Flavius Neapilius: Ghost-Comes Aegypti

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Among the persons registered in PLRE II figures, on p.773, one Flavius Neapilius, 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 Thebaïdis.” The name, however, is remarkable enough (I have not found another instance) to excite suspicion.

The sole source for Neapilius is described as follows by its editor, O. Montecchi: “si tratta di una lettera di un sottoposto al padrone. Il senso non è chiaro per le irregolarità morfologiche, sintattiche e grafiche. In sostanza Παππούθος annuncia al padrone di aver assicurato alla giustizia un tale βάρβαρος Έσαγαβθός.” A reference in lines 8–9 to τοῦ κυρίου μου λαμπροτάτου κωμήγον 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. It is a difficult piece, as the editor said, but progress can be made. I propose the following text:

τῷ δεσποτῇ μου Πλυκαρίων
Παππούθος

Ἐσαγαβθόν τινα βάρβαρον παραδεδωκότι

4 έαντών εἰς τὸ φῶς τῷ κρομμέων περικ( )
Κ . . . . ον καὶ ἀποστάλεντα κατὰ παιδατούραν
ὑπὸ τῶν κοινῶν ἡμῶν ἀδελφον πραγματολογοῦν Πανίσκ(ον)
μετὰ κ(α)λὴν ἀναφορὰς γραφάς περὶ αὐτῶν

8 πρὸς τὴν ἔξονταν τοῦ κυρίου μου λαμπροτάτου
κώμηγον Φλαβίου Άμβονιδαντίου, ἔχον μεθ’ ἐαυτὸν
περιβάλλον ἀπὸ χρήσεως τούτων,
ὑποδεξάμενον παρὰ τῶν ἀπὸ χειράς. ον

12 κοντίου βερνίλαν. (M.2) ἔφρωνθαι σαι
ἐλξομαι πολλαῖς
[χρίονος κύριε.

Verso: τῷ δεσποτῇ μου

I 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.

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3 παρασάτωκα ed. pr.; read παραδεδωκότα 4 έαντω Πε. του-φοι τῷ Κραμμέως . περί κ( ) ed. pr.; read έαντόν, κραμμέως
5 ἀποστελείντα κατάπαυσα τοῦτον ed. pr.; read πεδατού-ραν 6 πρα( ) τατσηγ ed. pr.; read τῶν κοινῶν 7 . . .

Flavius Abundantius (1) is listed at PLRE II 3 as comes Aegypti in 412, on the basis of Socrates HE 7.7, where as ο τοῦ στρατιωτικοῦ
tάγματος ἕγεμών he is recorded as supporting one episcopal can-
didate 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
collection that we may identify the comes here with the Fl. Abun-
dantius 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 Abundantiius’ 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 κρομμέων to be equivalent to τῷ κρομμέων, “in the
onion field.” I do not find the word as a common noun else-
where, but it is known as a place name (in which epsilon and
upsilon also interchange) in the Corinthia (see Pieske, RE 9
[1922] 1973). περί( ) could be περί κόμην but it could also be
περίκεφαλήν (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 παδατούρα, Latin pedatura, as the reading
here comes from K. A. Worp. The term has not appeared hitherto
in published papyrus texts, 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 [ . ] εθ. τουρασκαί he reads (on
a photocopy kindly provided by R. Pintaudi) πεδατούρας οἰκί;

5 Cf. the absence of attestations in the lists of S. Daris, Il lessico latino nel greco
d’Egitto (Pap.Casst. 3 [1971]), and H. Zilliacus, Zum Kampf der Weltsprachen im ost-
römischem Reich (Helsingfors 1935) 230.
and (2) P.Mil. inv. 74.01, where in line 5 instead of Πελατίου πρεπε one should read πεδατοπρεπε. (The latter reading, which eliminates a date to the Oxyrhynchus 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 περιβολάων is used for a variety of coverings, cf. LSJ s.v. For ἀπὸ χρῆσεως 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

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4 Published by C. Balconi in Scriti O. Moniaveci (Bologna 1981) 32.
4 Jo. Mal. 351.5 Bonn; Maur. Strat. 10.3 (246 Scheffer), whence Leo Tact. 15.56; Const. Porph. Cae. 482.8, 490.4 Bonn.
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