

# Antoninus Pius to Ptolemais Barca about the Capitolia

*James H. Oliver*

JOYCE M. REYNOLDS<sup>1</sup> has just published all nine fragments of the large inscription at Cyrene which contains (1) an imperial letter of A.D. 135 to Cyrene with an appendix about what Hadrian had written on the same subject to the archon of the Panhellenion, (2) extracts of another epistle<sup>2</sup> of [Hadrian] to the Cyrenaeans, (3) a long section from a speech<sup>3</sup> (rather than an edict) of Hadrian, (4) extracts of (I think) one epistle of Antoninus Pius to the Cyrenaeans, and (5) a complete epistle of Antoninus Pius to Ptolemais Barca. Two fragments of this inscription were already known but not enough to give a clear idea of what the lines said nor of the purpose of the inscription. The lower part, which is entirely new, shows that the purpose was to advertise the *eugeneia* and assert the status of Cyrene as the mother city of the Cyrenaica. The first four documents will receive considerable attention in my forthcoming *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*, but meanwhile I should like to add to the many good remarks of Miss Reynolds a short observation concerning the last document, which I know from her publication and from photographs kindly placed at my disposition by Professor Donald White and Mr Woodard Openo. The text reads as follows.

Ἀυτοκράτωρ Καίσαρ θεοῦ Ἀ[δριανοῦ υἱ]ός, θεοῦ Τραιανοῦ Παρθι-  
κοῦ υἱωνός, θεοῦ Νέρουα ἔγγ[ο]-  
νος, Τίτος Αἴλιος Ἀδριαν[ός Ἄντωνε]ῖνος Σεβαστός, ἀρχιερεὺς  
μέγιστος, δημαρχικῆς ἐξ[ου]-  
80 ρίας τὸ ιζ', αὐτοκράτω[ρ τὸ β', ὕπα]τος τὸ δ', πατὴρ πατρίδος,  
Πτολεμαεῦσι Βαρκαίοι[ς]

<sup>1</sup> "Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and the Cyrenaican Cities," *JRS* 68 (1978) 111–21 with plates.

<sup>2</sup> Line 12 might read *Κεφάλαια ἐξ ἐπιστολῆ[ς ἄλλης θεοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ]*.

<sup>3</sup> If line 25 reads *Κεφάλαιον ἐκ δ[ημηγορίας (or δ[ιαλέξεως] θεοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ)]*, it would imply a visit sometime by the emperor, probably in A.D. 123 between Carthage and Alexandria.

χαίρειν vacat [Θαυμάζω] ὅτι μηδέποτε ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν  
 χρόνῳ διαπέμφαν[τες καὶ]  
 συνθύσαντες εἰς τὸν τῶ[ν Καπετω]λίων ἀγῶνα νῦν πρῶτον  
 ἀπεστείλατε· οὐ γὰρ ἀγνοεῖ[τε ὅτι]  
 τὸ τὰ τοιαῦτα καινοτομ[εῖν αἰτί]αν παρέχει ταῖς πόλεσι φιλο-  
 νεικίας ἢ ἐγένετο τοίνυ[ν ἢ συν]-  
 θυσία ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἔθνους [ἀνὰ τὸν ἀ]γῶνα. Ἐπρέσβευεν Οὐαλέριος  
 Πανσανίας, ᾧ τὸ ἐφόδι[ον δοθή]-  
 85 τω εἰ μὴ προῖκα ὑπέσ[χετο. Εὐτυ]χεῖτε vacat

The text is based on that of Joyce Reynolds except for καὶ (ἀλλὰ Reynolds) in line 81, Καπετω]λίων (Κυρηνη]αίων Reynolds) in line 82, and [ἀνὰ τὸν ἀ]γῶνα ([. . . . .]ενα Reynolds) in line 84.

#### TRANSLATION

“Imperator Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrian [Anton]inus Augustus, [son] of *divus* [Hadrian], grandson of *divus* Trajan Parthicus, great-grandson of *divus* Nerva, *pontifex maximus*, tribunician power for the seventeenth time, imperator [twice, consul] four times, *pater patriae*, to the Ptolemais-Barcans, greetings.

“[I marvel] that you, who in all the time gone by have never sent a delegation or shared in the sacrifice, have now for the first time sent representation to the contest of the [Capitolia]. For you are not unaware that the making of such innovations brings upon the cities the [charge] of contentiousness. Well, [the joint] sacrifice in behalf of the region’s population did take place [during the] contest.

“As ambassador Valerius Pausanias served, to whom let the travel money be paid unless he promised to go at his own expense. Farewell.”

#### COMMENTARY

The epistle is addressed to the Ptolemais-Barcans, *i.e.* the men of a single community comprising Barca and its port Ptolemais about 16 km. away. This city, the rival of Cyrene in the region, apparently tried to challenge the preeminence of the old mother city, not by holding a festival at Ptolemais Barca (so Reynolds), but by sending a delegation to the Capitoline festival at Rome in order to offer the sacrifice for the *ethnos*, which presumably means the Cyrenaica rather than the whole province of Crete and Cyrene.<sup>4</sup> The emperor

<sup>4</sup> For *ἔθνος* in the meaning ‘region’ see the edict of Severus Alexander (*P.Fayum* 20) line 11, and the examples collected in the writer’s commentary, *AJP* 99 (1978) 474–85.

replies sarcastically, but they were not refused a part in the sacrifice.

On the Capitolia, the magnificent penteteric festival established at Rome by Domitian in honor of Jupiter Capitolinus and held for the first time in the summer of A.D. 86, little has been added since Wissowa's succinct article in *RE* 3 (1899) 1527–29, *s.v.* CAPITOLIA.<sup>5</sup> It was a festival of a Greek type over which the emperor himself presided in Greek costume. If one rolls the four-year cycle forward, one finds that another celebration did indeed occur in the summer of 154, which by anyone's computation falls in the middle of the seventeenth tenure of the tribunician power by Antoninus Pius. The joint sacrifice<sup>6</sup> is a welcome addition to our knowledge.

The contentiousness of Ptolemais Barca in 154 explains the whole inscription, which begins with an epistle of Hadrian on the extravagant claim of another city, surely Barca,<sup>7</sup> to share with Cyrene the distinction of membership in the Panhellenion. As absurd as the claim seemed for historical, religious and cultural reasons in the second century, the outrageously ambitious Barca was destined eventually to supplant Cyrene, so much so and so long that some European maps as late as the eighteenth century still referred to the Cyrenaica as the kingdom of Barca.<sup>8</sup>

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

January, 1979

<sup>5</sup> L. Robert, "Deux concours grecs à Rome," *CRAI* 1970, 6–27, says on p.8 n.2 that the list of references in L. Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte Roms*<sup>10</sup> IV (Leipzig 1923) 276–80, "Zur Geschichte des kapitolinischen Agons," could today be abundantly augmented without becoming thereby more interesting. His own incisive article, however, makes the environment more familiar.

<sup>6</sup> On a *κυθύρη* as representative of his fatherland see L. Robert, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 10. On rivalries of cities see also L. Robert, *HSCP* 81 (1977) 21–38.

<sup>7</sup> On the foundation of Barca as a rival of Cyrene see Hdt. 4.160. In *Olympionikai* (*MemLinc* VIII.8 [1957] 2) 198, L. Moretti refers the reader to fourteen victors from Cyrene, one from Barca and none from any other city of the Cyrenaica. In 460 B.C., when it produced its victor (Moretti, no.261), Barca must already have been considered a Greek city. See also O. Masson, "Grecs et Libyens en Cyrénaïque," *Antiquités africaines* 10 (1976) 49–62, especially p.53 on the Libyan name of a king of Barca at the end of the fourth century B.C.

<sup>8</sup> On a Dutch map from the eighteenth century in the writer's possession the whole area (Cyrenaica plus Marmarica) is labeled "le royaume de Barca." Johan Blaeu, *Le grand atlas* (Amsterdam 1663), map between pp. 57 and 58, shows the eastern part as "Barcha Marmarica."