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SOME INSIGHTS INTO EGYPT’S HISTORY
UNDER THE REIGN OF MAXIMINUS THRAX
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The reign of Maximinus Thrax has been discussed extensively in scholarly literature. However, Egypt has been noticeably overlooked. Furthermore, the main classical sources rarely offer historical information about Egypt. For instance, Herodian of Antioch (AD 170–240) scarcely mentions Egypt. His account gives us a general notion of the heavy taxation on the whole Roman Empire and portrays the widespread bloodshed among the remnants of Alexander Severus’ supporters (Herod. *Hist. Rom.* 6–7); he mentions Egypt casually when describing the city of Carthage during the revolt against Maximinus (*Hist. Rom.* 7. 6. 1–2, tr. Whittaker 1970):

[Γορδιανὸς] ἀπάρας [τε] τῆς Θύστρου ἐς τὴν Καρχηδόνα ἠπείχθη, ἣν ἦδει μεγίστην τε οὖσαν καὶ πολυάνθρωπον, ἵν’ ὥσπερ ἐν Ῥώμῃ πάντα πράττοι· ἡ γὰρ πόλις ἐκείνη καὶ δυνάμει χρημάτων καὶ πλήθει τῶν κατοικούντων καὶ μεγέθει μόνης Ῥώμης ἀπολείπεται, φιλονεικοῦσα πρὸς τὴν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Ἀλεξάνδρου πόλιν περὶ δευτερείων).

Then he (Gordian) left Thysdrus and marched to Carthage, the largest and most heavily populated city (as Gordian knew), so that he could act exactly as if he were in Rome. The city is the next after Rome in wealth, population, and size, though there is rivalry for second place between it and Alexandria in Egypt.

Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260/265–339/340) concentrates on the persecution of Christians during the reigns of the Roman emperors. So this article surveys the available papyri and ostraca that cover the three-year period, through which some new insights into its political, economic, administrative, and social history can be attained.

The reign of Emperor Maximinus Thrax was short,¹ so there are few documents one can rely on to trace changes that occurred in Egypt under

¹ Rathbone 1986, 109; Sijpesteijn 1984, 74–75; Sickel 1929, 289.

his rule. According to Herodian of Antioch, Maximinus was a lowborn barbarian, and he behaved as such. His popularity was confined to the soldiers. In many instances, he offended and disrespected the Senate. Under his rule, the people were burdened by unprecedented rates of taxes.² Maximinus Thrax was considered one of the Persecuting Emperors, and his persecution (διωγμός) was generally given sixth place in the canon.³

Given the scarcity of evidence for the history of Egypt under the reign of Maximinus Thrax, it is essential to survey the papyri and ostraca of the same period. They not only supply information about Egypt in this time, but also link it to the general history of the Roman Empire. Forty-three documents date back to the reign of Maximinus Thrax, only twenty-eight of them citing the name of Emperor Maximinus.⁴ The following division of the documents is suggested here:

Official Orders: *SB* I. 421 (1 March AD 236, Memphis: instructions for a solemn procession in honor of Maximus' accession to the throne);

² Herod. *Hist. Rom.* 6. 7. 8 – 8. 2; 7. 3. 3–6; 4. 1–3; Mullens 1948, 65–66.

³ Grumel 1956, 59–66.

⁴ *BGU* III. 735. 1: (ἔτους) α Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου; *BGU* IV. 1062. 26: (ἔτους) γ Αὐτοκράτ[ορ]ος Καίσαρος Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐήρου [υ] [Μαξιμείνου] Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβαστοῦ καὶ Γαίου; *C. Pap.* 2. 1. 78 l. 13: [Μαξ]μείνου [Εὐ]σε[βοῦς Εὐτυχ]οῦς; *O. Berl.* 48. 2: Μαξιμείνου καὶ Μαξίμου; *O. Stras.* I. 406. 3: Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβαστοῦ; *O. Wilcken* 996. 2: [τῶν κυρίων] ἡμῶν Μαξιμείνου; *O. Wilcken* 997. 2: [ἡμῶν Γαίου Ἰουλ(ίου)] Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου; *P. Euphrates* 15. 3: Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβ(οῦς) Εὐτυχ(οῦς) Ἀνεκίτου Σεβ(αστοῦ); *P. Lond.* II. 212 B. 2: [Οὐή]ρου Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Ε[ὐτυχοῦς]; *P. Lond.* III. 948 r. 15: (ἔτους) γ Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβαστοῦ; *P. Oxy.* VI. 912. 39: Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς; *P. Oxy.* VIII. 1114. 17: ἔτους τρίτου Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς; *P. Oxy.* XLIII. 3132. 8: Ἰουλίῳ Οὐήρῳ Μαξιμείνου; *ibid.* 24: Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου; *P. Oxy.* L. 3564. 10: Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς; *P. Rein.* II. 91. 9: [Οὐήρ]ου Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβαστοῦ; *P. RyI.* II. 109. 14: Οὐήρου Μ[α]ξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβαστοῦ; *PSI* IX. 1067. 18: [Οὐή]ρου Μαξιμείνου Γερμανικοῦ μεγ[ιστου]; *PSI* X. 1121. 8: Ἰουλίῳ Οὐήρῳ Μαξιμείνου καὶ Μαξί[μου]; *PSI* XII. 1248. 38: Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου Καίσαρος τοῦ κυρίου; *PSI* XII. 1254. 11: Μαξιμείνου εὐσεβοῦς εὐτυχοῦς σεβαστοῦ Γερμανικοῦ μεγίστου; *P. Wisc.* I. 15. 14: Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβαστοῦ καὶ Γαίου; *SB* I. 5806. 24: Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου; *SB* XVI. 12753. 3: [(ἔτους)][.][Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβαστοῦ; *Stud. Pal.* XX. 37. 13: Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβ[αστοῦ]; *Stud. Pal.* XX. 45. 14: ἔ[τους τετ]άρτου Αὐτοκράτορ[ος Καίσαρ]ος Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐ[ήρ]ου Μαξιμείνου Ε[ὐσεβο]ῦς; *Stud. Pal.* XX. 47. 1: [ἔτους τετ]άρτου Αὐτοκρ[άτορ]ος Καίσαρος Γα[ίου]ν Ἰουλίου Οὐήρου Μαξιμείνου Εὐσεβοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς.

O. Did. 29 (Jan.–Jun. AD 236, the Eastern Desert: an official letter to the curators on the proclamation of Maximus with his father, Emperor Maximinus); *P. Rein.* II. 91 (16 May AD 236, Apollonopolites Heptacomia: letter from the prefect Maevius Honoratianus to the strategos of Apollonopolites Heptacomia); *PSI* I. 35 (25 March AD 237, Oxy.: orders of payments); *P. Oxy.* XLIII. 3118 (AD 237, Oxy.: official letter from the prefect Cornelius Galba to the procurator Phari).

Public Tax Registers and Reports: *BGU* III. 735 (4 Jun. – 29 Aug. AD 235, Arsinoe: a tax register); *BGU* III. 734 (AD 235 or later, Arsinoe: a tax register); *BGU* IV. 1062 (29 Aug. AD 236, Oxy.: tax collection); *PSI* VII. 733 (3 May AD 235, Oxy.: reports of πράκτορες to the strategos); *P. Oxy.* LXXII. 4892 (17 July AD 236, Oxy.: report of village scribe).

Official Receipts: *SB* I. 5806 (2 Sep. AD 235, Oxy.: lease receipt); *P. Oxy.* L. 3564 (5 Oct. AD 235, Oxy.: receipt for a grain transfer); *P. Lond.* III. 947 v a = *HGV* 22740 (19 May AD 236: a payment in money); *O. Stras.* I. 406 (10 July AD 236, Thebes: a payment in grain); *P. Lond.* III. 948 r. (19 Oct. AD 236, Theadelphia, Arsinoe: a contract for grain transport); *P. Ross. Georg.* V. 19 (16 March AD 237, Memphis: receipt of sacrificial animals for Apis cult); *O. Amst.* 68 (15 July AD 237, Thebes: a granary receipt); *O. Berl.* 48 (5 Dec. AD 237, Upper Egypt: a payment in money).

Notices, Declarations, Oaths, and Applications: *PSI* IX. 1067 (10 Dec. AD 236, Pois Hermopolites: request for registering new birth ἀπαρχή of a little girl); *SB* I. 5137 = *C. Pap. gr.* 2. 1. 77 (9 Feb. AD 237, Lykopolites: a death notice); *PSI* XII. 1254 (28 Sept. – 27 Oct. AD 237, Oxy.: application for ἀνάκρισις of a slave); *P. Oxy.* XLIII. 3132 (2 Nov. AD 237, Oxy.: oath on undertaking service).

Requests, Petitions, and Complaints: *P. Harr.* II. 200 (9 May AD 236, Philadelphia, Arsinoe: petition); *ChLA.* V. 290 = *P. Mich.* III. 165 (AD 236, Oxy: request to appoint a guardian); *SB* XIV. 11863 (before 2 July AD 237, Karanis, Arsinoe: a complaint against the use of a liturgy); *CPR* VII. 11 (9 Feb. – 29 Aug. AD 237: a complaint for payment of interest).

Private Contracts and Letters: *P. Oxy.* VI. 912 (30 Aug. AD 235, Oxy.: lease of a cellar); *PSI* XII. 1248 (after 14 Dec. AD 235, Oxy.: private letter from Menesthianos to Apollonios and Spartiates about five men escaping from Oxyrhynchus); *P. Wisc.* I. 15 (24 Jun. AD 236, Bubastis, Oxyrhynchus: exchange of donkeys); *P. Grenf.* II. 67 (6 Aug. AD 237, Bacchias, Arsinoe: a contract on hiring two dancers); *P. Bodl.* I. 43 (13 Sept. AD 237, Magna Oasis: a loan of money); *Stud. Pal.* XX. 45 (28 Sept. – 27 Oct. AD 237, Mochyris, Marmarika: a loan of money).

Wills and Testaments: *Stud. Pal.* XX. 35 (5 Apr. AD 235, Herakliopolites: testament); *P. Ryl.* II. 109 (23 Aug. AD 235, Hermopolis: a valuation of an inheritance); *P. Oxy.* VIII. 1114 (AD 237: a declaration of inheritance).

Army Documents Concerning Egypt: *O. Did.* 286 (c. AD 235, the Egyptian Eastern Desert: a list of Palmyrian names).

Army and Public Documents Concerning Egypt's Eastern Neighborhood: *P. Dura* 125 (20 Apr. AD 235, Dura-Europus: decision of a tribune); *P. Dura* 126 (20 Apr. AD 235, Dura-Europus: decision of a tribune on division of property); *P. Euphr.* 15 (12 Dec. AD 235, Beth Phuraia, Syria Coele: incomplete act); *ChLA* IX. 382 = *P. Dura* 127 (c. AD 235, Syria: decision of a tribune); *P. Dura* 116 (AD 236, Syria: names and notations by Centuries and Turmae); *P. Dura* 117 (AD 236, Dura-Europus: list of names by Centuries, with numerals).

Unknown Content: *P. Lond.* II. 2128 (26 May – 24 Jun. AD 237: beginning of an incomplete official letter).

There are seven documents among the forty-three listed above that could provide some historical details of the period. They extend through the reign of Maximinus Thrax.

A letter from the prefect Maevius Honoratianus to the strategos of Apollonopolites Heptacomia dating back to the second year of the reign of Maximinus Thrax reveals disorders in the nome.⁵ The prefect tells the strategos that he was aware through his office of the hostile manifestations⁶ and instructs him not to repress these disturbances with violence.⁷ It seems obvious that he sought to quench it peacefully and desired to solve the causes of these disorders.⁸

It is known that the metropolis of the new nome Ἀπολλωνοπολίτης Ἑπτακωμίας was Heptakomia, where the well-known Apollonios resided during the reign of Hadrian. It was a small township with a chiefly Egyptian population and a minority of Greeks.⁹ Wilcken identified it as bordering the Antaiopolite and Hypselite districts. Furthermore, the district replaced the former Aphroditopolite nome.¹⁰ Tacoma estimated

⁵ *P. Rein.* II. 91 (16 May AD 236, Apollonopolis Heptacomia).

⁶ Il. 1–4: [Μ]ήνιος Ὀνωρ[ατιανὸς] . . . φ στρατηγῷ Ἀπολλωνοπολείτου κάτω . [. . .] ε . () κωμῶν χαίρειν. [ἐ]δη[λῶ]θη μοι ἐκ τῆς τάξεως [τ]οῦς αὐτόθι ἐκβεβη[κέν]αι περὶ τοῦ α . . . [. . .].

⁷ Il. 5–6: τοιγαροῦν φρόντ[ι]σον μηδεμίαν μέ[μψιν . . .] ἐν τούτου ἐπ[α]κόλο[υ] θῆσαι

⁸ Il. 6–7: ἴν[α - ca.9 -] ἵα παρ' ἐμοὶ . . . η . ε καταστ[- ca.10 -] θαι βούλομαι.

⁹ Wilcken 1908, 163–164.

¹⁰ Fuks 1984, 133.

the population of Apollonopolites Heptacomia at approximately 9000. He gives the following account of the population of some nomes:¹¹ “Going from North to South, the population of Thmouis in the Eastern Delta comprised 25 000 inhabitants at a minimum, ...that of Oxyrhynchus, between 20 000 and 42 000 inhabitants... and that of Apollonopolis Heptakomias, 9000 inhabitants”. Even though Tacoma was very cautious about his general estimates,¹² he considered the estimate of the population of Apollonopolis Heptakomias to be more reliable.¹³

For taxes and taxation policy, we cannot exclude from our analysis the *P. Oslo*. III. 111 (15 Feb. AD 235, Oxy.), which sheds light on the cause of these manifestations, although it dates back to a month before the accession of Emperor Maximinus. *P. Oslo*. III. 111 is a list of free men and freedmen, arranged according to houses; it is part of a series of records of all free men and freedmen who on a fixed date lived in the Hermaion and the Goosekeepers’ quarters of Oxyrhynchus (women, children, elder persons, and slaves not having been registered).¹⁴ The lists were directed to the Prytanis’ office. So, it may display the impact of the Antoninian constitution on the artisans and record information about the professions that is usually used in taxation. *BGU* III. 735 (June – 29 Aug. AD 235, Arsinoite), the earliest document from Maximinus’ reign, is also a fragment of a register of tax payments for houses and lands with relevant confirmations. It has been suggested that it reflects the actual application of the Antoninian Constitution and the later taxation from the time of Severus Alexander (AD 222–235).¹⁵

The main cause of Apollonopolites Heptacomia’s disorder may have been the imposition of such new taxes, which, along with the firm grip by the police,¹⁶ ignited the political upheavals on a nome with its predominantly Egyptian population. The economic motivation for this

¹¹ Tacoma 2006, 44, cf. 66: “The resulting urban system can be described as follows. Seen for the whole of Egypt, it consists of one very large center, a couple of quite sizeable towns, some towns of intermediate size and a majority of rather small ones. Expressed in orders of magnitude, ...Hermopolis was about five times as large as Apollonopolis Heptakomias, while Alexandria was ten times as large as Hermopolis”.

¹² Tacoma 2006, 46.

¹³ Tacoma 2006, 52, cf. 50: “We need to know whether there existed more towns as small as Apollonopolis Heptakomias”.

¹⁴ For more details about taxes on crafts and professions in the third century, cf. Venticinque 2016, 18.

¹⁵ In the year AD 235, a census of houses in one of the wards of the city enumerates 42 sparsely occupied ones and 31 empty or sealed ones (*P. Oslo*. 111; *BGU* 734). Cf. Johnson 1950, 152–154.

¹⁶ Homoth-Kuhs 2005, 43; 50; 55–60.

hostile manifestation thus may be supposed to be an aspect of the economic repercussions of the *Third Century Crisis*.

The second papyrus discussed here is from Oxyrhynchus. It is a letter from a high official, probably the prefect of AD 237, Cornelius Galba,¹⁷ to the procurator Phari (ἐπίτροπος Φάρου) asking him to consider a request by two women to prevent the departure of a certain man. According to this evidence, granting permissions for or restrictions on departure by sea from Alexandria were among procurator Phari's responsibilities:

Cornelius Galba to Chrestio, procurator Phari, greetings. I have given orders that the letters written to me by Claudia Philoromaea, through Claudia Isidora her daughter and Claudia Erotilla alias Apolinaria, are to be subjoined. You are to take cognizance of them and take measures to prevent the departure of the man they mention, Septimius Ammonius, and to give instructions to the other persons who keep watch over such matters concerning...

There are three papyrus attestations to the procurator Phari, dating from the end of the second century and up to the first half of the third century.¹⁸ This official was in charge of the main Egyptian harbor and its commercial traffic. The papyri, however, offer insufficient information about his duties. Only two texts emerged: a private petition sent to the prefect about issuing and one restricting permissions to leave Egypt through the harbor. The first document dates back to Maximinus Thrax and the other one to Philip the Arab (Feb. AD 244–Sep. AD 249).¹⁹ The two documents illustrate an aspect of government vigilance on the

¹⁷ *P. Oxy.* XLIII. 3118 (c. AD 237–238, Oxy.).

¹⁸ Procurator Phari Alexandriae ad Hegyptum (*CIL* VI. 8582 = *ILS* 1576 (late 2nd cent. AD); ἐπίτροπος Φάρου *P. Oxy.* XLIII. 3118 (AD 237); ἐπίτροπος τῆς Φάρου *P. Oxy.* X, 271 (AD 247)).

¹⁹ *P. Oxy.* X. 1271 (AD 246) is an application to the prefect Valerius Firmus from a woman who was a citizen of Side for a permit to leave the country via Pharos. An extremely cursive official endorsement in Latin remains partly undeciphered, but is not likely to have contained more than a formal authorization: "To Valerius Firmus, prefect of Egypt, from Aurelia Maeciana of Side. I wish, my lord, to sail out by way of Pharos; I therefore beg you to write to the procurator of Pharos to allow me to leave, as is usual. Pachon 1. Farewell". The Latin endorsement, *P. Oxy.* XVII. 2132 (c. AD 250), shows also some restrictions in the last two decades of the first half of the 3rd cent. AD. A man wrote to the prefect, wanting to go to a festival of Antinoos and seeking a similar permission from the prefect's office in Greek. Yet, the festival was most likely the Megala Antinoeia at Antinoopolis, and the text may thus not deal with going outside the province, but rather with the determination of residence or a notification of movements.

Egyptian borders during the first half of the 3rd century AD, and the strictness with which ingress and egress were controlled.²⁰ The general legislative framework for this procedure can be found in the γνώμων 66–67,²¹ where a major concern of the passage is the illegal export of slaves. Thus, one specific concern of the Pharos administration may have been the control of outgoing slaves as well as other passengers (e.g. their owners).²² Puk, therefore, concluded that the diligent control of departures from Egypt was due to taxation issues and fiscal interests, making sure that no one left with financial debts to the tax authorities.²³

It can be argued that the main reasons to prevent departure in *P. Oxy.* XLIII. 3118 (AD 237) were financial rather than religious. The blacklisted man, Septimius Ammonius, may have been the same person who some years later was strategos of Themistos and Polemon district of the Arsinoites.²⁴ Taking into consideration that the two persons who submitted the application were women (although it is unlikely that one of them, Claudia Isidora, is the landowner Claudia Isidora),²⁵ tax collection was the prefect's main concern during the economic crisis. These observations point to fiscal, rather than religious, reasons for restricting travel, because it was never mentioned that preventing travel was one of the means of persecuting Christians.²⁶ Furthermore, Eusebius does not attribute a widespread persecution in Egypt to Maximinus, who in AD 235 forced on the Christians a limited and carefully selective persecution by issuing his decree on the removal of only the "leaders" of the churches.²⁷

The third papyrus implies a shortage of manpower and thus also reflects one aspect of the *Third Century Crisis*. It is a contract for a donkey exchange.²⁸ Using Litinas' references to sales of donkeys as a guide, a few data on donkeys' prices show the successive and rapid increase of the donkeys' and she-asses' prices during the third

²⁰ Puk 2010, 227.

²¹ *BGU* V. 1210 = γνώμων of ἴδιος λόγος (after AD 149, Theadelphia), cf. Puk 2010, 227.

²² For more details, see Straus 2004, 302–305.

²³ Purpura 2002, 140–141.

²⁴ *BGU* I. 7 (AD 247): decree of Septimius Ammonius alias Dionysius, strategos of Themistos and Polemon district of the Arsinoites.

²⁵ Thomas 2004, 150; *P. Oxy.* XLIII. 3118 nn. 5–10.

²⁶ Barnes 1968, 43.

²⁷ Keresztes 1969, 617–618.

²⁸ *P. Wisc.* I. 15 (24 June AD 236, Bubastis or Oxyrhynchus).

century.²⁹ Our papyrus is the only contract regulating the exchange of a she-ass for another, pregnant one:³⁰ Potamon from Bubastis and Sarapion from Oxyrhynchus exchanged their she-asses, while Sarapion had to pay an additional sum of eighty drachmas.

Aurelius Potamon, son of Pecherous, his mother being Taopis from the town of Bubastis, greets Aurelius Sarapion, son of Heron, his mother being Tachairinon from the town of Oxyrhynchus. I declare that I have exchanged with you my mouse-colored she-ass, which is still a foal, and have also received from you, at the same time, a white, adult, pregnant she-ass, with a mark on the right eye, and I have received from you eighty silver drachmas, the amount that my she-ass was estimated to be worth more. This is written in two copies, and we have asked each other the question, and we have both consented. In the second year of the reign of Emperor Caesar Gaius Julius Verus Maximinus Pius Felix Augustus and Gaius Julius Verus Maximus, the most holy Caesar Augustus, son of Augustus, 30 Payni.³¹

Why was the price of the mouse-colored she-ass that was still a foal greater than the white, adult, pregnant she-ass that bore a mark on its right eye? It would be expected that the foal (πῶλον) would be lower in price than the adult one (τέλειαν),³² which would give birth to one or more

²⁹ Litinas 1999, 199–204: *SB* XVI. 12612 (AD 202–203) homologia, 1 fem. (5 years) = 800 dr.; *P. Oxy.* XIV. 1707 descr. = *SP* I. 33 (AD 204, Oxyrhynchus), cheirographon, 1 fem. (1 year) = 600 dr.; *PSI* I. 79 (AD 216–217, Oxyrhynchus), cheirographon, 2 fem. (4 years) = 1,500 dr.; *SPP* XXII. 16 (AD 217), cheirographon, 1 fem. = 400 dr.; *BGU* II. 413 = *M. Chr.* 263 (AD 219, Kerkesoucha), notarial protocol, 1 male (5 years) = 500 dr.; *P. Diog.* 28 (AD 223, Philadelphieia), cheirographon, 1 fem. = 600 dr.; *P. Wisc.* I. 15 (AD 236, Boubastis or Oxyrhynchus), exchange of donkeys (cheirographon), 1 fem. for 1 pregnant (5 years + 80 dr.); *SB* VI. 9221 = *P. Cair. Isid.* 84 (AD 267 or 276, Karanis), homologia, 1 male = 500 dr.; *PSI* XIV. 1417 (AD 290–291, Oxyrhynchus), cheirographon, 1 fem. (5 years) = 1 tal.; *P. Oslo.* III. 134 (2nd half of the 3rd cent. AD), cheirographon, 1 male = 132 dr.; *SB* VIII. 9829 (3rd cent. AD, Oxyrhynchus), cheirographon, 2 male (5 years) = 4 tal.; *P. Mert.* III. 106 (c. AD 280, Oxyrhynchus), cheirographon, 1 fem. (5 years) = 4000 dr.

³⁰ *P. Wisc.* I. 15 (24 June AD 236, Bubastis or Oxyrhynchus).

³¹ Ll. 5–11: ὁμολογῶ ἀντικατηλλάξα(ι) σοι ὄνον θήλιαν μυχρόχρῳμον πῶλον καὶ ἐσχικέναι ἀπὸ σου τὴν ἴσην ὄνον λευκὴν τέλειαν ἔγκυον (ἔγγυον Pap.) σημειῖον παραπεποδισμένην ὀφθαλμῷ δεξιῷ καὶ ἔσχον παρὰ σου τοῦ Σαραπίωνος τὰς ¹⁰ ἑσταμένας πλείως ἐπιτεμῆσεως ἀργυρίου δραχμὰς ὀγδοήκοντα.

³² Two examples show that a full-grown female donkey was higher in price than a female foal. Every pair of these documents came from adjacent nomes and from years close to each other. In *SB* XVI. 12612 (AD 202–203, Soknopaiu Nesus), the price of a full-grown female donkey (τέλειαν) was 80 dr., and in *P. Oxy.* XIV. 1707

foals. The higher price for the foal in this document can be explained by its readiness to work due to its youth and status or by its capacity to work perfectly (its age is not mentioned in the contract). The stamina of the pregnant she-ass would be at its lowest, because the female donkey's gestation period is 11–12 months, not to mention its mark. So, the two contracting parties reckoned the readiness and power of their exchanged she-asses. We also should consider that the estimated difference was 80 drachmas, which is the health and power variance between them.

This assumption matches the view of Hughes, who attributes the increase of 150 percents in donkey prices to the Antonine plague (AD 165–180). This plague reduced the labor force of the farmers, many of whom were infected and died.³³ Furthermore, Dionysios, Bishop of Alexandria, left a rhetorical comment about a serious drop in the Alexandrian population due to plague in the third century.³⁴ Anachoresis is also attested during the reign of Maximinus in a report, *PSI* XII. 1248 (before 14 Dec. AD 235), that five men fled from Oxyrhynchus.

Scarce documentary evidence provides some new insights into the administrative changes occurring in Egypt under the reign of Maximinus Thrax. The earliest testimony is an ostrakon from the Eastern Desert.³⁵ It is an official letter sent to the curators of the Roman forts in the Eastern Desert, on Emperor Maximinus' proclamation of his son Maximus' caesarship.³⁶ The ostrakon is possibly the earliest evidence of the official

(AD 204, Oxyrhynchus), the price of a female donkey aged one year (πρωτοβωλως [l. πρωτοβόλον]) was 60 dr. In *PSI* I. 79 (AD 216–217, Oxyrhynchus), two female donkeys, aged four years (τὰς δύο τετραβόλους), were sold for 1500 dr., i.e., 750 dr. each. In *SPP* XXII. 16 (AD 217, Soknopaiou Nesos), the price of one female donkey (age unmentioned) was 400 dr., which means that the price of a four-year-old female donkey was higher. Furthermore, I went to the main three donkey markets in Giza governorate, which are held weekly in Barageel, Muneeb, and Mazghuna villages. I asked the donkey merchants about the prices of female donkeys at different ages, and they explained that a female donkey is sold for a higher price because it gives birth, which brings a financial return.

³³ Hughes 1994, 18, 163; Scheidel also admits that prices in Egypt “never returned to pre-plague levels” (he considers the years 190–260 to be post-plague); an increase in prices denotes an increase in demand, cf. Scheidel 2002, 291; Scheidel-Southerland 2009, 13.

³⁴ Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 7. 21. 9: εἴτα θαυμάζουσιν καὶ διαποροῦσιν, πόθεν οἱ συνεχεῖς λοιμοί, πόθεν αἱ χαλεπαὶ νόσοι, πόθεν αἱ παντοδαπαὶ φθοραὶ, πόθεν ὁ ποικίλος καὶ πολὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὀλεσμός.

³⁵ *O. Did.* 29 (Jan.–Jun. AD 236, the Eastern Desert).

³⁶ There is another, earlier document that attests Maximus' accession, *SB* I. 421 (1 March AD 236, Memphis: instruction for a solemn procession in honor of Maximus' accession to the throne).

called “opin(i)ator” (ὀπιν(ι)άτωρ).³⁷ Helene Cuvigny tentatively proposes to read in the first line the word ὀρτινάτω, which at first glance can be understood as ὀρδινάτω rather than οπινάτωρ,³⁸ viz. the title of the sender was δεκάταρχος ὀπινάτωρ.³⁹ Cuvigny points out that *ordinarii* were normally centurions,⁴⁰ not *decuriones*. The office of the *opinator* could, on the contrary, be held by a military man of any rank (including a *decurion*). Mitthof recently studied this office and concluded that the function of the *opinatores* was to receive contributions in money owed to their military unit and to assure the transport of this money to the camp.⁴¹

The task of the *opinator* in Didymoi ostrakon matches the later attestations on papyri of the *opinators*’ functions. The earliest one dates to AD 253–261.⁴² An ἐκατόνταρχος ὀπιν[ιάτωρ] and several strategoi were addressed in a circular sent perhaps by the prefect of Egypt to hold a celebration in honor of Valerian (AD 253–260). The latest document dates back to AD 300;⁴³ the papyrus mentions *opinatores* who were centurions, *signiferi*, *imaginiferi*, cavaliers, and infantrymen. The

³⁷ *Opinio* is an assessment of the amount of corn that the owner of a provincial landed property had to deliver to the army. *Opinatores* were officials charged with the evaluation and collection of such contributions. Cf. Berger 1991, 609.

³⁸ *O. Did.* 29. 1–3 (http://papyri.info/ddbdp/o.did;29?rows=3&start=28&fl=id,title&fq=series_led_path:O.Did.;*;*.*&sort=series+asc,volume+asc,item+asc&p=29&t=466):

1, ms (perpendicular) [A]ὐρήλιος Σαραπάμμων δεκάταρχῳ ὀρτινάτω

2, ms (perpendicular) κουράτωρσιν τοῖς ἀπὸ Φοινι[κ]ῶν(ος)

3, ms (perpendicular) μέχρη [.] Βερ[ε]νίκης vac. ? χαίρειν.

“Aurelius Sarapammon... to the garrisons curators from Phoinikon to Berenice”.

³⁹ As Cuvigny notes, the infrared photo taken in 2009 does not encourage reading a beta instead of rho, and it suggests an epsilon (perhaps preceded by an erased letter) instead of an omicron. She admits that, from the point of view of palaeography, the proposed reading οπινάτωρ is uncertain (it is also unclear whether these two words stand in the nominative case and point to the sender, or in the dative case and point to the recipients of the document), see Cuvigny 2012, 92–93.

⁴⁰ Rea 1980, 217.

⁴¹ Cuvigny 2012, 93; Mitthof 2001, 158–165.

⁴² *P. Oxy.* XLII. 3029 (AD 253–261):

[- ca.? - σ]τρατηγῶς τῶν ὑπογεγραμμένων ν[ο]μῶν - ca.? -]

[- ca.? -]. νων ὑπὲρ τοῦ Μεσορῆ μ[η]νὸς - ca.? -]

[- ca.? -]εντι ἐκατοντάρχῳ οπιν[- ca.? -]

5 [- ca.? - τ]ῆς εὐτυχεστάτης ἡμέρας [- ca.? -]

[- ca.? -] Οὐαλεριανοῦ τοῦ πρεσβυτέ[ρου] - ca.? -]

[(hand 2) - ca.? - ἐρρωσθαι ὑμ]ᾶς εὐχομαι

[(hand 1) - ca.? -]ιτυ Κυνοπολίτου ἄνω

⁴³ *P. Panop. Beatty*, 2 (2 Feb. AD 300) ll. 41–42: δεκαδάρχω ὀπινιάτορι, 174: δεκαδάρχοι οπινιάτορες.

opiniatores clearly appear as collectors, charged with receiving from the civil authorities the money destined for the pay and the donatives due their military unit. Therefore, it is obvious that the circumstances in which our ostrakon was written were precisely those in which the soldiers received donatives.⁴⁴

In the same context, André Piganiol notes that it is not entirely correct to translate *opinator* as “food commissioner”. The *opinator*’s responsibility was confined to estimating the army’s demands in cash, but receiving payment in kind.⁴⁵ Piganiol discussed the duty of an *opinator* in *P. Oxy.* XII. 1419 (AD 265),⁴⁶ which is a prytanis of the senate’s order to a tax collector to pay the prytanis 1800 drachmae required for military supplies credited by the tax collector to the *opinator*, the exactor of wheat equivalents. The prytanis added a line after the fifth line, l. 5a: (hand 2) ὀπεινάτορι ἀπαι(τητῇ) τι(μῆς) πυροῦ, so Piganiol concluded that the *opinator* was a soldier appointed to be responsible for determining the value of wheat collected under the annona.⁴⁷ Thomas endorsed Piganiol’s argument that *opinator* is not a proper name, but the title of a military tax officer.⁴⁸ Sijpesteijn assumed that the unnamed person was in charge of the duties of the *opinator* and the *apaitetes* together.⁴⁹

Interestingly, Cuvigny’s views on the Didymoi ostrakon as the earliest available evidence of the *opinator* in Egypt match well with the aforementioned debates. We can suppose that the creation of the *opinator* as a military official in Egypt in the AD 230s served to coordinate the demands of the military personnel in the Egyptian eastern desert. The creation of this office significantly coincided with the attention given to Egypt’s commercial revenue, which substituted for most of the agricultural revenues after the decline of the latter.⁵⁰ The Roman province Africa Proconsularis became the main supplier of wheat production. Therefore, it gained an influential role in the revolution of the Gordians

⁴⁴ Cuvigny 2012, 89–97.

⁴⁵ Piganiol 1946–1947, 13.

⁴⁶ *P. Oxy.* XII. 1419: “From the Prytanis to Thonius, collector of city dues, greeting. Pay me from the tax-farming contributions that you have exacted in the nome the 1500 drachmae that you credited through the public bank to *opinator*, exactor of wheat equivalents, and further on account of the annona of the legionaries sent from Heraclammonos with Ischyron, corn collector, another 300 drachmae, making 1800 dr. in all. (Signed.) Pay the 1800 drachmae. The 12th year, Pauni 4”; Piganiol 1946, 137.

⁴⁷ Piganiol 1946–1947, 13: “Opinator, nom propre ou titre de fonction?... il désigne le militaire chargé d’estimer la valeur des blés perçus au titre de l’annone”.

⁴⁸ Thomas 1985, 115.

⁴⁹ Sijpesteijn 1991, 47–48.

⁵⁰ Cf. Nappo – Zerbini 2009, 61–78.

(19 March AD 238), which erupted against Maximinus Thrax and resulted in Gordian III's ascension to the throne (22–26 July AD 238).⁵¹

The ostrakon also adds a new explanation of how communications functioned between the prefect of Egypt and the garrisons in the Eastern Desert in the reign of Maximinus Thrax. It reveals an ambiguity surrounding a certain title that Rea was confused about in his commentary on an Oxyrhynchus document dating back to AD 214–246.⁵²

The editor believes that the sender of the aforementioned ostrakon, Aurelius Sarapammon, who belonged to the central administration, was the same person who, in *P. Oxy.* LI. 3615 (AD 212–248),⁵³ held the title that Rea described as the rare and mysterious one,⁵⁴ “overseer of prefectural letters and other matters” (Σαραπάμμων ἐπιτηρητῆς ἡγεμονικῶν ἐπιστολῶν καὶ ἄλλων).⁵⁵ It is unlikely that Aurelius Sarapammon was a nome strategos. He was the head of the military administration in the Berenice desert. Thus, it might be argued that the corresponding administrative changes and the introduction of this official rank did not take place before the reign of Maximinus Thrax in Egypt.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Rea 1972, 1–19; Townsend 1930, 62–66; Townsend 1928, 231–238.

⁵² *P. Oxy.* LI. 3615 (AD 214–246).

⁵³ LI. 1–8: Αὐρήλιος Κλαύδιος Λυκαρίων ὁ καὶ Σαραπάμμων ἐπιτηρητῆς ἡγεμονικῶν ἐπιστολῶν καὶ ἄλλων Αὐρηλίῳ Ἰέρακι τῷ καὶ Σαραπίωνι βασιλ(ικῷ) γρ(αμματεῖ) Ἑρμουπολ(ίτου) τῷ φιλάτῳ vac. χαίρειν. ἃ ἔπεμψ[α]ς . . . ια βιβλία κααχ[ωρισ]θησ[ό]μενα - ca.? -].

⁵⁴ Rea writes n. 2–3: “The rare title II. 2–3 [Σαραπάμμων ἐπιτηρητῆς ἡγεμονικῶν ἐπιστολῶν καὶ ἄλλων] leaves much obscure. In both instances [*P. Oxy.* XVII. 2116. 2 (AD 229); *PSI* XII. 1249. 14–16 (5 July AD 265)] the official is apparently concerned with the registration of records reaching Alexandria from the districts, rather than what we might expect from the title, the correspondences of the prefect. In *P. Strasb. inv.* 31+32 recto IV 18 (= *Archiv.* 4 [1908] 123) there is mention of records registered in Alexandria ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐπιτηρητοῦ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν, who seems very likely to have held the same office”.

⁵⁵ Translation: “Aurelius Claudius Lycarion alias Sarapammon, overseer of prefectural letters and other matters, to Aurelius Hierax alias Sarapion, royal scribe of the Hermopolite nome, his dearest colleague, greeting. The... records that you sent to be filed ...”.

⁵⁶ Cuvigny 2012, 104–105, a comment on *O. Did.* 40 (c. AD 219): “L'apparition de ce titre (ἐπίτροπος ὄρουσ – *H. I.*) sans parallèle coïncide avec la double disparition dans nos sources du *praefectus Montis Berenicidis* et de l'épistratège de Thébaïde: I. *Portes* 86 date de 219, la dernière attestation d'un préfet de Bérénice du 25.xii.216 et le dernier épistratège de Thébaïde daté a pour *terminus post quem* 216/217. Il n'est dès lors pas impossible que la fonction sans précédent (et peut-être éphémère) de *procurator Montis* ait été créée entre 217 et 21 pour remplacer celles d'épistratège de Thébaïde et de préfet de Bérénice”. For more about ἐπίτροπος ὄρουσ, see Hirt 2010, 70.

Furthermore, Cuvigny claims that Aurelius Sarapammon, the sender, was a member of the supreme military, though he had an Egyptian Greek name.⁵⁷

Another significant detail relies on the link between the *Third Century Crisis* and the causes of creating this office and its duties. Security considerations cannot have influenced the creation of this title, because the barbarians' assaults in the Egyptian Eastern Desert had apparently faded away at the beginning of the third century.⁵⁸ It might be argued that this title reflects the specific importance of the Eastern Desert trade in the AD 230s.

The duty of *epiteretes* (ἐπιτηρητής) existed from the late second century AD on. It expanded and became more efficient in the third decade of the third century and afterward, as *BGU* IV. 1062 (29 Aug. AD 236, Oxy.) highlights. It is a handover of a tax collection activity, συνάλλαγμα ἐπιτηρήσεως. Aurelius Sarapion alias Dios and Aurelius Hermias, freedmen of Hermias, son of the Sarapion, tax collectors of fine flour (l. 3: εἰς ἐπιτήρη[σ]ιν ὀνῆς πελωρχικοῦ), transferred their work, for a year, to Amois, son of Amois, Syros alias Agathus Daimon, son of Ptolemy, and Gaius Iulius Alexander, son of Gaius Iulius Suburana Longus.⁵⁹

Wilcken comments on *W. Chres.* 276 = *BGU* IV. 1062 that, through this contract, two people transferred the business of their *epiteresis* to three other people in the same city. The text is a valuable piece of content, in particular because it clearly explains the duties of an *epiteretes*

⁵⁷ Cuvigny 2012, 90.

⁵⁸ The second century AD witnessed many casualties among both legionnaires in the Roman forts and the barbarians, cf. *O. Krok.* 6 (10 Dec. AD 108); *O. Krok.* 51 (Nov.–Dec. AD 109); *O. Krok.* 61 (AD 102/103 or 121/122); *O. Krok.* 87, col. i. 1–13; *O. Krok.* 87, col. ii. 98–106, 1–44 (c. AD 118); *O. Krok.* 87. 89–115 (c. AD 118). But with the beginning of the third century AD, in a kind of peaceful compatibility, the high command of the Roman army provided the Roman forts with additional bread ovens to meet the barbarians' need for bread. Their bread receipts were found inside the praesidia. *O. Did.* 41 (AD 201), ll. 1–10: ἤλθεν μοι Μαγειρὴν δεκανὸν καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτῷ Βαρβάρους εἰς πεμφθέντα ὑπὸ Βαρατίτ ὑποτυράννου Βάρβαρος καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτοῖς κολ(οφώνιον) α καὶ ζεύγη ψομίον ιβ τῇ Φαωφίᾳ. Cf. Brun 2014 (a broadcasted lecture online) at: <https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/en-jean-pierre-brun/course-2014-10-14-11h00.htm>; *O. Xer.* Inv. 374 (3rd cent. AD) in: Cuvigny 2014, 165–198; Satzinger 2012, 1–49 = <https://www.slideshare.net/helmutsatzinger/the-barbarian-names-on-the-ostraca-from-the-easterndesert-3rd-century-ce>; <https://www.slideshare.net/helmutsatzinger/the-barbarian-names-on-the-ostraca-from-theeastern-desert-3rd-century-ce>.

⁵⁹ http://berlpap.smb.museum/record/?result=58&Publikation=%22BGU%20IV%20%22&order=Nr_mit_Zusatz-ASC&columns=pubnr&lang=en.

who was in charge of collecting taxes. According to the γνώμων and the custom of the nome, they are: issuing receipts to taxpayers, paying the amount of money raised to the government treasury, sending monthly billings to the strategos, keeping the invoices, submitting the files to be registered (καταχωρισμός), and transferring duplicates of the invoices to the examiner (ἐξεταστής).⁶⁰

The papyrus draws our attention to the *epiteretes*' official organizing duty to analyze and process the data in the AD 230s; despite no remarkable changes in the tax collecting measures, there was normal progressive filtering and classification of the tax lists. The word "compile" (l. 17: συστήσασθαι τοὺς ταύτης λόγους ὡς ἐκελ[εύσθη]) is applied to the κατ' ἄνδρα lists, which must have been extremely long and detailed. Extracting information from them for the strategos' own monthly statement was a painstaking and time-consuming process, requiring specialized personnel who were charged primarily or even exclusively with this task.⁶¹ A study of the progress in data processing concludes that the protocols in late third century Panopolites, in *P. Panop. Beatty* 1 (Sept. AD 298, Panopolis) and 2 (2 Feb. AD 300, Panopolis) were much the same as they had been three generations earlier in Fayum. This, in turn, would mean that administrative duties as shown in the Panopolite documentation had developed and matured much earlier.⁶²

One papyrus among the forty-three documents reveals unexplored aspects of the cultural life of that period. It is a receipt for a grain transfer,⁶³ showing the landowner C. Calpurnius Aurelius Theon, who was an Alexandrian officeholder and a member of the Museion (l. 2: ἀπὸ Μουσείου).⁶⁴ The classical authors testify that statesmen, along with representatives of the arts and sciences, were granted membership in the Museion, with its attendant benefits of tax exemption (ἀτέλεια) and dining in the Museion (σίτησις). Strabon (who stayed in Alexandria for some years in the 20s BC) states in his *Geography* that the Museion members gathered to eat common meals in the Museion (ἐν ᾧ τὸ συσσίτιον).⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Ll. 13–21; W. Chres. 276 comment.

⁶¹ Yiftach 2015, 297.

⁶² Yiftach 2015, 296–297.

⁶³ *P. Oxy.* L. 3564 (5 Oct. AD 235).

⁶⁴ Ll. 1–5: "Gaius Calpurnius Aurelius Theon, member of the Museion, and however I am styled, through me Aurelius Nilus alias Patermuthis, accounts manager, to Aurelius Apion, sealer of Senecelau for year 13, greetings...".

⁶⁵ Strabo 17. 1. 8: τῶν δὲ βασιλείων μέρος ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ Μουσεῖον, ἔχον περίπατον καὶ ἐξέδραν καὶ οἶκον μέγαν, ἐν ᾧ τὸ συσσίτιον τῶν μετεχόντων τοῦ Μουσείου φιλολόγων ἀνδρῶν (I cite the text from Jones 1930). Cf. Lewis 1963, 257.

But in the AD 230s, Cassius Dio states that Caracalla ordered in AD 212 (*Rom. hist.* 78. 7. 3) and AD 215 (*Rom. hist.* 78. 23. 3) that the city of Alexandria be punished by suspending the provision of the meals (τὰ συσσίτια) to the members of the Museion.

Nevertheless, in his *Lives of the Sophists*, Philostratus (AD 170–247/250) mentions the free meals in the Museion, as he says about the historiographer Dionysius of Miletus:⁶⁶

He was greatly honored by the cities that admired his talent, but the greatest honor was from the Emperor Hadrian, who appointed him a Satrap over peoples by no means obscure. He also enrolled him in the order of the knights who had free meals in the Museion. (By the Museion I mean a dining table in Egypt to which are invited the most distinguished men of all countries.)

Philostratus felt it was necessary to clarify the meaning of this honor with a phrase in parentheses. He uses a present tense participle ξυγκαλοῦσα in the sentence “a dining table in Egypt to which they are invited”. It might refer to the return of these banquets again during the time of Philostratus, who dedicated his book to the proconsul Gordian, during the period AD 230–238. However, there is no documentary evidence to support this interpretation. Furthermore, Philostratus’ intention might have been to describe the situation in Hadrian’s period (AD 117–138); moreover, the present tense participle refers to the continuous habit in the past, a custom that may already have vanished at the time of writing.

So, the first documentary evidence of the resumption of free meals in the Museion after Caracalla’s punishment of Alexandria is the document that dates back to the reign of Gordian III and presents Valerius Titianianus, the warden of the great Sarapis, as one of the tax-exempt who dine in the Museion (τῶν ἐν τῷ Μουσίῳ σιτουμένων ἀτελῶν).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 1. 524. 5–11: Μεγάλων μὲν οὖν ἡξιοῦτο καὶ τῶν πόλεων, ὁπόσαι αὐτὸν ἐπὶ σοφία ἐθαύμαζον, μεγίστων δὲ ἐκ βασιλέως. Ἀδριανὸς γὰρ σατράπην μὲν αὐτὸν ἀπέφηνεν οὐκ ἀφανῶν ἐθνῶν, ἐγκατέλεξε δὲ τοῖς δημοσίᾳ ἱππεύουσι καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ Μουσεῖῳ σιτουμένοις, τὸ δὲ Μουσεῖον τράπεζα Αἰγυπτία ξυγκαλοῦσα τοὺς ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ ἐλλογίμους. Tr. Wright 1921, with minor changes.

⁶⁷ *P. Mich.* XI. 620 (26 Jan. AD 240) Arsin., col. i. ll. 1–3 recto: Οὐαλερίῳ [Τ]ι[τ]ανιανῷ νεωκόρῳ τοῦ μεγάλ[ου] Σαράπιδος ἀπὸ ἐπάρ[χ]ων οὐηγούλων τῶν ἐν τῷ Μουσίῳ σιτουμένων ἀτελῶν (“To Valerius Titianianus, warden of the great Sarapis, formerly praefectus vigilum, one of the tax-exempt who are fed in the Museion”). For details about the title “member of Museion”, see Canfora 1989, 195–196.

The *P. Oxy.* L. 3564 (5 Oct. AD 235) is significant, for it shows that, during the reign of Maximinus Thrax, no additional benefits were restored, with an exception for the continuity of the usual honorary title “member of Museion” (l. 2: ἀπὸ Μουσείου). This evidence highlights the difference between the policy of Maximinus Thrax toward Egypt and that of Gordian III. There is much evidence of the Gordian III’s attempts to gain popularity among Egyptians⁶⁸ and other peoples of the Roman Empire,⁶⁹ which were utterly different from those of Maximinus. Gordian’s beneficent politics in Egypt appeared in many ways. When he replied to the three requests of the citizens of the city of Antinopolis, he expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs in these cases. Thus, in response to the Antinopolites’ complaints of injustice in previous concessions,⁷⁰ the Emperor ordered to exempt goods for personal use from fees and to increase the number of city council members.⁷¹

No document provides us with new details about the social life, but one papyrus suggests a connection between the legal rules in AD 235 and financial need. A lease contract for the property of Aurelia Besous is one of the earlier papyrus attestations of the word συνεστῶς (l. 4: μετὰ συνεστῶτος)⁷² instead of the word κύριος. It proves that women benefited from the application of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, enacted by the emperor Caracalla, which made all free people in the Roman Empire citizens and offered women a much-desired exemption

⁶⁸ The popularity of Gordian III in Egypt is testified by the fact that he is among the few emperors who were mentioned by name on mummy labels, *T. Mom. Louvre* 173 (8 Feb. AD 239, Epoikion Nesos Apollinariados, Panopolites); *T. Mom. Louvre* 260 (AD 238); *T. Mom. Louvre* 545 (AD 238); *T. Mom. Louvre* 91 (AD 238). The mummy labels are the identification cards of the dead; Al-Ebiary noted in his research that only 13 of 1209 known labels set the date of death according to the Egyptian calendar and the year of the emperor’s rule. He infers that not mentioning the name of the emperor on the mummy labels was intentional: the native Egyptians were reluctant to register the names of their foreign rulers on the labels that accompanied them in the next life, but willingly accepted labeling the names of those few emperors who left a good memory in the hearts of the Egyptians. They are Hadrian (AD 117–138), Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161), Marcus Aurelius (AD 161–180), Septimius Severus (AD 193–211), and Gordian III (AD 243–247). Cf. Al-Ebiary 2007 [حسن أحمد الإبياري، بطاقات الموتى في مصر في العصر الروماني], 360–361; for more details about mummy labels, cf. Wagner 1974, 45–61; Boyaval 1980, 149–169.

⁶⁹ Kehoe 2007, 83; 85–86.

⁷⁰ Hoogendijk–Minnen 1987, 47.

⁷¹ *SB XVIII.* 13774–13776 (AD 241–242).

⁷² *P. Oxy.* VI. 912 (30 Aug. AD 235): lease of a cellar.

from male guardianship.⁷³ Several documents mention that a woman is “without a guardian by the right of children, *ius liberorum*” according to Roman law,⁷⁴ which shows that the appeal to the *ius liberorum* was made by women in different parts of the Roman Empire at least up to the fourth century.⁷⁵ But what was the reason why women applied to hold the *ius liberorum* when the *constitutio Antoniniana* grants them the same right to act without a male guardian?

Some scholars take the *ius liberorum* to be an honorific rather than a practical advantage,⁷⁶ and in Egypt, Roman women mention that they are bound by the *ius liberorum* even in situations where a tutor’s consent would not have been required. Thus, we should not discount the importance of an imperially granted honor for women in the highly honor-conscious society of the Roman Empire.⁷⁷

One should not discount the financial benefits of this status for the state. The main goal of the *constitutio Antoniniana* was fiscal. Thus, Cassius Dio remarked that the *constitutio* was a false honor, actually impoverishing the populace, in an attempt to fund extravagant spending on imperial favorites.⁷⁸ He states (*Hist. Rom.* 78. 9. 5):

This was the reason why he (Caracalla) made everyone in his realm Romans; he was ostensibly honoring them, but his real purpose was to increase his revenues by this means, since peregrines were not required to pay most of these taxes.

By the same token, the continuity of granting the *ius liberorum* ensured income from applications for it, its registration, and its recognition; to be officially registered, women who were qualified for the *ius liberorum* had to submit proof of their childbearing to the authorities⁷⁹ and surely paid fees for these measures, which was a good source of revenue for governmental personnel.

To conclude, this article proves that the *Third Century Crisis* had its impact on life in Egypt under the rule of Maximinus Thrax. Papyri attested to domestic disorders and restrictions on travel from Egypt on people indebted to the state. Ostraca clarified some partial administrative

⁷³ Ng 2008, 687.

⁷⁴ Vanderpe–Wabens 2010, 418–420.

⁷⁵ Ng 2008, 688.

⁷⁶ Dixon 1988, 89–91.

⁷⁷ Grubbs 2002, 38–39.

⁷⁸ Imrie 2018, 50.

⁷⁹ Grubbs 2002, 38.

changes in new titles, which also implied the more specific importance of the Eastern Desert trade. The economic crisis and the external political disturbances against Maximinus Thrax affected the benefits that were usually granted to the Museion, so that no additional benefits of ἀτέλεια and σίτησις were restored.

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This paper focuses on some aspects of Egypt's history in the reign of Maximinus Thrax (Mid-March/25 March AD 235 – 10 May 238). The author argues that

the economic repercussions and the political upheaval in Egypt were tightly interwoven with the beginning of the *Third Century Crisis*. The article surveys forty-three documents (papyri and ostraca), through which new findings regarding the history of Egypt can be attained.

В статье рассматриваются некоторые аспекты египетской истории в правление Максимиана Фракийца (сер. марта / 25 марта 235 – 1 мая 238). Автор показывает, что экономические потрясения и политические беспорядки в Египте были тесно связаны с началом кризиса III в. н. э. Приводится обзор 43 документов (папирусов и остраконов), позволяющих получить новые сведения о социально-экономическом положении Египта в это время.

CONSPECTUS

GAUTHIER LIBERMAN	
Petits riens sophocléens : <i>Edipe à Colone</i> II	173
WALTER LAPINI	
La chiamarono <i>amplesso rubato</i> (Euripide, <i>Elena</i> 22)	199
VALERIA PETROVA	
The Bronze Horse and the Lifetime of Simon the Athenian	210
CARLO M. LUCARINI	
Textkritisches zu Agatharchides von Knidos und zu Markianos von Heraklea	221
SOFIA LARIONOVA	
Quadrivium in Varro's <i>Disciplines</i>	228
NATALIA KUZNETSOVA	
Ciceros Kritik an dem antonischen Provokationsgesetz	254
BORIS HOGENMÜLLER	
<i>Ameana (?) puella defututa</i> . Textkritische Überlegung zu Cat. c. 41	273
VSEVOLOD ZELTCHENKO	
Le mouchoir de Vatinius (Quint. <i>Inst.</i> VI, 3, 60)	282
MARIA N. KAZANSKAYA	
Ἰφιάνασσα: A Lost Homeric Reading in Lucian?	296
SVETLANA DUBOVA	
Apuleius' Venus and Speech Characterization	308
HANAN M. I. ISMAIL	
Some Insights into Egypt's History under the Reign of Maximinus Thrax (Mid-March / 25 March AD 235 – 10 May AD 238)	320
Keywords	341

Статьи сопровождаются резюме на русском и английском языке
Summary in Russian and English