

ATHENIAN CITIZENSHIP OF ROMAN EMPERORS

IN *Hesperia*, XVIII, 1949, p. 38 James A. Notopoulos pointed out that the curious notations in small letters *Ἀυρήλιοι* on *I.G.*, II², 1824 and *Ἀυρήλ[- -]* on *I.G.*, II², 1825 occupied on these two catalogues of the tribe Attalis the same position as the notations in small letters *Μ. Ἀυρ. Σεβήρο[ς], θεὸς Ἀδριανός, θεὸς Κόμοδος* occupied on *I.G.*, II², 1832,—that is to say, a position between the heading in large letters and the catalogue of prytaneis in small letters. From this he drew an inference: “*Ἀυρήλιοι* therefore can only refer to two Roman emperors who ruled together. These are M. Aurelius Antoninus (Elagabalus) and M. Aurelius Severus Alexandrus (Severus Alexander) who shared the rule in 221 and 222 A.D.”

In *A.J.P.*, LXX, 1949, pp. 306 f. James H. Oliver pointed out the most obvious flaw in this inference. Whereas *I.G.*, II², 1824 and 1825, on which the *Aurelioi* appear, were catalogues of Attalis, *I.G.*, II², 1832 with the names of Severus Alexander, the deified Hadrian and the deified Commodus was a catalogue of Hadrianis. It is well known that Hadrian and Commodus (*v. infra*) belonged to Besa, a deme of Hadrianis, and so it is clear that in engraving their names in small letters on the tribal catalogue, the prytaneis of Hadrianis were not honoring these emperors dead and alive but were boasting of distinguished *phyletai*. Accordingly, Oliver pointed out as his first and main objection to the identification that if the parallel with *I.G.*, II², 1832 had any validity, also the prytaneis of Attalis, who recorded the *Aurelioi*, were boasting of distinguished *phyletai*, and that Severus Alexander who belonged to the tribe Hadrianis, could not have been one of the *Aurelioi*.

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No Athenian, not even an emperor, could belong to more than one post-Solonian Athenian tribe.

The prytany catalogue *I.G.*, II², 1826 is from the same year as *I.G.*, II², 1825. Why does it not have a reference to the *Aurelioi*? Because it is a catalogue, not of Attalis, but of another tribe (Pandionis).

Erroneously assuming that, as Notopoulos asserted, the *Aurelioi* would have to be co-regent and being unable to date the inscriptions *I.G.*, II² 1824 and 1825 in the joint reign of Caracalla and Geta, Oliver erroneously argued for a date in the reign of Caracalla before the death of Septimius Severus, to which time some prosopographical evidence seemed indeed to point. However, Oliver warned his readers that other prosopographical evidence pointed toward the period of Severus Alexander, in the first two years of whose reign Notopoulos wished to date *I.G.*, II², 1824 and 1825. Oliver's date was the traditional date reexpressed in terms of the theory that the *Aurelioi* were living emperors, while Notopoulos' date was a new date expressed in

terms of the same theory. More recent evidence, contributed by Mitsos,¹ has settled the question of the approximate date at which the inscriptions were erected,—that is to say, they were erected presumably in the reign of Severus Alexander.

In *Hesperia*, XX, 1951, p. 65 Notopoulos reopens a discussion of the *Aurelioi* with the words, “The question as to the identity of the *Αὐρήλιοι* in *I.G.*, II², 1824 is worth settling once and for all,” and then, alas, without giving the reader any idea of Oliver’s first and main objection to an identification with Severus Alexander and, of course, without meeting that objection, Notopoulos reasserts that the *Aurelioi* of the catalogue of Attalis, *I.G.*, II², 1824, were Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, while in the other catalogue of Attalis, *I.G.*, II², 1825, which is too late for a living Elagabalus, he would restore the singular *Αὐρήλ[ιος]* and finds a reference to Severus Alexander as sole emperor. This is impossible because Severus Alexander belonged to the tribe Hadrianis, but even if it were not impossible, the analogy of *I.G.*, II², 1824 shows that the notation in *I.G.*, II², 1825 must be restored in the plural *Αὐρήλ[ιοι]*.

The new evidence contributed by Mitsos does not really confirm the identification with Severus Alexander, as Notopoulos thinks. Rather it destroys the assumptions of Notopoulos that the *Aurelioi* were living emperors and that they were therefore necessarily co-regent. After all, neither Severus Alexander nor any other living emperor could have been designated merely as *Aurelios*. If an emperor or a member of the imperial family was so ambiguously designated, it follows that his name could not be mentioned. The name, which for Greeks was the cognomen, could always be mentioned, unless the bearer had suffered *damnatio memoriae*. Hence the *Aurelioi* of *I.G.*, II², 1824 and 1825, if emperors, were two emperors who had suffered *damnatio memoriae*, to wit, Caracalla and Elagabalus. The latter is not reputed to have been a strong friend of Athens or patron of Hellenic culture, and an offer of citizenship to him first would have been astonishing; but if Caracalla, his pretended father, had had Athenian citizenship, Elagabalus upon his recognition might have received the citizenship automatically. Both through his mother² and friends³ Caracalla had had close connections with Athens, so that his citizenship would be easily explained.

¹ M. Mitsos, *Ἀρχ. Ἐφ.*, 1951, No. 6, pp. 21-23. Incidentally on p. 47 Mitsos, who reads the name of Severus Alexander in line 3 of *I.G.*, II², 2330, comments as follows: “The reading of the third line has significance in that it confirms the opinion of Graindor, Kirchner and Notopoulos that the emperor M. Aurelius Severu[s] of *I.G.*, II², 1832 is Severus Alexander and not Caracalla, because both inscriptions were composed in the archonship of Casianus.” Lest the absence of Oliver’s name from this list of right-thinking students of Athenian chronology imply that Oliver assigned *I.G.*, II², 1832 to the time of Caracalla, it may be pointed out that Oliver dated *I.G.*, II², 1832 to the reign of Severus Alexander both in his archon list, *Hesperia*, XI, 1942, p. 89, and in *A.J.P.*, LXX, 1949, p. 306, and that he has never harbored the opinion impugned by Mitsos.

² “Julia Domna as Athena Polias,” *Athenian Studies Presented to William Scott Ferguson* (= Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, Suppl. Vol. I, 1941), pp. 521-530.

³ “Connections and Identity of Caracalla’s Favorite Lucilius Priscillianus,” *A.J.A.*, L, 1946, pp. 247-250.

In summary, then, Notopoulos believes that the distinguished *Aurelioi* of *I.G.*, II², 1824 and 1825 were living emperors at the time the inscriptions were erected, while Oliver believes they were dead emperors. While Notopoulos has not explained how the curious notations came to be engraved, Oliver explains them as follows. When the emperor Severus Alexander accepted citizenship, he selected the tribe Hadrianis in which Hadrian and Commodus had been enrolled. The tribe Hadrianis, flattered by the choice, boasted of its three emperors and cut a figure as the imperial or royal tribe. The tribe Attalis, not to be outdone, then reminded the Athenians that it too had had emperors, though it could not mention them by name.

In view of the great importance of the imperial precedent ⁴ it is striking that an emperor would accept even Athenian citizenship in addition to that of Rome. The acceptance of citizenship was a very different thing from an acceptance of initiation into the Mysteries (as in the cases of Augustus, Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius), or entry into the Eumolpidae ⁵ (as in the case of Lucius Verus), or agreement to serve as archon at least in name (as in the case of Domitian, who, as far as we know, never became an Athenian citizen). It is striking because of the old law which provided that a Roman who accepted citizenship in another city automatically lost his Roman citizenship.

Of course, as early as the first century B.C. many Italians had accepted Athenian citizenship, as we know both from inscriptions and from Cicero's shocked surprise,⁶ but these were little people who may have started to do so even before their families received Roman citizenship. No Roman senator or Roman knight would have lightly accepted Athenian citizenship at this time. For example, Pomponius Atticus, though long a resident and closely associated with Athens, did not become an Athenian citizen. In the first century after Christ the impediment was still strong, at least for genuine Romans or Romans of rank. The first case, so far attested, of a Roman knight accepting Athenian citizenship is that of Q. Trebellius Rufus of Tolosa in Narbonnese Gaul in the Flavian Period. The first case, so far attested, of a Roman senator accepting Athenian citizenship is that of P. Aelius Hadrianus of Italica in Baetica in the Trajanic Period. The first Roman emperor to accept Athenian citizenship was Commodus.

The following list of emperors with Athenian citizenship includes Hadrian, who was already a citizen when he became emperor, and Elagabalus, who may have been treated as already a citizen when he became emperor.

Hadrian. Tribe Hadrianis. Deme Besa. *I.G.*, II², 1764 and 1832 (a catalogue of Hadrianis). He chose Besa because of Philopappus (cf. *A.J.P.*, LXXI, 1950, pp. 295-299) .

⁴ Compare Herodian, *Ab excessu divi Marci*, I, 2, 4.

⁵ For the entry of non-Athenians into the genos of the Eumolpidae see *Hesperia*, Suppl. VIII, 1949, opposite p. 248.

⁶ *Pro Balbo*, 12, 30: nonnullos imperitos homines.

Commodus. Tribe Hadrianis. Deme Besa. *I.G.*, II², 1832 (a catalogue of Hadrianis); *Hesperia*, XI, 1942, pp. 58-63, and Suppl. VIII, 1949, pp. 279-290. He chose Hadrianis and Besa because of Hadrian.

Caracalla. Tribe Attalis. Deme unknown. He is inferred to be one of the *Aurelioi* mentioned in catalogues of Attalis from the time of Severus Alexander, *I.G.*, II², 1824 and 1825 (see above). His choice of Attalis was motivated perhaps by the tribal affiliation of friends at Athens.

Elagabalus. Tribe Attalis. Deme unknown. He also is inferred to be one of the *Aurelioi* (see above). His tribal affiliation depends on that of his pretended father Caracalla.

Severus Alexander. Tribe Hadrianis. Deme unrecorded but presumably Besa. *I.G.*, II², 1832 (a catalogue of Hadrianis). He chose Hadrianis presumably because of Hadrian.

Gallienus. Tribe unknown. Deme unknown. *Vita Gallieni* 11, where the facts, unlike the aspersions, are from Dexippus: Cum tamen sibi milites dignum principem quaerent, Gallienus apud Athenas archon erat, id est summus magistratus, vanitate illa, qua et civis adscribi desiderabat et sacris omnibus interesse.

The purpose of the imperial government in the emperor's assumption of Athenian citizenship was to advertise the emperor as a perfect Greek. From Commodus to the unhappy Gallienus it seemed important for an insecure and imperfect emperor to appear a "Greek and Roman"; and he was judged largely as to whether or not he corresponded to the cultural ideal of the urban middle and upper classes in both halves of the empire (cf. Herodian, *Ab excessu divi Marci* V, 5 on the education of Severus Alexander).

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