1. From Σεβαστός to Αὐγούστος: a note on 4th-century imperial titulature

In his commentary to lines 1-2 of P.Bodl. MS Gr. class. d 36b, a very fragmentary papyrus published in JJP 33 (2003) 70-71 and presenting an incomplete consular dating formula from 353: ὑπατίας τῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν Κωνσταντίου I 'Ἀ'γ'γούστου τὸ c' καὶ Κωνσταντίου τοῦ, the editor notes that "it is less likely that one has to restore the consular pair of 320, viz. τῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν Κωνσταντίου I 'Ἀ'γ'γούστου τὸ c' καὶ Κωνσταντίου τοῦ (ἐπιφανεστάτου Καισάρας τοῦ α'); in consular formulas of 320, Constantine is not styled Αὐγούστος but Σεβαστός (in P.Kell. I 37.15 restore Σεβαστός, not Αὐγούστος, cf. P.Kell. I 21.24 and 52.8)." While the author of the note is certainly correct in making this proposal to rectify a restoration it is also correct to notice that P.Keil. I 37.15 is in fact already listed in CSBE\(^2\), App. D s.a. 320 (p. 179), under the formula with Σεβαστός τὸ c'. There is, however, no warning that the papyrus was originally restored as featuring Αὐγούστος τὸ c'. Obviously, this situation entails a tacit correction of the erroneous restoration in the original edition of the papyrus.

In general it seems worthwhile to pay some more attention to the subject of choosing between Σεβαστός and Αὐγούστος when it comes to restoring a damaged consular formula mentioning a Roman emperor.\(^1\) A perusal of CSBE\(^2\), App. D, shows that, whereas the Latin term ‘Augustus’ is, of course, regular in Latin 4th century consular dating formulas\(^2\), the use of its transliterated form Αὐγούστος in Greek documents initially was uncommon, though in later Byzantine Egypt this is the terminus technicus encountered most frequently. Therefore, one should attempt to establish more precisely, when and where in the documentary papyri Αὐγούστος appears in consular and regnal dating formulas and in imperial oath formulas.

First to be scrutinized are the consular datings (CSBE\(^2\), App. D, pp. 172-216): it is clear that initially, i.e. starting with the year 284, the term Σεβαστός was the most frequently used term in a Roman emperor’s titulature. This term had been in use since the reign of Tiberius (14 - 37\(^b\)), and the DDBDP even turns out to produce no unambiguous results when searched for cases of Αὐγούστος in imperial titulature within the 3rd century in Egypt.\(^3\) In the year 308, however, the first sign of change becomes visible because in the most elaborate consular formula for this year, attested fourteen times in texts from all over Egypt, one encounters instead of the usual Σεβαστός the term Αὐγούστος in only four texts, viz. in P.Grenf. II 72.11 and 75.19 (both from the Hibite nome), in P.Lips. I 18.26 (see BL I 1.205; from the Hermopolite nome), and in P.Panop. 2.10 (from Panopolis).\(^4\) The next year, in 309, the

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\(^1\) For a similar kind of question regarding the transition in imperial titulature from κύριος τοῦ δεσπότης see D. Hagedorn & K.A. Worp in ZPE 39 (1980) 165-177. I am grateful to my colleagues R.S. Bagnall for reading a first draft of the present article, to N. Gonis for correcting in proof a few mistakes, and to B. P. Muh for checking my English.


\(^3\) Cf., however, P.Dura 31\(^{14}\).24 and 43.4 for non-Egyptian texts from 204\(^7\) and 238-244\(^7\). Upon closer inspection, the only Egyptian papyrus that appeared during this search, P.Oxy. I 41 = W.Chr. 45.3.11.20.29, turns out to be dated ‘late III or early IV’; there seems to be reason to reject the earlier century and to prefer the later century, cf. below. Performing the same search for documents written during the 2nd century yields only BGU VII 1655.iii.55, a Greek translation of a testament written originally in Latin in the year 169. In general, see H. Mason, Greek Terms for Roman Institutions, Toronto 1974, p. 12: "Prior to the third century, Αὐγούστος rather than Σεβαστός had occurred only in scattered inscriptions and in such non-literary sources as the evangelist Luke, Epictetus and Pausanias. — see J. Rougé, Rev.Phil. 1969.83-92".

\(^4\) For the unwarranted editorial restoration of the plural Αὐγούστων in a dating formula in a document from 305/6, P.Grenf. II 76 = M.Chr. 295.25, see already BL 8.143. The question why the Latin term does not show up earlier seems impossible to answer; the fact that it appears is most probably connected with the emperor Diocletian’s well-known language policy which gave rise to a much wider use of Latin terminology and institutions in the Greek-speaking parts of the Impe-
notably the use of an anonymous consular dating formula (cf. CSBE², 50-51, 105-106); and only a few years later (i.e. in 609) one encounters a regnal dating formula lacking precisely the name of the emperor in question (cf. PSI I 61); and compare also the three Fayumic documents featuring invocation 3C in 610 and 612 completely lacking a regnal date. Hence, it might be argued that in the late 6th century and in the first decade of the 7th century the usually fairly precise practices of Byzantine scribes as regards recognizable dating formulas were simply dropped, and that PSI I 52 could be taken as another representative of this practice, if its date were to be placed close to 611/12 (it would seem that the distance between the years 602 and 611 is not really significantly longer than the distance between the years 617 and 611). Even so, in light of the results obtained with the attempt to assign a post-641 date for the other eleven out of twelve documents listed above, there arises strong doubt as to the likelihood of a date to ‘602 or 617’ for the PSI-text. One might also argue that one finds notaries in office for as long as a period of 35 years (cf. the notary Abraamios in Aphrodite, attested between 509/10 - 545 [ByzNot., 24-25]; cf. also the period of activity of a notary Papnouthios officiating in Oxyrhynchus between 582, maybe even 570 / 571(?), and 610/611 [ByzNot., 83-84]). If the three Oxyrhynchite documents attesting a notary Johannes in the years 611/612 are taken as the earliest attestations of his activity in Oxyrhynchus, one might link the 6th indiction referred to in PSI I 52 to the first possible Julian year coming after 641, i.e. to the year 647. In that case the span of years of his activity would be 37 years: a long time indeed, but not an impossibly long time. It should also be noted that, while in general ‘late’ Oxyrhynchus papyri are rare, there are some late documents preserved from this town (cf. CSBE², 108 n. 12, listing three texts from 635, 644/45 and 669).

The result of this reconsideration of the date of PSI I 52 would seem to be that —except in a few cases where transitions between reigns are going on— there is no longer any invocation text which, dated only by month + day and indiction, should be assigned to the period when there were still Byzantine rulers present in Egypt, i.e. in between the years 591 - 619/620 and 629/630 - 641. Indeed, this result seems in itself acceptable enough.