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A Re-edition of P.Bodl. I 77: The King of Kings in Arsinoe under Arab Rule

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P.BODL. I 77: THE KING OF KINGS IN ARSINOE UNDER ARAB RULE

J. Gascou and K. A. Worp, 'P.Rain.Cent. 35 et SB I 4483: les invocations', *ZPE* 57 (1984) 105–10, discussed a type of Christian invocation then known only from two Arsinoite documents: an invocation by Christ, Mary and Saints, with the additional description of Christ as 'the king of kings and eternal almighty' (τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν βασιλέων καὶ αἰωνίου παντοκράτορος; forms 4C–D). A new example of this kind of invocation, and in fact its latest, occurs in P.Bodl. I 77, but this was not recognised in ed. pr. A fresh study of the text has resulted in a new edition, presented below.¹

When the invocation of SB I 4483 first attracted attention, it was thought that the reference to the 'king of kings' was an allusion to the Sassanid king.² This need not be the case, even if SB 4483 most probably dates from the time of the Persian occupation of Egypt (29.v.621)—P.Rain. Cent. 35 may only be assigned to the seventh century on palaeographical grounds. As Gascou–Worp, loc. cit. 110, have put it, '[r]ien ne prouve a priori que l'usage de l'invocation 4C et de sa variante 4D ait été limité à la période perse'. This now finds confirmation in P.Bodl. 77, which shows that this invocation was used in Arsinoe under the Arabs too.³ For speculation on the nature of this invocation see below 2 n.

The papyrus originally carried a legal agreement whose nature can no longer be ascertained (it breaks off before the purpose of the transaction was stated), drawn up at Arsinoe some day between 27 March and 25 April 671. The text is generously spaced, and is written in a bold, elegant and stylised hand, a close relative of the minuscule used in official documents of the early Islamic period.⁴ Another remarkable detail is that the part combining the invocation and dating clause is written in *eisthesis*, as if the scribe intended to have the introductory formulas centred in relation to the main text.

At some later stage, the papyrus was reused for a writing exercise: a practicing scribe filled the ample (2.2 cm) interlinear spaces with trials of invocations. The writing practice has encroached into the main text in several places, so that what now stands before our eyes conveys a messy picture with often limited claims to legibility. The appearance of the original document would have made it a good candidate to serve as a model for a would-be scribe. It is unclear, however, whether the entire document or only part of it (its upper left-hand corner) was used for the exercise.

Further pen trials are found on the back: three lines of attempted invocations, and at 180^o two lines of jottings followed by a notarial signature, the latter apparently penned as writing practice. It is uncertain whether this signature is in the same hand as that responsible for the invocation trials.

We have renumbered the lines of the text (ed. pr. offered running line numbers); lines 1, 2, etc. refer to the *textus prior*, 1a, 2a, etc. (printed in different font) to the writing exercise. Given the uncertainties, we have left the lacunas of the exercise without supplements, and have translated only the main text.

¹ The revised text results from the study of photographs, kindly supplied by the first editor to K. A. Worp, and of the original by N. Gonis. The photographs are reproduced by permission of the Keeper of Western Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library.

² E. K. Chrysos, 'The Date of Papyrus SB 4483 and the Persian Occupation of Egypt', *Δωδώνη* 4 (1975) 343–8; cf. id., 'The Title Βασιλεύς in Early Byzantine International Relations', *DOP* 23 (1978) 35–6, 70–1, and G. Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (Wien 1978) 155–6.

³ There is one further example of this invocation form in an unpublished Aberdeen papyrus, a writing exercise of the late seventh or early eighth century.

⁴ So far as we can see, the use of this type of handwriting is not common among Arsinoite legal documents of this date (another case is CPR XIV 13, a deed of exchange of inherited property, assigned to the '6th/7th century', but probably not earlier than mid-7th; this has implications for the date of the literary text on the other side). But this may be an illusory impression: most of the texts of this date have been published without photographs.



P.Bodl. I 77



P.Bodl. I 77 (back, detail)

- 1 † ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου καὶ δεσπό[του Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος ἡμῶν]
 1a † ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου καὶ [
 2 τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν βασιλέω[ν καὶ αἰωνίου παντοκράτορος]
 2a δεσπότου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ [
 3 το καὶ τῆς δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τ[ῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας]
 3a θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος [
 3b ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου καὶ [
 4 καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων. [ἔτους Διοκλητιανοῦ τριακιοστοῦ]
 4a κ[υ]ρίου καὶ δεσπότου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [
 4b ἐν ὀνόματι ο .. πο
 5 ὀδοσηκοστοῦ ἐβδόμ[ο]υ, Φαρ[μουθ]ι η, ιδ ἰνδ[ικτιώνος], ἐν Ἀρ[σινόῃ].†]
 5a τοῦ θεοῦ [ἡμῶν] καὶ σωτήρος καὶ τῆς δεσποίνης[ε
 6 τῷ λαμπροτάτῳ Φιλοξένῳ καγκελ[λαρίῳ
 6a τῆς δεσπο
 6b τη, [] τῆς ἡμῶν τῆς ἁγίας
 7 ταύτης τῆς Ἀρσινόϊτων πόλεως [
 8 Α[ὐρ]ήλιος Φοιβάμμ[ων] .. .]

Back:

καὶ σωτήρος
 [[τῆς δεσπ]] τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος
 τοῦ θεοῦ

Back, turned 180°:

- † † †
 5 † ὄγ
 † *di emu Cosma Cos* ... (tachygraphy)

2 τοῦ βασιλέως: του βασιλείας ed. pr. 3a, 4b, 5 'illegible' ed. pr. 3b, 6a not transcribed in ed. pr. 5a text after ἡμῶν 'illegible' ed. pr. 6 καγκελ[λαρίῳ κα ... ed. pr. 7 ταύτης τῆς: ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς ed. pr. 8 'traces' ed. pr. back not transcribed in ed. pr.

'In the name of the Lord and master Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, the king of kings and eternal almighty, and of our Lady the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, and of all the saints.

'Year of Diocletian three hundred and eighty-seven, Pharmouthi ..., indiction 14, in Arsinoe.

'To the most splendid Philoxenos, *cancellarius*, ... this city of the Arsinoites ... Aurelius Phoibammon ...'

Main Text

1-4 For comparison, it seems worth quoting in full the two other instances of this invocation:

(4C) SB I 4483.1-2 (with BL VIII 309): ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου καὶ [δεσπότου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος ἡμῶν, τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν βασιλέων καὶ αἰών(ιου) παντοκράτορος, καὶ τῆς δεσποίνης ἡμῶν, τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου], καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων.

(4D) P.Rain. Cent. 35.2-5 (with BL VIII 286): - - - καὶ σωτήρος ἡμῶν τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν βασιλέων καὶ (αἰ)ωνίου παντοκράτορος καὶ τῆς δεσπίνης ἡμῶν τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων.

- 1 The lost part of the line as restored is 41 letters long. A fixed point for the length of the break is given by l. 4, where up to 30 letters are missing. It is likely that extensive abbreviation was used, probably by means of *nomina sacra*. δεσπό[του]. On the photograph of the papyrus, taken some twenty years ago we think we can see remains of tau on the edge of the break; but now nothing is visible on the original.

- 2 This line seems short as restored, but our parallels (cf. above, 1–4 n.) suggest that it must be complete. τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν βασιλέων καὶ αἰώνιου παντοκράτορος. Both collocations have Biblical antecedents, cf. the notes to P.Rain. Cent. 35.2 and 3. The first, especially in the form βασιλεὺς βασιλευόντων, is common in patristic literature; it also happens to be the appellation of the Persian king, cf. above n. 2. It is interesting that the syntagm *αἰώνιος παντοκράτωρ has only occurred in papyri (no instance among the texts of TLG_E), though both αἰώνιος and παντοκράτωρ are found as epithets of God in the same context. The appearance of these expressions in invocation formulas under a new ruler—there is at present no evidence that these formulas were current prior to the Sassanid conquest—may underlie a political statement. As the editor of P.Rain. Cent. 35 (K. Treu) put it, '[b]eide Formeln betonen die Königsherrschaft Christi, was wie ein Ersatz für die in persischer und arabischer Zeit nicht mehr gängige Nennung des christlichen Kaisers wirkt' (cf. also Gascou–Worp, op. cit. 110).
- 3 τῆ[ς] ἁγίας θεοτόκου καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας (with invocation form 4D) may seem rather long for the space (34 letters restored; cf. above 1 n.), but τῆ[ς] ἁγίας θεοτόκου (with form 4C) would be too short. Possibly θεοτόκου and/or ἀειπαρθένου were abbreviated. καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας otherwise belongs to invocation form 4B, attested exclusively in documents from after the Islamic conquest.
- 4–5 Year 387 of the era of Diocletian = 670/1 = indiction 14; Pharmouthi = 27.iii–25.iv.
- 5 Φαρ[μ]ουῦθι. After phi, a thickish trace at two-thirds height, apparently the apex of the ligature alpha-rho (that is, the remnants do not admit Φαμ[εν]ώθ or Φαῶ[φ]ι). ἐν Ἀρ[κιν]όη. The alternative would be to resolve ἐν Ἀρ[κιν]οῖτων πόλει. The issue will be discussed by N. Kruit in a forthcoming publication.
- 6 τῷ λαμπροτάτῳ. On the clarissimate in the seventh-century see J. Gascou, *Un Codex fiscal Hermopolite (P.Sorb. II 69)* (1994) 62. Φιλοξένῳ καγκελ[α]ρίῳ. This person has not been recorded elsewhere; he is the first post-Conquest *cancellarius* from Arsinoe to be known to us (those listed in J. M. Diethart, *Prosopographia Arsinoitica*, occur in texts of earlier date). He was a senior officer in the civil administration, perhaps attached to the *dux* of Arcadia. On the office of *cancellarius* in general see J. Gascou, *T&MByz* 12 (1994) 336 n. 72 with references.
- 7 γαύτης τῆς Ἀρκινοῖτων πόλεως. The collocation may suggest that Philoxenos held an office associated with the city: cf. e.g. CPR XIV 17.6–8 (652) Φλ[α]ουίῳ Ἀθανασίῳ τῷ μεγαλοκρεπεστάτῳ ἰταμειτικῷ (= δομειτικῷ) καὶ ἐκδικῷ ταύτης τῆς Ἀρκινοῖτων πόλεως; SB I 4666.5 (659) τῷ λαμπροτάτῳ Ἀπφου ἰταμειτικῷ ταύτης κτλ.; SB XIV 12481.5 (668) Φλ[α]ουίῳ Πεττηρίῳ τῷ ἐνδοξοτάτῳ παγάρχῳ ταύτης κτλ.; P.Ross.Georg. III 53.6 (674/5) Φλ[α]ουίῳ Στεφάνῳ τῷ ἐνδοξοτάτῳ στρατηλάτῃ ταύτης κτλ. But we cannot exclude that this is part of the description of Philoxenos' *origo* (ἀπὸ ταύτης κτλ.), cf. SB I 4763.2 (VII?), 4797.3 (664–73).

Writing practice

- 1a–6b On the face of it, the practicing scribe seems to have first written invocation form 1 (lines 1a–3a), followed by form 4 (3b–6b); but it is perhaps more likely that the scribe only practiced form 4, and wrote the part relating to Christ more than once (note that form 1 is much less common than form 4 in Arsinoite documents from after the Islamic conquest, see R. S. Bagnall, K. A. Worp, 'Christian Invocations in the Papyri', *CE* (1981) 124, 127–9, 131; invocations will be treated in *The Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*² [forthcoming 2003] Chapter 10 & Appendix H).
- 3 Before the start of the main text, the would-be scribe wrote τῷ; its purpose escapes us.
- 3b 4a suggests that ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου will have been written in the lost part of 3b; but the uncertainty about the size of the sheet used by the practicing scribe (cf. introd. above), as well as the 'wild' character of the exercise, discourage us from printing any supplement.
- 5a [ἡμῶν] καὶ σωτήρος. It seems to us—though we cannot be certain—that the second hand first wrote ἡμῶν, and later overwrote it with καὶ σωτήρος. ἡμῶν should have normally come after σωτήρος.
- 6b τη []. After tau, an upright reaching well below the line, possibly rho, followed by a small hole. We have considered reading ω[]τῆρ[ο]ς, but it is unclear whether there is enough space in the break for the lost circlet of rho and an omicron (even minute); we would also have to think that the small arc hanging from the left-hand extremity of the ensuing tau (τῆς) is not part of the letter, but should be read as sigma (sigma-tau ligatured).

Back

- 6 *Cosma*. This may well be the same notary as the one listed in J. M. Diethart, K. A. Worp, *Notarsunterschriften im byzantinischen Ägypten* (Wien 1986) 43, as Ars. 10.11.1 (no photograph available), attested in P.Ross.Georg. III 53.19 (674/5) δι' ἐμοῦ *Cosma* . *esemioth(e)* + signs. It is conceivable that Cosmas was the notary who signed the document on the other side. After *Cosma*, the would-be scribe continued with *Cos*, apparently repeating the first three letters of the notary's name; after that, and before the tachygraphic signs/paraph, we cannot make out anything meaningful (*esemioth* vel sim. cannot be read).