Flavius Neaptius: Ghost-\textit{Comes Aegypti}

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Among the persons registered in \textit{PLRE} II figures, on p.773, one Flavius Neaptius, known only from \textit{P.Bon.} 46 as a \textit{comes}. \textit{PLRE} suggests a date “V/VI” (the editor of \textit{P.Bon.} gave simply “ep. bizantina”), and remarks “he was perhaps the \textit{comes Aegypti} or the \textit{comes et dux Thebaidis}.” The name, however, is remarkable enough (I have not found another instance) to excite suspicion.

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

\begin{verbatim}
   τὸ δεσπότη μου   Γλυκαρίων
   Πατνοῦθιος
   Ἐπάγαθον τινα βάρβαρον παραδεδωκότας
4   ἐναντίων εἰς τὸ φόρο τῷ κριμμεών περικ( )
   Κ ....... ὦν καὶ ἀποσταλέντα κατὰ παιδανύραιν
   ὑπὸ τῶν κοινῶν ἡμῶν ἅδελφον προανέστησον Ἡλίασκ(ον) μετὰ κ[α][λ]ί ἀναφοράς γραφίσας περὶ αὐτῶν
8   πρὸς τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου μου λαμπροτάτου
   κώμητος Φλαβίου Neaptíon Ἀβουνοντίου, ἔχον μεθ’ ἐαυτοῦ
   περιβόλου ἀπὸ χρήσεως τούτων,
12   υποδεξάμην παρὰ τῶν ἀπὸ εἴκειμι. ὦν
   κοντ[ού] βερνάλων. (Μ.2) ἔρρωσθαί σαι
   εὐχομαι πολλο[ίς]
   [χρ]όνοις κύριε.

Verso: τὸ δεσπότη μου
\end{verbatim}

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.
Flavius Neaptius (1) is listed at PLRE II 3 as comes Aegypti in 412, on the basis of Socrates HE 7.7, where as ὃ τῶν στρατιωτικοῦ τάγματος ἡγεμόνι he is recorded as supporting one episcopal candidate 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 conclusion that we may identify the comes here with the Fl. Abundantius 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 Abundantius’ 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 τῶν κρομμεῶν to be equivalent to τῶν κρομμιῶν, “in the onion field.” I do not find the word as a common noun elsewhere, but it is known as a place name (in which epsilon and upsilon also interchange) in the Corinthia (see Pieske, RE 9 [1922] 1973). περίκ( ) could be περὶ κ(ῶμην) but it could also be περίκ(εμιένοι) (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 παιδατούρα, 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 [.]ἐδ.:πουρασκαί] he reads (on a photocopy kindly provided by R. Pintaudi) πέδατούρας οἰκ[;
and (2) P.Mil. inv. 74.01, where in line 5 instead of Πελαίτων κε one should read πεδατούρας. (The latter reading, which eliminates a date to the Oxyrhynchite 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.

The praepositus Paniskos is not elsewhere attested, so far as I am aware.

10 περιβόλαιον is used for a variety of coverings, cf. LSJ s.v. For ἀπὸ χρήσεως 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.

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3 Published by C. Balconi in Scritti O. Montevecchi (Bologna 1981) 32.
4 Jo. Mal. 331.8 Bonn; Maur. Strat. 10.3 (246 Scheffer), whence Leo Tact. 15.56; Const. Porhp. Caer. 482.8, 490.4 Bonn.
5 I am indebted to K. A. Worp for a number of suggestions and to A. F. Van Gemert for some helpful remarks about the language of the papyrus.