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Ἡ ΝΕΑ ΕΠΑΡΧΕΙΑ ἸΑΡΑΒΙΑ: THE NEW PROVINCE OF ARABIA IN THE PAPYRI  
FROM THE JUDAEAN DESERT

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*To my daughter Tor  
for her birthday*

The era of the Roman province of Arabia began on 22 March 106.<sup>1</sup> The earliest document which bears the provincial year in its dating formula is the Greek *P.Yadin* 5 from 2 June 110: τῆς δὲ κατ[α]κτ[ι]στικῆς ἐπαρχείας ἔτους πέμπτου (ll. 3-4).<sup>2</sup> The next four documents bear the formula דס מנין פפרכיח (i.e. the province of Arabia) in their opening: *P.Yadin* 6 (119, Nabataean, unpublished) line 1; *P.Yadin* 7 (120, Aramaic), lines 1-2 = lines 31-32;<sup>3</sup> *P.Yadin* 8 (122, Aramaic, unpublished) lines 2-3; *P.Yadin* 9 (122, Nabataean, unpublished) line 2. Then we have *XHev/Se gr* 60 from 29 January 125,<sup>4</sup> where the provincial year, without τῆς ἐπαρχείας (or τῆς ἐπαρχείας ’Αραβίας),<sup>5</sup> is given at the end: ἔτος ἐννεακαιδε[κάτου] (line 11). Two Greek papyri from the Babatha archive from 11 or 12 October 125 bear an identical formula at the opening: κατὰ δὲ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῆς ἐπαρχείας ’Αραβίας ἔτους εἰκοστοῦ (*P.Yadin* 14 lines 17-18; 15 line 2 = lines 15-16).

From 4 December 127 onwards a new element enters the formula which expresses the provincial year: the adjective νέα modifies ἡ ἐπαρχεία in the dating formula, thus no longer ἡ ἐπαρχεία ’Αραβία but ἡ νέα ἐπαρχεία ’Αραβία. It is attested for the first time in the two land declarations from that date *P.Yadin* 16 and *XHev/Se gr* 62.<sup>6</sup> The better preserved *P.Yadin* 16 reads in lines 9-10: κατὰ δὲ τὸν τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας ’Αραβίας ἀριθμὸν ἔτους δευτέρου εἰκοστοῦ μῆνος ’Απελλαίου ἐκκαιδεκάτη (cf. *XHev/Se gr* 62 frg. a lines 8-9). The addition proves tenacious: it occurs, in one of two formulas, in all the Greek documents which employ a provincial dating in the next five years, until the documents stop altogether in 132: ἀριθμῶ δὲ τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας ’Αραβίας (*P.Yadin* 17, 21 February 128, line 2 = lines 18-19; *P.Yadin* 18, 5 April 128, lines 30-31) or κατὰ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας ’Αραβίας (*P.Yadin* 19, 16 April 128, lines 9-10; *P.Yadin* 20, 19 June 130, line 3 = lines 21-22; *XHev/Se gr* 65, 7 August 131, lines 1-2;<sup>7</sup> *P.Yadin* 21 and 22, 11 September 130, lines 4-5; *P.Yadin* 27, 19 August 132, lines 2-3).

Two papyri seem at first sight to throw doubt on the clear cut division between documents written before and after December 127:

<sup>1</sup> See R. E. Briinnow and A. von Domaszewski, *Provincia Arabia* III, 1909, 303; G. W. Bowersock, ‘The Annexation and Initial Garrison of Arabia’, *ZPE* 5, 1970, 37–47; *idem*, ‘A Report on Arabia Provincia’, *JRS* 61, 1971, 231.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *IGLS XXI.2* 26 (‘year 43’, Medaba). The *P.Yadin* so far published can be found in N. Lewis, *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri*, Jerusalem, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> See Y. Yadin, J. C. Greenfield, A. Yardeni, ‘A Deed of Gift in Aramaic Found in Naḥal Ḥever: Papyrus Yadin 7’, *Eretz-Israel* 25, 1996, 383-403 (Hebrew, with an English résumé on p. 103\*).

<sup>4</sup> Olim *XHev/Se gr* 5, see H.M. Cotton, ‘Rent or Tax Receipt from Maoza’, *ZPE* 100, 1994, 550 = *eadem*, *ZPE* 105, 1995, 174. The Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek *XHev/Se* are forthcoming in H.M. Cotton and A. Yardeni, *Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek Texts from Naḥal Ḥever: The Seiyāl Collection II, Discoveries in the Judaeian Desert XXVII*, Oxford, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> The convention of dating by the provincial era without in any way referring to the province is very common in inscriptions from this area as well as in the Nessana papyri, see Ph. Freeman, ‘The Era of the Province of Arabia: Problems and Solution’, in H. I. MacAdam, *Studies in the History of the Roman Province of Arabia*, *BAR* 295, 1986, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Frg. a of *XHev/Se gr* 62 was published originally by N. Lewis, ‘A Jewish Landowner from the Province of Arabia’, *Scripta Classica Israelica* 8–9, 1985–8, 132–7; for a final publication which includes the other fragments see Cotton and Yardeni (n. 4).

<sup>7</sup> Originally published by N. Lewis as *P.Yadin* 37, but it is now known to belong to the archive of Salome Komaïse daughter of Levi; see Cotton, *ZPE* 105, 1995, 204-7, and the new edition of the papyrus in Cotton and Yardeni (n. 4).

i) *P.Yadin* 31 reads τῆς νέας ἐπαρχίας] in line 2, but is dated tentatively by Lewis to 110 on the basis of the fragmentary consular date in lines 15-16 of the outer text:

15 ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Μ[άρκου Σαλουειδιηνοῦ Ὀρφίτου καὶ Κουίντου Πεδ-]  
16 ουκαίου Πρ[ι]κ[ε]ί[λο]

In the time since Lewis' work the papyrus has deteriorated, and I have not been able to verify any of the letters beyond ουκαί in line 16. It could be suggested that we have here ου καί, i.e. the ου is the last syllable of the cognomen of the first consul, and is followed by καί, which introduces the name of the second consul. The fact that the formula ἡ νέα ἐπαρχία Ἀραβία occurs without exception in all Greek documents from 127 onwards in which the date can be safely read, together with the fact that the element νέα is never found in the documents before 127, makes it *a priori* more likely that *P.Yadin* 31 belongs in the years 127 onwards;<sup>8</sup> at least it puts the onus of proof on those who would postulate 110 as the date of this document. What remains of the consular date in line 16 can comfortably be accommodated to the names of the consuls known to us for the years 127, 130, 131 or 132:<sup>9</sup> 1) ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Μάρκου Γαούου Γαλλικανοῦ καὶ Τίτου Ἀτειλίου Ρούφου Τιτιανοῦ, as in *P.Yadin* 16 for the year 127; 2) ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Κοείνου Φαβίου Κατηλίνου καὶ Φλαοῦ Ἀπερου for 130;<sup>10</sup> 3) ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Σεργίου Ὀκταοῦ Λαίνα Ποντιανοῦ καὶ Μάρκου Ἀντωνίου Ρουφείνου, as in *P.Yadin* 27 for the year 131; 4) ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Γαίου Σεργίου Αὐγορείου καὶ Πουπλίου Τρεβίου Σεργιανοῦ, as in *XHēv/Se gr* for the year 132.<sup>11</sup>

ii) The Aramaic *XHēv/Se ar* 12 from 30 January 131 does not have the word 'new' in its dating formula:<sup>12</sup> 'year twenty-five of the hyparchia' [ה]שנתי עשרין וחמשה ליהפרכיה. However, this absence may be attributed to the nature of the document, a receipt; or, alternatively, to the different diplomatics of the Semitic documents, noticeable for example in the varying order of the several dating formulas (the regnal, the consular and the provincial).<sup>13</sup>

The fact that the term νέα modifies ἐπαρχία and not Ἀραβία – 'the new province', not *Nova Arabia* – as rightly emphasized by Lewis,<sup>14</sup> shows clearly that there is no question of the creation of a new province called Νέα Ἀραβία under Hadrian. The dating formula says explicitly 'the new province', not *Nova Arabia*.<sup>15</sup> The νέα, therefore, has nothing to do with the name, only with the 'province'. This

<sup>8</sup> A. Wasserstein, 'Lewis, Yadin and Greenfield, *Documents from the Cave of Letters*', *JQR* 84, 1993, 374-5.

<sup>9</sup> The consuls of the year 128 and 129 are excluded since a β̄, for the iteration of the consulate of the first named consul, would have stood between the ου and the καί, e.g. *XHēv/Se gr* 64 (129, olim *XHēv/Se gr* 1, see H.M. Cotton, *ZPE* 105, 1995, 183ff.) line 1: [ἐ]πὶ ὑπάτων Ποπλίου Ἰουλιεντίου Κέλκου τὸ β̄ καὶ Αἰολικίου Νηρατίου Μαρκέλλου τὸ β̄.

<sup>10</sup> This is the order of names in *P.Yadin* 20, and 23, but not in *P.Yadin* 21 and 22: Μάρκου Φλαοῦ Ἀπερος καὶ Κοείνου Φαβίου Κατηλίνου, unless Aper in the genitive is written Ἀπρου as in *XHēv/Se gr* 69 line 2.

<sup>11</sup> We do not have the line length for the outer text of this document. The reconstructions offered above have 30, 30, 37 and 29 letters per line respectively. In comparison with other documents in the Babatha Archive the line length in the first, second and fourth reconstruction falls below the average. Note though that the outer texts of *P.Yadin* 23 (130), *P.Yadin* 25 (131) and *P.Yadin* 26 (131) have ca. 34, 37 and 34 letters per line respectively. I would, therefore, opt for the third reconstruction: ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Σεργίου Ὀκταοῦ Λαίνα Ποντιανοῦ καὶ Μάρκου Ἀντωνίου Ρουφείνου, i.e. the year 131, as the date of *P.Yadin* 31.

<sup>12</sup> For an English translation see Cotton, *ZPE* 105, 1995, 204.

<sup>13</sup> See in detail Cotton in Cotton and Yardeni (n. 4), 'Introduction to the Greek Texts: The Calendar'.

<sup>14</sup> N. Lewis, 'The World of P.Yadin', *BASP* 28, 1991, 35-6 against A. Wasserstein, 'A Marriage Contract from the Province of Arabia Nova: Notes on Papyrus Yadin 18', *JQR* 80, 1989, 98, n. 15.

<sup>15</sup> And thus the association with the fourth century Νέα Ἀραβία in *P.Oxy.* L 3471 (Wasserstein, *JQR* 80, 1989, 96ff.) is quite irrelevant here. For the controversy over Νέα Ἀραβία in *P.Oxy.* L 3471 see T.D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, 1982, 205-6, 211, 213-5; G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* 1983, 145-6; Ph. Mayerson, 'P.Oxy. 3574: Eleutheropolis of the New Arabia', *ZPE* 53, 1983, 251-8 (= *Monks, Martyrs, Soldiers and Saracens. Papers on the Near East in Late Antiquity (1962-1993)*, 1994, 204-11); idem, 'Palaestina vs. Arabia in the Byzantine Sources', *ZPE* 56, 1984, 223-30 (= *Monks, Martyrs, Soldiers and Saracens*, 224-31); Bowersock, 'Naming a province: more on New Arabia', *ZPE* 56, 1984, 221-2; Mayerson, 'Nea Arabia (*P.Oxy.* 3574): an addendum to *ZPE* 53', *ZPE* 64, 1986, 139-40 (= *Monks, Martyrs, Soldiers and Saracens*, 256-7).

is further proved by the fact that the counting of the provincial years continues uninterrupted from 106.<sup>16</sup> One notes also that although the dating formula in the two land declarations says τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας Ἀραβίας (*P.Yadin* 16 lines 9-10; cf. *XHev/Se gr* 62 frg. a lines 8-9), the text itself says Ἀραβίας with no modification: ἀποτιμήσεως Ἀραβίας ἀγομένης ὑπὸ Τίτου Ἀνελίου Σεξτίου Φλωρεντείνου πρεσβευτοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ἀντικρατήγου (*P.Yadin* 16 lines 11-13; cf. *XHev/Se gr* 62 frg. a lines 10-12).

How to explain the change in the dating formula?

Lewis was right to point out that the change in the dating formula took place at the time of the census held in the province in 127.<sup>17</sup> The expression of the rate of taxation in terms of the old Nabataean monetary unit—the *melaina*,<sup>18</sup> as well as the presence in the declarations of the Nabataean royal tax—the *stephanikon*,<sup>19</sup> make it likely that this was the first census conducted in Arabia since its annexation in 106.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that this was the first census in Arabia is crucial for the explanation of the new dating formula given below. It is, therefore, important to dispel at this point the notion that a provincial census followed immediately upon the annexation of a territory to the Roman empire. Such a claim has been made for example in respect of the annexations of Judaea, of Cappadocia and of Dacia.<sup>21</sup>

Judaea happened to be annexed to the province of Syria<sup>22</sup> at the same time that the latter's governor, P. Sulpicius Quirinius, was conducting a census there;<sup>23</sup> naturally the census spread to the newly annexed area: παρῆν δὲ καὶ Κυρίνιος εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν προσθήκη τῆς Συρίας γενομένην ἀποτιμηρόμενός τε αὐτῶν τὰς οὐσίας καὶ ἀποδωρόμενος τὰ Ἀρχελάου χρήματα (*Jos. AJ* 18.2).<sup>24</sup> Nor does *Tac. Ann.* 6.41.1 prove that 'the annexation of ... Cappadocia by Tiberius [was] ... followed by [a census]'.<sup>25</sup> Cappadocia was annexed in 17 (*Tac. Ann.* 2.42.4) or 18 (*Ann.* 2.56.4); whereas *Ann.* 6.41.1 tells us that the Cietae revolted against the census à la mode romaine (*nostrum in modum ... census*) imposed on them shortly before 36 by the young Archelaus, whose subjects they were ('Cietarum natio Cappadoci Archelao subiecta').<sup>26</sup> Finally, *Lact. Mort.Pers.* 23.5 does not imply at all a census following directly upon the reduction of Dacia to a province: 'Quae veteres adversus victos iure belli facerant, et ille adversus Romanos et Romanis subiectos facere ausus est, quia parentes eius censui subiugati fuerant, quem Traianus Daciis assidue rebellantibus poenae gratia victor imposuit'. Lactantius means

<sup>16</sup> A point raised by Wasserstein himself ('Marriage Contract', 101) and dismissed.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis (n. 13), 36.

<sup>18</sup> See *P.Yadin* 16 lines 20, 27, 32; *XHev/Se gr* 62 frg. a lines 16-17; frgs. c-m line 8.

<sup>19</sup> See *P.Yadin* 16 lines 20, 27, 32; *XHev/Se gr* 62 frgs. c-m lines 17-18.

<sup>20</sup> For the *melaina* and the *stephanikon* see W. Weiser and H.M. Cotton, 'Gebt dem Kaiser, was des Kaisers ist: Die Geldwährungen der Griechen, Juden, Nabatäer und Römer im syrisch-nabatäischen Raum unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Kurses von Sela'/Melaina und Lepton nach der Annexion des Königreiches der Nabatäer durch Rom', *ZPE* 114, 1997, 237-87.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. P.A. Brunt, 'The revenue of Rome', *Roman Imperial Themes*, 1990, 330. On the provincial census see L. Neesen, *Untersuchungen zu den direkten Staatsabgaben der römischen Kaiserzeit*, 1980, 39ff; Anna Aichiniger, 'Zwei Arten des Provinzialcensus? Überlegungen zu neupublizierten israelischen Papyrusfunden', *Chiron* 22, 1992, 35-45.

<sup>22</sup> That it did not become an independent province, as the *communis opinio* maintains, will be argued elsewhere.

<sup>23</sup> *Jos. AJ* 18.1 and *ILS* 2683; on P. Sulpicius Quirinius see now E. Dąbrowa, *The Governors of Roman Syria from Augustus to Septimius Severus*, forthcoming.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *BJ* 2.117.

<sup>25</sup> Brunt (n. 21).

<sup>26</sup> See E. Schürer, G. Vermes and F. Millar, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175B.C.–A.D.135)* I, 1973, 414.

that Trajan made the Dacians subject to Roman taxes, not that he held a census there: the *poena* consisted in the payment of taxes, not in the census.

Significantly not only the formula expressing the provincial era was modified in the land declarations of 127, but also the formula expressing the regnal year is unlike anything we encounter before or after. Hadrian's full titulature appears in the dating formula:

ἐπὶ Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος θεοῦ Τραιανοῦ Παρθικοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ Νέρουα υἱωνοῦ Τραιανοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ἀρχιερέως μεγίστου δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ δωδέκατον ὑπάτου τὸ τρίτον (*P.Yadin* 16 lines 5-7 = *XHév/Se gr* 62 frg. a lines 4-7).

The appearance of the emperor's full titulature in the dating formula (i.e. following ἐπί) is quite exceptional; nowhere else in the papyri is the full titulature attested as part of the dating formula.<sup>27</sup> On the two occasions in which Hadrian's full titulature appears in the papyri, it occurs in the nominative, since it is the beginning of an edict and of an epistle. There are, as far as I know, only two other examples of the full form of Hadrian's imperial titulature in the papyri: *SB* III 6944 (two copies of an edict from 136); *P.Oslo* III 78 (another copy of the same edict),<sup>28</sup> and *P.Würzb.* 9 (a letter to the city of Antinoopolis, between 130 and 135).<sup>29</sup> A much shorter form of the imperial titulature occurs when it is part of the dating formula, as here, i.e. following ἐπί.<sup>30</sup>

The explanation offered below attempts, therefore, to explain both the νέα in the formula expressing the provincial date as well as the unusual appearance of the full form of the imperial titulature in the formula expressing the regnal years.

The land declarations *P.Yadin* 16 and *XHév/Se gr* 62 reflect in their dating formula the language used by emperor Hadrian, in an *edictum* or an *epistula*, ordering a census in the new province. In Hadrian's *edictum* or *epistula* the imperial titulature appeared in the nominative and not as part of the dating formula. Furthermore, since this was the first census, it was only natural that Hadrian will order a census in 'the New Province'. The *edictum* or *epistula* was then published by the provincial governor together with his own edict ordering the census. It is true that there is no example of an edict from Egypt ordering the census, but many declarations after 89 refer to it in the formula κατὰ τὰ κελευθέντα or κατὰ τὰ προστεταγμένα followed by the name of the prefect.<sup>31</sup> The procedure of attaching the emperor's communication to the governor's edict is attested for Claudius' epistle to the Alexandrians, published by the prefect of Egypt, Lucius Aemilius Rectus, together with his own edict in 41 CE.<sup>32</sup> The prefect's edict ends with the normal dating formula:

(ἔτους) β Τιβέριου Κλαυδίου Καίσαρος Σεβάστου Γερμανικοῦ Αὐτοκράτορος, μηνὸς Νέου Σεβαστοῦ) ιδ (col. I lines 11-12).

The imperial letter follows in the second column with the full nomenclature of the emperor in the nominative:

Τιβέριος Κλαύδιος Καίσαρ Σεβαστὸς Γερμανικὸς Αὐτοκράτωρ ἀρχιερεὺς μεγίστος δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας ὑπάτος ἀποδεδιγμένος (col. II lines 14-15).

<sup>27</sup> I suppose this is what Lewis means when he says 'This is the imperial titulature of Hadrian in its fullest form, found hitherto only in inscriptions' (n. 2), p. 68.

<sup>28</sup> See J. H. Oliver, *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*, 1989, no. 88A, B, C.

<sup>29</sup> See Oliver (n. 28), no. 164; see P. Bureth, *Les Titulatures impériales dans les papyrus, les ostraca et les inscriptions d'Égypte (30 a.C.–284 p.C.)*, 1964, 63.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bureth (n. 29), *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> See M. Hombert and Cl. Préaux, *Recherches sur le recensement dans l'Égypte Romaine* (*P. Bruxelles Inv.* E. 7616), *Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava* V, 1952, 53; see 53-6; 76-7; R. S. Bagnall and B. W. Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt*, 1994, 11. *W.Chr.* 202 (*P.Lond.* III 904) is an edict calling people to return home after the census has been declared: τῆς κατ' οἰκίαν ἀπογραφῆς ἐλνεστῶ[σης] (line 20).

<sup>32</sup> Oliver (n. 28), no. 19 (= *P.Lond.* VI 1912).

What we have in the land declarations from Arabia is both the imperial titulature and the order to conduct a census in the ‘new province’. Both were translated into the dating formula by the official scribes who translated the original declarations into Greek and prepared the authorized copies.<sup>33</sup> Thus there is no longer a reason to postulate a reorganization of the province of Arabia, ‘occasioned by, or connected with, the antecedents ... of the Bar Kokhba rebellion’,<sup>34</sup> nor ‘a reform of the provincial administration.’<sup>35</sup>

As has been seen, the intrusion of the *νέα* element into the provincial dating formula proves tenacious. It is present in documents written in two different locations and by different scribes. The land declarations *P.Yadin* 16 and *XHev/Se gr* 62 were written in 127 in Rabbath Moab by two different, though unknown, scribes. The other documents bearing the new provincial dating formula were written in Maḥoza, also by different scribes: *P.Yadin* 18 (marriage contract) was written in 128 by Theēnas son of Shim‘on; *P.Yadin* 19 (deed of gift) was written in 128 by a son of Shim‘on (not to be identified with Theēnas son of Shim‘on);<sup>36</sup> *XHev/Se gr* 64 (deed of gift) was written in 129 by Reisha son of Judah;<sup>37</sup> *P.Yadin* 20 (concession of rights), *P.Yadin* 21 and 22 (complementary deeds of sale) and *P.Yadin* 27 (receipt) were written in 130 by Germanus son of Judah; *XHev/Se gr* 65 (marriage contract) was written in 131; the scribe’s name is not preserved since only the inner text survived. This uniformity of usage gives us an insight into scribal practices in the province of Arabia: dating formulae invented in administrative centres for copying official documents were later incorporated into private documents by local scribes.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See H.M. Cotton, ‘Subscriptions and signatures in the papyri from the Judaean Desert: the χειροχρήτης’, *JJP* 25, 1996, 29ff.

<sup>34</sup> J. Geiger apud Wasserstein (n. 14), 101, n. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis (n. 14), 36.

<sup>36</sup> See Lewis (n. 2), p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> Note though that the *νέα* in line 2 is a restoration. For the scribe see commentary ad *XHev/Se gr* 64 line 44 in Cotton and Yardeni (n. 4).

<sup>38</sup> The role of the scribe in influencing the form and content of legal and non-legal documents is a fascinating subject, much neglected; see E. Bickerman, ‘Two legal interpretations of the Septuagint’, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* I, 1976, 207.