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The Journal of Juristic Papyrology 31, 47-49

2001

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Nikolaos Gonis

ABŪ AND APA.
ARAB ONOMASTICS IN EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

The publication of "L'emploi des titres *abba*, *apa* et *papas* dans l'Égypte byzantine" by Tomasz Derda and Ewa Wipszycka in *JJP* 24 (1994) 23-54, marks a major step forward in our understanding of the titlature and onomastics of Christian Egypt. The aim of the short note that follows is to discuss a particular use of the word *apa* in Greek and Coptic documents that was not dealt with in the said study: that when *apa* precedes an Arab name, there is a fair chance that it is not a title, but an Egyptian version of Abū, used alongside the more faithful and common transliterations Αβου (ΑΒΟΥ) and ΑΠΟΥ.¹

This is not news. W. E. Crum, *Coptic Dictionary* 13a, has long pointed out that ΑΠΑ may correspond to Abū: '[in] Α. ΑΠΤΕΛΛ(Α) BM 1231, Α. ΑΜΡΟΥ Bodl(P) d 20 [ΑΠΑ] is for ابو'. The Bodleian papyrus has been published as *P. Bal.* 102: in this document, the monastery of Apa Apollo at Bala'izah undertakes to repay a loan of eight *solidi* to a certain ΑΠΑ ΑΜΡΟΥ ΠΥΔΑΧΙΟΥ. The editor made the following comment:²

"Amrou is an Arabic name عمرو cf. *P. Lond.* IV 1441.55 note. This would be a most unusual name for a Christian at this period³ and Crum: *Dictionary* p. 561a citing this passage suggested that ΑΠΑ might stand for

¹ Abū means 'father'; for the significance of the syntagm Abū + name, see *The Encyclopedia of Islam*² V 395-396, s.v. *kunya*.

² P. E. KAHLE, *Bala'izah: Coptic Texts from Deir el-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt (P. Bal.)*, Oxford 1954, II p. 495 n. 4

³ There is however the curious Πέτρον Αμρου in *SPP* VIII 1082, 3, see N. GONIS & F. MORELLI, 'A Requisition for the Commander of the Faithful: *SPP* VIII 1082 Revised', *ZPE* 132 (2000) 195 n. 1. 3. Could it be that the name was borne by Christians too?

ابو ; this is plausible but nevertheless unusual. In 150³ there is reference to an ἀπα κολαϊμᾶν who evidently is a monk of the monastery, see note there; but κολαϊμᾶν is a common name for a Christian in later times being the Arabic version of κολομων.

But there is nothing unusual in Crum's suggestion. To my knowledge, there are four other examples of this particular usage: to the cited BM 1231 and *P. Bal.* 150, 3, one may add two further instances from Greek documents from the Fayyūm.

The case of ἀπα ἀπτελλ(α) in BM 1231 is more or less clear. The text lists a number of persons, Christians as well as Muslims. The Muslims are called ἀπτελμοῦμι (ʿAbd al-Mūmī) and ἀπα ἀπτελλ(α); the element ἀπα seems to be an integral part of the latter's name (note that none of the Christians is an ἀπα), so that it is likely that his name was Abū ʿAbd Allāh.

Another straightforward example is furnished by *SPP* III 474 (VII/VIII), a receipt for a payment of wheat made δ(ιὰ) Ἀπα Μοζεεῖλ ἀμῖρ(α) τοῦ κύτου Βαβυλῶ(ν) (l. 3).⁴ With Μοζεεῖλ being an Arab name, it seems probable that this *amīr* was a Muslim called Abū Muʿzil.

A further instance of the usage may be recognised in the case of Ἀπα Μουση in *SPP* X 54.10 (VIII). Although this person could have been a Christian called Ἀπα Μουση, the possibility exists that he is a Muslim named Abū Mūsā.⁵ The document records tax payments made from a number of Arsinoite villages through various individuals, including two with Arab names (lines 4 and 8).

I would also be inclined to think that ἀπα κολαϊμᾶν in *P. Bal.* 150, 3 is a Muslim called Abū Sulaymān. It is significant that, as the editor noted, the name is unusual for a Christian at that time. Besides, in this putative tax receipt there is nothing that would identify ἀπα κολαϊμᾶν as a monk. The fact that the papyrus was found at Balaʿizah need not imply that Sulaymān 'was probably a member of the community there'; several texts in the collection appear not to have any relation with the monastery.⁶

We may now turn to ἀπα ἀμροῦ in *P. Bal.* 102. He is a ψαλιούγ, an official associated with the collection of taxes.⁷ Interestingly enough, one entry in the

⁴ H. I. BELL, 'An Official Circular Letter of the Arab Period', *JEA* 31 (1945) 80, notes: 'here the *amīr* appears to be either the director or the local representative of the director of the government granaries at Babylon'.

⁵ The name Μουση = Mūsā is also attested in *P. Lond.* IV 1350, 5 (710), 1434, 256 (714–6), 1435, 125 (715–6), and *SB* XVIII 13218, 11 (713), always in connection with Mūsā b. Nuṣair, the conqueror of North Africa. A further instance of the name may be recognised in *SPP* X 80, 18 [Μ]ουση ([]ουση *ed. pr.*) υἱὸς(ς) Α[βδ]ερα(μᾶν) (Mūsā b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān). The cases of Μουσε in *SPP* X 74 *recto* II 14 or of Μουση ἐργ(άτης) in *CPR* IX 67, 1 and 6 are more difficult to evaluate. Cf. also J. VON KARABAČEK, 'Zur Kenntnis des Umlautes im Arabischen', *MPER* 5 (1892) 61.

⁶ This point is discussed in 'Arabs, Monks and Taxes: Notes on Documents from Deir el-Balaʿizah', forthcoming in *ZPE*.

⁷ P. E. KAHLE, *P. Bal.* II, p. 740 n. 9, suggested that the term may correspond to Greek πικτικός, an official generally involved in the collection of taxes; cf. also S. J. CLACKSON, *Coptic and Greek Texts*

fiscal register *P. Lond.* IV 1441 concerns an Abū ^cAmru who had come to Aphrodito to collect a fine: Α[β]ου Αμρου ἐλθ(όντος) (ὑπὲρ) ζημιά(ς) (l. 55). In view of their function, it is conceivable that ΔΠΑ ΔΜΡΟΥ and Α[β]ου Αμρου are one and the same person.⁸

Before closing, I cannot refrain from raising the question whether in certain or all of the cases in which *apa* precedes an Arab name the word should be understood as a title and not as a version of Abū. Even if it is difficult to take ΔΠΑ as a title in *BM 1231*, the possibility cannot strictly be ruled out. But it may be significant that there are a few examples of the equation *απα/αββα* = Abū in Arabic documents of the eighth century, that is, of roughly the same date as the Greek and Coptic documents discussed above.⁹ Why should one exclude the opposite process, an Abū turned into Apa?

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relating to the Hermopolite Monastery of Apa Apollo (*P. Mon. Apollo*), Oxford 2000, 25–6. KAHLE further referred to an unpublished papyrus attesting such officials in the service of the σύμβουλος, the Arab governor of Egypt (μεψαλλιογ υπεγμβουλ[ος]). But this makes the equation of ψαλλιογ with πιστικός problematic: πιστικός is nowhere else accompanied by a further qualification; and there is no instance of a *πιστικός τοῦ συμβούλου in the papyri, whereas we find several *μαυλεῖς* (*maiwālī*) (*P. Lond.* IV 1441, 81 and 83; 1447 *passim*), *παλλικάρια* (*P. Lond.* IV 1447 *passim*), *ἀνδράποδα* (*P. Lond.* 1447, 172), *παῖδες*, and one *νοτάριος* (*P. Lond.* 1447, 140 and 190) of the σύμβουλος.

⁸ If the identification holds, the date of *P. Bal.* 102 (Mechir 16, indiction 3) should correspond to 10 February 705. *P. Lond.* 1441 was written in the course of 706, but refers to exercises that took place in 701 or 702, see F. MORELLI, 'Legname, palazzi e moschee. P. Vindob. G 31 e il contributo dell'Egitto alla prima architettura islamica', *Tyche* 13 (1998) 170 n. 18. The entry concerning Α[β]ου Αμρου probably dates to Phamenoth 1, i.e., 25 February 701 or 702.

⁹ The monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara is called the monastery of Abū Harmīs already in the eighth century; see Y. RĀĠĪB, 'Sauf-conduits d'Égypte omeyyade et abbasside', *AnnlsI* 31 (1997) 143–68, texts I.3 (717–20), V.4 (750), VII.4–5, VIII.4 (751). (Of course, one should note that Arabic renders /p/ as /b/).