Baetocaece / Baitokaike: Valerian and the Ancestral Privileges of a Temple in Syria [1]

Epigraphic dossier confirming the privileges of the sanctuary of Zeus in Baetocaece (Syria) in 258-260 CE. Seleucid and Augustan precedents are used to back the worshippers' petition.

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Epigraphic dossier confirming the privileges of the sanctuary of Zeus in Baetocaece (Syria) in 258-260 CE. Seleucid and Augustan precedents are used to back the worshippers' petition. **Original Location/Place:** Outer wall surrounding the north section of the sanctuary of Baetocaece, to the west of the main gate.

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): In-situ. Hosn Suleiman (Syria)

Date: 258 CE to 260 CE

Physical Characteristics: Rectangular and moulded surface carved directly on the walls of the sanctuary. Greek letters have lunate forms and the different documents of the dossier are visually separated.

Material: Rectangular and moulded surface carved directly on the walls of the sanctuary. Greek letters have lunate forms and the different documents of the dossier are visually separated.

Measurements:

The surface is 213 centimetres high and 105 centimetres wide.

Language: Latin, Greek

Category: Roman, Greek

Publications: IGLSyr 7.4028

Commentary:

This inscription records several documents that do not date to a single moment, but rather stretch over centuries. Two different languages are also present and the messages are not unitary. However, the text is concerned with a principal theme: the privileges that the rural sanctuary of <u>Baetocaece</u> [2] in Syria managed to defend from the Hellenistic age to the mid-3rd century CE. This testimony is therefore fundamental for illustrating the continuity of Roman rule in a complicated period, the uninterrupted importance of royal benefits, and the survival of ancestral cults in the Levant.

The epigraphic dossier is composed of five documents. The first (I. 1-14) and last (I. 40-43) date to the reign of Valerian and Gallienus when the son of the latter, Licinius Cornelius Saloninus Valerianus, acted as

Caesar between 258 and 260 CE (see Feissel, "Les privilèges," p. 16-17). The second and third (I. 15-31) are addressed by a Seleucid king (??????/basileus) called Antiochos, and the fourth (I. 32-39) consists of a city decree sent to Augustus. The common feature of this collection becomes very clear in the Latin text acting as prologue of the long inscription. The Roman emperors were confirming ancient royal privileges (regum antiqua beneficia), which had survived both in time (tempus) and custom (consuetudo), and were to be guaranteed by the ruler of the province, that is the governor. Valerian, Gallienus and Saloninus were collegially responding to a petition brought by Aurelius Mareas and others (alii). This type of communication corresponds with the system of subscript/rescript which is perfectly attested in the example of Skaptopara (see below) and continued to function in the mid-3rd century CE. Accordingly, a man such as Aurelius Mareas who most likely belonged to a family granted Roman citizenship just after the *Constitutio Antoniniana* was making use of resources pertaining to Roman administration and law. He would have acted as the representative that needed to travel and hand in the petition on behalf of his community wherever the Roman authorities were located as shown by the procedure recorded in the so-called "Middle-Euphrates Papyri" (*P.Ephr.* 1). In this case, Valerian was staying in Antioch, the capital of Syria, which the imperial army had managed to retake after the Sassanian king Sapor rayaged the territory in 253 and carried out raids in both Anatolia and the Levant (see Halfmann, *Itinera*, p. 236). This decade was indeed adverse to Roman power in the ancient Near East, just preceding the disastrous capture of Valerian when he failed to surrender Mesopotamia in 260 (see Potter, *The Roman Empire*, p. 251-262). Such challenging circumstances including the usurpation of Uranius Antoninus may be alluded to in the rescript where the removal of violence (Violentia) from an opposing party is mentioned in lines 12-13. An alternative interpretation is to consider that the violent episodes solely referred to internal issues raised by Aurelius Mareas in his plea.

The final document (V) enables us to know that this imperial petition had originated from a group of worshippers of Zeus that called themselves "subjects" (??????/katochoi; see Millar, The Roman Near East, p. 272). They were displaying the transcript (???????/antigraphê) because the Roman emperors had acted with piety (??????/eusebeia) and liberality (???????/eleutheria) towards a god considered holy (?????/hagios) and celestial (???????/OURANIOS). The syntax of the epigraphic colophon is slightly complex (see Feissel, "Les privilèges," p. 19-26), but it appears that the divine (????/theia) imperial response generated an analogous sentiment of reverence (?????????/proskynoumenê) among the devotees. In an area that had already witnessed and experienced the aforementioned weakness of Roman power in the preceding years, such expressions of loyalty are particularly noteworthy. After all, this community of worshippers was grateful for an imperial decision that benefitted the privileges on which their survival and sacred prominence depended. The celebrated confirmation, however, had not been easily achieved. In addition to the complications inherent to the system of Roman petitions, the case needed to be based on documentary evidence creating precedents that were fundamental for the resolution of conflicts among provincial entities. The documents II, III, and IV of the dossier are the precise confirmation of a procedure also attested in the defence of ancestral privileges by the people of Aizanoi (Phrygia) under Hadrian and the creation of the 'Archive-wall' of Aphrodisias' in the Severan period. Aurelius Mareas and his party needed to demonstrate the validity of their claims and provided material attached to the petition which was subsequently recorded in the epigraphic commemoration of the process.

Precedents were normally found in previous decisions taken by emperors from whom the current rulers were claiming ancestry and descent. Our case is even more interesting because it traces its roots to the Hellenistic age and this antiquity becomes a valid argument for the Roman administration. A letter (???????/epistolê) of a king Antiochos is introduced in line 15. This royal name was particularly popular among the Seleucid dynasty and the letter does not offer any other chronological detail because the addressee, Euphemos, cannot be identified. Different dating proposals have consequently been made, but it seems that the reference to the satrapy of Apamea in line 21 indicates a period between the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE (see Baroni, "I terreni," p. 140-148). The memorandum (?????????/hypomnêmatismos) is much more informative with regard to the reasons that motivated Antiochos' communication about sacred matters. The king affirmed that the power (??????/energeia) of the Zeus from Baetocaece had become apparent to him. We do not know how this persuasion exactly took place but his personal grant (?????/ekrithê) was a result of it. Antiochos gives to the god the village (????/kômê) of Baetocaece which shall assure the strength (??????/dynamis) of the cult. With this new ownership taken away from a certain Demetrios, the accruing revenue (??????/prosodos) could be dedicated to the monthly sacrifices (?????/thysiai) and other initiatives that contributed to the growth (??????/auxesis) of a sanctuary led by a priest (see Dignas, Economy of the sacred, p. 74-84). Moreover, the Seleucid ruler conceded the privileged status of inviolability or ?????/asylos (cf. Artemision of Ephesus and the Aphrodision of Aphrodisias; Rigsby, Asylia, p. 504-511), and the exemption from (?????????/anepistathmos) bearing the high costs of forced billeting. Finally, two days of tax-free fairs (????????/panégyreis) were granted. This last gift motivated the Roman precedent attached by the petitioners.

The city (????/*polis*) responsible for the decree addressed to Augustus is not specified. Nevertheless, this mountainous area in eastern Syria must have belonged to the large inland territory which the island of Arados already enjoyed prior to Roman domination according to Strabo(*Geography* XVI.2.14; see Seyrig, "Antiquités," p. 191-206). Market-offices of this community also controlled its hinterland (???/*chôra*) and were probably accused of not respecting the fiscal rights of Baetocaece. The villagers would have then complained to Augustus, and Arados needed to draft a civic resolution evidencing protective measures. Hence, even if the privileges are not specifically worded, the choice of this document in the 3rd century CE by the group of worshippers of Zeus was not accidental. Roman emperors who called themselves ?????/*Sebastoi* could see that the founder of their imperial rule had shown himself favourable to the same sanctuary that was asking for a new royal endorsement. Furthermore, Zeus of Baetocaece was not only backed by such powerful precedents but also by a cultic community that built one of the best preserved sacred complexes in this Roman province (see Tholbecq, Dabbour, "Le sanctuaire"), and was still celebrating with their own funds the greatest (??????/*megistos*) of gods in 257/8 CE (*IGLSyr*7.4033). In this year, or soon thereafter, the same devotees had to launch a new mission to defend their survival and aimed at demonstrating the legal validity of the privileges that had first emanated from the power

of a deity persuading Seleucid kings. The villagers of Baetocaece followed Antiochos' instructions and wrote down (????????/anagraphênai) a memorandum that still proved effective centuries later. With Augustus's

acceptance, Hellenistic benefits became Roman *exempla* by which imperial successors would be expected to abide. Local archival efficiency was consequently necessary, but more important was the villagers' reliance on a system of Roman administration to which they could address their requests. Sassanian raids had not broken this loyalty after 253 CE and this provincial community still found it worthy to preserve market rights which had previously attracted economic activity, in spite of a clear idolatrous context normally condemned by some Jews and, perhaps, avoided by Christians who were enduring new persecutions under Valerian.

Keywords in the original language:

- imperator [3]
- Augustus [4]
- <u>Caesar</u> [5]
- <u>nobilis</u> [6]
- <u>rex</u> [7]
- <u>beneficium</u> [8]
- <u>consuetudo</u> [9]
- <u>tempus</u> [10]
- violentia [11]
- <u>rego</u> [12]
- provincia [13]
- <u>curo</u> [14]
- incolumnis [15]
- <u>???????</u> [16]
- <u>???????????</u> [17]
- <u>???????</u> [18]
- <u>???????</u> [19]
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- <u>????????</u> [46]



• <u>????????</u> [47]

Thematic keywords:

- Valerian [48]
- Galerian [49]
- <u>Saloninus</u> [50]
- Baetocaece [51]
- Baitokaike [52]
- <u>Syria</u> [53]
- <u>Zeus</u> [54]
- privileges [55]
- precedent [56]
- rescript [57]
- crisis of the third century [58]
- Antiochos [59]
- <u>Seleucids</u> [60]
- <u>Augustus</u> [61]
- petition [62]
- <u>Roman law</u> [63]
- imperial taxes [64]
- <u>market</u> [65]
- <u>fair</u> [66]
- transport [67]
- billeting [68]
- <u>piety</u> [69]
- liberality [70]
- archive [71]
- <u>copy</u> [72]
- imperial cult [73]

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Gordian III and the imperial petition of Skaptopara [84]

Villagers from Thrace petitioned the emperor Gordian III to end abuses from soldiers that threatened their ancestral homes.

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Provincial Edict and the Market Days of Mandragoreis (Asia) [85]

Edict responding to a village in the Maeander valley that petitioned for market days. The legal procedure concerning the reproduction of this official document is also detailed.

• Read more about Provincial Edict and the Market Days of Mandragoreis (Asia) [85]

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<u>Iulius Saturninus and the abuses of Roman soldiers in Syria under Commodus</u> [86]

The Roman governor responds to a complaint raised by a village in southern Syria that suffered illegal exactions despite having a guest house for soldiers.

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Papyrus

P.Giss. 40 and the Constitutio Antoniniana [87]

An edict issued by the emperor Caracalla records a universal grant of citizenship as an expression of magnificence and gratitude to the immortal gods.

Language English

• Read more about P.Giss. 40 and the Constitutio Antoniniana [87]

Inscription

Nomenclature and Constitutio Antoniniana in Aphrodisias [88]

A funerary text inscribed on a sarcophagus of Aphrodisias records the change of nomenclature caused by the *Constitutio Antoniniana*.

• Read more about Nomenclature and Constitutio Antoniniana in Aphrodisias [88]

Inscription

Hadrian and Zeus in Aizanoi [89]

Hadrian restores the ancient lands of Zeus in Aizanoi using Hellenistic precedents and members of his administration

• Read more about Hadrian and Zeus in Aizanoi [89]

Inscription

<u>Aphrodisias, Divine Kinship and the Accession of Septimius Severus and</u> <u>Caracalla</u> [90]

Septimius Severus and Caracalla confirm the privileged polity and laws of Aphrodisias, a city that celebrated their dynastic victories and was closely related to the empire of Rome.

• Read more about Aphrodisias, Divine Kinship and the Accession of Septimius Severus and Caracalla [90]

Inscription

Paullus Fabius Persicus, Claudius, and the temple of Artemis in Ephesos [91]

The provincial governor of Asia tries to curb corruption in the internal affairs of Ephesus and the temple of Artemis. His actions are connected with the emperor Claudius.

• Read more about Paullus Fabius Persicus, Claudius, and the temple of Artemis in Ephesos [91]

Inscription

Popillius Carus Pedo and the festivities of Artemis in Ephesus [92]

The Roman governor Carus Pedo produces an edict authorising a local decree of Ephesus. The decree celebrates the fame of Artemis' cult and institutes that all the days of one month (*Artemision*) should be sacred and dedicated to this guardian goddess.

• Read more about Popillius Carus Pedo and the festivities of Artemis in Ephesus [92]

Inscription

Edict of the governor of Galatia on the requisitioning of transport and accommodation [93]

The governor Sextus Sotidius Strabo Libuscidianus sets the rules for requisitioning official transport and accommodation in the territory of Sagalassos

• Read more about Edict of the governor of Galatia on the requisitioning of transport and accommodation [93]

Text

Cyprian, Epistle LXXXI I (some editions list at Epistle LXXX) [94]

The treatment of prominent Romans found to be Christians

• Read more about Cyprian, Epistle LXXXI I (some editions list at Epistle LXXX) [94]

Inscription

Perge, metropolis by the emperor-god Tacitus [95]

The city of Perge in southern Anatolia celebrates its new title of *metropolis* after the exceptional grant of the emperor Tacitus, worshipped as a god.

• Read more about Perge, metropolis by the emperor-god Tacitus [95]

Inscription

An Augustan governor on the freedom of Chios [96]

The provincial governor settles a dispute concerning the freedom of Chios and describes the use of previous official documents

• Read more about An Augustan governor on the freedom of Chios [96]

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