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P.OXY. XIV 1676.38: FROM STABLE TO RECORD OFFICE?

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A question arises from the following passage as published in 1920 in P.Oxy. XIV 1676:

ἀσπάζεταιί σε ὁ υἱός

35 [μου] καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ
[καὶ Δι]ονύσιος ὁ συναγωνισ-
[τής μο]υ, ὃς ὑπηρετεῖ με ἐν
[τῷ στ]αβλαρίῳ

‘My son salutes you and his mother and Dionysius my fellow worker, who serves me at the stable’. This is the translation of ed.pr.

After more than seventy years the postulated word σταβλάριον remains unique. Its form is unobjectionable: -άριον is a prolific suffix in the papyri, see L.R. Palmer, *A Grammar of the Post-Ptolemaic Papyri* 88 and n. 6, referring to p. 84. Its source, the loan word στάβλον = Latin *stabulum*, is well attested in the papyri, along with the further coinages σταβλίτης and ἀρχισταβλίτης.

However, there is now a known, if rare, word which seems to have a greater chance of being right in this context, namely ταβλάριον, a syncopated Greek form of the Latin *tabularium*, ‘record office’, cf. P.Oxy. VII 1022 (= *W.Chr.* 453 = *ChLA* III 215 = R.O. Fink, *Roman Military Records* No. 87) .29 - 31, *scripsi authenticam epistulam in tabulario cohortis esse*, ‘I have certified in writing that the original letter is in the record office of the cohort’.

The fuller Greek transliteration ταβουλάριον has occurred once, in P.Oxy. XVII 2116.10. The document acknowledges the receipt of six copies of an official account, which are to be passed on to various government offices:

ὥστε εἰς διοίκησιν β, εἰς τὸ

10 [Ῥω]μαϊκὸν ταβουλάριον α, ἐπιτρόπῳ Ἐρμού (cf. BL V 80) α,
[εἰς τ]ὸ λογιστήριον αὐτοῦ α, οἰκονόμοις α.

‘... two for the department of the *dioecetes*, one for the Latin record office, one for the *procurator ad Mercurium*, one for his accounts office, one for the *dispensatores*’.

Likewise the syncopated form has appeared once, in SB XII 11043.16. The document is a record of proceedings before a procurator and concerns a veteran’s application to have his name enrolled among those of a privileged category of persons. The text was much altered by the writer or writers and is abraded, so that the reading remains uncertain at some points but ἐν τῷ ταβλαρίῳ is certain. If we suppress the erasures, the relevant words of the procurator’s judgment run: ἐκ... μαῖ ἐν τῷ ταβλαρίῳ καὶ ἐὰν εὔρεθῃ ἡ μάτριξ τῶν οὐβτραγῶν, σημιώκομαί σοι

ὀνόματί σου ὃ δεῖ με ζημιώσασθαι (15-21), ‘... (I shall search?) in the record office and if the muster-roll of the veterans is found, I shall certify for you in your name what it is necessary for me to certify’, cf. J.R. Rea, *ZPE* 26 (1977) 218-222.

Very much more common in the papyri is the related word ταβουλάρτιος, meaning a record office clerk, or in the later period, when it becomes more common, a clerk of accounts, cf. A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* i 564-5, 600, ii 1248 n. 89.

The syncopated form of this, ταβλάρτιος, occurs in the papyri three times: P.Diog. 5.15 (AD 132/3), P.Turner 23.20 (c. AD 144/5), SB XIV 11612.12 (after 23.xi.162). It is also found particularly in the inscriptions of Ephesus: I.Eph. III 651.16, V 1564.7, VI 2103.2, 2480.[4?]: (*tabularius* 2), 2903.1, VII.i 3054.9. This is connected with the Roman administration of the province of Asia.

In P.Oxy. 1676 the writer is called Flavius Herculanus (1, 41-2). The letter is assigned to the third century, but in the light of what we now know about the use of Flavius, the dynastic name of Constantine, as a status indication for soldiers and members of the civil service after his victory over Licinius in AD 324, see J.G. Keenan, *ZPE* 11 (1973) 33-63; 13 (1974) 283-304; 53 (1983) 245-250, it seems far more likely that Herculanus belongs to one of those categories and to that period, although the hand suggests that the date will not be very much later than 324. Such a person could well have had a fellow-worker who assisted him in the *tabularium* of a military unit or a government office.

The name Herculanus occurs in the papyri in only one other place, P.Oxy. XXXI 2561. This is a letter addressed to a person called Herculanus (1, 22) and is dated by its reference to the emperor Galerius under the name of Maximianus Caesar to the period between his proclamation as Caesar in AD 293 and his elevation to Augustus in AD 305. It speaks of important financial business involving the *rationalis* and concerned with the payment to military *praepositi* of sums in respect of a donative for the birthday of Galerius Caesar, and of *stipendium* and *salgamum*. In spite of a probable difference in date of at least twenty years there does seem to be some degree of likelihood that the documents do concern the same Herculanus. Whether they do or not, the restoration of the unique word σταβλάρτιον in P.Oxy. 1676.38 should be questioned at least until it appears elsewhere and in the meantime the text might be presented in the more likely form, ὁ συναγωνισ[τής μου]ν, ὃς ὑπηρετεῖ με ἐν [τῷ τ]αβλαρίῳ (?), ‘... my assistant, who helps me in the record office (?)’.