

THE *AMICITIA PAPHYROLOGORUM* IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD OF LEARNING

Roger S. Bagnall (Président de l'Association Internationale de Papyrologues)

We may be the only international scholarly organization to include on its web site a special section on the ideal of friendship among practitioners of the discipline it serves. Geneviève Husson and Alain Martin have collected there the passages in which the concept of the *amicitia papyrologorum* was introduced into papyrological discourse, first – as it seems – by Leopold Wenger in his closing speech at the Munich congress of 1933, and then invoked by others, through the increasingly dark days leading up to and during the Second World War¹. It emerges, after the end of that war, in a letter of Wenger to Marcel Hombert in 1948, thanking him for the news of his election as an honorary president of our now more formally and constitutionally defined Association Internationale de Papyrologues.

The key element in these early passages is certainly internationalism, as James Keenan (2009, 69) has pointed out in his discussion of the *amicitia* in the *Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. That remains a crucial part of how we conceive of ourselves, and I shall come back to this point shortly. But otherwise, as Keenan points out, « the meaning of the motto is usually assumed but rarely defined ». When I was young, it was often contrasted in a somewhat self-congratulatory fashion with *odium epigraphicum*, a state of affairs that the idealistic motto of the *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* sought to change. Papyrologists adopted, in Keenan's words, « a code of courtesy even in cases of strong disagreement, where criticism is directed at an anonymous "editor" and polemics are frowned-upon exceptions ». The contrast with epigraphical discourse as practiced in the 1960s and 1970s could indeed hardly be more striking, although things are far better in epigraphy today than then.

But this side of the *amicitia* is in a sense passive, or even negative, in concept – the avoidance of something unpleasant. Now avoiding *odium* is a good thing, to be sure, but it is not enough to define friendship. The personal dimension of the friendship of papyrologists is also a part of its meaning, as Keenan remarks. I know that many of us felt this acutely this spring, in the outpouring of grief and affection at the accidental death of Traianos Gagos, the impresario of our last congress and one of the most vivid personalities to grace our discipline in my lifetime. The loss of a fine papyrologist and superb leader was truly hard for a small discipline like ours, but I think it was surely Traianos, rather than Professor Gagos, who occasioned the depth of the obviously widespread love expressed on that occasion by our community.

Neither what I call the negative side of *amicitia* nor the personal, however, is fully satisfying as the basis for thinking about ourselves as a scholarly community. We are by far more numerous than we were in 1933, certainly, and that makes the larger community inevitably less personal. Even the distance between today and the first Ann Arbor congress of 1968 – of which only nine participants are also on the list for the present congress – is substantial, as Dorothy Thompson pointed out in her address there three years ago. None of us knows the entire membership of the AIP, and not even the friendliest and most outgoing of us can hope to develop a personal relationship with more than a subset of papyrologists.

A mere nine countries were represented among the eleven speakers whose papers were published in *Museum Helveticum* the year after our association last met in Geneva²; the second notice of that congress, published beforehand in *Chronique d'Égypte*, lists just ano-

¹ < <http://www.ulb.ac.be/assoc/aip/amicitia.htm> >.

² Martin (1953). The paper of Victor Martin, however, does not figure in the typed program, a copy of which I owe to the kindness of Dr. Barbara Roth of the Bibliothèque de Genève.

ther nine who were scheduled to give short papers (in the event, there were ten)³. These collectively add just one country to the list. Thus fewer than two dozen papers in all were given, although about 105 persons were present. From the preliminary list of participants at the present congress, by contrast, I counted 23 countries, and there might be a couple more that I did not identify. International today is much more international than it was then : doubling our numbers has roughly doubled the range of countries represented.

My question for us today, then, is how we can and should instantiate positively the friendship of papyrologists in a globalized world. In referring to a globalized world of learning, I mean something more than this growth of the international community on which we draw and in which we work, but that is certainly part of it. National boundaries play a weaker role than ever before, something we can see at a very basic level in the much freer movement of people around the academic world. Within the European Union this is a matter of legal right, but it is equally a reality of the transatlantic world. The United States has long imported scholars, and it is perhaps not surprising that 40 percent of the board of the American Society of Papyrologists have their origins in three other countries. But when the General Editors of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* include a Greek and an American, just to give one example, we are truly dealing with a degree of integration once hard to imagine. I remember hearing much anger about « foreign » scholars taking American jobs in the 1970s, when the exuberant academic job market of the 1960s came to a sudden end ; not today, despite the shortage of academic positions in the last two years. Indeed, the greatest impression made on me by reading the list of participants is how many of them work in a country other than their place of origin ; and of course many were also at least partly trained in one or more additional countries.

Other boundaries than national have also eroded. Institutions cooperate more readily today than before, to the benefit of all. We recognize that resources of people, energy, and money are all limited, and that we can do more together than separately. People do step in when necessary to preserve that core of research tools on which our discipline has always prided itself. A recent example is the outstanding leadership Andrea Jördens has shown in ensuring that the termination, at least for now, of papyrology in Marburg will not mean the end of the great enterprises founded by Friedrich Preisigke and nourished in recent decades by Hans-Albert Rupprecht. Papyrology has always had some welcome willingness to welcome scholars from outside an institution to bring their expertise to bear on publishing collections, too ; I think for example of the role of Claire Préaux in publishing the ostraca transcribed by J.G. Tait from the collection originally in the Bodleian Library, movingly evoked in correspondence recently published by the late Georges Nachtergaele⁴. Disciplinary distinctions, too, are less clear than they used to be, both in categories of material – papyrology and epigraphy, particularly – and in language, as both Ptolemaic and Late Antique Egypt owe much of their vitality as research areas in recent years to the willingness of scholars to work across linguistic lines and bring all of the relevant texts to bear. Piet Pestman, whom we lost just three months ago, was one of the great trailblazers in this kind of work for the Hellenistic period. Today, the renaissance in Coptic and Arabic papyrology has brought similar approaches to the other end of papyrology's millennium.

None of this happens of itself, and we must not let ourselves take it for granted or think that it is an immutable law of scholarly history. Underlying all of it is a willingness to share resources, to be open to others and welcome them, and the courage to believe that openness and generosity are good things for all involved rather than a threat to those who have. There is a positive, activist, willed character to this disposition, and I believe that even if this has not always been articulated, we can see it at work already in the smaller world of our predecessors. It was, even if unstated, part of what made the *amicitia*

³ Anonymous (1952).

⁴ Nachtergaele (2009).

papyrologorum what it was sixty years ago and more. But it is much more important today, when not only have national boundaries faded from importance in scholarship but the continuing usefulness of our learned disciplines is not taken for granted by too many people outside the ranks of their practitioners.

The importance of this activist view of the *amicitia papyrologorum* was brought home to me very forcefully by the experience of working over the past three years with the group appointed at our last congress to discuss the question of the traffic in papyri. I know that some members of the Association were uncomfortable even to have the subject brought up in Ann Arbor, and I am certain that some members of the working party would rather have been somewhere else, almost anywhere else, than at its meetings. Nonetheless, they devoted themselves to their charge with good will and good faith, and even in disagreement credited their colleagues in the group with similar good faith. They looked at the task from a positive and future-directed point of view, as you will be able to see from their recommendations⁵. I want to thank them most warmly for their service. The group's recommendations will be formally presented at the Assemblée Générale, and I do not intend to rehearse all of them now ; they were presented and adopted at that meeting. But the underlying theme of the deliberations and some of the core conclusions do concern me here. That theme is indeed the sharing of resources.

If our discipline is larger in numbers today than a generation ago, it is in significant part because there are papyrologists in countries and especially in institutions with limited or no history of work in the field, often places with no collections of papyri, or no working libraries in the subject, or lacking both. In two countries that have a special relationship to our studies, Egypt and Greece, papyrology is thriving to a much greater degree than ever before ; papyrologists are no longer lonely. But they often work in places that do not have full collections of the published texts, and equally in places that do not have collections of unpublished papyri for their students to work on.

This trend will and must continue, if papyrology is to grow and flourish. Even one of the summer institutes in papyrology recently sponsored by the ASP took place at an institution, the University of Cincinnati, with a superb library but with no collection of papyri to support the teaching. Scans from the Austrian National Library and papyri from the University of Michigan provided the unpublished material needed for the institute, and both institutions deserve the gratitude of the discipline for their generosity. The earlier series of such seminars in the 1960s also benefited from such sharing ; when I learned to read papyri in the 1968 seminar in Philadelphia, it was on Oxyrhynchus papyri brought by David Thomas, Eric Turner, and Peter Parsons. In collaboration of this type must lie our collective future. Only this sort of resource-sharing can give papyrology an expanded future without the newer institutional participants being driven to build their own collections through purchase, something no longer possible or desirable in most cases for legal and ethical reasons, not to mention cost and sheer availability.

The most visible instantiation of this kind of sharing in our time, of course, is the digitization of collections and the placing of their catalogues on the Web. The pioneer in this revolution was one of my teachers, John Oates, who made of Duke University the first papyrus collection to have a full public catalogue with digital images, open to everyone rather than being reserved to insiders. Although few have followed with as comprehensive an online presentation as Duke offers, by now many collections are at least partly available on the Web. Some are fully catalogued online but not yet fully imaged; more are somewhere in process. One of the Working Party's key recommendations was to urge collections to put their full catalogues on line, even if they do not feel able at this point to put up images of all papyri, published and unpublished.

⁵ Recommendations at < <http://www.ulb.ac.be/assoc/aip/workingparty.pdf>>.

I want to dwell on this last word, unpublished, for a moment. I know that the thought of exposing images of unpublished papyri to the world at large frightens many of those in charge of collections. I think this fear is exaggerated. There have been hardly any cases in which people have published texts from images taken off the Web without seeking permission. On the whole, this aspect of courtesy in dealing with collections has also been part of the *amicitia papyrologorum*. I believe that the gains for our discipline of openness and trust far outweigh the risks. But even those not persuaded by these words of exhortation should consider putting up metadata and thumbnail images, from which one could not edit a text, so that others may know what exists. The benefits of such discoveries are great, especially given the dispersal of fragments of many papyri among different collections through the workings of the antiquities trade. The kind of museum archaeology practiced with such brilliant results by, for example, Katelijn Vandorpe and the late Sarah Clackson, is much furthered by such metadata.

Obviously the ability of such projects to progress has been affected by the availability or absence of grant funding, which varies greatly from country to country and from time to time. When the future of the *Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis* was threatened by an end to its external funding, we discovered that the financial problems of a single institution now belonged to us all as a scholarly community. When the Perseus solution to access to the *Duke Databank* broke down, the need for a new portal and search engine became everyone's business. At the same time, it is not inevitable that all progress must depend on external funding, and we run the risk of perennial crises of this sort if we do not find a way of spreading the responsibility for our critical research tools beyond individual institutions.

A major step forward in moving away from a permanent dependence on grants for the survival of these instruments will be described by Joshua Sosin on Thursday, after having already been given trial runs with a couple of highly successful workshops this spring and summer. The community-based editorial system for the *Duke Databank* that Sosin will show you will make it possible, when fully implemented, for not only the *Databank* but also the *HGV* and *APIS* to be maintained by groups of users spread around the globe, with quality control provided by an editorial board checking work that is submitted online. Central coordination will still be important also for technical updates and management, but in the past the creation and update of content was also dependent on project-based grant funding and a central office. This work will now be able to enlist the energies of a constantly shifting and widely distributed body of volunteer contributors. Such a system will demand an activist form of the *amicitia papyrologorum*, asking editors to enter the texts they produce into the *Databank* or to find someone to do this for them; at the same time, a scholar exasperated by finding a volume missing could simply go ahead and enter it.

One major advance that this system will make possible is the widening of the *Databank* to end its artificial restriction to documents, a category never fully defined and increasingly indefensible in an era when all of our texts have come to be recognized as artifacts of everyday writing. Isabella Andorlini realized this possibility at once and just three months ago raised the idea of entering the medical papyri using the new editor, as a kind of test project for literary texts. We are optimistic that additional functionality to support this work will be added to the editor in the coming year, and I hope that this kind of active *amicitia* will spread widely. As the editor's capabilities grow, we hope that this approach can be extended also to other languages, in order, for example, to expand the splendid work done by Andreas Kaplony's *Arabic Papyrology Database*⁶.

Three more expressions of the *amicitia* that the working party has urged will occupy my final minutes. One of them is the digitization of the hundreds of volumes of printed texts of papyri and ostraca. Some, of course, are already in *Google Books* or elsewhere, but

⁶ <<http://orientw.uzh.ch/apd/project.jsp>>.

only a small fraction of the corpus is fully available, so that not only the texts but the commentaries, translations, and introductions can be read from anywhere on earth with an Internet connection. This will require the active cooperation of many institutions, because most of these volumes are still covered by copyright in many countries, and we will need permission to do this. The Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University will undertake to do the scanning, cataloguing, and Web presentation for free access to these volumes, if the institutions owning the rights will cooperate. I hope that all will step forward and help make our core literature available to all.

Secondly, the working party recognizes that the library resources and other opportunities available to Egyptian students of papyrology are still far from being as rich as those that many centers in Europe and the U.S. enjoy, and we urge members to look for opportunities to provide scholarships to allow Egyptian students to further their educations abroad. A step in this direction will be a project to publish Cairo papyri photographed long ago by the AIP's *International Photographic Archive of Papyri*, through a seminar involving Egyptian and non-Egyptian graduate students and recent doctorates, with cooperation from the University of California, Berkeley, which has scanned these photographs, from the Supreme Council of Antiquities – Dr. Zahi Hawass has approved this project – and private donors who will support the costs.

Finally, in Claudio Gallazzi's paper at this congress you will hear another proposal involving Egypt, enlarging on one of the Working Party's recommendations. This speaks to the need – but it is also an opportunity – to develop the capability to move quickly to excavate endangered sites in Egypt where papyri and ostraca may be found, with the advantage that such work could produce more material that can be made available to papyrologists who do not have collections of papyri. I hope you will give serious thought to it. We will be discussing this also at the *Assemblée Générale*.

That is enough protreptic for one day. That I have felt it possible to put forward these thoughts, however, is in itself a form of celebration. With many groups, recommendations turn out to be so many empty words. The history of papyrology shows that with us that is not the case. The *amicitia papyrologorum* has a long track record, and it is with the utmost confidence that I look forward to what we can do together in the next few years.

Bibliography

- Anonymous (1952), « Nouvelles : le VII^e Congrès International de Papyrologie », *CE* 27, 415–416.
 Keenan, J.G. (2009), « The History of the Discipline », in Bagnall, R.S. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (New York) 59–78.
 Martin, V. (1953), « L'originalité de l'Égypte dans le monde gréco-romain », *Museum Helveticum* 10, 3–4.
 Nachtergaeel, G. (2009), « En marge des ostraca de la Bibliothèque Bodléenne. Lettres de John G. Tait à Paul M. Meyer et de Harold I. Bell à Claire Préaux », *CE* 84, 278–309.