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Epithets with the Title Despotes in Regnal Formulas in Document
Dates and in the Imperial Oath

EPITHETS WITH THE TITLE DESPOTES IN REGNAL FORMULAS
IN DOCUMENT DATES AND IN THE IMPERIAL OATH

The title despotes first appears in regnal formulas during the reign of Diocletian.[1] At this period, in documents where regnal formulas appear in both the dating formula and in the imperial oath, the two are, as a rule, identically formulated, both beginning with the title kyrios: so, e.g., CPR VII 14:[2]

oath formulation:	τῶν κυρίων ἡμῶν Διοκλητιανοῦ καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ Σεβαστῶν καὶ Κωνσταντίου καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ ἐπιφανεστάτων Καισάρων
date formulation:	τῶν κυρίων ἡμῶν Διοκλητιανοῦ καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ Σεβαστῶν καὶ Κωνσταντίου καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων Καισάρων

A few such documents give a regnal formula in the imperial oath that is much reduced by comparison with that in the date, and in these cases the reduced formulation in the oath is marked by the use of the title despotes, appearing, like kyrios, without an epithet. So in P.Sakaon 2, 3, and 76; P.Cair.Isid. 3, 4 and 5:

oath formulation:	τῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν Αὐτοκρατόρων Σεβαστῶν
date formulation:	τῶν κυρίων ἡμῶν Διοκλητιανοῦ καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ Σεβαστῶν καὶ Κωνσταντίου καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων Καισάρων

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[1] For a thorough discussion of the introduction of the title despotes, see D.Hagedorn and K.A.Worp, "Von ΚΥΡΙΟΣ zu ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ, ZPE 39 (1980) 165-77.

[2] So also P.Flor. I 32 a and b; P.Harr II 208. Other documents give nearly identical formulations -- so P.Oxy. XXXVI 2765 (and cf. P.Oxy. XXXIII 2673; P.Wisc. II 61):

oath formulation:	τῶν κυρίων ἡμῶν Αὐτοκρατόρων Διοκλητιανοῦ καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων Καισάρων
date formulation:	τῶν κυρίων [ἡμῶν] Διοκλητιανοῦ καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ Σεβαστῶν καὶ τῶν κυρίων ἡμῶν Κωνσταντίου καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων Καισάρων

For two hundred years after the reign of Diocletian, the regnal formula is normally omitted from the imperial oath, from the date, or from both,[3] so that comparisons between the two are difficult to accomplish. Where the oath includes the regnal formula in documents between the reigns of Diocletian and Justinian, that formula at first may begin with kyrios: The latest example known to me is P.Amh. II 138, from the year 326. In other cases, and exclusively after the reign of Constantine, the regnal formula preserved in the imperial oath begins with despotes. In the majority of cases, several dozen all together, the title appears without epithets or participial phrases: so, e.g., P.Cair.Isid. 8 and 9, from the year 310; P.Lips. 47 and 53, from the year 372; P.Flor. III 310 and others from the reign of Theodosius II. An only slightly smaller group of documents, however, beginning with the reign of Constantine, give regnal formulas in the imperial oath beginning with the phrase τῶν τὰ πάντα νικώντων δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν: so, e.g., P.Vind.Sijp. 3, from the year 325; P.Lips. 50 and 52 from the year 372; P.Oxy. XVI 1880 and 1881 from the reign of Theodosius II. In P.Lips. 48, 49, and 51, from the year 372, the words δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν are followed by the adjective καλλινίκων, and in P.S.I. VII 951, from the year 388, that adjective appears in attributive position, so that the oath formula begins with the phrase τῶν καλλινίκων δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν.

From the reign of Justinian through to the Arab conquest, documents again appear with regnal formulas preserved both in dates and in the imperial oath. These are for the most part identically formulated except that different epithets are attached to the title despotes appearing at the beginning of each.[4] So, e.g., P.Cair.Masp. I 94, from the reign of Justinian:

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[3] For date formulation, see R.S. Bagnall and K.A. Worp, *Regnal Formulas in Byzantine Egypt,* Missoula 1979, pp. 42-44; for oath formulation, K.A.Worp, "Byzantine Imperial Titulature in the Greek Documentary Papyri: The Oath Formulas," ZPE 45 (1982) 199-225.

[4] In a number of documents, the imperial oath is distinguished from the dating formula not only by epithets preceding despotes, but by the inclusion of the queen. So, e.g., from the reign of Justin II, P.Muench. I 1:

oath formulation:	τῶν κρατίστων δεσποτῶν τῆς οἰκουμένης Φλ(αουίων) Ἰουστίνου Νέου καὶ Αἰλίας Σοφᾶς τῶν αἰωνίων Αὐγούστων Αὐτοκρατόρων
date formulation:	τοῦ θειοτάτου ἡμῶν δεσπότου Φλαουίου Ἰουστίνου Νέου τοῦ αἰωνίου Αὐγούστ[ου Αὐτοκράτορος]

And, from the reign of Mauricius, P.Koeln III 157:

oath formulation:	τῶν γαληνοτάτων ἡμῶν δεσποτῶ[ν Φ]λ(αουίου) Μαυρικίου Τιβερίου κ[αὶ] Αἰλίας Κωνσταντίνας τῶν αἰωνίων Αὐγ[ούσ]των Αὐτοκρατόρων
date formulation:	τοῦ θειοτάτου καὶ εὐσεβεστάτου ἡμῶν δεσπότου Φλαουίου Μαυρικίου Τιβερίου τοῦ αἰωνίου Αὐγούστου Αὐτοκράτορος

oath formulation:	τοῦ καλλινίκου ἡμῶν δεσποτοῦ Φλ(αουίου) Ἰουστινιανοῦ τοῦ αἰωνίου Αὐγούστου καὶ Αὐτοκράτορος
date formulation:	τοῦ θειοτάτου ἡμῶν δεσπό[του Φλαουίου Ἰουστινιανοῦ τοῦ αἰωνίου Αὐγούστου] καὶ Αὐτοκράτορος

P.Muench. I 7, from the reign of Mauricius:

oath formulation:	τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου ἡμῶν δεσπότου Φλαουίου Τιβερίου Μαυρικίου τοῦ αἰωνίου Αὐγούστου Αὐτοκράτορος
date formulation:	τοῦ θειοτάτου ἡμῶν δεσπότου Φλαουίου Τιβερίου Μαυρικίου τοῦ αἰωνίου Αὐγούστου Αὐτοκράτοροςτοῦ αἰωνίου]

P.Lond. II 483, from the reign of Heraclius:

oath formulation:	τοῦ τὰ πάντα νικῶντος δεσπότου ἡμῶν Φλ(αουίου) Ἡρακλείου τοῦ αἰωνίου Αὐγούστου Αὐτοκράτορος
date formulation:	τοῦ κλεινοτάτου καὶ θεοστεφοῦς ἡμῶν δεσπότου Φλαουίου Ἡρακλείου τοῦ αἰωνίου Αὐγούστου Αὐτοκράτορος

Imperial oath and dating formulas offer different epithets before the title despotes in every text where both are preserved; moreover, these epithets seem to have been drawn to some extent from separate pools. Here is a list of the epithets occurring in regnal formulations in the imperial oath and in the dating formula, in texts where both are preserved. The list is arranged alphabetically according to the epithets appearing in the oath formulation.

Epithets in Regnal Formulas in Documents with both Oath and Date

	Oath formulation	Date formulation	Document
Justinian	καλλίνικος	θειότατος	P.Cair.Masp. I 94
	καλλίνικος	θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος	P.Cair.Masp. I 32

Justin II	γαληνότατος		θειότατος	P.Lond. V 1676
	καλλίνικος		θειότατος	P.Lond. V 1707
	καλλίνικος		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος	P.S.I. I 76
	κράτιστος		θειότατος	P.Muench. I 1
	οἰκουμενικός		θειότατος	P.Cair.Masp. III 353

[Tiberius II -- no examples surviving]

Mauricius	γαληνότατος		θειότατος	P.Lond V 1727
	γαληνότατος		θειότατος	P.Lond. V 1728
	γαληνότατος		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος	P.Koeln III 157
	εὐσεβέστατος		θειότατος	P.Muench. I 7
	εὐσεβέστατος		θειότατος	P.Muench. I 9
	εὐσεβέστατος		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος	P.Muench. I 13
	θεοφύλακτος		γαληνότατος	P.Par. 21 c
	θεοφύλακτος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος		θειότατος	P.Muench. I 14
	no epithet		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος	SB VI 9403

Phocas	no epithet		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος	SB XVI 12604

Heraclius	εὐσεβέστατος		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος	P.Oxy. I 138
	εὐσεβέστατος		θειότατος καὶ γαληνότατος	
			καὶ θεοστεφής	SB I 4669
	τά πάντα νικῶν		γαληνότατος καὶ θεοστεφής	P.Lond. II 483

From the evidence of these documents, the epithets available for use in the dating formula are strictly limited (to θειότατος or θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος) during the reigns of Justinian and Justinus, and entirely distinct from the rather wider range of epithets available for use in the regnal formula attached to the imperial oath. During the reign of Mauricius, one epithet previously appearing only in the oath formulation appears for the first time in the dating formulation as well (γαληνότατος), while εὐσεβέστατος, previously appearing in combination with θειότατος in the dating formula, now stands alone in the oath formulation

as well. All the same, the epithets standing before despotes in imperial-oath or dating for-
mulas appear for the most part to belong to exclusive sets, to judge from documents
preserving both, in the reigns of Mauricius, Phocas, and Heraclius. The varieties of epithet
do not appear to be entirely dependent on geographical factors: In the reign of Mauricius, for
example, where we have the largest number of examples, Syene offers several different sets
(P.Lond. V 1727 and 1728; P.Muench. I 9, 13 and 14), while one set occurs both at Syene
and at Antinoopolis (P.Muench. I 7 and 13). Nor are the differences easily accounted for by
chronological considerations: In the same reign, two texts from the same year and the same
place offer different sets of epithets (P.Muench. I 13 and 14, Syene, AD 594).

A good many published documents from the sixth and seventh centuries preserve either
an imperial oath or a date with regnal formula, but not both. Dating formulations and oath
formulations have been separately collected by R.S. Bagnall and K.A. Worp *(Regnal
Formulas in Byzantine Egypt,* Missoula 1979) and by K.A. Worp ("Byzantine Imperial
Titulature in the Greek Documentary Papyri: The Oath Formulas," *ZPE* 45, 1982, 199-225),
and I offer here, from those sources, a catalogue of epithets appearing before despotes in
documents where regnal formulas are preserved in an imperial oath (but not in the
document's date), or where regnal formulas are preserved in a document's date (but not in an
oath formulation). The epithets appear in alphabetical order in each of the two columns. I
have not noted the number of documents in which each appears.

Epithets in Documents with Regnal Formulas in either Oath or Date -- but not Both

	Oath formulation[5]	Date formulation[6]
Justinian	γαληνότατος	θειότατος
	καλλινίκος	θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος
	εὐσεβέστατος καὶ γαληνότατος	
	τὰ πάντα νικῶν	
	τῆς οἰκουμένης	
	no epithet	

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[5] For citations, see Worp, p. 222.
[6] For citations, see Bagnall and Worp, pp. 83-85.

Justin II	εὐσεβέστατος	θειότατος
	εὐσεβέστατος καὶ οἰκουμενικός	no epithet
	καλλίνικος	
Tiberius II	γαληνότατος	θειότατος
	γαληνότατος καὶ τροπαιοῦχος	θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος
		no epithet
Mauricius	γαληνότατος	γαληνοτατος
	εὐσεβέστατος	εὐσεβέστατος
		θειότατος
		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος
		no epithet
Phocas	no epithet	γαληνοτατος
		εὐσεβέστατος
		θειότατος
		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος
		no epithet
Heraclius	[- -]τατος καὶ θεοστεφής[7]	γαληνότατος
	γαληνότατος καὶ θεοστήρικτος	εὐσεβέστατος
		εὐσεβέστατος καὶ φιλάνθρωπος
		θειότατος
		θειότατος καὶ γαληνότατος
		θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος
		no epithet

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[7] P.Mich. XIII 665

It will be observed that this table, like the one above, shows mutually exclusive sets of epithets in use in oath formulations and in dating formulas, up to the reign of Mauricius. From the combined information in both tables, it appears that the epithets which appear before despotes in dating formulas up to the reign of Mauricius (θειότατος or θειότατος καὶ εὐσεβέστατος) never appear in oath formulations afterwards, but some of those which appear in oath formulations up to that time (γαληνότατος, and εὐσεβέστατος standing alone rather than in combination with θειότατος) do appear in dating formulas during the reigns of Mauricius, Phocas, and Heraclius. The diminishing variety of epithets appearing in oath formulations -- 6 in Justinian's reign, and only 2 in Heraclius') is certainly due to a decline in the number of texts in successive reigns which preserve the oath with regnal formulation: 17 from the reign of Justinian; only 3 from the reign of Heraclius. The case is different with the increasing variety of epithets appearing in dating formulas. The 44 examples of regnal formulas from documents dated to the reign of Justinian offer only two epithet types, while the 34 examples in the reign of Heraclius offer seven. The later reigns offer in dating formulas a degree of variation in epithets with the title despotes which in earlier reigns was available only for regnal formulas in the imperial oath.

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