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SOME BERLIN PAPYRI RECONSIDERED

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Some Berlin Papyri Reconsidered*

In **BGU I 159** (= W.Chr. 408) we have a case of a temporary anachoresis of an appointed liturgist. Aurelius Pakysis states that he had fled from his village to avoid the burden of a liturgy. However, when the prefect Valerius Datus ordered all those who sojourned outside their abodes (ἅπαντας τοὺς ἐπὶ ξένης διατρίβοντας) to return to their *ἰδία*, Pakysis came back. Thereafter, however, he fell a victim to extortion by one Aurelius Soterichus, *exegetes* of a *πόλις*. For that reason he complained against Soterichus and his father.

The petition is dated 11 Pauni, year 24 of Antoninus Caracalla, that is 5th June A.D. 216. We do not know the date of the edict of Valerius Datus. Also the precise date of the beginning of his prefecture is unknown. He was a successor as prefect to Septimius Heraclitus, who was probably sentenced to death by Caracalla during the imperial visit to Alexandria.¹

The beginning of Caracalla's visit to Egypt may be now, in view of the recently published P.Oxy. LI 3602-3605, dated to late November or early December 215. Accordingly, the trial of Septimius Heraclitus, recorded in a papyrus found in Hermopolis (SB VI 9213), cannot be earlier than December 215.

After a short intermedium of the vice-prefect Aurelius Antinous,² Valerius Datus appears in office. His edict to return to the *ἰδία* may possibly date to the early spring 216.

We may visualize the lost text of the *κέλευσις* of Valerius Datus as similar in wording to the extant edict of C. Vibius Maximus of A.D. 104,³ which orders a universal return to domicile because of the census. Special attention is given to those, who for some reasons are necessary in Alexandria (ἰδὲ εἰδὼς μέντο[ι ὅ]τι ἐνίων τῶν [ἀπὸ] τῆς χώρας ἢ πόλις ἡμῶν ἔχει χρε[ίαν]). But Wilcken noticed that the census of 215-216 was ordered not by Valerius Datus but by his predecessor Aurelius Antinous, vice-prefect.⁴ Rostovtzeff observed that there could be some connection between Valerius Datus' order and Caracalla's edict expelling the "true Egyptians" from Alexandria (P.Giss. 40 ii, 30).⁵ Wilcken says, however, that there is a chronological obstacle: «der Erlaß Caracallas stammt aus dem Herbst 215, jenes Edikt des Datus aber erst aus dem Jahre 216. Und doch ist anzunehmen, daß der im Erlaß angeredete Präfekt sofort den Willen des Kaisers ausgeführt hat ... Die bekannten Vorgänge in Alexandria vom Herbst 215 erklären auch zur Genüge die Maßregel des Kaisers (vgl. auch Dio 77, 23, der auf diese Vertreibung der ξένοι hinweist). Aus diesen Gründen glaube ich nicht, daß zur Erklärung des Caracalla-Erlasses jene Zensusedikte heranzuziehen sind.»⁶

Let us, however, remember that in view of the evidence of some papyri (last, but not least P.Oxy. XLIII 3090 of February-March A.D. 216) which confirm Caracalla's presence in Alex-

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¹ P. Benoît, J. Schwartz, Caracalla et les troubles d'Alexandrie en 215 apres J.-C., *Études de Papyrologie* 7, 1948, pp.17-33. = SB VI 9213.

² P.Rein. 49 = W. Chr. 207; SPP I p. 28 = W. Chr. 209.

³ P.Lond. III 904 p. 125 = W. Chr. 202.

⁴ W. Chr. 202, p. 235 (comm.), cf. P.Rein. 49 = W. Chr. 207; SPP I p. 28 = W. Chr. 209.

⁵ Rostovtzeff, Kolonat, p. 209ff.; cf. W. Chr. 202, p. 235.

⁶ W. Chr. 202, p. 236

andria in the early months of 216, the “chronological difficulties” adduced by Wilcken, cease to exist. Both P.Giss. 40 ii (3^o) and the edict of Valerius Datus *may* belong to the same time of 216.

But there is still the problem of fixing the date of P.Giss. 40 ii (3^o) and of the supposed dependence of the text upon the massacre of the Alexandrians by Caracalla (also of unknown date). If P.Giss. 40 ii (3^o) really belongs to the time of Caracalla’s visit to Egypt (this can be deduced rather from the word ἐνθάδε in line ii 26 referring to Alexandria than from other places in the epistle) its date is rather 216 than 215.

Caracalla’s epistle is commonly interpreted as a piece of evidence to the great slaughter carried out by Caracalla during his stay in Alexandria. The reason for such an interpretation is the striking resemblance of the contents of P.Giss. 40 ii (3^o) to the passage of Cassius Dio (77.23) concerning the repressive measures taken by Caracalla against the dwellers of Alexandria: συναπώλοντο δ’ οὖν αὐτοῖς (that is together with the Alexandrians) καὶ τῶν ξένων πολλοί Cassius Dio 77.23.1). ταῦτα μὲν οἱ ἐπιχώριοι ἔπαθον, οἱ δὲ δὴ ξένοι πάντες ἐξηλάθησαν πλὴν τῶν ἐμπόρων, καὶ δῆλον ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἐκείνων πάντα διηρπάσθη (Cassius Dio 77.23.2). Wilcken, quoted by Meyer in the first edition of P.Giss. 40, says: «Das paßt wundervoll zu den Worten des Papyrus». ⁷ Indeed, in P.Giss. 40 ii (3^o), the eviction of Egyptians from Alexandria is ordered, with the exception of some categories of merchants or traders. However, it is necessary to reconsider the nature of the Emperor’s order.

Caracalla’s authorship of the epistula can be taken for granted. The text belongs to a series of legal acts issued by that Emperor, recorded on the same piece of papyrus, and although neither the author nor the receiver are mentioned, it is sure that Caracalla’s letter was directed to a prefect of Egypt.

The papyrus text is but an excerptum and not a copy of the original (μεθ’ ἕτερα in line ii 26). As stated before, the Emperor probably wrote his epistle in Egypt, since he uses ἐνθάδε with reference to Alexandria.⁸ The emperor states that there are in Alexandria some Egyptian fugitives who came from other places. They are easy to be recognized and should all be expelled with exception of: χοιρέμπο[ρ]οι (line 18), ναῦται ποτά[μ]ιοι (line 18), ἐκείνοι οἵτινες κάλαμον πρ[ὸ]ς τὸ ¹¹⁹ ὑποκαίειν τὰ βαλα[νεῖ]α καταφέρουσι. The others are to be expelled because they τῷ πλήθει ¹²⁰ τῷ ἰδίῳ κα[ὶ] οὐχὶ χρήσει ταρασσουσι τὴν πόλιν. Immediately after that statement new exceptions are made; they concern Egyptians who Σαραπείους καὶ ἑτέρας τισὶν ἔορ¹²¹τασί[μοις ἡ]μέραις κτλ. ¹²² ct. ἢ καὶ ἄλλαις ἡ[μ]έρασις bring into the city ¹²¹ ct. θυσίας εἵνεκεν ταύρους καὶ ἄλλα τινὰ ¹²² ἔνψ[υ]χα. The expulsion should be limited to those who φεύγουσι τὰς χώρας τὰς ἰδίας to avoid the agricultural occupations. Also those should be spared who τὴν πόλιν τὴν Ἀλεξανδρέων τὴν λαμπρο¹²⁵τάτ[ην]{ην} ἰδεῖν θέλον[τες] εἰς αὐτὴν συνέρχονται ἢ πολιτικωτέρας ζωῆς ἐνε¹²⁶κεν [ἢ] πρ[α]γματείας προ[σ]καίρου ἐνθάδε κ[α]τέρχονται. Particular attention was given to detecting the ἄγροικοὶ Αἰγύπτιοι among linen workers: they are easy to recognize owing to their φωνή, ὄψεις καὶ σχῆμα (line 28) ἔτι τε καὶ ζω[ῆ] δεικνύει ἐναντία ἡθῆ ¹²⁹ ἀπὸ ἀναστροφῆς [πο]λιτικῆς εἶναι ἀγροίκους Αἰγυπτίους. As we can see, the text contains a series of alternative statements of the necessity of expelling the ἄγροικοὶ Αἰγύπτιοι from Alexandria and exceptions of this rule.

There are several arguments against the habitual interpretation of the text under discussion as a piece of evidence of the repressive measures taken after the great massacre of Alexandrians. The slaughter is known from the authors: Cassius Dio, Herodian and Caracalla’s biographer in the

⁷ P.Giss. 40 ii, comm. p. 41.

⁸ Wilcken (in:) P.M. Meyer, P.Giss. 40, introd. p. 41; J.E.G. Whitehorne, Did Caracalla intend to return to Egypt?, CdE 57, 1982, p. 133.

Historia Augusta. Neither the language nor the contents of Caracalla's letter in P.Giss. 40 ii (3^o) justify the view that the emperor's order was directed against the Alexandrians. As a matter of fact the expulsion of peasants who οὐ]χι χρήσει ταράσσουσι τὴν πόλιν seems rather to be a favour done to the municipal élite. The peremptory character of the expulsion of the ἀληθινοὶ Αἰγύπτιοι is extenuated by a series of exemptions. The exemptions concern not only ναῦται ποτάμιοι, deliverers of κάλαμος necessary to heat the baths, furnishers of animals needed for sacrifices, but also tourists, students, businessmen of all kinds and generally all those who had some definite business in Alexandria.

Cassius Dio says: ξένοι πάντες ἐξηλάθησαν πλὴν τῶν ἐμπόρων (77.23.2). It is not sure whether Dio's ξένοι are really to be interpreted as Αἰγύπτιοι, ἄγροικοι Αἰγύπτιοι or ἀληθινοὶ Αἰγύπτιοι (according to the terms of P.Giss. 40 ii). The identity of Dio's ξένοι (in opposition to ἐπιχώριοι) with the visitors arrived to Alexandria from the χώρα must be subjected to criticism. Even more suspect is the alleged equality of Dio's ἔμποροι and the numerous categories of persons exempted from eviction in P.Giss. 40 ii (3^o). Dio states that although merchants (among the foreigners) were not expelled, their property was pillaged. His statement suggests rather that those merchants were non-citizen residents of Alexandria and not pig-deliverers or furnishers of κάλαμος for the baths. The furnishers were certainly not likely to have with them any considerable property during their temporary stay in Alexandria.

It seems that Caracalla's order was a routine matter, not much different in tone from the order to return to the ἰδίᾳ of C. Vibius Maximus of A.D. 104.⁹ ταράσσουσι in the Gießen papyrus does not refer to a general rebellion. The entire sentence concerns the strangers "who disturb the city by their great number and their inutility".

Therefore it is preferable to see in Caracalla's epistle a document from the time when he was still on relatively good terms with the municipal élite of Alexandria. Of course some minor tumults, also among the native populace or among particular groups of workers (e.g. weavers), involving the ἀληθινοὶ Αἰγύπτιοι are very probable.

In the reconstruction of the events in Alexandria it is probably better to follow Herodian and not Cassius Dio. Dio describes an immediate extermination of the inhabitants of Alexandria and leaves no place for pacific contacts whatsoever between the emperor and the Alexandrians. According to Herodian there were two different periods during the visit: 1^o the triumphal arrival and a long series of feasts, 2^o bloody repressions. A passage of Herodian's History concerning the emperor's irritation caused by the peasant crowds attending the festivals in his honour is worth attention: συμπανηγυρίσας τοίνυν αὐτοῖς καὶ συνεορτάσας, ὡς εἶδε πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν πλήθους μεγίστου πεπληρωμένην τῶν ἀπὸ πάσης περὶ αὐτὴν χώρας ἐκεῖ συνελθόντων ... (Herod. IV 9.4). After this statement we might expect information about the expulsion of the visitors. But Herodian turns to a description of Caracalla's cruel stratagem which led to the destruction of the Alexandrian youth. There is no direct link between these events. However, Herodian's description shows probably the true sequence of events: first there were some unspecified facts that emerged from the presence in Alexandria of numerous visitors and only later the massacre of the Alexandrians happened. It seems that the expulsion of the ἄγροικοι Αἰγύπτιοι recorded in P.Giss. 40 ii (3^o) fits well Herodian's statement and belongs to the time when Caracalla was still on peaceful terms with the Alexandrians. On the other hand, Dio's text, although apparently confusing the events, allows us to suppose that during the great massacre at the end of Caracalla's visit, the foreigners who lived in Alexandria shared the fate of the ἐπιχώριοι.

⁹ P.Lond. III 904 (p. 125) = W.Chr. 202.

An important document concerning the chronology of Caracalla's visit in Egypt is an inscription from Alexandria (SB I 4275). That dedication to Caracalla, his mother Julia Domna and to *divus* Severus comes from the municipal authorities of the city. The text is so flattering (with Caracalla as Kosmokrator and Philosarapis) that it is impossible that the item came from the time after the massacre. The date of the inscription, 15 Phamenoth year 24, i.e. 11 March 216 may be considered a *terminus post quem* of the Alexandrian apocalypse.

Two Berlin papyri of a close date have been published in the first volume of the BGU. BGU I 321 and 322 are two complaints concerning the same case of theft.¹⁰ The plaintiff, Aurelius Pakysis son of Tesenouphis was a priest at Soknopaiu Nesos. He possessed a place (τόπος) in the house of his son's wife where some cereals were stored. When the priest was absent, members of his family entered the storeroom and discovered that a quantity of wheat had been taken away through a hole made in the floor. The dwellers of the lower storey consented to pay 7 artabas of wheat on account of the stolen σιτόρια. However, they did not convert their promise into fact. When the owner of the stolen wheat came back, he applied for compelling the guilty ones to give back the due amount of wheat (petition to the centurion). The strategus was petitioned to register the accusation in the files. The date of both petitions is 7 April 216.

The whole story would be completely irrelevant to our consideration if there were not in line 10 (BGU I 321) the words explaining the priest's absence: διὰ τὸ ἐμὲ ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ εἶναι. The priest states that his relatives discovered the theft πρώην (BGU I 321.9) i.e. "not long ago". We may assume that the petitioner came to his village not long before the date of his request. Thus, it is probable that he left from Alexandria not very late in the second half of March. Anyway, the date of his departure must have been very close to the date of SB I 4275. We do not know anything about the circumstances of the priest's visit to Alexandria. We may, however, take for granted that the mention of his stay there is not gratuitous. It is very probable that Aurelius Pakysis went to Alexandria to attend the ceremonies in honour of Caracalla or just to see the emperor.

If we visualized the priest's come back as a flight from the massacred city, we could situate the slaughter and the subsequent repression about 11th March 216 or within a few days after that date. Aurelius Pakysis would even probably hesitate to mention his stay in the ominous city, if he fled from the inferno or if the acts expelling the dwellers of the country from Alexandria were a kind of martial law after the city had been massacred. Therefore it is preferable to reconstruct the events in another way: on 11th March 216 the relations between Caracalla and the Alexandrians were still good as attested by SB I 4275. Some time in March 216 Caracalla, in an *epistula*, ordered the prefect to expel ἄγροικοὶ Αἰγύπτιοι from the capital of the province. Probably the prefect's act ordering everybody to return to the *ἰδία* was issued subsequently. On 7th April 216 the priest Aurelius Pakysis was already back in Soknopaiou Nesos.

Another Pakysis, the petitioner of BGU I 159, also returned to his village. Two months later, on 5th June 216, he already complained to an authority of a new offence.

Probably in April 216 an event unknown to us caused the disaster in Alexandria. The city was massacred and soon after it the emperor left for Syria. On 27th May 216 Caracalla was already there, as the inscription from Dmeir certifies.¹¹

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¹⁰ A. Łukaszewicz, Petition Concerning a Theft. P.Berol. 7306. JJP 19, 1983, p. 117.

¹¹ SEG XVII 759.