

The Levy at Thespieae under Marcus Aurelius

C. P. Jones

AN INSCRIPTION discovered at Thespieae in 1890–91, and not published until 1932, refers to a corps of volunteers raised by the city to fight under Marcus Aurelius. Not only has this interesting document been unduly neglected: it will be argued below that it refers to an entirely different occasion from that generally assumed.¹

The text, which is substantially complete,² is in three parts. The first states that in accordance with the decision of the Council and Assembly, the names are inscribed below of the men sent to Marcus for “the campaign” (τῶ[ν προθύμως ἐκπεμ]φθέντων νέων ἐπὶ τὴν στ[ρ]ατείαν τῷ μεγ[ίστῳ καὶ θει]οτάτῳ αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Μ. Αὐρηλίῳ Ἀντων[νείνῳ Σεβα]στῷ, κτλ.). The second part records the motion as a result of which the names are inscribed. In the preamble of this, the mover reminds the Council and Assembly that they have already on several occasions resolved that the men due to go on the “most fortunate and pious campaign” (ἐπὶ τὴν εὐτυχεστάτην καὶ εὐσεβεστάτην στρατείαν) should enjoy the privileges of councillors, themselves while they are present and their parents after their departure. So that they may enjoy them forthwith, however, it is proposed that the distributions and privileges should be granted to the volunteers (τοῖς προθύμοις πρὸς τὴν ἔξοδον τῶν νέων) immediately, that their parents should enjoy them after their departure, and that after their successful return they should continue to enjoy these same privileges; and moreover, that their names should be recorded on a stele set up in the Agora so that the memory of those who volunteered for their city

¹ Published by A. Plassart, *Mélanges Gustave Glotz* II (Paris 1932) 731–38. Not incorporated in *AE* or *SEG*. I owe thanks to Professors T. D. Barnes and G. W. Bowersock for helpful criticism.

² Plassart’s text can be improved in two places. At the end of line 10, καί is preferable to ὡς (James H. Oliver, *The Civilizing Power* [TrAmPhilosSoc n.s. 58.1, Philadelphia 1968] 33 n.6). In line 26, τρίτον τ[ο]ῦτο, not τρίτον τ[ὸ] αὐτό: cf. *LSJ* s.v. αὐτός, B iv. Oliver’s suggestion in line 9, ἐπίτροπον in place of δῆμον, would only be plausible if the customary interpretation were correct, but see *infra*, p.47.

(τῶν ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος προθυ[μ]ηθέντων νέων) may last for all time, the stele to be paid for out of the revenues available to the magistrates. The text of the decree is immediately followed by the name of the escort of the levy (ὁ παραπέμπων τοὺς νέους) and of two ambassadors, presumably those who conveyed the decree to the emperor. Finally, there appears the list itself, containing the names of eighty volunteers and a physician.

The inscription can be dated fairly closely by internal evidence. As the first editor, A. Plassart, correctly argued, since it does not mention Lucius Verus, it should be later than his death in late A.D. 168 or early 169,³ while the absence of ‘Germanicus’ from the titulature of Marcus, which is otherwise given fully, shows that it is earlier than 172.

Arguing from these *termini*, Plassart brought the inscription into connection with an event of 170 or early 171. In one of those years Greece was invaded by a barbarian tribe, the Costoboci, who penetrated as far south as Eleusis: their sack of the temple of Demeter there is the subject of Aelius Aristides’ *Eleusinian Oration*. An experienced soldier later to be Commodus’ Guard Prefect, Julius Julianus, was dispatched from the German front with the title of *procurator*, and by means of special detachments drove the invaders out of Achaëa and Macedonia.⁴ The effects of this incursion are attested less than fifty kilometers away from Thespieae, at Phocian Elatea. There Pausanias saw the monument of a citizen, Mnesibulus, who organized a levy against the invaders and fell in battle with them.⁵ Plassart argued that the Thespian levy had similarly been raised against the Costoboci, though presumably to help in the offensive of Julius Julianus and not to meet an imminent danger as at Elatea. He saw confirmation in the description of the campaign as “most pious”: the Thespians would be helping to avenge the sack of the temple at Eleusis.

The inscription does not name the enemies against whom the con-

³ Cf. *PIR*³ C 606: T. D. Barnes, *JRS* 57 (1967) 73.

⁴ The fundamental study is by A. von Premerstein, *Klio* 12 (1912) 145–66 (the inscriptions *BCH* 8 [1884] 470 no.1, and 19 [1895] 119 no.2, are now respectively *IG* II² 13172 and 3411). Recently, B. Gerov, *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 16 (1968) 325–38, and Oliver, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 33 n.6. Date: von Premerstein argued for 170, *op.cit.* 151–53; W. Zwickler rightly maintained that 171 was also possible, *Studien zur Markussäule* I (Amsterdam 1941) 170–72; cf. T. D. Barnes, *JThS* 18 (1967) 434 n.4 (on p.435). Eleusis: Aristid. *Orat.* 22 Keil, and compare also *IG* II² 3411, 3639, *SEG* XXII 156; the relevance of *IG* II² 9898 and 13172 is less certain. Julianus: *ILS* 1327, *PIR*³ I/J 615.

⁵ Paus. 10.34.5. On Mnesibulus, *IG* IX.1 146=SIG³ 871.

scripts are to fight. It does, however, suggest long drawn out preparations for a major operation: the Thespians had “many times” decided to reward the volunteers “while they were still present” in the city. That is suspicious, if they were being raised to drive an occupying force out of Greece. The fact that ambassadors were involved also implies an official request for troops and a negotiated response, not a levy hastily raised in crisis. One detail seems fatal to the customary interpretation. While the Greek appears to say unequivocally that the conscripts were to be sent to Marcus,⁶ the emperor was not involved in the campaign against the Costoboci.

An alternative occasion is easily found. In 166, Marcus began preparations for a German war against Rome’s enemies across the Danube.⁷ He and Lucius set out, however, only in 168. In the following winter Lucius died, and Marcus returned to Rome. In 169, as part of the continuing preparations for the war, he held a famous auction of palace property to raise funds. Though the auction was designed to lessen the burden on the provinces, enormous levies were in fact necessary: the description of them given by the *Historia Augusta* is confirmed for the Greek East by epigraphical evidence.⁸ Of particular relevance to the Thespian inscription, since it employs such similar language, is a text from Greater Termessus honouring a man as ἡγεμ[ό]να τῶν ἐκπεμφθ[έν]των συμ<μ>άχων τῷ μεγίστῳ αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Μ[άρ]κῳ Αὐρηλίῳ Ἀντωνείνῳ, κτλ. That the occasion here is one of the northern campaigns is certain, since Lucius is dead and Marcus has the title of ‘Germanicus’, taken in 172, but not ‘Sarmaticus’, taken in 175. Though the inscription must therefore have been cut after 172, the levy to which it refers appears to be part of the extensive recruitment of 169.⁹ The Thespian inscription, referring to troops

⁶ Plassart, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 735, interprets ἐκπεμφθέντων ἐπὶ τὴν στρατείαν τῷ . . . αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Μ. Αὐρηλίῳ Ἀντωνείνῳ to refer to the *vexillatio* detached from the imperial armies to serve under Julianus, but that appears to be against the Greek. See further the inscription from Termessus discussed *infra*.

⁷ On the chronology of the German campaigns, A. R. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius* (London 1966) 201–34; *idem*, in *Provincialia: Festschrift für Rudolf Laur-Belart* (Basel–Stuttgart 1968) 214–25; I. G. Nagy, *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 16 (1968) 343–50; James H. Oliver, *Marcus Aurelius: Aspects of Civic and Cultural Policy in the East* (*Hesperia* Suppl. 13, 1970) 82 n.38.

⁸ *HA* Marcus 21.6–9. As an illustration of 21.7, *armavit et diogmitas*, see OGIS 511=IGRR IV 580 (Aezani). There is no difficulty in connecting this inscription with the German war: it can fit in 166/7, cf. T. D. Barnes, *JThS* 21 (1970) 407.

⁹ TAM III.1 106 with Heberdey’s commentary.

to be sent to Marcus for “the most pious campaign,” and cut between 169 and 172, must also refer to the German war.

If that is correct, it shows how heavily the burden of this costly and distant undertaking could be for a city of old Greece: even if Thespieae was comparatively prosperous,¹⁰ the other cities can be presumed to have contributed in proportion to their means. Such a drain of manpower also helps to explain why, when the Costoboci invaded a year or so later, they were able to penetrate so far and with such fatal ease.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, TORONTO

November, 1970

¹⁰ On Thespieae in this period, see now C. P. Jones, *HSCP* 74 (1970) 247. I regret that in that discussion I too neglected the present text, which would substantially have reinforced the conclusions drawn there.