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Flavius Neaptius: Ghost-Comes Aegypti

Roger S. Bagnall

AMONG THE PERSONS registered in *PLRE* II figures, on p.773, one Flavius Neaptius, known only from *P.Bon.* 46 as a *comes*. *PLRE* suggests a date “V/VI” (the editor of *P.Bon.* gave simply “ep. bizantina”), and remarks “he was perhaps the *comes Aegypti* or the *comes et dux Thebaidis*.” The name, however, is remarkable enough (I have not found another instance) to excite suspicion.

The sole source for Neaptius is described as follows by its editor, O. Montevecchi: “si tratta di una lettera di un sottoposto al padrone. Il senso non è chiaro per le irregolarità morfologiche, sintattiche e grafiche. In sostanza Παπνούθιος annuncia al padrone di aver assicurato alla giustizia un tale βάρβαρος Ἐπαγαθός.” A reference in lines 8–9 to τοῦ κυρίου μου λαμπροτάτου κωμητου Φλαβίου Νεαπτίου indicated a “personalità di rango molto alto,” but the editor noted that he was “finora sconosciuto.”

A visit to Bologna in May, 1981, enabled me to examine the original papyrus.¹ It is a difficult piece, as the editor said, but progress can be made. I propose the following text:

τῷ δεσπότη μου Γλυκαρίωνι
 Παπνούθιος
Ἐπάγαθόν τινα βάρβαρον παραδεδώκ[τ]ος
4 ἐαυτῶν εἰς τὸ φῶς τῷ κρομμεῶνι περικ()
Κ οὐ καὶ ἀποσταλέντα κατὰ παιδατοῦραν
ὑπὸ τῶν κοινῶν ἡμῶν ἀδελφῶν πραιπ(όσιτον) Πανίσκ(ον)
μετὰ κ[α]ὶ ἀναφορᾶς γραφίσις περὶ αὐτῶν
8 πρὸς τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου μου λαμπροτάτου
κώμητος Φλ(αοίου) Ἀβουνδαντίου, ἔχον μεθ' ἐαυτοῦ
περιβόλεον ἀπὸ χρήσεως τούτων,
ὑποδεξάμην παρὰ τῶν ἀπο ἐκείαι . οὐ
12 κοντ[ου]βερνάλιον. (M.2) ἐρρῶσθαί σαι
 εὔχομαι πολλ[οῖς]
 [χρ]όνοις κύριε.

Verso: τῷ δεσπότη μου

¹I am grateful to Giovanni Geraci and Lucia Criscuolo for their assistance on this occasion and for sending me subsequently a photograph and responding to queries.

3 παρασέσωκα ed. pr.; read παραδεδακότα 4 έαυτω Πε. του-
 φω τῷ Κραμμέως . περι κ() ed. pr.; read έαντον, κρομμῶ-
 νι 5 αποστειλαντα καταπαισα τούτου ed. pr.; read πεδατού-
 ραν 6 πραι() τασιση ed. pr.; read τον κοινον 7 ...
 φυσικ ed. pr.; read γραφείσης 9 κομητου Φλαβίου Νεαπτίου
 ed. pr.; read έχον<τα> 10 περιβ. λεον αποχρή[σ]εως ed. pr.;
 read περιβόλαιον 11 τῶν σ..ο[]υσον ed. pr.; read ύπεδε-
 ξάμην 13-14 πολλ[ά] ομοισκ... ed. pr.

Flavius Abundantius (1) is listed at *PLRE* II 3 as *comes Aegypti* in 412, on the basis of Socrates *HE* 7.7, where as *ὁ τοῦ στρατωτικοῦ τάγματος ἡγεμών* he is recorded as supporting one episcopal candidate in late 412. While palaeography is not a very precise argument, I see nothing in the lettering of *P. Bon.* 46 to contradict the natural conclusion that we may identify the *comes* here with the Fl. Abundantius of A.D. 412. The *fasti* for *comes Aegypti* (*PLRE* II 1297) are full of only vaguely dated characters, and we cannot secure either end of Abundantius' tenure in that position.

I add some remarks on the individual lines and an attempt at a translation on the basis of these notes.

- 3 An accusative participle would be expected if the syntax were perfect, but I do not believe that an *alpha* can be read at the end of the line. It seems preferable to read the genitive singular (as if a genitive absolute had been attempted) than a nominative plural, which would make the reflexive meaningless.
- 4 I take τῷ κρομμῶνι to be equivalent to τῷ κρομμῶνι, "in the onion field." I do not find the word as a common noun elsewhere, but it is known as a place name (in which *epsilon* and *upsilon* also interchange) in the Corinthia (see Pieske, *RE* 9 [1922] 1973). περικ() could be περὶ κ(ώμην) but it could also be περικ(ειμένω) (and perhaps other things as well); at all events, I expect a village name at the start of line 5, though it is mostly effaced.
- 5 The suggestion of παιδατούρα, Latin *pedatura*, as the reading here comes from K. A. Worp. The term has not appeared hitherto in published papyrus texts,² but Worp has identified it in two other papyri where it was not recognized by the editor: (1) *P. Flor.* III 384.18, where for the editor's [.]εδ. τουρασκαμ[] he reads (on a photocopy kindly provided by R. Pintaudi) πεδατούρας οίκ[];

² Cf. the absence of attestations in the lists of S. Daris, *Il lessico latino nel greco d'Egitto* (Pap.Castr. 3 [1971]), and H. Ziliacus, *Zum Kampf der Welt Sprachen im ost-römischen Reich* (Helsingfors 1935) 230.

and (2) P.Mil. inv. 74.01,³ where in line 5 instead of Πελαίτου ρκε one should read πεδατούρας. (The latter reading, which eliminates a date to the Oxyrhynchite era year 125 = 94 [A.D. 448/9], also removes the only criterion for an exact date; Worp suggests "V-VI.")

Pedatura refers to a delimited area of land. In ancient (as opposed to later mediaeval, for which see Du Cange *s.v.*) Latin it referred mostly either to the land surrounding a (funerary) monument and enclosed by a *maceria* (wall), or to an area "assigned in a camp to an individual unit" (*Oxford Latin Dictionary* 1317 *s.v.* b). It is the latter sense which appears to be involved here, given the military context, *i.e.* the camp or fort (*cf.* *CIL* XIII 6548, with a *castellum*) of a particular unit. The several occurrences of the term in the Greek authors seem likewise to have the military application.⁴

6 The *praepositus* Paniskos is not elsewhere attested, so far as I am aware.

10 περιβόλαιον is used for a variety of coverings, *cf.* *LSJ s.v.* For ἀπὸ χρήσεως see S. Daris, *ZPE* 53 (1983) 239-40.

Translation

To my lord Glykarion, Papnouthios (sends greetings).
A certain barbarian Epagathos, who brought himself to the light at the onion field located at (?) K . . . and who was dispatched to the camp by our common brother the *praepositus* Paniskos, with a written report concerning them (him?) to the might of my lord the most illustrious *Comes* Fl. Abundantius, and having with him a used covering of theirs, I received from the tentmates . . . (Second hand) I pray for you to be well for many years, my lord. (Verso) To my lord.⁵

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
February, 1984

³ Published by C. Balconi in *Scritti O. Montevicchi* (Bologna 1981) 32.

⁴ *Jo. Mal.* 351.8 Bonn; *Maur. Strat.* 10.3 (246 Scheffer), whence *Leo Tact.* 15.56; *Const. Porph. Caer.* 482.8, 490.4 Bonn.

⁵ I am indebted to K. A. Worp for a number of suggestions and to A. F. Van Gemert for some helpful remarks about the language of the papyrus.

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