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‘Η ΝΈΑ ΕΠΙΑΡΧΕΙΑ 'ΑΡΑΒΙΑ: THE NEW PROVINCE OF ARABIA IN THE PAPYRI FROM THE JUDAEAN DESERT


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The era of the Roman province of Arabia began on 22 March 106. The earliest document which bears the provincial year in its dating formula is the Greek P.Yadin 5 from 2 June 110: τής δὲ κατ’ακαθαρσίαν τῆς ἐπαρχείας ἐτοις γεμματον (ll. 3-4). The next four documents bear the formula ἐτοις γεμματον, ‘according to the era of this hyparchia’ (i.e. the province of Arabia) in their opening: P.Yadin 6 (119, Nabataean, unpublished) line 1; P.Yadin 7 (120, Aramaic), lines 1-2 = lines 31-32; P.Yadin 8 (122, Aramaic, unpublished) lines 2-3; P.Yadin 9 (122, Nabataean, unpublished) line 2.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, where the provincial year, without τής ἐπαρχείας (or τής ἐπαρχείας ἀραβιακος), is given at the end: ἐτοις ἐν μετακαιδεῖατοι (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 ἄραβια τῆς ἐπαρχείας ἀραβιακος ἐτοις εἰκοστοὶ (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 η ἐπαρχεία in the dating formula, thus no longer η ἐπαρχεία ἀραβιακος but η νέα ἐπαρχεία ἀραβιακος. It is attested for the first time in the two land declarations from that date P.Yadin 16 and XHev/Se gr 62. The better preserved P.Yadin 16 reads in lines 9-10: κατὰ δὲ τὸν τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας ἀραβιακος ἐτοις δευτέρου εἰκοστοῖ μηνάς Ἀπελλαίου έκκαιδεκάτη {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: ἀραβιακος δὲ τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας ἀραβιακος (P.Yadin 17, 21 February 128, line 2 = lines 18-19; P.Yadin 18, 5 April 128, lines 30-31) or κατὰ τὸν ἄραβια τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας ἀραβιακος (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; 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:

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2 Cf. IGLS XXI.2.6 (‘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.
5 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.
6 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).
7 Originally published by N. Lewis as P.Yadin 37, but it is now known to belong to the archive of Salome Komâise daughter of Levi; see Cotton, ZPE 105, 1995, 204-7, and the new edition of the papyras in Cotton and Yardeni (n. 4).
i) *P. Yadin* 31 reads τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας 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 υπάτων Μάρκου Σαλοκειδηνοῦ Ὀρφατοῦ καὶ Κοιντοῦ Πεδή
16 χιλιάυδου Πρόσελγεν

In the time since Lewis’ work the papyrus has deteriorated, and I have not been able to verify any of the letters beyond χιλιάυδου in line 16. It could be suggested that we have here χιλιάυδου καὶ, i.e. the χιλιάυδου is the last syllable of the cognomen of the first consul, and is followed by καὶ, which introduces the name of the second consul. The fact that the formula ἡ νέα ἐπαρχεία 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; 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: 1) ἐπὶ υπάτων Μάρκου Γαυού καὶ Γαλλικανοῦ καὶ Τίτου Ἀτειλίου Ροῦφου Τίτιανοῦ, as in *P. Yadin* 16 for the year 127; 2) ἐπὶ υπάτων Κοιντοῦ Φαβίου Καττήλανοῦ καὶ Φαλούου Ἀπεροῦ for 130; 3) ἐπὶ υπάτων Σεργίου Ἀκτάλου Λαϊνα Ποιτιανοῦ καὶ Μάρκου Ἄντωνοῦ Ρουφένου, as in *P. Yadin* 27 for the year 131; 4) ἐπὶ υπάτων Γαύοο Σερφίου Λαυγορεινοῦ καὶ Ποπλίου Τρεβίου Χεργανοῦ, as in *XHer* Se gr for the year 131.

ii) The Aramaic *XHer* Se ar 12 from 30 January 131 does not have the word ‘new’ in its dating formula: ‘year twenty-five of the hyparchia’ (יָדוֹק הַלָּחֶשׁ). 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).13

The fact that the term νέα modifies ἐπαρχεία and not Ἀραβία – ‘the new province’, not Nova Arabia – as rightly emphasized by Lewis,14 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.15 The νέα, therefore, has nothing to do with the name, only with the ‘province’. This

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9 The consuls of the year 128 and 129 are excluded since a β, for the iteration of the consulate of the first named consul, would have stood between the ω and the καὶ, e.g. *XHer* Se gr 64 (129, olim *XHer* Se gr 1, see H.M. Cotton, *ZPE* 105, 1995, 183ff.) line 1: [ἐπὶ υπάτων Ποπλίου Ιουριουκήνου Κέλου τοῦ βασιλείου Νερατοῦ Μαρκελλοῦ τοῦ β.]
10 This is the order of names in *P. Yadin* 20 and 23, but not in *P. Yadin* 21 and 22: Μάρκου Φαλούου Ἀπεροῖ καὶ Κοιντοῦ Φαβίου Καττήλανοῦ, unless Aper in the genitive is written Ἀπεροῖ as in *XHer* Se gr 69 line 2.
11 We do not watch 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 reconstructions 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 υπάτων Σεργίου Ὀκταλού Λαϊνα Ποιτιανοῦ καὶ Μάρκου Ἄντωνοῦ Ρουφένου, i.e. the year 131, as the date of *P. Yadin* 31.
12 For an English translation see Cotton, *ZPE* 105, 1995, 204.
13 See in detail Cotton in Cotton and Yardeni (n. 4), ‘Introduction to the Greek Texts: The Calendar’.
is further proved by the fact that the counting of the provincial years continues uninterrupted from 106. One notes also that although the dating formula in the two land declarations says τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας 'Αραβίας (P. Yadin 16 lines 9-10; cf. XHev/Se gr 62 frg. a lines 8-9), the text itself says 'Αραβίας with no modification: ἀποτιμήσω τῆς Αραβίας ἡγομένης υπὸ Τίτου 'Αρεινίου Σεξτίου Φλωρεντίου πρεσβευτοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ἀντιπρατήγου (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. The expression of the rate of taxation in terms of the old Nabataean monetary unit—the melaina, as well as the presence in the declarations of the Nabataean royal tax—the stephanikon, make it likely that this was the first census conducted in Arabia since its annexation in 106.

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.

Judaea happened to be annexed to the province of Syria at the same time that the latter’s governor, P. Sulpicius Quirinius, was conducting a census there; naturally the census spread to the newly annexed area: παρῆν δὲ καὶ Κυρινίος εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν προσήκην τῆς Συρίας γενομένην ἀποτιμημένος τε αὐτῶν τὰς οὐσίας καὶ ἀποδοκομένος τὰ Ἀρχελαόν χρήματα (Jos. AJ 18.2). Nor does Tac. Ann. 6.41.1 prove that ‘the annexation of ... Cappadocia by Tiberius [was] ... followed by [a census]’. 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’). 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 subjectos facere ausus est, quia parentes eius censui subiugati fuerant, quem Traianus Daciis assiduis rebellantibus poenae gratia victor imposuit’. Lactantius means

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16 A point raised by Wasserstein himself (‘Marriage Contract’, 101) and dismissed.
17 Lewis (n. 13), 36.
18 See P. Yadin 16 lines 20, 27, 32; XHev/Se gr 62 frg. a lines 16-17; frgs. c-m line 8.
19 See P. Yadin 16 lines 20, 27, 32; XHev/Se gr 62 frgs. c-m lines 17-18.
22 That it did not become an independent province, as the communis opinio maintains, will be argued elsewhere.
23 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.
24 Cf. BJ 2.117.
25 Brunt (n. 21).
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:

\[ \text{ēπι Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος θεοῦ Τραϊανοῦ Παρθικοῦ χιοῦ θεοῦ Νέρου υἱῶν Τραϊανοῦ} \]

\[ \text{'Αδριανοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ἀρχιερέως μεγίστου δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ διωδέκατον ὑπάτου τὸ τρίτον (P.Yadin 16 lines 5-7 = XHev/Se gr 62 frg. a lines 4-7).} \]

The appearance of the emperor’s full titulature in the dating formula (i.e. following ēπι) is quite exceptional; nowhere else in the papyri is the full titulature attested as part of the dating formula. 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), and P.Würzb. 9 (a letter to the city of Antinoopolis, between 130 and 135). A much shorter form of the imperial titulature occurs when it is part of the dating formula, as here, i.e following ēπι.

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 *XHev/Se* gr 62 reflect in their dating formula the language used by Hadrian, in an *editum* or an *epistula*, ordering a census in the new province. In Hadrian’s *editum* 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 *editum* 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. 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. The prefect’s edict ends with the normal dating formula:

\[ (ἐτους) β Τιβεριου Κλαυδιου Καισαρος Σεβαστος Κερμανικου Αυτοκρατορος, μηνς Νεου Σεβαστωιδι το (col. I lines 11-12). \]

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

\[ Τιβεριου Κλαυδιου Καίσαρ Σεβάστος Κερμανικός Αὐτοκράτωρ ἄρχων μέγιστος δημαρχικής ἐξουσίας ὑπάτου ἀποδειγμένος (col. II lines 14-15). \]

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27 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.

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


30 Cf. Bureth (n. 29), passim.

31 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: τις κατ’ οικίαν ἀπογραφής ἑνεκτάοις (line 20).

32 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. 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’, nor ‘a reform of the provincial administration’.

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); *XHev/Se gr* 64 (deed of gift) was written in 129 by Reisha son of Judah; *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.

34 J. Geiger apud Wasserstein (n. 14), 101, n. 27.
35 Lewis (n. 14), 36.
36 See Lewis (n. 2), p. 83.
37 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).
38 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.