
It is not far short of 100 years since the office of royal scribe in Roman Egypt was the subject of a monograph by E. Biedermann, published in 1913, so this new study by Kruse will be sure of a warm welcome. It will be all the more welcome for the comprehensive and thorough way in which the author has undertaken his task.

K. begins with a brief introduction, including a sketch of the Ptolemaic background, before a general section on the nature of the office (area of control, substitution, length of service, pay, etc.). There follows an extremely detailed study of the functions of the holder, which takes up over 700 pages (with no fewer than 2185 footnotes, many of them extensive). This is divided into sub-sections dealing with the royal scribe’s involvement in the control of population (the census and ἐπίκρισις), ἐπίσκεψις, issuing of seed-corn, sales and leases of government property, taxation, and the administrative control of the priesthood. After a short chapter on the personnel functioning in the office of the royal scribe, there is a longer section on his level in the administrative hierarchy and his social position. The work concludes with a discussion of the disappearance of the office and with a detailed prosopography containing 235 individual entries.

K. has particularly interesting suggestions to make regarding the early Roman period and the disappearance of the office. He suggests that the powers of the royal scribe in the early Roman period may have been substantially different from those he came to possess from the late first century AD on, though he admits that lack of evidence makes this uncertain. In this period the royal scribe may have been much more like his Ptolemaic predecessor, essentially an Egyptian office and one with which the Egyptian farmer may have felt more affinity: cf., e.g., 560f. Later the office may have become more ‘hellenised’: note that there are no holders with Egyptian names in the Roman period (§92ff.). K. suggests that the powers of the royal scribe with regard to priestly offices may have been greater in the first century than later (see especially p. 750). He may at this period have had some police powers (see 863ff.) and certainly at this date he received petitions and could issue summons (§72ff.). From the later first century on, K. suggests, the strategos came to have more power and the royal scribe, though still essential to the running of the Roman administrative machine in the nome, became more definitely subordinate, with his duties confined to «Finanzverwaltung und Fiskalbuchhaltung». K. in several places emphasises that the royal scribe was responsible for «fiskalische Buchhaltung über sämtliche Ressourcen des Gaus» (e.g. 61); his receipt, and his only, of certain reports well suits his position as «obersten Finanzbuchhalters des Gaus» (e.g. 641).

The chapter on the disappearance of the office (§940–54), which happened during the administrative reforms of Philip in the 240s, puts forward the attractive suggestions that this was due in part to the process of municipalisation with the βουλαί gradually taking on some of the jobs of the royal scribes, and that it was directly connected with the introduction into Egypt of the δεκατοροί.
The royal scribe was at the centre of the administration of Roman Egypt and heavily involved in its paper work, of which large quantities have survived among the papyri. One may still wonder why K.’s work is of such great length. It must be admitted that there is some repetition (especially notable in the Appendix, which overlaps a good deal with the notes to the prosopography), and unnecessary explanation of the general background, which is sure to be familiar to anyone reading a book of this nature; and in making his points K. does tend to put up improbable hypotheses only to knock them down, and to pile Pelion on Ossa. But to have cut down in these areas would have made little difference. The main reason the work is so long is because K. has gone well beyond a study of what is directly concerned with the office of royal scribe, both in general considerations and in the examination of the texts, with the deliberate intention of putting the study into its context (cf. the sub-title). It is not merely that he has left no stone unturned; in many cases he has thrown his stone into the pond and pursued every ripple which it makes. His examination of the office, in particular the minute examination of masses of texts, often goes beyond what is strictly relevant. Thus the section on the Φαραονία Φαραονία does not merely examine the role of the royal scribe in this, but is in effect a comprehensive examination of the topic; and the same could be said mutatis mutandis for many other sections of the book. The result is a work which is not only enormous but also enormously useful.

Throughout K. uses parallel information, especially regarding the strategos, to illuminate what we know or can deduce concerning the office of royal scribe. K. makes clear areas in which he functioned alongside the strategos and areas where he could act independently.

The relationship between the two posts is treated in detail, especially 812–18 and 894–9: note in particular his statement on p. 814 that «die Unterordnung des Königlichen Schreibers unter den Gaustrategen zweifellos ein grundlegendes Strukturmerkmal der administrativen Beziehungen zwischen diesen beiden Spitzenbeamten der ägyptischen Gauverwaltung war». K. has interesting comments on the language used between officials, emphasising that the use of ιστορικός between strategos and royal scribe and the fact that the strategos never uses the imperative in addressing him shows that the royal scribe was not felt to be a subordinate in the same way as say a village scribe or a tax collector.

He was undoubtedly no.2 in the local administration, as is evidenced most clearly by the fact that it was the royal scribe who acted as strategos when that office was vacant. K. brings out well the difference between substitution for a strategos temporarily absent and appointment by the central government to stand in when there was no one holding the office of strategos (843ff.). When acting as strategos, the royal scribe had the full powers of the strategos, but it is often difficult to be sure when he is using his powers as acting-strategos and when he is functioning as a royal scribe. Interestingly, while there are examples of royal scribes later becoming strategoi, there is no known example of a royal scribe moving up to the post of strategos in the same nome, which K. is inclined to think was deliberate policy (cf. 848, 921–3).

The relationship of the royal scribe to the central administration and to the conventus is discussed on pp. 818–43. On the question of whether the office of royal scribe was a liturgy, K. decides that it was not, surely rightly: it was part of a career in the Roman administrative service.
Its holders certainly belonged to the metropolitan elite and sometimes had been or became magistrates, though not before the second century, it seems; some were also Alexandrian citizens (cf. 928, 929, 932ff.). Few, however, in comparison with strategoi seem to have been Roman citizens (932–6) and there is no evidence of this in the first century (K. could have added that, with one possible exception, BGU III 971.8, no third-century royal scribe has any gentilicium other than Aurelius). The royal scribe was not allowed to serve in his ódò, at any rate after the earlier first century (44–6).

K.’s work is to be commended not just for its thoroughness but for the competence he shows in all aspects involved in such a study. His detailed examination of the individual texts constantly throws up something new and often challenging, even if many of his conclusions are only what one would expect.

I would single out three features in particular. First, his palaeographical skill: in numerous places he offers suggestions for improved readings, which, where they can be checked, are nearly always plausible and usually certainly right. Regrettably, so far as I can see, there is no indication in the indexes of those texts where suggestions on the readings are offered.

This is also the one respect where I feel K. might have done more than he has, that is to say in checking readings. He has used plates where available or in one or two cases images on the web, and also sometimes asked scholars to look at originals for him, in particular Günter Poethke for the Berlin papyri. But more could easily have been done. To take but three examples: (1) On p. 108 K. remarks of PSI X 1136 «Die Lesung bedürfte ... einer erneuten Überprüfung» why not ask? there are several competent papyrologists in Florence who would have been willing to check the original. (2) In P.Oxy. L 3565, 40 K. suspects άναγρωφή for the editor’s άναγρωφή (117ff.); a digital image is available on the web, which, in my opinion, confirms K.’s suggested reading. (3) A request to the reviewer would at least have enabled him to see a photograph of the unedited text he refers to on p. 288.

Secondly, K.’s handling of the Greek in these often difficult, fragmentary texts is impressive (in one place, p. 765, he specifically speaks of a «grammatisch einigermaßen verzwickte[n] Passus» – there are many such).

Note, for example the precision with which he discusses the meaning of μήπος (14564)), έτερος (746), μηνύειν (10667) (άνεξέταστοι έδη on p. 1081 is a strange slip). K. is especially good on the meaning of some of the administrative terms which occur, e.g. καταχορισμός (82ff.), καταπνίξεις (170, cf. 676), παροδίσχος (187ff.), δίκαιος (326ff.), άναπόστασις και χρηματισμός (486ff.), παράδειξες (108ff.), άναπλημματές (616ff.), πρόξημος (619), παραχώρηση (661ff.), έκχορηγίας (666ff.), διαστέλλεις and επάχθης (676ff.) – part of an extensive discussion of P.Thmuis I), λοιποτύπων (799ff.), ἐπιβολή (861ff.), σομιτισμός (1096ff.). Note also his discussion of the somewhat shadowy officials, the έκλογητής (821ff.), the τοπογραφευτές (488ff.) and the θεοφόρους (415ff.); as well as that of κατ’ άναφοράν μεμοθομένη και ένοεμένη γη (582ff.).

Thirdly, his judgement is of a very high order. His approach is full of common sense and healthy scepticism. In well over 90% of cases where texts are controversial I find myself agreeing with the conclusion he reaches. Yet he is not afraid to criticise the views of earlier scholars, sometimes in rather fierce language, from Wilcken’s downwards and including once or twice those of the reviewer (but my remark criticised in n. 426 on p. 201 referred not to Didymus but to those υπό τοῦ αὐτοῦ στρατηγοῦ...ἀπεθέντων, described by K. on p. 203 as «Vertreter des Strategen»). Nor does he avoid posing questions to which he cannot provide the answers. He is also fully alive to the problems presented by the accident of preservation and to the danger of making deductions from a unique text or of in-
sisting on conclusions which can be overturned in the future by a single text. He is also prepared to admit that there may have been some flexibility in administrative practice or differences in the different nomes; things may have been less rigid than «der zur Systematisierung neigende Historiker» might have wished (372).

Although there are a number of typographical errors (very few of which will cause difficulty: n. 1512 on p. 549 has mostly disappeared; in 588, the reference should be to P.Oxy. III 500 not P.Flor. III 568), K.'s general accuracy is extremely high, so that the reference to «der berühmte Dioiket Zenon» (876,10f.) comes as something of a shock. Inconsistencies, so far as I have noted, are almost entirely absent, a considerable achievement in a work of this kind (but note the discrepancy between p. 139, where the upper age limit for the payment of poll-tax is given as 60, and p. 253 where it is given as 62).

There are many small points which could be raised, as is inevitable in a work of this length, of which the following are a selection. P.Oxy. XLVII 3362 could have been cited with advantage in the discussion of the union or otherwise of more than one nome (24ff.). P.Oxy. I 82 (51,18f.) is not a fragment of an «Amtseides eines Gastrategen» but of a υπηρέτης of a strategos (see P.Oxy. XXXVI 2764,11ff.); this post was certainly a liturgy, whatever may be the case of the γραμματέας of the royal scribe, discussed on pp. 724ff.

The irregular height of the items in SB XX 14095 (224,18f.) is not a good argument against their being part of an official τόμος συγγραφέως. The date of SB V 8755 (412, 471,10f.) could as well be 787/8 24 49/8 BC. I do not believe the question of whether abbreviated titles of magistrates refer to their current or past holding of the office is as simple as K. would imply (e.g. 44,14f.). The βουλευτής in P.Col. X 273 (445,10f.; not indexed) was not necessarily a councillor at Oxyrhynchus (and perhaps cf. P.Oxy. XLVII 3340). K. is, I believe, entirely right to reject any difference in practice between loans of seed-corn which include or omit the word δέντου (448ff.), but he fails to note that the same idea is conveyed in P.Oxy. LVII 3923–5 by the use of the verb δαπανάω. In view of Hunt's comment, it is wholly unjustified to suggest altering the reading ζητήματος to λόγου in P.Oxy. IX 1188,1 (528,19f.). I suspect that whether or not confiscated property came under the control of the δικαστής or the procurator in charge of the ἱδρος λόγου (e.g. 546,10f.) depended on the type of property and did not imply the latter losing competence in some areas to the former. The change of οὔτε ζητήματος to οὔτε κατασχέθημα suggested for P.Oxy. X 1279,24 (567) cannot be put down to a misreading, as K. implies; scribal error is another matter (and I do not understand the reference to κατασχέθημα). 

I am not certainly a liturgy, whatever may be the case of the γραμματέας of the royal scribe, discussed on pp. 724ff. The editor pointed out that the lease is granted, without implying anything for the powers of the royal scribe. There is no mystery about the prefect's order to publish his subscriptio in P.Oxy. VII 1012 (659); Rudolf Haensch has demonstrated that this is normal at this date. It is odd that in discussing P.Lips. II 134 on pp. 829ff. K. quotes the form ἔξωπτου without comment, though the editor pointed out that it is not Greek as it stands. There is no good evidence for a nome in the Delta called Ἡνεκελοπολίτης ὁ μαρὰς (968,5). The suggestion for the lacuna in P.Princ. II 26 (968,14) is attractive but long, as K. admits, and is even longer with the correct genitive form Τυμαγόνου. Dates in the prosopography are sometimes too precise: e.g. the limits of Hi-erax' term in P.Oxy. III 579 are given as 12 March 134–October 137 (1018) on the grounds that he served along with the strategos Apolinaris, first attested in office on 12 March 134; but there is no reason why Apolinaris should not have been in office some time before then. The description of the Appendix as 'Testimonia incerta' is misleading: the great majority of the entries definitely concern royal scribes, it is the nature of the documents which is uncertain. In P.Flor. I 13,12 (1068), which is a doubtful case, K.'s suggestion to supply some case of βεστίλιτι may be supported by P.Mich. XIV 676,10. SB XIV 13547 may be more of a problem than K. allows (1106ff.), though he is right that the passage mentioning the royal scribe must refer to years of Philip.
These are trivialities and it would certainly be wrong to end on a note of criticism. This is a splendid work, on which the author is to be congratulated. The grasp he shows of the mass of disparate, often fragmentary and difficult, material is impressive. The argument throughout is clear and clearly expressed, and makes plain what can be proved and what is mere speculation. What is needed now is a comparable study of the nome strategos. Dare we hope that K. will go on to provide this? There is no one better qualified.

Durham


In den Prolegomena (9 f) führt L. die wichtigsten älteren Arbeiten zum Gegenstand an. Dabei verweist er vor allem auf die erst postum erschienene Dissertation von M. Berjenišvili,2 auf die er im folgenden immer wieder zurückgreift.

In den kurzen Überlegungen zur Herleitung des Namens ‘Phasis’ (11 f) kann L. plausibel machen, daß es sich dabei um die hellenisierte Form eines lokalen kartvelischen Toponyms handelt, das im weitesten Sinne ‘Wasser’ oder ‘Fluß’ bedeutet.3


2 M. D. Berjenišvili, K’alak’ p’asisis istoriisat’vis [Zur Geschichte der Stadt Phasis] (Diss. T’bilisi 1941. 1969) [georg.].