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Universität Basel
Departement
Altertumswissenschaften

ORDO PHILOSOPHORUM ET HISTORICORUM

Urbes clariores aliis
**Urban Transitions in Roman Egypt
from the Third to the Fourth Century CE**

**International Conference, 11 - 12 May 2023, Rome
Istituto Svizzero di Roma**

Organized by S. Alfarano - F. Gerardin - S. Huebner

**'Urban Biographies of the Roman and Late Antique Worlds:
Antinoopolis and Heracleopolis in Egypt, c. 100 – c. 650 CE'**

Swiss National
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di Roma

https://romegyptcities.philhist.unibas.ch/en/
https://www.istitutosvizzero.it/conferenza/urbes-clariores-aliis/

Program

Papers of 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes for discussion

Thursday May 11, 2023

10:30-11:00 **Welcome and Coffee**

Panel I: The Shape of the City
Chair: Sabine Hübner

11:00-11:30 **Paola Davoli (Lecce)**
Ruins and Landscape in Late Roman Egypt

11:30-12:00 **Stefania Alfarano (Basel)**
Shaping Cities: Building Investment and Urban Development in Late Antique Egypt

12:00-12:30 **Aaltje Hidding (Oslo)**
Walking through Hermopolis: The Changing Sacred Landscape of Hermopolis in Late Antiquity (per Zoom)

12:30-14:30 **Lunch break**

14:30-15:00 **Nicola Barbagli (Naples)**
When Amun Was Gone: The City of Thebes between Diocletian and Constantine (AD 284 - 337)

15:00-15:30 **Krzysztof Jakubiak (Warsaw)**
Pelusium, the Urban Landscape of a City on the Eastern Delta Outskirts

15:30-16:00 **Coffee break**

16:00-16:30 **Nicola Aravecchia (WashU)**
Churches, Burials, and the Built Environment of Late Antique Egypt: Archaeological Data from Fourth-Century Dakhla Oasis

16:30-17:00 **General discussion**

17:00-17:30 **Keynote lecture by Noel Lenski (Yale)**
Egypt's Cities and the Supply of the Eastern Capital

20:00 **Conference dinner**

Friday May 12, 2023

Panel II: Economy and Society
Chair: François Gerardin

09:00-09:30 **Carl-Loris Raschel (Paris)**
Professional *koina* under Diocletian: Organizing Urban Population in Late Roman Egypt

09:30-10:00 **Irene Soto Marin (Harvard)**
Monetization in Urbanized Settlements in Late Third and Early Fourth Century Egypt

10:00-10:30 **Discussion**

10:30-11:00 **Coffee break**

Panel III: City and Administration
Chair: Marco Maiuro

11:00-11:30 **Colin Adams (Liverpool)**
Central and Local Government in Panopolis: The Evidence of the Chester Beatty Papyri

11:30-12:00 **Lucia Colella (Naples)**
The Metropolitan *boulai* in the Age of Diocletian and Constantine

12:00-12:30 **Matthias Stern (Munich)**
Shifting Balance(s): Conflict and Reform in City, Village, and Nome Administration(s) on the Eve of Late Antiquity

12:30-14:00 **Lunch break**

14:00-14:30 **Jose Luis Alonso (Zurich)**
Urban Notarial Institutions: The Fourth Century Disruption

14:30-15:00 **François Gerardin (Basel)**
"Metropolis of the Thebaid": City Government and Imperial Administration at Antinoopolis from the Third to the Fourth Century CE

15:00-15:30 **Discussion**

15:30-16:00 **Coffee break**

Panel IV: Late Antique Culture and the City
Chair: Stefania Alfarano

16:00-16:30 **Lucas Weisser-Gericke (Basel)**
Honorific Epithets and Interurban Competition in Roman and Late Antique Egypt: The Case of Heracleopolis Magna

16:30-17:00 **Alberto Camplani (Rome)**
The Network of Egyptian Bishoprics between the Third and the Fourth Centuries: Areas of Expansion, Urban Character of the Dioceses, the Relationship of the Bishops to the *chora*

17:00-17:30 **Alexander Free (Munich)**
Christian Hermopolis. Civic Representation of a Late Antique Town in Middle Egypt

17:30-18:00 **Final discussion**

20:00 **Conference dinner**

About the conference

Urban transitions in Roman Egypt from the Third to the Fourth century CE:

Ancient writers testify to the renown and significance of Egyptian cities in the Roman Empire of the Fourth Century CE: thus, in his ethnographic digression on Egypt, Ammianus Marcellinus (22, 16) provides a list of such "cities more renowned than others" (*urbes clariores aliis*) in the Thebaid or "largest cities" (*urbes maximae*) in "Egypt itself," i.e. the Delta and Middle Egypt. From literary sources, whether historiography, hagiography, or else, to archaeology, coins, and documentary texts, not least papyri, the multifaceted evidence from urban sites in Egypt suggests tremendous activity and, arguably, significant change from the third to the fourth century CE. Yet despite, or perhaps owing to, the wealth and complexity of these data, Egypt too often cuts a pale figure in the discussion of cities' role in the transition to Late Antiquity.

How did the cities of Egypt in the fourth century differ from those of the third, in relation to one another and individually? Which forces, political, cultural, or economic, did contribute most to refashion the urban landscape of Egypt? And, finally, did cities evolve along similar or different lines than other provinces in the Roman Empire? With these questions in mind, the conference purports to demonstrate the relevance of Egyptian urbanism to the transition of the Roman world into Late Antiquity.

Organization

Organizers:
Prof. Dr. Sabine Huebner
Dr. François Gerardin
Dr. Stefania Alfarano

Institute of Ancient History
University of Basel (Switzerland)

 https://romegyptcities.philhist.unibas.ch/en/

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– Day One: May 11, 2023 –

Paola Davoli (Università del Salento)
Ruins and Landscape in Late Roman Egypt

Archaeology of Late Roman Egypt is still at its beginning. In the last two decades several sites, other than monasteries, has been explored or are still under excavation. The archaeological evidence published on urbanism, its impact on landscape, possible changes in layout and in typology of buildings, are still not many. However, some interesting regional cases may prompt a reflection on the causes of evident changes in the use of the land, in settlement distribution and changes in their layout. One of the key points in the evaluation of Late Roman settlement pattern in Egypt is the physical change of the cultural and religious buildings and, above all, of its social and economic function. In many cases ancient pagan temples remained in the settlements for decades and were reemployed in a number of way. Their ruins were part of the urban and sub-urban landscape, as other abandoned buildings. Their fate has highly depended on population density and on countryside change.

Notes

Stefania Alfarano (Universität Basel)

Shaping Cities: Building Investment and Urban Development in Late Antique Egypt

Archaeological research in Egypt has traditionally focused on necropoleis and temples. This approach has shaped the study of the urban landscape and, consequently, the analysis of the development of cities as well as that of rural sites. Moreover, Egyptian archaeological record has suffered a strong dilapidation and deterioration of the evidence over time. For all these reasons, the analysis of the Late Antique urban layouts should take into account the several factors that have shaped and still influence the preservation of archaeological contexts of the cities. In the last years, excavations and surveys provided a large amount of information about building investment and city (re)shaping from different geographic and socio-economic contexts supplementing the ones provided so far by papyri and literary sources. Contextual analysis of Late Antique Egyptian sites has already begun to show a pattern of large-scale constructions or restorations and reconstructions in urban centers. By tracing the development of urban settlements, we can enrich the picture of investment in public and private construction, which intensified especially from the third century and into the fourth century, as evidenced by construction patterns at various sites in Egypt. In Middle Egypt, cities such as Hermopolis Magna and Antinoopolis, characterized between the second and third centuries by an intense construction activity, were affected starting from the second half-last quarter of the third century by a series of structural restorations. In other cases, the archaeological records of other main settlements reflect a significant renovation of the civic city center in th century and, as a result, massive investment in public construction. In this period the urban development of the cities does not concern only the new buildings but also the inclusion of the spolia in the construction site industry (perhaps also commercialization). For instance, at Heracleopolis Magna, the temple of Herishef, restored for the last time during the reign of Antoninus Pius, was used as a quarry for building materials for the construction of a late Roman residential neighborhood. According with recent studies on the inscribed marks the reuse of architectural elements for both public and private building works had to be authorized. This paper will review all the available data concerning building activities and the re-planning of the main urban contexts to recognize how the urban layouts changes over the time, how the built-up area shrinks or expands, how old monuments and new building requirements interact with each other? Is it still possible to define a modus operandi in the remodeling of Late Antique cities? Who are the key actors in these changes and what are the needs? This first review of archaeological data will have to be combined in the future with a contextual study of the written sources to better understand Egyptian building investment in later Roman period.

Notes

Aaltje Hidding (MF Vitenskapelig Høyskole)
Walking through Hermopolis: The Changing Sacred Landscape of Hermopolis in Late Antiquity (per Zoom)

One of the most visible transformations of Late Antiquity was its changing sacred landscape. Whereas at the beginning of this period the landscape was still dominated by temples, visitors strolling the streets in the following centuries would increasingly encounter churches, shrines and monasteries. When explaining this change, Christian chronographers often tell dramatic stories about violent 'temple conversions' and scholars have long followed their perspective in seeing a development 'from temple to church'. Recent research, however, has shown that reality was more complex. We now know that temples, often after having been empty for a considerable period, were reused for a wide variety of more practical purposes. At the same time, archaeological material from all over the Mediterranean has revealed that freestanding churches were increasingly constructed from the fourth century onwards. Against this background, the city of Hermopolis in Middle Egypt gives us an excellent opportunity to study the changing sacred landscape of Late Antiquity in a local context. Recently, Jean Gascou ('Hermopolis: son paysage monumental pendant l'Antiquité tardive [l'incidence de la christianisation]', in E. Capet et al. [eds.], Reconstruire les villes: modes, motifs et récits [Turnhout, 2019] 215-30) has shown that for Hermopolis, too, there is neither evidence of religious violence against temples nor of a continuous development from temple to church. Although his article provides a reliable starting point to discuss the sacred landscape of Late Antique Hermopolis, a comprehensive study based on all attestations of the temples, churches and monasteries is still outstanding. This contribution thus aims to complement and update his survey by presenting a checklist of sacred buildings in the city's papyrological record, which will then serve as the basis for an analysis of Hermopolis' changing sacred landscape. For comparison with the findings from the papyri, the paper also briefly discusses the site's archaeological material.

Notes

Nicola Barbagli (Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici)
When Amun Was Gone: The city of Thebes between Diocletian and Constantine (AD 284 - 337)

The worship of Amun was a central element in the topography and culture of Thebes up to the early Roman period. The temples in modern-day Karnak and Luxor were the most prominent landmarks of the city serving as a focal point of civic life, while the performance of the cult, from the daily rites to the great festivals, marked the time of the local communities on both banks of the Nile. During the 3rd century, however, the evidence of the activities in and around the temples fades and, by the beginning of the next century, we are confronted with quite a different situation. The sanctuaries had been seemingly abandoned and put into other uses, reflecting a profound mutation of the urban and social fabric of the city. This paper offers an overview on Thebes at the outset of Late Antiquity by focussing on the structural and functional changes that the temples of Amun underwent by the age of Diocletian and Constantine. The alteration of the sanctuary in Luxor, usually intended as to convert it into a military camp, is discussed by comparing architectural and epigraphical evidence throughout the empire, in order to get a proper understanding of its new function. The fate of the temple in Karnak is also addressed, in light of both literary and archaeological sources on imperial and private initiatives, which shed light on the origins of its transformation in the first decades of the 4th century. The picture thus outlined is set in the wider framework of the Theban area, in an effort to grasp how local life functioned after the end of Amun's cult.

Notes

Krzysztof Jakubiak (Uniwersytet Warszawski)
Pelusium, the Urban Landscape of a City on the Eastern Delta Outskirts

Tell Farama, ancient Pelusium located on the Mediterranean Shores of Sinai, has fascinated numerous scholars for many decades. This archaeological site has been extensively excavated during several expeditions, greatly increasing our knowledge of the urban structure of the city. Several excavation periods of the Egyptian-Polish expedition have also contributed new data to a better understanding of the inner urban space. The dynamic process of urban development is the main topic of the lecture. Fortunately, we have not only archaeological data, including the results of the recent Egyptian excavations at the site, but also historical evidence that can sometimes shed additional light on the functioning of the city. In other words, the cityscape of Pelusium should be analyzed from several perspectives. Particular attention must be paid to the Late Antique period, when Christianity was deeply rooted in the city and fundamentally changed the urban area. The sacred structures, as well as the still under-researched residential quarters, can be a reflection of the local community and the city itself.

Notes

Nicola Aravecchia (Washington University in St. Louis)

Churches, Burials, and the Built Environment of Late Antique Egypt: Archaeological Data from Fourth-Century Dakhla Oasis

This paper will discuss changes in the built landscape of late antique Egypt as attested in the archaeological evidence from two sites Amheida/Trimithis and ´Ain el-Gedida) located in Dakhla Oasis, in Egypt's Western Desert. Remains of two fourth-century churches were found that are among the earliest available evidence on Christian sacred space, not only in the region of the so-called 'Great Oasis' (comprising Dakhla and Kharga) but throughout Egypt. Furthermore, the sites in which the two churches were excavated were also the object of extensive investigation. This allowed for a better understanding of the built environment in which these places of Christian worship were erected; it also provided the opportunity for an in-depth reflection on how Christian sacred space was constructed and used by local communities, and how it helped shape the surrounding urban environment. Moreover, the excavation of the church at Trimithis revealed largely intact burials in the nave and side aisles and (remarkably) a well-preserved funerary crypt, with sealed graves, underneath the area of the sanctuary. This is the first known crypt, associated with a church, to have been found in Dakhla; also, its early dating makes it one of the oldest, if not the oldest, of any other known crypts from Christian Egypt. The existence of a funerary church at the edge of a large urban settlement yet undoubtedly built as one of its defining and most visible features (rather than being erected in an isolated cemetery)—sheds additional light on the shifting built environment of Egypt in Late Antiquity.

Notes

Noel Lenski (Yale University)
Egypt's Cities and the Supply of the Eastern Capital

This paper will explore the reorganization of the Egypt's grain tax after the foundation of Constantinople diverted its grain tax from Rome to the new eastern capital. Egypt's grain surplus had been directed to feed the western capital since Augustus's incorporation of its territory into the empire. It had thus long been inured to servicing the caloric needs of the western Mediterranean's largest city: 'it was generally believed that Rome could only be fed and maintained with Egyptian aid' (Plin. Pan. 31). After capturing Byzantium and rededicating it as Constantinople in May 330, Constantine diverted this supply to the feed his new capital even while restructuring doubling down on Rome's African supply and reorganizing Italy to supplement the city's provisions (Lenski forthcoming). We have considerable evidence for the scale and administration of the tribute paid by Egyptian cities in the sixth century which shows that Egypt now sent some 8,000,000 measures of grain (likely *modii*) to Constantinople annually (Just. Edict 13) and that cities such as Antaeopolis paid upwards of 60,000 *artabae* annually toward this grain tax (*embolē*) (P. Car. Masp. 1: 67057, cf. Bransbourg 2016; Gascou 1989; Van Dam 2022). The payrological and textual evidence for the fourth century is scantier, but this paper will deploy what remains and extrapolate from the sixth-century sources and demographic modeling in order to lay out parameters for the organization and outlays entailed in the feeding of Rome and then Constantinople in the third and fourth centuries. It will lay particular emphasis on the way that the redirection of grain from Rome to Constantinople helped precipitate changes in the structural organization of Egypt's cities between the late third and late fourth centuries.

Notes

– Day Two: May 12, 2023 –

Carl-Loris Raschel (Collège de France)
Professional *koina* under Diocletian: Organizing Urban Population in Late Roman Egypt

By comparing the minutes of the meetings of Oxyrhynchus' Council drawn up immediately before and after the reign of Diocletian, we can see significant differences in how the professional groups of the *polis* are identified and designated. During the main part of the 3rd century, as during the whole Roman period, these groups (which we must not confuse with professional associations, in which membership is voluntary and often subject to a charge, so that they don't bring together all fellows craftsmen or merchants of a same town) don't bear any specific name and their chiefs (or representatives) don't bear any title. From the reign of Diocletian these groups (or corporations) are called *koina*. For half a century, their chiefs are monthly headmen (*meniarchai*) and then yearly-elected presidents (*kephalaiotai*) just as in ancient associations. This is not only a change of terminology. The so-called *koina* are assigned news tasks by the authorities: the submission of names for the liturgic positions, the declaration of the prices of their merchandises, evaluation and expertise works such as inspecting whether a tree is dead or defining who owns a disputed house. Therefore, the *koina* become important players in the daily administration of egyptian towns and the public purchase orders submitted to them seem to be on the rise. This is apparently not the case for village *koina*, which will only perform the same functions later on. In this presentation based on my 2021 defended PhD, I would like to show how deeply the Diocletianic reforms changed the position of the corporations in the city life in general, and in the urban administration in particular. I shall try to demonstrate that such transition has not taken place uniformly and at the same pace in all egyptian towns

Notes

Irene Soto Marin (Harvard University)
Monetization in Urbanized Settlements in Late Third and Early Fourth Century Egypt

Ancient authors, including the writers of papyri, testify to the importance of Egyptian *poleis*. If we look at the texts alone, which for fiscal and administrative reasons make clear distinction between cities, villages, and hamlets, we might obtain a rather simplified view of urbanization in Egypt: cities are large and busy, villages less so, and hamlets are inhabited by a few dozen people. The reality though, is much more complex, especially when thinking of the economic output and population size of the numerous villages in Egypt which are not proper poleis. While the categorization of *poleis*, *metropoleis*, *komai*, and later *epoikia* may be useful fiscally, the reality is that most settlements lie in a spectrum of size and economic importance and designating what constitutes the "urban economy" in a province as agriculturally focused as Egypt, may require more nuance. Furthermore, while Diocletian's reign in Egypt ushered new political, administrative, and economic changes, for economic historians it is the taxation and monetary reforms are what defined key aspects of Late Antique Egyptian economy, such as the end of Egypt's closed currency system and the more visible inclusion of Egypt in the new imperial monetary economy. These changes, however, did not have an immediate effect, and the archaeological, papyrological, and textual evidence seems to suggest that the same conditions used to define the economy during the later third century continued at least down to the reign of Constantine.

Notes

Colin Adams (University of Liverpool)

Central and Local Government in Panopolis: The Evidence of the Chester Beatty Papyri

The Chester Beatty Papyri from Panopolis (dating to AD 298 and 300) offer unparalleled evidence for the functioning of Roman government at a local level and in importance they bear comparison with the letters of Pliny the Younger to Trajan. This paper presents some of the evidence they provide for the relations between state officials and the magistrates and city council of Panopolis (addressed at length in my forthcoming monograph). The papyri reveal an administrative system in transition, struggling to cope with recent administrative changes introduced by Diocletian. How was this change managed? Was it a smooth process? Was the relationship between state and city council one of consensus or friction? The paper will also briefly consider the urban environment in which administration took place and how this affected the day-to-day communication between central authorities and local magistrates. What was the balance between verbal and written communication? What was recorded, what was passed on to central government in Hermopolis and Alexandria, and what was done with documents generated at a metropolite level? The picture which emerges is one of an authoritarian government in a constant struggle to maintain control.

Notes

Lucia Colella (Università Federico II)
The Metropolitan *boulai* in the Age of Diocletian and Constantine

Through the grant of the *boulai* to Alexandria and the Egyptian *metropoleis* by Septimius Severus (AD 200/201), nome chief towns became in fact very similar to the Greek cities (a process already started in the first two centuries of the Roman era in terms of municipal administration, self-representation of the metropoleis, and social and fiscal privileges enjoyed by the metropolitai). However, metropolitan *boulai* were introduced in Egypt when the municipalization process was already in crisis in the rest of the Empire, and difficulties in Egyptian civic administration became apparent around the middle of the 3rd century (SB V 7696). The reforms by Diocletian and Constantine – with the introduction of nome officials chosen from the council, the decline of importance of the strategos and the introduction of the pagi – seem an attempt to cope with these difficulties ascribing more administrative duties to individual members of the curial class and reducing those of the whole council, as A. Bowman has shown. However, the purported revival of the *koina ton archonton* in the early 4th century, which would have taken some of the responsibilities of the boulai concerning the administration of the metropoleis, is now to be reconsidered on the basis of a re-edition of the only piece of evidence from the 4th century, P.Ryl. IV 701. This paper will investigate the competences of the boule and of the bouleutai (also performing liturgies) in the age of Diocletian and Constantine, paying attention also to the evidence from the Arsinoite nome, until now neglected in comparison with that from Oxyrhynchus and Hermopolis.

Notes

Matthias Stern (LMU München)
Shifting Balance(s): Conflict and Reform in City, Village, and Nome Administration(s) on the Eve of Late Antiquity

The introduction of the city councils by Septimius Severus represented a milestone in the process of the so-called municipalization of the Egyptian metropoleis. This continuing "municipalization" over the course of the third century, then, is often rendered as an expansion of the power of local government, insofar as municipal liturgists would have been presented with increasing responsibilities for, and power over, the administration of the nomes. The fourth century, on the other hand, saw increasing attempts at a more direct access to the local level from the part of the central government, manifest in the creation of new "semi-imperial" officials at the city level. This contribution wants to shed light on the circumstances of this transition by focusing on the balance between institutions from various layers of local administration(s) throughout the third century. Some papyri provide the impression that village, city, and nome administrations in this new environment might at times have formed conflicting hierarchies. Others, along with documents from other provinces, appear to reflect a general climate in which measures of administrative centralization hit an Egyptian hinterland that had yet to completely transform into a landscape of fully fledged civitates. This need not, however, suggest a "decline" of the city councils or the curial class, as these conflicting hierarchies also provided the Roman government with more administrative options at the local level. We may thus take these developments at the eve of late antiquity to foreshadow the transformation of curial power alongside an increasing influence of "non-curial" dignitaries in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Notes

Jose Luis Alonso (Universität Zürich)
Urban Notarial Institutions: The Fourth Century Disruption

The fourth century has long been seen as a new Era in the legal history of Egypt, a turning point that cuts much deeper than the Constitutio Antoniniana or even the Roman annexation. An element of disruption often highlighted as decisive is the progressive generalisation in the East of notarial offices by imperial concession (*stationes tabellionum*), replacing the institutions –in Egypt, the agoranomeia (and *grapheia*) and the different *bibliothekai*– that had presided over legal life since the late Hellenistic and Early Roman time. This paper wishes to reexamine the evidence of this disruption and reassess its consequences.

Notes

François Gerardin (Universität Basel)

"Metropolis of the Thebaid:" City Government and Imperial Administration at Antinoopolis from the Third to the Fourth Century CE

Antinoopolis, the city founded by Hadrian in 130 CE, became the capital of the Thebaid and Egypt's second city in the late antique period. In the religious travelogue of the late fourth century CE known as the Historia Monachorum, the seat of Roman administration and government in Upper Egypt bore the title of "metropolis of the Thebaid." A creation of the imperial period, Antinoopolis had never been a "metropolis" in the Egyptian sense of the term, i.e. a nome capital, nor does any documentary evidence warrant the use of the title of "metropolis" in its late antique meaning. Indeed, direct evidence is entirely lacking on the promotion of Antinoopolis to the status of capital of the Thebaid. All things considered, this trajectory seems only obvious in retrospect. Of the cites enumerated by Ammianus as the "brighter towns" (urbes clariores aliis), others, such as Hermopolis or Koptos, may have assumed that role. This paper returns to the scattered evidence for the transformation of Antinoopolis at this juncture of imperial rule in Egypt, from architecture, to literary fragments and papyrological sources. Putting aside the rise of Christianity, what did really change for Antinoopolis and Egypt in the years 275-325 CE and why? In particular, was Ernst Kühn right to think to posit no "essential cesura" (kein wesentlicher Einschnitt, p. 162) in the city's history for that otherwise transformative moment?

Notes

Lucas Weisser-Gericke (Universität Basel)

Honorific Epithets and Interurban Competition in Roman and Late Antique Egypt: The Case of Herakleopolis Magna

After they had been granted city councils by Septimius Severus in the early third century and thus acquired civic status, Egyptian nome capitals began to adorn their names with various honorific epithets, such as μεγαλή, or λάμπρα, and combinations thereof. Previous inquiries into this (nearly exclusively papyrological) phenomenon have mostly been concerned with compiling the pertinent material (Zehetmair 1912; Hornickel 1930; Hagedorn 1973; Litinas 1995) or pointing out its potential contribution to the dating of otherwise undated papyri (Hagedorn 1973); a historical interpretation has yet to be carried out. Focusing on the titles of Middle Egyptian Heracleopolis Magna, this contribution suggests to conceptualize the use of individualizing (combinations of) honorific epithets as dialogical in character and as a means of the interurban competition for prestige so vital in third-century Egypt – the 'inflationary' use of superlatives such as λαμπροτάτη bears witness to both. The papyrological (and epigraphical) material on Heracleopolitan epithets (ἀρχαία καὶ θεοφιλής, ἀθάνατος, μεγάλη, and, supposedly, λαμπροτάτη), ranging from the third to the fifth centuries, will be reviewed and analysed, through a comparison with the epithets of other Egyptian cities, as to the communicative strategies employed to single out Heracleopolis among its urban competitors.

Notes

Alberto Camplani (Università La Sapienza)

The Network of Egyptian Bishoprics between the Third and the Fourth Centuries: Areas of Expansion, Urban Character of the Dioceses, the Relationship of the Bishops to the *chora*

The contribution, which is part of a long-term research on both the historiography of the episcopal see of Alexandria and the ecclesiastical structures of Christian Egypt between the third and seventh centuries, aims to investigate the expansion lines of the episcopal network, the urban context of the episcopates, the relationship of the bishops with the hinterland, even the non-urbanized one, between the middle of the third and the fourth centuries. In order to reconstruct this complex phenomenon, the episcopal lists preserved in Ethiopic, published by Alessandro Bausi, discoverer of the text entitled Historia episcopatus Alexandriae, those of the Council of Nicaea (325), that of Melitius of Lycopolis, and some later conciliar lists, are exploited, as well as the studies that have been conducted by Annick Martin, Ewa Wipszycka and Alberto Camplani on this documentation. Being lists drafted at the end of the fourth century on the basis of archival documents composed between the third and fourth centuries, they allow us to study the evolution of the episcopal network, the cities selected to be episcopal sees, and the cases in which the dioceses were founded in centres that are not urban. Many dioceses are located in the ancient capitals of the nomoi, while others are founded in cities that are not capitals, like some of the cities of the Melitian bishops. The strict relationship between bishop and city is well underlined by the canonical literature (Canons attributed to Athanasius). Some dioceses are located on the roads (Stathma), even in semi-desert areas. Libya Pentapolis certainly made reference to the bishop of Alexandria, starting at least with Maximus (264), but also earlier. Between the third and fourth centuries the episcopal network not only of Libya Pentapolis, but also of Libya inferior was growing, with dioceses flourishing in villages and ports. The Oases became the place of bishoprics by the time of Peter of Alexandria (303-311). The contribution will also focus on cities for which we have some documents, for example Oxyrhynchus and Herakleopolis, but also on border disputes between Libyan bishops, attested by Synesius of Cyrene, demonstrating the interest of the bishops not only for the urban context, but also for the countryside and its economic potential.
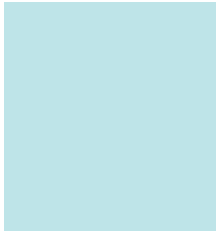

Notes

Alexander Free (LMU München)
Christian Hermopolis. Civic Representation of a Late Antique Town in Middle Egypt

Focusing on Hermopolis, a site in middle Egypt, the paper examines the changes in civic representation between the third and the fifth century CE. Starting in the third century, the Hermopolitans presented their hometown to the outside world as a Greek polis through the establishment of a gymnastic and musical contest, through athletes who were successful throughout the Mediterranean, through an impressive urban architecture and through the adaptation of their local history to a Hellenic past. In the course of the 4th century, however, all markers that identified Hermopolis as a Greek city lost relevance. The more important Christianity became locally and at the imperial level, the more anachronistic did features of urban representation appear that clearly associated the place as Greek and thus pagan. Instead, for instance, the Egyptian name of the city, Shmoun, that was originally associated with a pagan cosmology and referred to the so-called Ogdoad, now primarily referred to the individual Ashmoun, who, as a fourth-generation descendant of Noah, was usually designated as the founding figure of the city. Several monumental churches were furthermore built, that gave the official name suffix of Hermopolis as very radiant (λαμπροτάτη) a new justification. Religiously, the city was even connected to the visit of the Holy family in Egypt, making a stay at Hermopolis the very reason for their journey. Hermopolis as a Greek city lost relevance and led to a new interpretative framework of the label "city", which strongly linked the acknowledgement of the community to Christian parameters.

Notes

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