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P.Wisc. I 11: the Oath Formula

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P.WISC.I 11: THE OATH FORMULA
= P.L.Bat 16, 11

While assembling the relevant papyri for a new list of oath formulas in Greek papyri which mention the Byzantine emperor, either by giving his full name and titulature, or by mentioning him in a more indirect way (see pp.199ff.), I came across the oath formula in P.Wisc.I 11 (Oxyrhynchus, VIIth century), where we find in lines 26-28 the following oath:

- - - Ἐπωσοάμην θεὸν
τὸν παντοκρ(άτορα) καὶ τὴν σωτηρίαν
τῶν κελεύοντων) ἡμῶν. - - -

In his note *ad loc.* the editor rightly refers to E.Seidl, *Der Eid im römisch-ägyptischen Provinzialrecht*, II 137-160 for Coptic oaths sworn by the *salus*/σωτηρία of the rulers. He was unable to cite a parallel for the verb *κελεύειν* used in this connection in the Greek papyri.

There is, in fact, a parallel for this use to be found in *SPP* III 432.6, a papyrus written according to C.Wessely in the VIIth century and stemming from Arsinoe. As Wessely indexed neither the word *σωτηρία* nor the word *κελεύω*, it is only natural that this text escaped further notice.

Other oath formulas occurring in Greek and Coptic papyri may usefully be cited in this context as showing a certain resemblance to the oath formula in P.Wisc.I 11. To the oath formulas cited by Seidl, *op.cit.*, 139-144 (see especially the Greek formulas in P.Lips. 103 and P.Würzb.20 [add now P.Stras.660 and P.Laur.III 112-120; all Hermetopolitan documents from the VIIth century]: *πρός τε τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς σωτηρίας τῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν τῶν Ἀμιράτων*, and P.Lond.inv.2018 [=SB VI 8987, Oxyrhynchus, 644/45]: *θεὸν τὸν παντοκρ(άτορα) καὶ τὴν σωτηρίαν [πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας κατακυριευούσης ἡμῶν - -]* we may add *CPR* IV 34 (Hermetopolis, VII), where we find in lines 7-8, 35-36: - - *θεὸν τὸν παντοκράτορα καὶ τὴν σωτηρίαν τῶν κρατούντων ἐφ' ἡμᾶς..*

These oath formulas all have in common that they do not mention any specific ruler by name, as papyri written during the reign of Byzantine emperors normally do (for Coptic papyri mentioning Arab

governors of Egypt by name cf. BM 1079^V; ZAS 60 [1925] 107.26ff.). One is therefore entitled, I think, to assume that, as *P.Lips.* 103, *P.Würzb.* 20, *P.Stras.* 660 and *SB VI* 8987 were all written during the period after A.D. 641, so also *CPR IV* 34, *P.Wisc.I* 11 and *SPP III* 432 belong to this particular period. This date for the Wisconsin papyrus is remarkably late, in that with the exception of *SB VI* 8987 (*Oxy.*, 644/45) there are no dated documents from Oxyrhynchus now known later than A.D. 619.¹⁾

On the other hand, it should be noted that H.I. Bell has already shown that the Arab word *amīr* has a somewhat vague sense, "ruler" or "commander" (cf. *JEA* 31 [1945] 80). There is, in my opinion, a fair chance that the Greek οἱ κελεύοντες ἡμῶν / οἱ κρατοῦντες ἐφ' ἡμᾶς tries to convey the meaning of the Arab *amīr*; other writers

1) Cf. R.S. Bagnall-K.A. Worp, *Regnal Formulas in Byzantine Egypt* (Missoula 1979) 68. Of course, one might argue, that the plural οἱ κελεύοντες ἡμῶν refers to the joint reign of Heraclius and his son Heraclius novus Constantinus. Consequently, one might pinpoint the date of *P.Wisc.I* 11 (Epeiph 8, 4th indiction, ἀρχῆ 5th indiction; cf. R.S. Bagnall-K.A. Worp, *The Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*, 57 n.20) to 2.vii.616/631. But this seems in conflict with normal practice during the reign of any Byzantine emperor, when oaths were sworn mentioning the emperor(s) by name. Cf., however, the class of oaths referring simply to the βασιλικὴ σωτηρία, some of which date also from the pre-641 period, e.g. *BGU I* 255 from A.D. 599. But is it likely, that the Byzantine emperors would be referred to as οἱ κελεύοντες ἡμῶν?

On the other hand, it is curious to see the βασιλικὴ σωτηρία still referred to in a papyrus from 16.vii.647, viz. *SB VI* 8988.79 (cf. H.I. Bell, *Byz. Zeitschr.* 22 [1913] 393). A similar oath by the βασιλικὴ σωτηρία is found in a Hermopolitan document published by F. Preisigke in *Archiv* 3 [1906] 418ff., line 89. The papyrus was assigned by Preisigke to the VIth century; E. Seidl (*Der Eid*, II 10 n.4) lists this text under documents from the reign of Justinian I. This date is, however, not acceptable, as the papyrus starts with an invocation of the Holy Trinity. This type of invocation is only found in Greek documentary papyri written during the reign of the emperor Phocas (A.D. 602-610) and later (cf. R.S. Bagnall-K.A. Worp, *Christian Invocations in the Papyri*, Cd'E 56 [1981]). Consequently, the date of the papyrus must be changed into "VIIth Century". The third indiction referred to in the papyrus (lines 101, 124) must refer to A.D. 614/5, 629/30, 644/5, 659/60, etc.; Thoth 21 = 18/19.ix. In the case of a date to A.D. 614, the βασιλικὴ σωτηρία should be taken as referring to the emperor Heraclius; in the case of a date to A.D. 629, one should think of the Persian King (cf. E. Chrysos, *ΔΩΔΩΝΗ* 4 [1975] 343-48), but if the document dates from even later times (644, 659, 674, etc.) the use of βασιλικὴ σωτηρία in Arabic times is equally anachronistic as in *SB VI* 8988 and to be regarded as a scribal conservatism.

simply graecisized this word into a Greek plural form ἄμφοδες. If this interpretation should be right, there would be no reason to think, as Wilcken (*P.Würzb.* 20, introd.) does, that by the *Amirates* the governor of Egypt (σύμβουλος) and his minister of finances (ἄμφοδ) are to be understood. H.I.Bell (*loc.cit.*) expressed already his doubts as regards the use of ἄμφοδ for the governor of Egypt (cf. also *P.Apoll.* no 1.1 n.), and it is telling that we hear in the Greek papyri from the Arabic period next to nothing of his minister of finances.

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