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Two lengthy papyri from the collection of the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin are the focus of this short paper. They were bound as a codex found to be made up of two documents, dating to AD 298 and 300 respectively, which originated from the city of Panopolis. Between them, they contain some 735 lines of text. The contents are made up of the outgoing correspondence of the strategos of the Panopolite nome, and the incoming correspondence to the strategos from the office of the procurator of the Lower Thebaid. The first papyrus is doubly valuable, as it concerns (in large part) arrangements made for the visit of Diocletian to Panopolis in 298. Much of the second text is concerned with matters of taxation, local government, military supply and the appointment of officials. As it stands, then, we have an archive of documents bearing comparison to the letters of Pliny the Younger to the emperor Trajan or the archive of Aurelius Abbinaeus. We have evidence, albeit in snapshot form, of the working of internal administration on many levels.

It is surprising, therefore, that the documents have not received the scholarly attention that they deserve. Perhaps reasons for this are: firstly, the texts were published not long after the appearance of two centrally relevant works on the Later Roman Empire by A.H.M. Jones, and specifically on Egypt by J. Lallemand. Both were aware of the papyri, but were unable to use them extensively. Secondly, the consummate edition of Skeat has left little to be done textually bar perhaps minor adjustments to readings and a checking of the translation for consistency. A number of journal articles, most recently and importantly by N. Lewis (and I acknowledge the importance of these in my title) have discussed points of detail and raised awareness of the rich material contained within the papyri. But there has been no major study and no attempt to write a full historical commentary on the texts; even the most recent treatment of Later Roman bureaucracy, mentions the texts only in passing.1

The texts demand a full treatment, setting them in their historical context. There is no space here to do more than scratch the surface of the evidence they provide, for they can be approached in different ways, ranging from micro-historical to asking broad questions about government, rulers and the ruled. Here, I want to focus on three matters preliminary to this larger study: the first a theme, the nature of bureaucracy; and the second and third, aspects of administration highlighted by P. Panop. Beatty 1, and discussed in the context of some modern theories about administrative culture.

Framing bureaucracy in the Roman empire and Roman Egypt specifically is difficult – especially perhaps in the late third and early fourth century, as this period falls between the early Roman period, which in one influential general study is characterized as "government without bureaucracy" (arguably less so for Egypt, but this is still the standard view, as Egypt is usually left out of the reckoning), and the Later Roman period, which Jones saw as "before all things a bureaucratic state." 3 For the first three centuries of Roman rule, the two basic aims of the government – the maintenance of peace and the collection of taxes – were achieved with a very small number of Roman officials. This is essentially the meaning of "government without bureaucracy," but it places too narrow a semantic range on the word "bureaucracy": it has a wide application and is not easily defined. Indeed, among modern sociological research, much ink has been spent trying to establish a definition. Most importantly for us, it can be used without a definite article to mean the paperwork and general routines and practices of administration. It does not solely mean a body of officials, and its nature or prevalence should not be measured merely by numbers of officials. This fixation on numbers of bureaucrats within the basic scholarly works on Roman administration, then, serves to blur our understanding of what bureaucracy is in all its forms. The proliferation of bureaucrats in the later empire was a result of the increase in their numbers centrally, but does not preclude large numbers of individuals involved in the running of the empire and its provinces at a local level directed by a small number of Romans at the top. It follows then that government in Roman Egypt was certainly not without bureaucracy.

How can we think about bureaucracy? Modern sociological theory provides an important way of thinking about it in Roman Egypt (for arguably we know enough about hierarchies of power and administrative practice to apply comparative approaches). Weber, of course, is central, and many of the main tenets of bureaucracy identified by him are present: for Weber believed that bureaucracy was not only the idea of a group, but also of distinct forms of action. Many features of Weber’s propositions about the structuring of authority are present in the Beatty papyri: continuous organization, tasks divided into discreet spheres, vertical hierarchy of office, separation of state and private income, emphasis on written documentation; all these can be clearly seen and explored. Weber also set out a series of related values on which he believed all systems of authority depended – among them was the notion that obedience was

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3 P. Garnsey and R. Saller, The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture (London 1987); Jones, op.cit. (above, n. 1) 1563.
due, not to the person who held authority, but to the order which granted him his authority – for us this is especially important to understanding relationships between state and local officials. This especially can be tested through the Beatty papyri, for they contain many examples of what the sociologist R. Sennett has recently called "administrative dysfunction." Letters reprimanding officials for failure to produce registers, appoint liturgists, or to provide supplies for the army on time abound, as do the appropriate threats (even of capital punishment) should the strategoi continue failing to meet their duties. However, we must be mindful that in the papyri generally, and the Beatty papyri specifically, letters are generated because of officials' failure to act; we have no examples that I know of in which officials are praised for their efficiency, so there are serious questions about documentary practice that have to be asked.

Failure is often the trigger for the letters contained within the Beatty texts, and I want to turn to them in order to give two examples of issues that the strategos had to deal with, both of which parallel two main features of Sennett's notion of administrative dysfunction: superficial and strained personal relationships between officials, and change fatigue. These were as familiar to Apolinarius the strategos of the Panopolite nome as they are to anyone working in modern administration.

Both of these issues, relationships and change fatigue are illustrated by a series of letters preserved in *P.Panop.Beatty* 1. It is clear that the strategos and the president of the Panopolite council had a strained relationship, which is perhaps understandable, as the president was in a position where he had to satisfy the demands of the strategos and the state, while at the same time looking after the interests of fellow Panopolite citizens. In a letter to the procurator of the Lower Thebaid complaining about the president (precipitated by the president's failure to appoint surveyors for the repair of treasury ships, but which is clearly the last straw in an ongoing saga), the strategos Apolinarius writes:

But he, in contempt for this most honourable duty, had the audacity to reply that the city ought not to be troubled. How, then, is it possible, when this man shows such contempt for my mediocrity, for the repair of the ships to be carried out and provision for their refitting to be made? And not only this, but there is the appointment of receivers (*apodektai*) and overseers (*epimeletes*) of the supplies of the *annona* which have been ordered to be reviewed in different localities … concerning which matters I have of necessity been pressing him, and, not being satisfied with this, have also commanded the same president in writing, not only once but many times. And since he has not even nominated the receivers and overseers, I have found it necessary to report to your universal Solicitude, enclosing copies, not only of my letters to him, but also of his replies

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5 Of most relevance are R. Sennett, *Authority* (New York 1980), *id., The Corrosion of Character* (New York 1998), and *id., The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven-London 2006). Sennett's main interests are in the sociology of what he calls "New Capitalism," and most particularly in personal relationships and the experiences of individuals. He departs from the Weberian pyramid shaped hierarchies in bureaucracies, and instead argues that modern corporations offer no long-term stability for their employees; this is very different from 19th century organizations which offered the certainty of progression through the ranks. Corporations in the world of "New Capitalism" constantly adapt in order to remain competitive, and this places strain on employees.
… For if this man makes a beginning of disobeying orders, others may try to do the same thing, and through this and his unparalleled insolence the whole administration is endangered (enedreuetai)\(^6\) (1. 170–179).\(^7\)

This was not the only time that the president or the council had refused the request of the strategos to appoint liturgists. In another example (1. 369–373, 400–404), a direct request from the procurator to appoint four superintendents for treasury estates was refused by the council, on the basis that a ruling by the governor of the Thebaid provided that no-one of curial rank should be subjected to a treasury duty. The strategos was forced to write to the procurator, who quickly replied that four suitable men should be appointed. The strategos forwarded the reply to the council. The important points from this are, first, that the request never mentioned the status of the appointees, merely that four men (tessarôn andrôn) should be appointed. Could it be that the president and council were being deliberately obstructive? Second, it shows that the strategos has no real authority or sanction over the council, and can only achieve his ends by repeated requests (which are usually ignored) and ultimately by invoking the direct support of the procurator. Throughout \textit{P.Panop.Beatty} 1 we see the strategos repeating orders to the deaf ears of the president: a letter previous to the one quoted (but concerning the same issues) shows his consternation — "I gave you orders not only once but also a second time, and many times in writing I commanded you in conformity with the letters of Aurelius Isidorus … now again I hasten to enjoin you even to select the persons aforesaid, in order that you may avoid placing both yourself and me in jeopardy (kindynos)" (1. 110–114).

In another example — the perplexing case of the passaliôtikon — he writes that he has been compelled to write to the procurator. The strategos makes verbal requests, which are then backed up by letters, finally followed by a letter threatening to bring the procurator into the matter, which is the end result. Importantly, it is often the receipt of written orders and copies of letters from the procurator that precipitates action on the part of the president. We see here more than Sennett's \textit{superficial personal relationships}, rather a relationship which is perpetually in opposition, strategos and president both trying to do their job, perfectly aware of the scope each has for enforcing or avoiding orders (this is far from the concept of \textit{dyarchy} imagined by Jones).\(^8\) Also, as far as documentary practice is concerned (and this raises a difficult issue with the texts), it is clear that much communication took place verbally (and thus we have no record of it) and although we can trace correspondence for the 17 day period preserved by the text, it is not fully clear that the letters preserved in the papyrus represent the total written correspondence of the strategos (it may be that the letters preserved in the Beatty papyri represent formal letters, and perhaps exclude other forms of memoranda). Certainly we have included in text letters merely recorded as being "on the same form and date and on the same subject."

\(^6\) Forms of \textit{enedreuô} are used by the strategos when he means real disaster is impending. He uses it eight times in \textit{P.Panop.Beatty} 1.

\(^7\) \textit{P.Panop.Beatty} 1. 170–179. Internal evidence suggests the letter is dictated (repetition, construction, phonetic mistakes).

Central to the correspondence illustrating the dynamics of the relationship between strategos and president is the issue of the appointment of receivers and overseers of supplies for the impending visit of Diocletian to Panopolis (studied in a paper by Napthali Lewis). A problem in the appointment procedures for these liturgists neatly illustrates the second of Sennett’s features of administrative dysfunction – change fatigue. The president and senate had deliberately appointed liturgists contrary to the instructions given by the strategos by appointing two collectors for each type of provision by toparchy, and similarly with distributors and overseers (a total of about 60 liturgists). However, the strategos, acting on orders from the procurator, had ordered that they were to be appointed collectively for the whole nome. What we have here is a change in administrative procedure – which may be related to the contents of a letter mentioned earlier in the papyrus addressed to the strategoi of the procuratorial district concerning the appointment of collectors and overseers. This change is probably linked to the general revamping of the tax collection system by Diocletian; for the implicit equitable spread of liturgies throughout the nome is reminiscent of the edict of Aurelius Optatus, the principal drive of which is about equity of distribution and transparency of process. But this change does not seem to have been popular with the council, who continue with customary procedure. They are either being intransigent or are confused about new procedures. We have other evidence suggesting possible resistance to change or confusion over new procedures with, for example, the introduction of Aurelian’s anabolikon.

We come now from some particular examples to more general observations. It has long been known that the papyri of Roman Egypt can reveal much about Roman government, indeed, they can "illuminate administrative, social and economic features of the empire as a whole." But they reveal something more, the personalities of state officials, local officials, and the provincials they ruled over. This is arguably more the case with the Beatty papyri, for the 112 letters preserved in the first papyrus cover a two-week period (11th – 24th September AD 298) and the second, a period of just over one month (27th January – 1st March AD 300). This concentration of letters into comparatively short time frames serves to make the evidence even more illuminating, and allows us to develop a picture of the protagonists. For we have something more than the usual snapshots which papyri offer: ongoing correspondence and the possibility of establishing a context for the documents. Apolinarius the strategos, new in his post in AD 298, trying to exert his authority from the beginning of his tenure, fastidious, pedantic, but above all, careful to protect his back from his superiors – he was certainly not above passing blame. We can sense his frustration with the president of the council, who on occasion he simply has to by-pass in order to get things done.

Apolinarius’ boss, Aurelius Isidorus, the Procurator of the Lower Thebaid, although higher up the administrative hierarchy, has similar concerns. It is interesting to note the parallel between Apolinaris’

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9 Lewis (2003), op.cit. (above, n. 1).
10 P.Cairo.Isid. 1 (AD 297).
13 P.Panop.Beatty 1. 90–107 is a letter concerning discrepancies in the accounts of the previous strategos. In it Apolinarius mentions his appointment to his office by the katholikos and his subsequent journey to Panopolis to assume his post.
14 P.Panop.Beatty 1. 180–183, where the strategos writes directly to the city nominators (systatai) about making appointments to liturgies.
exertion of pressure on the president and council (often expressed in time limits and with a keen notion of by what points orders had to be fulfilled) and the pressure placed on Apolinarius by the procurator, for he too is under pressure from higher authorities. Such exigency can be seen, for example, in a letter from the procurator to all of the strategoi under his authority concerning the use of ships to transport granite columns from Aswan: the transport was most urgent, and the procurator was clearly acting to a timetable.\textsuperscript{15}

The vertical hierarchy is clear, as are the pressures each level endured. These influenced the relationships between individuals, which in turn influenced their dealings with one another. It seems clear that the Beatty papyri offer an opportunity unique in ancient evidence to study "office politics," for they can be set in the context of known historical events – Diocletian’s visit – and offer a much less anecdotal picture of administration than we usually find in papyri. Their importance lies in the fact that they cover an extended period of time, so that we can see patterns of activity. Perhaps the most interesting aspect, however, is that we can get a sense of the personalities of a number of the protagonists, and many of the character traits we see are easily recognizable in many individuals in modern bureaucratic institutions.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{P.Panop.Beatty} 2. 43–49; the columns may have been destined for Diocletian’s Baths in Rome, for columns of Aswan granite were used in the \textit{frigidarium}. The baths were completed in AD 305; the timing may fit.