

The great, old and splendid city of Hermes. Hermopolis magna and the emergence of civic rivalry in Roman Egypt

I. Hermopolis and Antinoopolis within the province of Egypt

1. P. Giss. I 40, col. 2,29f.:

ἔτι τε καὶ ζω[ῆ] δεικνύει ἐναντία ἦθη ἀπὸ ἀναστροφῆς [πο]λειτικῆς εἶναι ἀγροίκους Αἰγυπτίους.

“Moreover, their way of life, which is opposed to a political way of life, shows that they were rural Egyptians.”

2. Dion. Chrys. 31,111-114:

μη γὰρ οἴεσθε Ῥωμαίους οὕτως εἶναι σκαιούς καὶ ἀμαθεῖς ὥστε μηδὲν αἰρεῖσθαι τῶν ὑφ' αὐτοῖς ἐλευθέριον εἶναι μηδὲ καλόν <κάγαθόν>, ἀλλὰ βούλεσθαι μᾶλλον ἀνδραπόδων κρατεῖν. [...] ἀλλ' εἴ γε οὕτω σφόδρα ἐπισηφαλῆς ἐστὶν ὥστε ἐκ τῆς τυχούσης προφάσεως περιαιρεθῆναι, δουλεύειν ὑμῖν τῷ παντὶ βέλτιον ἦδη. [...] καὶ ἔγωγε φαίην ἄν, εἰ καὶ χαλεπῶς ἀκούσεσθε, κρεῖττον ὑμῶν ἀπαλλάττειν τοὺς ἐν Φρυγίᾳ μέση δουλεύοντας ἢ τοὺς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ καὶ Λιβύῃ.

“For you must not suppose that the Romans are so stupid and ignorant as to choose that none of their subjects should be independent or honourable but would rather rule over slaves. [...] But if your freedom is in so precarious a state that it can be stripped from you on any petty pretext, it would in every way be better for you to be slaves forthwith. [...] And I, for my part, would say, even at the risk of angering you, that slaves in the interior of Phrygia, and those in Egypt and Libya, fare better than yourselves.”

3. Men. Rhet. 358:

<ὄς> φασὶ τὴν Μέμφιν ἐπὶ τῷ γάμῳ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης καὶ τοῦ Ἥφαίστου. νίκης δέ, οἶόν φασὶ τὴν Θεσσαλονίκην ἐπὶ τῇ νίκῃ τῶν Θεσσαλῶν οἰκισθῆναι ὑπὸ Μακεδόνων· καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ Ἀκτίῳ Νικόπολιν ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἐπὶ τῇ νίκῃ τῇ κατὰ Κλεοπάτρας.

“They say that Memphis was founded to commemorate the marriage of Aphrodite and Hephaestus. Victory: Thessalonica was settled by the Macedonians after the victory over the Thessalians, Nicopolis at Actium by the Romans after the victory over Cleopatra.”

II. Hermopolis in the 2nd century AD

4. P. Oxy. XLIII 3088:

ἀντίγρ(αφον). Φλάβιος Τιτιανὸς Ὁξυρυγχειτῶν τῇ πόλει χαίρειν. ἀποδέχομαι ὑμᾶς τὴν πατρίδα κοσμεῖν προηρημένους καὶ ἐπιτρ[έ]πω κατασκευάζειν τὸ βαλανεῖον ἔκ τε τῶν ἦδη συνειλεγμένων χρημάτων [...].

“Copy. Flavius Titianus to the city of the Oxyrhynchites, greetings. I congratulate you on your design to beautify your hometown and I permit you to equip the bath from the funds already collected.”

5. Tac. Agr. 21:

Namque ut homines dispersi ac rudes eoque in bella faciles quieti et otio per voluptates adsuescerent, hortari privatim, adiuuare publice, ut templa fora domos extruerent, laudando promptos, castigando segnis: ita honoris aemulatio pro necessitate erat.

“In order that a population scattered and uncivilised, and proportionately ready for war, might be habituated by comfort to peace and quiet, he would exhort individuals, assist communities, to erect temples, market-places, houses: he praised the energetic, rebuked the indolent, and the rivalry for his compliments took the place of coercion.” (Trans. Hutton/Ogilvie).

III. The emergence of civic rivalry in Egypt**6. I. Herm. 15:**

[Ἑρμοπόλει τῆ]

[μεγάλη ἀ]ρχαία

καὶ λαμπρᾶ

Γ(άϊος) · ὁ καὶ Ἀγαθῖνος

5 σὺν τῷ υἱῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ

τῷ καὶ Σαραπίωνι ·

ἀνέθηκεν · ἐπ’ ἀγαθῷ.

“Gaius, who is also known as Agathinus, and his son Alexandrus, who is also known as Sarapion, have dedicated this to the city of Hermes, the big, old and shining for the good.”

7. ISide 130:

Μᾶρκον Αὐρήλιον Φιλόξενον Σιδήτην, κήρυκα

καὶ κωμωδόν, ἱερoneίκην, παράδοξον,

νεικήσαντα ἀγῶνας τοὺς [ὑπογεγραμμένους·

5 [ἐ]ν τῆ λαμπροτάτῃ καὶ ἐνδόξῳ πατρ[ίδι τὸν] Μυστικὸν

[.]τάκις, · καὶ Ἴσοκαπιτώλιον ἐν Ἑρμο[πόλει],

κτλ.

„To Marcus Aurelius Philoxenus from Side, herald and comedian, winner in the games, the incredible, who has won games below: in his shining and famous fatherland the Mystika ...; and the Isokapitolia in Hermopolis”

8. P. Oxy. IV 705:

Τειμήσατε μὲν οὖν καὶ ὑμεῖς αὐτοὺς ἐπιδημήσ[αν]τες τῷ ἔθνει πρώτοις μετὰ Πηλουσιώτας μεταδόντας τῆς εἰς τὸ δ[ικ]αστήριον ὑμῶν εἰσόδου, γνωρίζει δὲ τὴν πόλιν καὶ ὁ λαμπ[ρότα-]τος Λαῖτος ἐπὶ τε τοῖς καλλίσ[το]ις καὶ ἐλε[υθερωτάτους] ἔχουσιν/ τοὺς ἐνοικο[ῦν]τας καὶ π[ρὸς τὸ τα(?)-]μεῖο[ν(?)] ἐπιεικεστάτους. διὰ δ[ὲ τοῦτο ταύτην] τὴν

πόλιν ἠθέλησα μηδε[μῖα ἐνδεεστέραν(?)] τῶ[ν] ἡμετέρων καταλιπε[ῖν - ca.11 -]τρη[.]άμην
καὶ τοὺς ὑπυσμ[- ca.13 -] οὐκ [ἔ]λ[α]ττον Ἀττικῶν μυρί[ων ἐπ]ὶ τῷ . [. . . ἀν-]τὰς δανείζεσθαί
τε καὶ φυλ[άσσει]σθαι καθὰ ἐπ[ὶ] τῶν προτέρων ὄρισται, τὸ[ν δὲ] σ[υ]ναγόμενον τ[ό]κον
χωρεῖν εἰς ἑπαθλα ἐφήβων τῶν παρ' αὐτ[ο]ῖ[ς] κατ' ἔτος ἀγωνιουμένων ἐφ' οἷς κα[ὶ] οἱ
Ἀγτ[ι]ν[οεῖς] γῶν ἀγωνίζοντε

“You yourselves honoured them (i.e. the Oxyrhynchites) when you came to Egypt, by giving them access to your tribunal first of all after the men of Pelusion. The most illustrious Laetus knows that the city possesses inhabitants of the best and most generous spirit and most just in their dealings with the treasury. For this reason I wished to leave this city in no way inferior to any in our land . . . not less than 10.000 Attic drachmai to be lent and kept according to the former regulations, the accumulated interest to be applied to the ephebic games which they hold annually, in which the Antinoites now compete.“

9. SB X 10493

Μ[άρ]κος Αὐ[ρ]ήλιος Διο[νύ]σιος [Παυ]λε[ί]νου ἀπ' [Ο]ξυρύγχων πόλεως
ἀγωνοδ[ί]κ[η]ς ἀγῶνος ἀχθέντος τῷ διελθόντι ζ (ἔτει) Μάρκου Αὐρηλί[ο]υ
Σεουήρου [Ἀλεξάνδρου] Καίσαρος τοῦ κυρίου τῆς ἱερῆς ἐφηβικῆς ἰσαντινο-
εἰφ φιλ[- ca.12 - ἀγ]ῶνι τῆς αὐτ[ῆς] πόλεως διὰ τοῦ πατρὸς Αὐρηλίου
Παυλεί[ου - ca.12 -]σιου διανιο. . . . ἀπὸ [τ]ῆς αὐτ[ῆς] πόλεως
. [- ca.9 - Αὐρηλί]ῳ Ἡρακλείῳ τῷ ξυστάρχῃ τῆς αὐτῆς πόλεως χαίρειν.

“Markus Aurelius Dionysios son of Paulinus from Oxyrhynchos, judge in the contest, that was held in the 6th year of Markus Aurelius Severus Alexander Caesar, the lord of the 18th sacred, ephebic contest of that same town, that equals the one in Antinoupolis, acting on behalf of his father Aurelius Paulinus from the same town to Aurelius Herakleius, the Xystarchos of the same town greetings.”

10. P. Harrauer 36,7-9:

ἡ πολιτικὴ ἀγορὰ καὶ [πρὸς κόσ]μον τῆς πόλεως ἄρισ[τον κόσ]μημα.

„The political agora is also the best ornament for the decoration of the city.“

11. Philostr. soph. 1,25,2 (532):

πόλιν γὰρ δὴ λαμπρύνει μὲν ἀγορὰ καὶ κατασκευὴ μεγαλοπρεπῆς οἰκοδομημάτων [...].

"For the agora and a magnificent arrangement of buildings put the city in the right light."

12. I. Herm. 81

οὗτος ὁ κοσμήσας περιμή<κ>εα τείχεα νηῶν,

στήσας αἰθούσσαις κίονας ὑψορόφους,

„It was him, who decorated the very long walls of the temples and who placed high covered columns in the porticus [...].“

13. Additional reading:

IG XIV 1102 (=IGUR I 240)

<https://inscriptions.packhum.org/text/187874?&bookid=250&location=1696>

SB XXVIII 16959,3 (=CdE 79, 2004, 203-208 avec traduction)

https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb;28;16959?rows=2&start=0&fl=id,title&fq=idno_led_path:16959;SB;*:hgv&sort=series+asc,volume+asc,item+asc&p=0&t=0

CPR XXXV 35, 36, 40-43 (= Corpus Papyrorum Raineri vol. 35, nouvelle édition de M. Drew-Bear avec traduction française) (traduction anglaise in A. C. Johnson, Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian, Baltimore 1936, pp. 697-701)

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015011033613&view=1up&seq=714>

P. Köln. I 52-53 (traduction allemande dans l'édition)

https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.koeln;1;52?rows=3&start=1&fl=id,title&fq=series_led_path:P.K%C3%B6ln;*:hgv&sort=series+asc,volume+asc,item+asc&p=2&t=406

BASP 56, 2019, 117-127 (= P. Mich. Inv. 975, édition anglaise)