

NIKOLAOS GONIS

THREE CONSULAR DATES

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 132 (2000) 183–186

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## THREE CONSULAR DATES\*

## 1. PLond III 1286 desc.: A Curious Combination

Only a description of this document has been published. This note concerns its date, said to be ‘the 9th Tybi in the consulship of Tiberius Manilius Fuscus II and [Servius Calpur]nius Domitius Dexter [= 4 Jan., A.D. 225]’ (p. lxxi). In the index of officials (p. 336), the following version of the consular formula is given: ὑπατείας Τιβερίου Μανιλίου Φούσκου τὸ β̄ καὶ Σερβίου Καλπουρνίου Δομιτίου Δέξτρου.<sup>2</sup>

The combination of a Roman consular dating with an Egyptian month in a text of 225 strikes one as odd. But on inspection of the original the month of Tybi disappears, and a more plausible text emerges:

ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Τιβερίου Μανιλίου Φο[ύσκου τὸ] β̄ καὶ Σερβίου Καλπουρ-  
νίου Δομιτίου Δέξτρου πρὸ Ἰου[λίω]ν

Read Ἰου[νίω]ν or Ἰου[λίω]ν; the date corresponds to 24 May or 23 June 225. I should also note that if the *praenomen* of the second consul, Σερβίου, was written, the end of the first line of the consular clause would have been very cramped.

## 2. SB IV 7444: Date and Rent

This papyrus preserves a lease of a number of rooms out of a house<sup>3</sup> situated in the city of Oxyrhynchus. The text was assigned to the third/fourth century, but contains a consular date clause which was not read. The latter was presented in the following fashion (lines 17-18):

ὑπατείας Φλ.....  
των λαμπροτάτων ἐπάρχων]..... Θῶθ̄ ..

The commentary of ed. pr. (H. B. van Hoesen, A. C. Johnson, *JEA* 14 (1928) 121-2) on line 18 records a note by H. I. Bell: ‘This [i.e. the editors’ reading] seems to me, from a photograph sent me, almost certain, though the hand is very cursive’. Unfortunately, the photograph was not published, and the text

\* I am grateful to Prof. R. S. Bagnall and Dr K. A. Worp for their comments on an earlier draft of parts 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> On these consuls see P. M. M. Leunissen, *Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander (180-235 n. Chr.)*. *Prosopographische Untersuchungen zur senatorischen Elite im römischen Kaiserreich* (1989), *Personenregister*, under the names.

<sup>3</sup> Physical damage has obscured the details of the object of the lease; we only hear of ἀπὸ ὀλοκλήρου [ο]ικίας [..... καὶ] τὸ ὑπερφῶν (lines 6-7), τοῖς μισθωτῶσι μοι τόποις (l. 11), and [τόπο]υς οἰκία[ε] (l. 20).

does not seem to have attracted any critical attention since then. But a new photograph of the papyrus<sup>4</sup> allows further progress to be made:

Cf. Tafel I

ὑπατείας Φλ[αου]ίου Κωνσταντίου καὶ Οὐαλερίου Μαξιμί[ο]υ  
τῶν λαμπρότατων ἐπάρχων] Θὼθ̄ ε̄.

The date converts to 3 September 327. The consuls of the year, Flavius Constantius and Valerius Maximus, were both *praefecti praetorio* (ἐπαρχοί); see R. S. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S. R. Schwartz, K. A. Worp, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (1987) 188-9 [hereafter *CLRE*].

The amount of rent to be paid (the clause specifying the duration of the lease has not survived) also calls for attention. According to the edition, the lessee will have to pay (lines 7-8)

ὑπὲρ ἐνοικ[ίου] κατ' ἔτος [ἑκακτον] ἀργυρίου δρα[χ]μὰς ζξ', ἅπερ κτλ.

A sum of 270 silver drachmas is much too small for that date<sup>5</sup>; ἅπερ also does not sit comfortably with the preceding δρα[χ]μὰς. Study of the photograph results in a different text, and yields a more plausible figure, viz. 4 talents:

ὑπὲρ ἐνοικ[ίου] αὐτῶν ἐνια[υτίως] ἀργυρίου τάλαντα τέσσαρα, ἅπερ κτλ.

Some more points of detail. In lines 3-4 read *μισθώσασθαι ἀπὸ νεομηνίας (?) τοῦ* | *[ὄντος μ]ηνὸς Θὼθ̄ τοῦ ἐνεκτῶτος ἔτους κβ ιβ δ ἐπὶ χρόνον ἔτη x* ], in place of *μισθώσασθαι* | *[ἀπὸ α τοῦ μ]ηνὸς Θὼθ̄ τοῦ ἐνεκτῶτος ἔτους*]. For the supplements cf. e.g. POxy XLVIII 3384.6-8 (331); for Year 22 (Constantine I) = 12 (Constantine II) = 4 (Constantius) = 327/8, see R. S. Bagnall, K. A. Worp, *The Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* (1978) 36-40.

### 3. SB XX 14535: Which Basilius?

This papyrus, a loan of money with repayment in kind (or 'sale with future delivery'), bears the following consular date clause:

ὑπατεία]ς Φλαουίου<sup>6</sup> Βασιλίου τοῦ λαμπρο(τάτου)  
] Φαῶφι κβ τῆς ε̄ ἰνδ(ικτίωνος) ἐν Ἀρσι(νόη).

The editor dated the document to 19 October 541 (?). The reasoning behind this choice is given in the introduction, from which I quote (Pap. Flor XIX.1 p. 156):

Ein Problem bereitet die Datierung. Die Angaben Φλαυίου Βασιλίου τοῦ λαμπροτάτου und 5. Indiktion können sich ... auf die Jahre 481, 541 oder 556 beziehen. Die Spuren eines ζ am Beginn der Z. 1 weisen jedoch auf die Formulierung ὑπατείας hin und erlauben daher, das Jahr 556 auszuschließen. In diesem Fall wäre μετὰ τὴν ὑπατείαν zu erwarten. Ein Kriterium für die Zuweisung des Papyrus in das 5. oder 6. Jh. bietet das Schriftbild von P.Rain. Cent. 99, Taf. 90 (Hermopolites, 451), das gut mit dem hier vorliegenden zu vergleichen ist.'

As we see, no arguments in favour or against a date in 481 have been produced. The paleographical parallel is good, but dates from 90 years earlier than 541. Clearly, a few things need to be specified, especially since the date of this papyrus is not devoid of interest.

<sup>4</sup> Supplied by the Princeton Collections of Papyri, Manuscript Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library (the item bears inv. no. GD 7548), with whose permission it is reproduced here.

<sup>5</sup> For a list of rents of house property in fourth century Egypt, see R. S. Bagnall, *Currency and Inflation in Fourth Century Egypt* (1985) 70-1, and id., *The Kellis Account Book* (1997) 229.

<sup>6</sup> Ed. pr. has Φλαυίου, but the first omicron is clearly visible on the plate, Pap. Flor. XIX.2 tav. XV.

A date in 541 would make this text one of the earliest, if not the earliest,<sup>7</sup> records for the knowledge in Egypt of the consulate of Anicius Faustus Albinus Basilius. But the hand seems to point to an earlier date, some time in the second half of the fifth century;<sup>8</sup> the script of PPrag I 37, an Arsinoite contract of 465, is very similar. Nevertheless, a date in 481 may appear difficult at first sight. Caecina Decimus Maximus Basilius was the eponymous consul of 480 (*CLRE* pp. 495, 497, 499). On a day which, to judge from the indiction, falls more than nine months after the end of Basilius' consular year, we would expect to find a *postconsular* formula, not a consular one ([ὕπατεία]c, as the editor notes, is the only possible reading). But this may be a false problem, in view of the consular date of the Hermopolite BGU XII 2155: [ὕπατείας] Φλαυίου Βασιλείου τοῦ λαμπροτάτου, Φαῶφι κα, ε ἰνδικ(τίωνος) (line 2; the restoration of a postconsulate is ruled out by spacing). It is worth reproducing a comment by Bagnall and Worp, *BASP* 17 (1980) 8, on this papyrus:

'as late as 27.iii.481 (*P.Princ.* II 82) Egyptian scribes were dating by the postconsulate of Zeno III, i.e. the consul of 479. BGU XII 2155, of 18 October, refers to Basilius as consul, but the editor has properly described this as an error for postconsulate, natural enough if his consulate *per se* had never been in use in the country. The scribe might be pardoned for believing that the newly-announced name meant the consul of the current year.'

Chances are good, it seems, that the consular date of BGU XII 2155 is not isolated; that one day after this text was written a scribe in the Fayum used the same aberrant consular clause. Although on present evidence there can be no certainty, a 481 date for SB XX 14535 seems to be preferable to a date in 541.<sup>9</sup>

There are two further certain instances of a (post)consular formula of Basilius cos. 480 in the papyri: PLond III 991 (22 June 481-83, cf. *ZPE* 123 (1998) 197),<sup>10</sup> and CPR X 118 (13 (?) October 482; CPR X 117 may attest a third example. PLond III 991 and CPR X 118 use the formula μετὰ τὴν ὑπατείαν Φλαυίου Βασιλείου τοῦ λαμπροτάτου καὶ τοῦ ἀποδειχθησομένου (restored). At this point, it may be useful to have the consular datings of the period 481-83 tabulated below:

SB XXII 15461 <sup>11</sup>	Heracleopolis	17-25.iii.481	p. c. D. N. Fl. Zenonis perp. Aug. III
PPrinc II 82	Lycopolis	27.iii.481	p. c. D. N. Fl. Zenonis perp. Aug. III
BGU XII 2155	Hermopolis	18.x.481?	<p.> c. Fl. Basilii v.c.
SB XX 14535	Arsinoe	19.x.481	<p.> c. Fl. Basilii v.c.
PLond III 991	Hermopolite	22.vi.481-83	[p. c.] Fl. Basilii v.c. e.q.f.n.
CPR X 118	Hermopolis	13?.x.482	[p. c.] Fl. Basilii v.c. e.q.f.n.
SB XX 15134	Oxyrhynchus	11.vii.483	p.c. Fl. Trocundi v.c.
PLond V 1896	Hermopolis	25.vi-24.vii.483	p.c. Fl. Trocundi v.c. e.q.f.n.
BGU XII 2156	Hermopolis	27.viii.483	p.c. Fl. Trocundi v.c. e.q.f.n.

<sup>7</sup> The situation is not entirely clear. As late as 4, 14, or 24.ix.541 the postconsulate of Fl. Justinus was used in Hermopolis (SB XIV 12051). PStras VI 598, of 10.ix.541, has been thought to attest Basilius' consulate (see *CLRE* p. 617), but the name of the consul has not survived, and much depends on letter counting. In PStras VI 597.3, dated to ix-xii.541 (cf. BL IX 328), the unread name of the month is probably not Thoth (⋯]⋯ κγ παρ.): 'peut être 'Aθὺ]ρ suivi d'un diagonal'. (Incidentally, if 'Aθὺ]ρ is right, the date would be 19 November 541.)

<sup>8</sup> Note e.g. the latinate sigmas; the particular way of ligaturing ε and ν; the open-topped alphas; and the nus with the diagonals consistently starting from lower than the top of the left-hand upright, a typical fifth-century feature.

<sup>9</sup> I should note that the absence of a regnal formula cannot be used as an argument for an early date. Likewise, it is difficult to make much out of the apparently low rate of the παρὰ κερῶτα, which may seem to favour a date before 498, cf. K. Maresch, *Nomisma und Nomismatia* (1994) 78 (the loan involves x + 1 nomismata minus 4 carats).

<sup>10</sup> I now realise that in my note on PLond III 991 I failed to mention a further possible, although perhaps less likely, dating, viz. 22.vi.483. The earliest Egyptian evidence for the knowledge of the consulship of Fl. Trocundes (cos. 482) dates to 11.vii.483 (SB XX 15134, although PLond V 1896, of 25.vi-24.vii.483, could be slightly earlier), hence a 483 date for PLond 991 cannot presently be excluded. I should also note that the 481 date (BL VIII 183) now seems to me difficult, in view of the presence of the 'e.q.f.n.' formula, cf. the table above.

<sup>11</sup> Ed. pr. *CE* 68 (1993) 160, cf. *CE* 71 (1996) 120. The SB XXII number has been supplied by Dr J. Hengstl.

In the event that PLond III 991 dates to 482 (or 483), we are faced with a very peculiar picture. In 480 no Eastern consul was proclaimed, and the dissemination of Basilius may have been late (cf. *CLRE* p. 495). This may be reflected in one or two consular clauses of 481. But in 482 it seems to have been generally thought that Basilius had a colleague. It appears, therefore, that all Egyptian consular dates of Basilius misrepresent the facts.<sup>12</sup> We may observe something similar with Trocundes: two consular clauses of 483 give him a ‘to-be-designated’ colleague whom he never had.<sup>13</sup> All this can hardly be an accident; in fact, a perusal of the *CLRE* entries under the years 475-90 is revealing. Sometimes it took more than a year for the news of a new consulate to reach Egypt, and sometimes no consul was proclaimed or disseminated in the East. The highest concentration of second postconsulates may also be observed in this period.<sup>14</sup> As is well known, the reign of Zeno did not coincide with an easy time for the Empire, beleaguered by civil strife and external threats; a breakdown of the communications should not come as a great surprise.

Wolfson College, Oxford

Nikolaos Gonis

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<sup>12</sup> Dr Worp makes the following comment (letter of 30.xi.1999): ‘The use of the ‘e.q.f.n.’ [= *et qui fuerit nuntiatius*] with Basilius, a *Western* consul, is interesting. It turns up in A.D. 482 unexpected and, in a way, unwarranted (in the East this element usually follows ‘Eastern’ consuls and refers to the ‘Western’ consul still to be announced, cf. *CLRE* p. 30; for the (only two) epigraphical occurrences of the formula following a ‘Western’ consul cf. *CLRE* s.a. 439 and 452), especially after it had not been used in A.D. 481.’

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bagnall and Worp, *BASP* 17 (1980) 34. The two occurrences of the postconsulate of Trocundes in papyri of 484, viz. PRainCent 107 (?; 14.ii.484) and POxy VIII 1130 (Oxy.; 4.v.484), do not include the ‘e.q.f.n.’ formula. One may notice that the two texts attesting the ‘e.q.f.n.’ formula come from the Thebaid (Hermopolis), whereas two (or all) of the other three have their origin in the province of Arcadia. But before more evidence becomes available, one cannot speak of regional preferences. It may also be noted that the dates of the two Hermopolite texts are very close; the wrong impression could have been shortlived.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bagnall and Worp, *The Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* 50-2. Another feature of consular date clauses of this period, the frequent occurrence of the τοῖς μετὰ τὴν ὑπατείαν formula, will be discussed elsewhere.

