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GAIUS JULIUS, AN AGORANOMOS FROM TIBERIAS

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A recently published lead weight from Tiberias calls for special comment.¹ The obverse side of the weight bears an inscription in six lines which reads:

ΕΠΙ ΗΡΩΔΟΥ | ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ | ΛΔΛ ΑΓΟΡΑ | ΝΟΜΟΥ ΓΑΙ | ΟΥ ΙΟΥΛΙΟΥ | ΕΤΑΛΕΝΤΟ

The reading of the last line is not entirely certain, since only ΕΤΑΛ at its beginning and ΤΟ at its end are clearly distinguishable; the space in between shows traces of two or three letters. It looks as if the line consisted of a single word - a verb, most probably, a local variation of ΤΑΛΑΝΤΕΥΩ (to weigh out) in the past passive (3rd singular).

The reading of the remainder presents no difficulties. The date, ΛΔΛ (year 34), although put somewhat awkwardly after ΕΠΙ ΗΡΩΔΟΥ ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ must nevertheless refer to the regnal years of Herod Antipas. Tiberias was founded by Antipas between 17/8 and 20/21 A.D. and the 34th year by the era of the city would fall between 50/51 and 53/4 A.D., i.e. long after the end of the tetrarch's rule. The 34th year of Antipas, on the other hand, falls in 30/31 A.D., by either the spring or autumn calendar.²

The agoranomos mentioned in the inscription bears a Roman name, Gaius Julius. Since citizenship grants to the inhabitants of this part of the Empire were made by both Julius Caesar and Augustus, it is not in itself surprising that an inhabitant of Tiberias should have Roman citizenship.³ However, what makes the present instance somewhat special, is that it may concern a well-known historical figure. A detail preserved by Josephus suggests identification of our agoranomos with none other than the future Jewish king Agrippa I.

Josephus' account of Agrippa's life is very fragmentary. Born in 11 or 10 B.C., Agrippa was sent as a child to Rome where he remained after his education was completed. His life in the capital is described by Josephus as that of a courtier and a spendthrift. Some time in the 20s A.D. Agrippa was forced to leave Rome because of the debts he incurred there and also because he fell out of favour with the emperor Tiberius.

He went to his native land, Palestine. Josephus does not tell us what Agrippa did or intended to do upon his arrival. All he reports is that, unable to pay his debts, Agrippa became so depressed that even contemplated suicide. This prompted his wife Cypros to seek help from Herodias, Agrippa's sister and the wife of the tetrarch Herod Antipas. Persuaded

¹ S.Qedar, "Two Lead Weights of Herod Antipas and Agrippa II and the Early History of Tiberias", *Israel Numismatic Journal* 9, 1986-7, 29-30.

² The publisher erred in assigning the weight to 29/30 A.D.

³ Josephus mentions one Julius Capellus as a head of pro-Roman faction in Tiberias at the time of the First Jewish revolt (Vita 32).

by Herodias to come to Agrippa's rescue, Antipas gave his brother-in-law some means to live on and appointed him agoranomos in Tiberias, the capital of his tetrarchy.

According to Josephus, the arrangement did not last long and came to an end through Antipas' fault. At a banquet in Tyre the tetrarch reproached his brother-in-law with being a "poor relative". That was more than Agrippa could endure. He resigned his post in Tiberias and made his way to Flaccus, the current governor of Syria, whom he had befriended while still in Rome.

Having spent some time in Flaccus' retinue, Agrippa was again forced to depart. This time Aristobulus, Agrippa's brother, is indicated by Josephus as the main source of Agrippa's misfortune. A dispute between the cities of Sidon and Damascus was to be heard by Flaccus. Agrippa took a bribe from the Damascenes, promising to influence the legate in their favour. Aristobulus revealed the deal to the governor who, after investigating the matter and finding the facts true, broke off his friendship with Agrippa. Deprived of all means of subsistence and with no other prospective patron, Agrippa decided to try his luck again in Rome.⁴

The chronology of the period spent by Agrippa in the region cannot be worked out precisely. Josephus says that he fell out of favour with Tiberius because the old emperor could not bear to see former friends of his deceased son Drusus. Drusus died on September 14, 23 A.D.,⁵ which makes 24 A.D. the *terminus a quo* for Agrippa's departure from Rome. It may be suggested from the order in which Josephus' narrative proceeds that Agrippa went to Antipas almost immediately upon his arrival to Judaea. Such a sequence, however, is not imperative. Josephus' account of Agrippa is far from comprehensive and is based rather on a number of episodes which Josephus (or his source) deemed worth mentioning. It would be somewhat strange had Agrippa arrived in Palestine simply in order to go to a remote place in Idumaea and to contemplate suicide there. From what we know about him, he was a sanguine and inventive person. It is more likely that he would have had some plans for improving his situation upon his return home and that he would have tried to put these plans into practice. Josephus (or his source) may have omitted the description of Agrippa's initial years in Palestine either out of ignorance or because he did not find them sufficiently interesting.

Agrippa's marriage to Cypros might have been one of the things he had in mind while leaving Italy. We hear of no wife during his stay in Rome, while in the events in Judaea Cypros plays an important part. Their eldest child, Agrippa II, was in his seventeenth year in 44 A.D. and thus must have been born in 27 -28 A.D.; this would allow for the marriage between Agrippa and Cypros as late as 26-27 A.D.⁶ Since Cypros was instrumental in

⁴ Josephus, Ant. XVIII 143-155 (6.1-3).

⁵ CIL VI 32493.

⁶ D.R.Schwartz, Agrippa I, the Last King of Judaea, Jerusalem 1987, (Hebrew) 55.

bringing her husband to Antipas' service, the beginning of Agrippa's stay with the tetrarch can be safely suggested only some time after this date.⁷ As for the termination of his arrangement with Antipas, much depends on the chronology of Flaccus' governorship of Syria, since it is to the Syrian legate that Agrippa went immediately upon resigning his post in Tiberias.

The only firm evidence on Flaccus' presence in Syria are coins of Antioch bearing his name and dated ΒΠ (82). The coins must have been issued sometime between October 33 A.D. and September 34 A.D.⁸ For the opening and closing years of Flaccus' term we have to rely on somewhat incomplete literary evidence. Certain remarks by Tacitus and Cassius Dio seem to imply that Flaccus' predecessor was relieved of his post in 32 A.D.⁹ The appointment of Flaccus' successor, L. Vitellius, is mentioned by Tacitus among the events of 35 A.D.¹⁰ On the strength of these indications Flaccus' governorship is sometimes put between 32 and 35 A.D.¹¹ There are, however, some uncertainties especially as regards the latter date. According to Tacitus, Flaccus died in his post and the event is mentioned at a point of the narrative which implies a date at the very end of 33 A.D.¹² The possibility that Flaccus had died so early is usually rejected on the ground that Tiberius would not have left the important Syrian province without a governor from the end of 33 A.D. to sometime in 35 A.D. (when Vitellius would have arrived). The objection may not be entirely binding. Tiberius had a well-known tendency to procrastination when it came to appointing provincial governors. Tacitus tells us how, after receiving the news of Flaccus' death, the emperor complained about the scarcity of suitable candidates, which would seem to imply precisely this kind of delay.¹³

The decision by Tiberius as regards the tetrarchy of Philip may have resulted from this situation of suspense. Philip died in 33/4 A.D. and although his territory was annexed to the province of Syria, the tribute which was collected in it was to be held on deposit.¹⁴ If one assumes that the emperor received the news about Philip's death while he was still meditating over the appointment of a future Syrian governor, the provisional character of his ruling would be easier to explain.¹⁵

⁷ Schwartz (note 6) comes to a similar conclusion albeit by slightly different reasoning (54-56).

⁸ BMC, Syria, 170, nos. 161, 162.

⁹ Tacitus, Ann. VI 27; Cassius Dio LVIII 19.

¹⁰ Tacitus, Ann. VI 32; Suetonius, Vit. 2,4: ex consulatu Syriae praepositus. Vitellius was consul in 34 A.D.

¹¹ E.Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. I (revised and edited by G.Vermes and F.Millar), Edinburgh 1973, 262; cf. W.Eck, RE, Suppl. XIV, 439-440; PIR² P 538.

¹² Tacitus, Ann. VI 27.

¹³ Ibid; Schwartz (note 6), 199 and note 5.

¹⁴ Josephus, Ant. XVIII 108.

¹⁵ Cf. M.Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, Leiden 1976, 182 and Schwartz (note 6), 62.

But even if the possibility of Flaccus' death in 33 A.D. is discarded, some separation in time is to be postulated between his governorship and that of Vitellius.¹⁶ It would have taken some six to ten weeks for the news of Flaccus' death to reach Rome, depending on the season. No less time would be needed for the new governor to make the necessary preparations, and to reach Syria. Therefore, it is hard to envisage Flaccus' death much later than at the very beginning of 35 A.D.

Agrippa, then, would have left the governor either in the course of 34 A.D. or, if Flaccus indeed died at the end of 33 A.D., sometime during this latter year. As for the date of Agrippa's joining Flaccus, one may suggest that it closely followed the governor's arrival in Syria. Josephus says that it was the tetrarch's tactless remark which caused Agrippa to part from him and to seek Flaccus' patronage, but since Josephus tends to present versions which are most favorable to Agrippa, a somewhat different development cannot be excluded. Agrippa's conditions in Tiberias would hardly conform to his idea of good living. His means were limited and Tiberias was a small provincial city. Thus, he might well have conceived the idea of trying to join Flaccus from the first moment he was informed of the latter's appointment.¹⁷ After securing the governor's agreement he would feel free to depart from Antipas with or without a pretext. His joining Flaccus in the course of 32 A.D. is therefore more than likely.

The time when Agrippa stayed with his brother-in-law would, accordingly, fall within the period immediately before. This means that even if his arrangement with Antipas lasted for barely two years, these years would correspond to 30/31 and 31/2 A.D. Our lead weight bears the first of these dates, 30/31 A.D. and gives the name of agoranomos for this year as Gaius Julius. If, as the chronology seems to suggest, it was Agrippa who served as agoranomos in Tiberias in the same year, the name Gaius Julius would have belonged to him.

Since Roman citizenship was granted by Julius Caesar to Antipater, father of King Herod and great-grandfather of Agrippa, all scions of the Herodian house would have been called *Iulii*.¹⁸ The use of Roman names is not attested, however, for the first two generations after Antipater, i.e. for King Herod and his sons. On the other hand, Agrippa I is named Julius on the inscription from Athens set up in honour of his daughter Julia Berenice.¹⁹ His son, Agrippa II, was also Julius and from inscriptions and coins we know that his praenomen

¹⁶ Cf. Schürer (note 11), 262.

¹⁷ Schwartz (note 6), 57.

¹⁸ Waddington (Le Bas, P., and Waddington, W.H.) *Inscriptions grecques et latines recueillies en Grèce et en Asie Mineure III*, Paris 1870, 2365 (commentary).

¹⁹ OGIS 428 = IG II/III² 3449.

was Marcus.²⁰ However, the praenomen of Agrippa I has remained unattested so far. It has often been assumed that his full name was, like that of his son, Marcus Julius Agrippa.²¹

Our weight, however, suggests that his praenomen was Gaius. This may not be entirely unexpected since the name Gaius Julius would have been current in the Herodian family from the days of Antipater. There is, indeed, an example of Agrippa's *tria nomina* used by a late descendant of his uncle Alexander. The man is called "Gaius Julius Agrippa, son of Alexander" on an inscription from Ephesus.²²

Knowledge of the full Roman name of Agrippa I may be of help for more precise assignment of some inscriptions. Until now, if an inscription mentioned Marcus Julius Agrippa but gave no other clues, it was unclear whether it referred to the father or the son.²³ It seems that inscriptions of this type may now be attributed to Agrippa II with more certainty.

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²⁰ SEG VII 216; Y.Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage*, New York 1982, vol. II, 250 (nos. 6, 6BN), pl. 11 (nos. 6, 6BN).

²¹ Schürer (note 11), 442 (note 1); PIR²I 131.

²² OGIS 429 = D 8823 = *Inschr. von Ephesus* IV 1537.

²³ Waddington 2552 = OGIS 420.