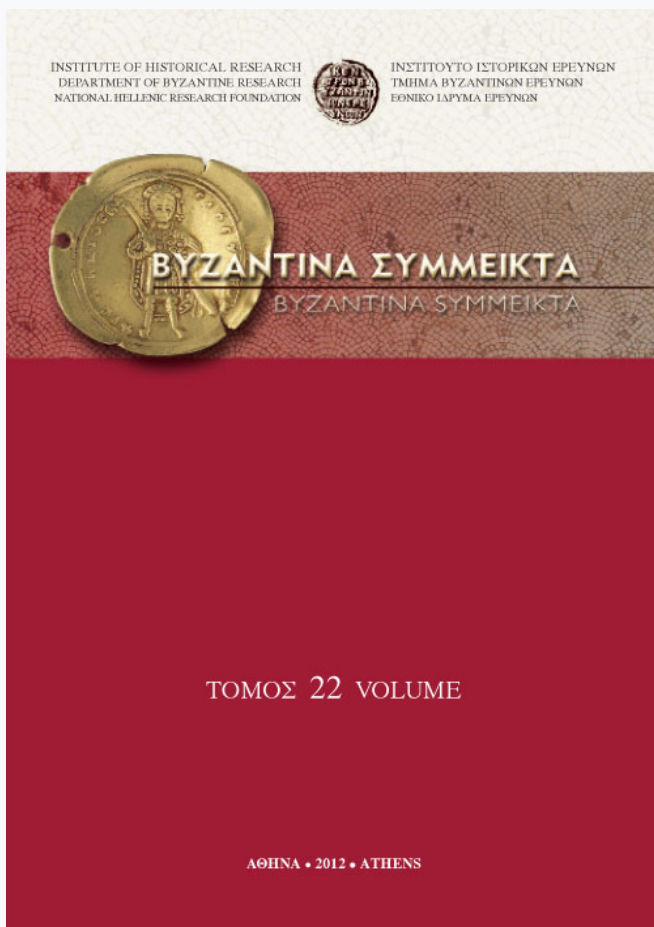


## Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 22 (2012)

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 22



**Book review: Ά. ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΟΥ, Τὰ δημόσια ἀρχεῖα στὴν ρωμαϊκὴ Αἴγυπτο, διδακτορικὴ διατριβή, Σύλλογος πρὸς διάδοσιν ὠφελίμων βιβλίων, Ἀθῆναι 2012,**

*Efstathios PAPAPOLYCHRONIOU*

doi: [10.12681/byzsym.1090](https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.1090)

Copyright © 2014, Efstathios PAPAPOLYCHRONIOU



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

### To cite this article:

PAPAPOLYCHRONIOU, E. (2012). Book review: Ά. ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΟΥ, Τὰ δημόσια ἀρχεῖα στὴν ρωμαϊκὴ Αἴγυπτο, διδακτορικὴ διατριβή, Σύλλογος πρὸς διάδοσιν ὠφελίμων βιβλίων, Ἀθῆναι 2012., *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 22, 371–374. <https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.1090>

A. ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΟΥ, *Τὰ δημόσια ἀρχεῖα στὴν ρωμαϊκὴ Αἴγυπτο*, διδακτορικὴ διατριβή, Σύλλογος πρὸς διάδοσιν ὠφελίμων βιβλίων, Ἀθήναι 2012, pp. 472 (3 maps and 4 photographs of papyri included). ISBN 978-960-8351-61-5

The book under review is the published version of the author's doctoral thesis, which was submitted to the Department of Archives and Library Science of the Ionian University in 2003. Its subject is public archives in Roman Egypt, a fundamental institution of public administration in that era.

The book is initiated by a short foreword, in which the author explains how he made the choice of his topic, defines the term "archive", offers a brief summary of contents and makes certain acknowledgements. After three lists of bibliographical abbreviations, editions of papyrical archives and editorial signs, the main text begins. It is divided in two parts:

The first chapter of the first part deals with the institutional frame of public archives in Roman Egypt. Their organization was based, without major changes, on the pre-existing archival system of the Ptolemaic period, which in turn had succeeded that of the Pharaonic era. In this chapter there is a synthesis and a critical appreciation of the existing literature, with a view to painting a complete picture of the institution of public archives in Roman Egypt, while the parallel examination of textual sources has helped the author to locate wrong interpretations or even references. Furthermore there were sources detected, which had never been studied until now.

After a short description of the administrative system of Roman Egypt, the author illustrates the functions of each kind of archive and the duties of the several civil servants employed therein in a detailed and fully documented way. There are chapters elucidating the operations of the local archives and officers, such as the *γραφεῖα*, the *ἀγορανομεῖα*, the

μνημονεία, the βιβλιοθήκη δημοσίων λόγων, the βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων, the χωρική βιβλιοθήκη, the συναλλαγματογράφοι, the βιβλιοφύλακες, the ἀμφοδογραμματεὺς and the βασιλικογραμματεῦς, but also others depicting the central archives of Alexandria, such as the καταλογεῖον, the διαλογίη, the Ναναῖον, the Ἀδριανεῖον, the βιβλιοθήκη ἐν Πατρικοῖς and the ἡγεμονική βιβλιοθήκη (the prefect's archive), as well as their officers, such as the ἀρχιδικαστής, the ἀπολογισταὶ γραμματεῖς, the εἰκονισταί, the νομογράφος ἀγορᾶς, the ἀρχιταβλᾶριος and the ἐπίτροπος βιβλιοθηκῶν. The author also explains the procedure by which a document could be transformed into a public one (δημοσίωσις), the rules and limitations governing contracts and the measures taken against forgery.

The second chapter of the first part similarly makes a complete synthesis and critical evaluation of the archival system in Rome itself, in order to stress the similarities as well as the differences with the system valid in Egypt. This kind of comparison is unprecedented by the existing bibliography.

A distinction is made between the period of the *res publica* and that of the *principatus*. In the former period we encounter the *aerarium*, the *plebei* archive, several archives located in temples, the *pontifices'* archive, the *tabularium*, the *tabularium coloniae* and the private archives of the powerful noble families (*tablina*). In the latter period we come across the central imperial archive (*tabularium/sanctuarium Principis/Caesaris*), the secret personal archive of the Emperor (*sacrarium/secretarium*), the *Consistorium's* archive, several archives serving the imperial bureaucracy (mainly the *a memoria* archive), archives pertaining to financial matters and services, the provincial archives, the military archives and finally the municipal archives (the *commentarii* of the *decemprimi*).

The conclusion of the above analysis is that the Romans did not apply a uniform archival system over all of their dominion, but they adopted the local systems, provided the latter ensured control of power and smooth administration of the provinces. The archives in Egypt were divided in more categories than those in Rome and they performed more functions. In Rome archives rather formed a permanent deposit of public documents and had little to do with citizens' transactions, either among themselves or with the state.

The first chapter of the second part makes the distinction among private, public and mixed archives, as this distinction has not always been

clear. After a list of the diverse sources of the archives' names and the classification of the different types of documents under the headers 'private' and 'public' document respectively, the author elucidates the meaning of each of the three categories in Roman Egypt systematically and thus, unlike any other scholar up to now, offers a means to avoid confusion and characterize each archive accurately. The chapter is concluded by the analysis of two representative specimens of mixed archives, namely the archives of Aurelius Isidorus (late 3rd – early 4th cent. AD) and Flavius Abinnaeus (4th cent. AD).

The second chapter of the second part, which is the most extensive one in the book, presents eight published public archives of the Roman period, mainly aiming at examining their typology, which is investigated in a systematic and methodical way for the first time. The reason why these specific archives have been chosen is that they are adequately complete and well preserved. Their contents are mainly or exclusively financial. These eight archives belonged to the notarial office of Tebtunis and Kerkesouchon Oros (1st cent. AD), the public record office of Theadelphia (2nd cent. AD), the public record office of Karanis (second half of 2nd cent. AD), the Soknobraisis' temple in Bacchias (late 2nd – early 3rd cent. AD), the senate of Polydeukia (early 3rd cent. AD), the assembly of Hermoupolis (second half of the 3rd cent. AD), the corn dole service of Oxyrhynchus (late 3rd cent. AD) and finally the assembly of Oxyrhynchus (late 3rd – early 4th cent. AD). Each archive is preceded by a brief and enlightening introduction concerning its date and origin, the operations of its bearer and the kinds of documents it contains. Afterwards the typology of the documents is analyzed extensively. Documents are classified in categories and they are subsequently subject to a document by document scrutiny.

The main conclusions of the second part are as follows: There was an extensive bureaucracy and several cases of corruption. Civil servants often tried to make personal profit of their duties. An elaborate and developed system of notary deeds existed and wide use of copies was made, in order to safeguard and secure the parties involved. There were templates for all kinds of documents. The archives of lower level, namely the local ones, carried out more legal transactions and thus they were richer in number of documents. All transactions, especially fiscal ones, were strictly controlled by the state. Equally strict control was exercised upon temples and priests

of the Egyptian religion. Even lower subjects could address a petition to high authorities, even the prefect himself, without any intervention of local officers. Many documents refer to marriage, divorce and dowry, revealing the upgraded social status of women. Professional guilds were very strong and strictly organized. Documents were written almost exclusively in Greek with the exception of very few Demotic and Latin ones.

The detailed investigation of the aforementioned archives is followed by an appendix of complete texts, small extracts of which can be found mainly in the second chapter of the second part. Finally, a glossary follows, covering the archives under examination, as well as other archives which needed to be studied by the author; its originality lies in the fact that it also includes explanations of entries, or entries missing even from the recent supplement of the *Oxford Greek-English Lexikon*, by Liddell, Scott et al. (1996).

The book is concluded by a series of useful tables: Symbols and abbreviations used by the scribes of papyri, the nomes of Egypt, the Egyptian months and their Macedonian, Roman and modern equivalents, Roman emperors up to the year AD 305 grouped by dynasties and finally a short chronological table displaying the history of Roman Egypt.

The last pages are covered by a well updated bibliography, a summary in English, an outline depicting the operation of the archival system in Roman Egypt, three maps of Roman Egypt, four plates with photographs of papyrial texts and finally very rich indexes of emperors, kings, deities, nations, months, temples, archives, institutions, historical events, place names, personal names, administrative terms, legal terms, financial terms and different sorts of taxes.

In conclusion, Dr. Anagnostou's treatise is a remarkable work from many aspects. It is a valuable source of information both for specialists and for the educated public in general. Based on original textual sources it elucidates the administration of Egypt, a country strongly influenced by Greek language and civilization, even under Roman rule, and offers to Greek readers a means of access to a very important period of Greek history, which is almost neglected by the official school timetable in modern Greece. From this point of view it is a dissertation no library, either public or private, should miss.

EΦΣΤΑΘΙΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΠΟΛΥΧΡΟΝΙΟΥ  
Athens