bears the title of pagarch in other documents. But whereas the Byzantine pagarchs acted almost as feudal lords, the tone and contents of these letters show how strictly their successors were controlled and called to account by the Arab government.

Conscription of labour for works of public utility was in Egypt an immemorial institution, to which

there are many references in the papyri of all periods. No. 389 illustrates its most common object, the annual consolidation of the irrigation dykes. Apart from manual labour, we find in Ptolemaic papyri a few allusions to temporary duties imposed by the king and probably also by the governing bodies of the Greek cities. But it was not till the Roman period that the principle of compulsory service was adopted as the basis of an elaborate system. The tenure of various public offices became gradually an obligatory burden, from which only certain classes of people (see for example Nos. 217, 245, 285, 288) could claim exemption. In each town and village individuals who owned property of a certain value could be appointed to an office in correspondence with their means on the responsibility of the community or of the nominating functionaries. Nos. 342, 343 exemplify the procedure employed and the kind of work which they were called upon to perform ; but the mode of selection, nomination, and appointment varied from period to period. When the local senates were created, it was they who nominated the more important office-bearers not only in the towns but in the surrounding districts as well (Nos. 226, 237). In other cases we find a system of allotting certain duties to the inhabitants of each quarter of the town in rotation, the suitable persons being nominated by a local official (Nos. 290, 362). Even the magistracies themselves, such as the gymnasiarchship, became compulsory honours imposed upon such townsmen as were thought able to afford the expense involved ; No. 241 shows very clearly the reluctance with which they were sometimes undertaken. The main object of the system