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65. An amīr between Umayyads and Abbasids: A Note on P. KRU 70

(L. BERKES – J. A. CROMWELL)

The Theban legal document *P. KRU* 70.3–5(34) dated to 4 July 750 contains the testament written in Coptic of a woman of Djeme called Tbabes. What concerns us here is the remarkable prescript of the document written in Greek. After the bilingual protocol, the prescript comprises the invocation and a date by the day of the month and the indiction year followed by an eponymous dating according to the ‘amīr of the pagarchy of Hermonthis, the Three Castra, Contra Latopolis, and Djeme’ and also the dioiketes of Djeme. The *editio princeps* reads:(35)

+ ἐν όνόματι τῆς ἀγίας καὶ ζωοποιοῦ ὀμοουσίου τρίαδος πατρὸς καὶ ύιο(ῦ) καὶ ἀγίου πνεύματος. ἐγράφα(φη) μ(πνός) Ἐπίφι 1, i(ν)δ(ικτίωνος) γ

Φλαου(ίου) Ἰασήφ ύ(ιό)(ῦ) Ἀβειδ ἐν(λεεστάτου) ἀμφά παγαρχίας Ἐρμόνθεως καὶ

Τριών Κάστρο(ν)

καὶ Κόνδρολάτον καὶ κάστρο(ου) Μεμνιόν ἔπτι τιμωτ(άτου) κόμες Χαηλ διοικ(η)τ(ού)

5 κάστρο(ν) Μεμνιονίων ἔπρ(ου) τΣαρακείνων ρλβ (καὶ) ἔπρ(ου)τ Διοκλη(πιανοῦ) νύς

– Insert fig. –

‘+ In the name of the Holy, life-giving, and consubstantial Trinity, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. It was written on the 10th of Epeiph of the 3rd indiction.

(Under?) Flavius Ioseph s.o. Abied (= Yūsuf b. ‘Ubayd [?]), the most well famed amīr of the pagarchy of Hermonthis, *Tria castra*, Contra Latopolis, and *castrum* Memnonion. Under the most esteemed comes, Chael, the dioiketes of *castrum* Memnonion. In the 132rd year of the Saracens and in the 466th year of Diocletian.’

This formula not only attests to the longevity of the usage of formulaic Greek even deep down in Upper Egypt, but provides valuable information on the administrative history of the region, which will be discussed in more detail elsewhere.(36) The description of the territories

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34 A German translation of the text was published by W. C. TILL, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen auf Grund der koptischen Urkunden* (Wien, 1954), pp. 185–188. On the date see W. C. Till, *Datierung und Prosopographie der koptischen Urkunden aus Theben* (Graz – Wien – Köln, 1962), p. 27. The Arabic protocol was published as *CPR III* 70, and the Greek prescript of the document was reprinted as *SBI* 5591.

35 In contrast to the DDBDP, we resolve also the first name in the genitive, since – as part of the dating formula – the scribe probably intended a genitive and perhaps forgot to start with ἔπτι, as is the case in the prescripts of *P. KRU* 12, 45, 50, and 106. We have not normalized the spelling.

controlled by the *amīr* is of considerable importance. Of specific interest here is the identity of the Muslim official: this is one of the few examples in which a Muslim seems to bear the honorific *gentilicum* Flavius.\(^{37}\) The name itself of the official is also interesting *prima facie*. Ἱσοσήφ does not seem to be an Arab spelling for Yūsuf. However, examination of the papyrus reveals that there is no need for further speculation on what implications this spelling may have. We read in l. 3:

Φλαβίο (I. Φλαβίου) Σικερ νιο(ū) Αβιειδ εύκλ(εστάτου) ἀμιρᾶ παγαρχίας Ἐρμόνθεως καὶ Τρίων Κάστρου (I. Κάστρων)

The *editio princeps* read -ιου- as the beginning of the name, producing an unusual abbreviated writing of Φλαβίου, and then attempted to make sense of the following cramped letters. The kappa seems to have been corrected from another letter and the gap between its vertical stem and limbs produces a strange form. After kappa, what the *editio princeps* read as phi is an epsilon-rho ligature. The reading of the name is therefore Σικερ not Ἰσοσήφ.\(^{38}\) Accordingly, the name of the *amīr* seems to have been Šukayr b. ‘Ubayd. Although the spelling Σικερ is strange, we have not been able to find any alternative for the interpretation of the name.\(^{39}\) However, Αβιειδ for ‘Ubayd shows that the spelling of Arabic names by the scribe was idiosyncratic.\(^{40}\)

Šukayr b. ‘Ubayd was in office during turbulent times. In the summer of 750, Abbasid troops entered Fustāt and in August the last Umayyad calif, Marwān II was killed with his followers in Būṣīr.\(^{41}\) Since *P. KRU*70 is the only document attesting Šukayr, we do not know how he was affected by the regime change, but – as always in papyrology – new documents may provide insights in the future.

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\(^{38}\) As this papyrus is the only occurrence of a Yūsuf b. ‘Ubayd, this individual needs to be removed from discussions on Muslim officials and names, e.g., M. LEGENDRE, “Perméabilité linguistique et anthropoïdynamique entre copie et arabe : L’exemple de comptes en caractères coptes du Fayoum fatimide,” *Coptica Argentorantensia: Conférences et documents de la 3e université d’été en papyrologie copte (Strasbourg, 18–25 juillet 2010)* (Paris, 2014) pp. 325–440, here 403.

\(^{39}\) The name occurs as Σουμὶρ in *P. Lond.* IV 1441.84 (Šukayr b. Muhāĝir). We would like to thank Nikolaos Gosis, Andreas Kaplony, and Naim Vanthieghem for confirming our reading and identification of the name.

\(^{40}\) On attested variations in Greek and Coptic texts of this name, see respectively A. KAPLONY, “The Orthography and Pronunciation of Arabic Names and Terms in the Greek Petra, Nessana, Qurra and Senouthish Letters (Sixth to Eighth Centuries CE),” *Mediterranean Language Review* 22 (2015), pp. 1–81, here 50 and M. LEGENDRE, “Perméabilité linguistique” [n. 5], p. 403.