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## In memoriam Józef Meleze Modrzejewski (1930–2017)

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**IN MEMORIAM**  
**JÓZEF MÉLÈZE MODRZEJEWSKI**  
**(1930–2017)\***

OUR COMMUNITY, and in a particular way this Journal, has suffered an irreparable loss. Early on the 30th of January 2017, Józef Méléze Modrzejewski, a member of the scientific council of *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, professor emeritus of Sorbonne and of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, left us devastated both in the human and scientific sense. He was an infallible scientific resource for all, a teacher for many (even those who did not know him directly), but above all, a charitable friend and caring mentor for his students throughout the *oikoumene*. We feel this tangible loss of him even more, since all his life he had always been so

\* While preparing this memorial I used – aside from my own, very vivid, recollections, the hitherto unpublished long interview with Joseph Méléze Modrzejewski, *Le Passeur d'Histoire. Entretiens avec Stéphane Encel*, provided by Józef himself. Another fascinating take on his personal history so curiously intertwined with the *Zeitgeschichte* is to be found in the transcript of a conversation Méléze held with Maciej JONCA, published in *Zeszyty Prawnicze* 14.2 (2014), pp. 213–234 ('Obronimy się' [We will defend ourselves]). A particularly valuable token of remembrance may be found at [http://www.akadem.org/magazine/un-peuple-de-philosophes-avec-joseph-meleze-13-09-2011-27165\\_591.php](http://www.akadem.org/magazine/un-peuple-de-philosophes-avec-joseph-meleze-13-09-2011-27165_591.php) – a recording of a dialogue of Méléze and Nicolas WEILL following the publication of *Le peuple des philosophes*. I would like to thank Derek SCALLY for the proof-reading of the text and all his most valuable suggestions.

present among us: at congresses, meetings, PhD presentations – even in the last decade of his life when the ill-health had curtailed his travel ability. Lately it was thus mostly via electronic means of communications that he could be with us. Always so very keen to see his colleagues, friends, and students, he would regularly appear at the Skype communicator: it was almost as if he were sitting at the same desk. Barely a day passed when I would not find a cheerful message when opening my computer, particularly with deadlines approaching: – *Jak idzie? Ile napisales?* – *How is it going? How much have you written?* And to my whining and distrust in whatever I may have produced an almost sacramental reply would instantly arrive: *No już wyslij mi, co tam masz, porozmawiamy* – *Oh come on, send me what you have done, we shall discuss it.* And then we discussed for hours, with him always ready to help, to suggest, to amend, and to share his ideas: never harshly, always mildly pushing back onto the right track. With this obituary I would like to pay respect, in an imperfect manner, to his extraordinary personality and pay homage to his scientific brilliance, but also to cherish his life, his elegant irony, warmth, and the friendship and concern he had always shown for others, especially his students.

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Józef Modrzejewski was born on the 8th of March 1930 in Lublin, where his father, Józef Ignacy Franciszek, had been appointed the manager of the local gas-company. Maria, his mother, came from a semi-assimilated Warsaw Jewish family. Orphaned by their father shortly before the war, the family, defined as Jewish according to the Nuremberg laws, survived the Holocaust thanks to an unexpected act of human kindness. Stefan Kamiński, the man who saved Modrzejewski providing them with counterfeit documents, had been a supporter of the National Democracy movement, an extreme right wing, nationalistic and anti-Semitic party rather popular in the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural pre-war Poland. Yet he was also the father of Iza, who happened to be one of the best friends of Joasia, Józef's elder sister, and of Tomasz, who later was to become friends with Józef. In the years to come Modrzejewski often recalled these unaccounted for circumstances of their rescue. For



Józef Méléze Modrzejewski  
(1930–2017)

him it was a proof that one might never be quite certain what to expect of a fellow human being, that we should never let the hopes fade, and that people are able to raise above their appearances and common expectations. One of the many lessons Józef taught me ...

After the end of the war Modrzejewski continued his education at the Stanisław Staszic Secondary School in Lublin. He often recalled how in his last school year there, just before the final exams, the wiles of Aphrodite ensnared him for life.<sup>1</sup> His high school classics teacher Janina Niemirska-Pliszczyńska, known to the broader public as the Polish translator of Suetonius, assigned him the task of reciting Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite* at a school ceremony. Fate brought to the same gathering Jerzy Manteuffel. This co-founder of Polish papyrological studies, captivated by Józef's flawless declamation, beckoned the teenager to visit him and his colleague Rafał Taubenschlag at the newly created Institute of Papyrology if, as he planned, he began studying law in Warsaw. These words met receptive ground in an ephēbos who, while leisurely reading the pre-war Polish almanac *Ultima Thule* was entranced by an article devoted to Hellenistic civilisation as a marvellous melting-pot of cultures: Greek, Oriental, Jewish.

Modrzejewski, probably like many of us, read law as a smart and practical option (in fact, it was the choice of his mother!), rather than the subject closest to true desires. No wonder, he decided to seek diversion from law with history and so, following the summons of Manteuffel, one day he called into the Institute of Papyrology. There he met the man who was

<sup>1</sup> Ποικιλόθρον', ἀθάνατ' Ἀφροδίτα,  
παῖ Δίος, δολόπλοκε (...)  
*Iridescent-throned Aphrodite, deathless  
Child of Zeus, wile-weaver* ... (trans. Elizabeth Vandiver).

One of the accounts is to be found in Modrzejewski's acceptance speech delivered on the occasion of the festive renewal of his PhD in Warsaw in 2011. We are reprinting this outstanding piece on the following pages (partially re-published as J. MÉLÈZE MODRZEJEWSKI, 'Jewish oath in Ptolemaic Egypt', [in:] D. M. SCHAPS, U. YIFTACH & D. DUECK [ed.], *When West Met East. The Encounter of Greece and Rome with the Jews, Egyptians, and Others. Studies Presented to Ranon Katzoff in Honor of his 75th Birthday*, Trieste 2016, pp. 169–176). For a detailed resume of his scientific *curriculum vitae* as well as the updated list of publications one may consult <http://www.ihd.cnrs.fr/spip.php?article27&lang=fr>.

to become his teacher and leader for the years to come: Rafał Taubenschlag. And what began as a mere distraction, a bout of amusement among his dry law studies, became his true life pursuit.

In his own words, once he had entered the premises of the Institute – today a confederation of *amicitia* and common scientific interests of the Department of Papyrology of Institute of Archaeology, Faculty of History, and the Chair of Roman Law and the Law of Antiquity of Institute of History of Law, Faculty of Law and Administration, of our University, physically and spiritually united by a joint Raphael Taubenschlag Library and this Journal he never left – neither literally nor figuratively. Even when he lived elsewhere, he always remained present in our Warsaw rooms. He took active part in scientific gatherings as well as the evaluation and teaching of the younger generations of scholars. In his final years he rarely let a year pass without a visit to Warsaw.

Back in 1948 he continued his adventure soon to become a student-assistant of Taubenschlag, then followed his mentor with a research project that was to culminate in a PhD thesis on family relations in the papyri, the first of three he completed in his scientific career. It was in these post-war days when he met the love of his life, a true companion of his journeys, Lydia (Lidia Serenin), a French-Polish actress of a Jewish origin. A Polish citizen by birth, she survived war in France, but soon after she was forced to return to her country of origin. She found her place in post-war Poland after being expelled from France for her leftist sympathies (which she had never abandoned, as those who visited their home well may remember) and active participation in the communist movement. A stunning beauty with an mesmerising smile, she captivated the heart and mind of the young scholar and soon they became inseparable. They shared happily the hardships and cheers of 1950s Warsaw: shortages, planned economy, but also the joys of building – seemingly – the brave new world and the arty scene of the capital (for which Józef translated Count Jan Potocki's *Recueil des Parades* from French<sup>2</sup> – the royalties

<sup>2</sup> Jan POTOCKI, *Parady* [*Recueil de Parades représentées sur le théâtre de Łańcut dans l'année 1792, Varsovie 1793*], trans. Józef Modrzejewski, Warszawa 1966 [originally published as 'Jan Potocki, *Parady*', *Dialog* 8 (1958)].

for the translation, as he often joked, were his pocket money while back in Poland).

In 1957, he presented his doctoral thesis, supervised by Taubenschlag at the Faculty of History. In the same time, together with his then study companion Henryk Kupiszewski, he also worked on the publication of *Opera Minora* of their joint mentor as well as on the second edition of his monumental *Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri*. In the larger historical context, October 1956 was also the time of the so-called Gomułka Thaw: a time of a moderate relaxation of the regime. This allowed for contacts with the West, which included scholarships for young Polish scholars abroad, especially in France. In 1958, Modrzejewski obtained a Ford Foundation grant and left Warsaw for Paris. On the way there he was to change planes in Berlin. In the east of the divided city, he met with Lydia in secret. She was contracted to star in a film to be shot there and had left for Berlin earlier accompanied by their two infants, Stella and Paul. Before leaving Warsaw the couple had resolved to go together and to remain in France, yet they feared their joint departure would be foreclosed by the authorities, and so they made a stealthy departure worthy of a movie. After beginning their new life in France, Józef would only return to communist Warsaw in 1985, just in time to meet for the last time his elderly mother. The occasion was her 90th birthday. Shortly afterwards Maria Modrzejewska passed away, and Józef travelled to Warsaw again for her funeral.

In Paris, Modrzejewski found new mentors: Henri Lévy Bruhl, and especially Jean Gaudemet. The former was his supervisor while working on an Advanced diploma (dedicated to fiscal privileges in Egypt), the latter oversaw his second doctoral thesis, in law. This work, *Les sources du droit dans l'Égypte grecque et romaine*, was presented in 1970. To these theses yet another doctorate was added in 1976, this time in humanities, under joint supervision of Claire Préaux and Claude Nicolet. All of these French diplomas were indispensable in still very separated Europe: otherwise Modrzejewski could not have carried on the scientific and didactic work.

Once naturalised in 1964 as Méléze – a pun on the root of his Polish surname, literally meaning ‘of Larch’ – Modrzejewski gradually ascended the steps of a French academic career. It was not a painless path for a



stranger coming from beyond the Iron Curtain. It was perhaps even more difficult in French academia, still infused back then with mistrust and scepticism to anything foreign. First his scholarship was extended for several years within the French National Research Centre, where he took various positions. Afterwards he became teaching assistant and teacher of ancient laws at the present University Paris II Panthéon Assas and, finally, Directeur d'étude of juristic papyrology and history of ancient laws at the École pratique des hautes études, as well as professor of ancient history at Paris I Sorbonne (serving until his retirement in 1999). His seminars are vividly remembered: he would choose a single topic for a year and work on it simply interpreting texts with his audience. This method was meticulous, open-minded and learned. Mélèze Modrzejewski's passion for his subjects and feeling for sources' historical characters remains an example of how to teach. With these skills he excelled in the universities of his adoptive country surpassing many of its born nationals, a worthy successor of Glotz, Gernet, Gaudemet, Lévy Bruhl, and others.

Despite his abilities his French career path was, for a long time, not secure, pleasant, or easy. It is of no surprise, then, that Modrzejewski often undertook teaching and research assignments elsewhere to take a break from his land of choice. The first important job came with a temporary professorship in Marburg (1967/68), later came periods as guest scholar and teacher in, among others, Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at Bar Ilan University, British Academy in London, and, for a longer period by the end of his active university life, at the Free University of Brussels. Still he remained faithful to Marianna. Lydia and the upbringing of the children, Stella and Paul who had by then been joined by the youngest daughter Sabine, played an important role in this choice and rejection of other, seemingly more interesting, chairs. Their flat in the Parisian suburb of Châtney-Malabry, equipped with impressive and almost exhaustive collection of books, wittily deposited in every corner, became the universal centre of juristic papyrology. Many of us, but especially his students, were often guests there, partaking in scientific chats and splendid amicable meals, often with the rest of the Mélézes. We felt the part of his extended family.



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His scientific excellence received further recognition by a number of academic accolades: memberships of Academy of Sciences<sup>3</sup> and honorary degrees (of the University of Athens in 2002, and of his own Alma Mater in 2010). There were also numerous state and academic decorations (just to name just a few by which extraordinary pieces of his scientific work were honoured: Silver medal of the CNRS in 1972, Academic Palms in 1989, Academy of Humanities Bordin Prize in 1994, and in 2012 François Millepierres Prize of the French Academy and Victor Delbos Prize of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences). In addition, his invaluable in-depth knowledge made him a sought-after member of the scientific councils of learned journals: *IVRA. Rivista internazionale di diritto romano e antico* (1962), *Revue internationale des droits de l'Antiquité* (1973), where he headed the section on Juristic papyrology; *Dike. Rivista di storia del diritto greco ed ellenistico* (1998); *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* (2005); *Scripta Classica Israelica* (2009), and of our *Journal* (2010). From 1971 until his death he also edited *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*. Yet, we also remember him as the lively participant at symposia and conferences. The clarity of his papers and elegance of their presentation is unsurpassable – filled with wit and casual imparting of knowledge as if he knew it all just by nature. His interventions and critiques, profound and often justly stern, were usually made in the way that only the corrected speaker could really understand how serious the criticism was. He was, especially in his later years, extremely forgiving, prone to admonition rather than contempt (yet still very conscious and certain of his own comprehension of the matters).

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It would be impossible to give absolute justice to Modrzejewski's sci-

<sup>3</sup> Corresponding member of the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften since 1972; Athenian Academy since 1984; Foreign member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1994 and of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 1997, finally ordinary member of the European Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, since 2003.

entific œuvre in a single obituary. More in-depth studies on the most outstanding findings of his work will be published in the *Proceedings* of the 2017 Symposium of the Greek Law Historians. This society he once co-founded with Arnaldo Biscardi and Hans Julius Wolff as an amicable platform to discuss the intricacies of Greek legal orders, and to bring together historians and lawyers in a pursue to reconstruct the non-Roman legal realities without the stigma of the overly present romanistic paradigm. And so, in this place I would only limit myself to a very subjective mention of the ideas I would consider the most influential.

First and foremost, we owe him a thorough theory of the relations between law and personal status, indeed a profound redefinition of the principles of law-application in Graeco-Roman Antiquity. Józef explored this topic throughout his entire scientific career. It was the theme of his earliest contributions on juristic papyrology which dealt with family law in private letters in the papyri: the outcome of his first doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Rafał Taubenschlag in Warsaw.<sup>4</sup> These interests culminated with his ground-breaking studies on the *Regle de loi* in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt,<sup>5</sup> and his doctoral thesis in law *Loi et coutume* (which reviewed, and updated, turned to be his last published book).<sup>6</sup> He also dedicated many essays dealing with more specific aspects of this topic. They supplemented the general studies serving as workshop for the development of the law-application-theory at large. Among these the research on *Loi des Égyptiens*<sup>7</sup> and the system of Ptolemaic administra-

<sup>4</sup> ‘Le droit de la famille dans les lettres privées grecques d’Égypte’, *JfurP* 9/10 (1956), pp. 339–363 [= *Droit et justice dans le monde grec et hellénistique* (= *JfurP Supplement* 10), Varsovie 2011, pp. 379–406]; *Loi et coutume dans l’Égypte grecque et romaine. Recherches sur les facteurs de formation du droit privé en Égypte aux temps des Lagides et sous la domination romaine*, thèse de doctorat d’État en droit, Paris, Université de Paris II, 1970.

<sup>5</sup> ‘La règle de droit dans l’Égypte ptolémaïque. État des questions et perspectives de recherches’, [in:] *Essays in Honor of C. Bradford Welles* [= *American Studies of Papyrology* 1], New Haven 1966, pp. 125–173, and ‘La règle de droit dans l’Égypte romaine. État des questions et perspectives de recherches’, *PapCongr.* XII, pp. 317–378.

<sup>6</sup> *Loi et coutume dans l’Égypte grecque et romaine. Les facteurs de formation du droit en Égypte d’Alexandre le Grand à la conquête arabe* [= *JfurP Supplement* 21], Warsaw 2014.

<sup>7</sup> ‘La loi des Égyptiens»: le droit grec dans l’Égypte romaine’, *PapCongr.* XVIII, pp. 383–399 (= *Historia Testis. Mélanges T. Zawadzki*, Fribourg 1989, pp. 97–115 = *Droit impérial et tra-*

tion of justice<sup>8</sup> deserve a particular mention.<sup>9</sup> Other outstanding items were dedicated to family and personal relations, where his primary study cases were marriage and guardianship (in this respect both Uri Yiftach and I, as well as many others owe him credit for giving us our initial direction in our scientific undertakings).<sup>10</sup>

To answer the question of how the phenomenon of legal symbiosis was at all possible, my late mentor also researched the apparent turning point in its existence: *constitutio Antoniniana*. The Edict of Caracalla in the old Mitteis's vision brought to an end that peaceful co-existence of the different law regimes, establishing once and forever the domination and exclusivity of the Roman order. If the Edict indeed abolished legal plurality, understanding of the changes it brought could make evident, conversely, how that system had worked before AD 212. Modrzejewski carefully and diligently showed that Mitteis's belligerent view of now-all encompassing and exclusive *Reichsrecht* was a misconception. According to Modrzejewski the old usages continued *more regionis* to populate the legal panorama of the, now Roman, *oikoumene*, just as they had before. For this aspect of his work two pieces are particularly significant. Both part from a study of rhetorical works: a handbook of rhetorical art ascribed to Menander of

*ditions locales*, Aldershot 1990, no. IX]. The text corresponds closely to § 21 of *Loi et coutume* (cit. n. 6).

<sup>8</sup> 'Réflexions sur le droit ptolémaïque (à propos d'E. Seidl, *Ptolemäische Rechtsgeschichte*, 2ème édition, Glückstadt 1962)', *Iura* 15 (1964), pp. 32-56 (= *Droit et justice* [cit. n. 4], pp. 17-42); 'Chrématistes et laocrates', [in:] *Le monde grec. Hommages à Claire Préaux*, Brussels 1975, pp. 699-708 (= *Symposion* 1974, pp. 375-388), and also in *Droit et justice* (cit. n. 4), pp. 179-192. 'Zum Justizwesen der Ptolemäer (à propos de H. J. Wolff, *Das Justizwesen der Ptolemäer*, Munich 1962)', *Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte. Romanistische Abteilung* 80 (1963), pp. 42-82 and 'Nochmals zum Justizwesen der Ptolemäer', *Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte. Romanistische Abteilung* 105 (1988), pp. 167-179.

<sup>9</sup> Some of the most important ones are collected in *Droit impérial et traditions locales dans l'Égypte romaine* [= *Collected Studies* 321], Aldershot 1990; *Statut personnel et liens de famille dans les droits de l'Antiquité* [= *Collected Studies* 411], Aldershot 1993, and in *Droit et justice* (cit. n. 4).

<sup>10</sup> The ground-breaking 'La structure juridique du mariage grec', *Symposion* 1979, pp. 39-71 (= *Statut personnel* [cit. n. 9], no. V), following other studies on marriage and family relations, and a true gem of ancient comparative research: a study on *tutela*: 'À propos de la tutelle dative des femmes dans l'Égypte romaine', *PapCongr.* XIII, pp. 263-292 (= *Droit imperial* [cit. n. 9], no. III).

Laodicea and *Oratio Panegyrica* by Gregory the Miracle-Worker honouring his teacher Origen.<sup>11</sup> The former study opened a fierce polemic with Mario Talamanca,<sup>12</sup> who had read Menandrian treatise, as proof of complete withdrawal from the old orders and their replacement by the generally-binding law of the Romans. Yet, for Mèlèze it rather served as a proof that since the beginning of the Roman conquest the Romans had tolerated the local laws treating them as the customs.<sup>13</sup> In this way these essays contributed further to the idea, originally inspired by Gaudemet, that Mèlèze had first put forward in his *Regle(s)* and then perfected in *Loi et coutume* (the chosen title of the thesis and then the book was by no means accidental). The Romans would use the local norms, as Julian seems to have explained,<sup>14</sup> in an auxiliary and supplementary way, when no other Roman norm was in force or could be found.

While most of Modrzejewski's œuvre touches on the dissemination of the Hellenic order, the era post-dating the conquest of Alexander and

<sup>11</sup> 'Ménandre de Laodicée et l'Édit de Caracalla', *Symposion* 1977, pp. 335–364 (= *Droit impérial et traditions locales*, no. XII), and 'Grégoire le Thaumaturge et le droit romain. À propos d'une édition récente', *Revue historique de droit* 49 (1971), pp. 313–324, reviewing the H. Crouzel's edition of *Remerciement à Origène, suivi de La lettre d'Origène à Grégoire*, Paris 1969 [= *Droit impérial et traditions locales*, n° XI].

<sup>12</sup> M. TALAMANCA, 'Su alcuni passi di Menandro di Laodicea relativi agli effetti della Constitutio Antoniniana', [in:] *Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra*, vol. V, Milan 1971, pp. 433–560; cf. as well C. HUMFRESS, 'Laws' Empire: Roman universalism and legal practice', [in:] P. DU PLESSIS (ed.), *New Frontiers: Law and Society in the Roman World*, Edinburgh 2013, pp. 73–101.

<sup>13</sup> For the critical appraisal of the notion of custom and its application for such means, see J. L. ALONSO, 'The status of peregrine law in Roman Egypt: "Customary law" and legal pluralism in the Roman Empire', *JfurP* 43 (2013), pp. 351–404, esp. at pp. 362–365 and 389–395.

<sup>14</sup> *D.* 1.3.32 pr. (Iul. 84 *dig.*): 'De quibus causis scriptis legibus non utimur, id custodiri oportet, quod moribus et consuetudine inductum est: et si qua in re hoc deficeret, tunc quod proximum et consequens ei est: si nec id quidem appareat, tunc ius, quo urbs Roma utitur, servari oportet'. One of the reasons for which this text needs to be treated with particular caution is the fact that notwithstanding its seeming flavour of a general rule in the context of the Digest title *De legibus senatusque consultis et longa consuetudine*, it was originally meant to solely concern civic *munera* (or liturgies); in this context, cf. *SB VI* 9016, in which *archiereus* Ulpius Serenianus deciding a case on of the right to appoint *neokoroi* by the *bule* of Ptolemais had three previous verdicts on the matter read, recalling the royal legislation of the Ptolemies. See further, ALONSO, 'The status' (cit. n. 13), pp. 379–386.

then the confrontation thereof with the new regime of the Roman victors, his later works deal with the history of the Jewish people. This choice was scientific, yet personal as well. It meant for him coming back to his own origins and, perhaps, the pursuit of his true self. He looked closely to the last decades of independent Israel,<sup>15</sup> but especially the acculturation of the Jewish people: those remaining in the Promised Land, and those dispersed in the Mediterranean. How they took to, and indeed contributed to, the intellectual climate of the Hellenised era (in this respect see especially the pieces dedicated to Philo and the Alexandrian Judaism)<sup>16</sup> but also how they tried establishing their own political communities.<sup>17</sup> His studies show how deeply embedded were the fates of the members of the Chosen People to the tissue of the already Hellenised *oikoumene*. These works demonstrate how they struggled adapting their lives, regulated by the ancestral norms and customs, to the new Greek, and then Roman, reality, also in legal sense. So again the leitmotiv of his studies – the plurality and co-existence of laws – was always a focal point there. This flow of Méléze’s work was not limited to scientific publica-

<sup>15</sup> *Troisième Livre des Maccabées (La Bible d’Alexandrie XV/3)*, Paris 2008, and A. CAQUOT & M. PHILONENKO (ed.), *La Bible. Écrits intertestamentaires II*, Paris 2009 [*Bibliothèque de La Pléiade*], see also ‘Loi du Seigneur et loi du roi. Le Troisième livre des Maccabées: un drame judiciaire judéo-alexandrin’, *Foi & Vie* CVII 4 (octobre 2008), pp. 47–62.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Philon d’Alexandrie, notable juif et philosophe politique’, *Le monde de la Bible* 153 (2003), pp. 45–47; ‘La destruction du judaïsme hellénisé (115–117)’, *ibidem*, p. 48 and ‘Philon, un philosophe juif à Alexandrie’, [in:] *Ce que la Bible doit à l’Égypte*, Paris 2008, pp. 239–246; see also ‘Trajan et les Juifs. Propagande alexandrine et contre-propagande rabbinique’, *Problèmes d’histoire du christianisme* 17, Bruxelles 1987, pp. 7–31 and ‘Espérances et illusions du judaïsme alexandrine’, [in:] *Alexandrie, une mégapole cosmopolite. Actes du 9ème Colloque de la Villa Kérylos, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, les 2 et 3 octobre 1998 [= Cahiers de la Villa Kérylos 9]*, Paris 1999, pp. 129–144.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *inter alia*: ‘10.1 Ptolemaic Justice’ and ‘10.2 The politeuma’, [in:] J. KEENAN, J. MANNING & U. YIFTACH-FIRANKO, *Law and Legal Practice in Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest. A Selection of Papyrological Sources in Translation, with Introductions and Commentary*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 471–481, and again a piece which marvelously shows how work on seemingly unimportant and minor aspects leads to most significant general conclusions: ‘La fiancée adultère. À propos de la pratique matrimoniale du judaïsme hellénisé à la lumière du dossier du politeuma juif d’Hérakléopolis (144/3 – 133/2 av. n.è.)’, [in:] Z. SŁUŻEWSKA & J. URBANIK (ed.), *Marriage: Ideal – Law – Practice. Proceedings of a Conference Held in Memory of Henryk Kupiszewski [= JJurP Supplements 5]*, Warsaw 2005, pp. 141–160.

tions: for years he directed a seminar on Hellenistic Jewish history at the Free University of Brussels.

And so Józef's interests and amazing, insatiable scientific curiosity of how different laws and peoples actually interrelated, transpire probably the vast majority, if not all, of his essays, scientific and popular ones (and he was even able to turn dull pieces of scientific evaluation, such as PhD reviews, into precious little treatises). The latter he modestly classified in his scientific *curriculum vitae* as 'articles de vulgarisation', even if there are by no means less scientific than the others. Or rather: his scientific works have a quality, extremely rare in our community – particularly in the case of legal analyses – of transmitting the knowledge and interpretations in the most legible, yet truly elegant way. This makes them pieces of vulgarization of science, and thus accessible to experts and less advanced students alike, but also to general public.

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Having devoured Méléze's œuvre and followed his ingenious ideas about intricacies of the laws and societal cohabitation in the Antiquity, one marvels at how he was able to reach such a level of comprehension and imagination of how these would actually work together. How was he able to propose sound answers to the first question of this research, *viz.* how was it possible that the ancients were never at a loss with such richness and variety of legal forms and orders? Modrzejewski was obviously outstandingly educated, well-read in the cultural history of *oikoumene* from the ancient times to the present day: he was a true polymath. Yet I think there is something more I would identify as my mentor's particular personal trait.

To explain it, let me recall the pocket edition of his *Les Juifs d'Égypte de Ramsès à Hadrien* (ed. Quadriga, Paris 1997). On the frontispiece of this small, red book there is a miniature of its author, probably contemporary to the book itself: a handsome, elegant scholar in his prime. The legend underneath says *Comment être à la foi Juif et Grec?* A careful student immediately guesses that it only seemingly refers to the content of this great little book. In fact that is the question that Józef lived all his life. How to

be a descendent of a Polish noble family, a baptised and confirmed Catholic, a Jew, fascinated by the teaching of the rabbis and inspired by the Philo's Hellenism, finding ways to the modern synagogue, and yet an initiated Freemason? And then, how to be a proud Pole, whose memory never failed when he recited the treasures of our literature; a distinguished Frenchman, whose elegant and clear language surpassed many of his compatriots; a new Hellen; an adoptive Israeli, who felt at home in Athens and Jerusalem, *à la foi?* Józef was these all and more, choosing the facets of his personality at will.

They were not merely masks: on the contrary, these *personae* were always authentic, insightful, and thoughtful. Only he knew how it was possible to balance it all yet it was precisely this phenomenon that made him comprehend antiquity and its people so well, but also that made him understand and cherish us all in our diversity. Preceded by his beloved Lydia, he leaves behind three children — Stella, Sabine and Paul — seven grand-children and a great-grandson. In addition he leaves behind a bereft academic family, an extended family of whom he was always tirelessly proud. We all miss him deeply and cherish his memory with love. His death came just before the Jewish New Year of the Trees of 5777. Let the title of this Tree make us worthy care-takers of his Blessed Memory, may his Memory be a blessing for us.

*Jakub Urbanik*