

Two Notes concerning Nero

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I

Two Neronian Inscriptions from Cyrene

ὑπὲρ τῆς Νέρωνος Κλαυδίου
Καίσαρος νίκης καὶ σωτηρίας
καὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ παντὸς
Ἀπόλλωνι Ἀποβατηρίῳ
Μ. Ἀντώνιος Γέμελλος ἐκ τῶν τοῦ
Ἀπόλλωνος.

THE USE of the Apolline epithet *Apobaterios* in the text above suggested to its discoverers and first publishers that at the time of the dedication “the emperor was then engaged in some journey.”¹ More precisely, the term implies the beginning or completion of a journey, as in a passage from Arrian (*Anab.* 1.11.7) where Alexander is said to have built temples to Zeus Apobaterios on leaving Europe and upon arrival in Asia.² The appearance of the epithet in the present inscription, found close to the temple of Apollo at Cyrene, suggests careful, not random selection on the part of the dedicant.

M. Antonius Gemellus has been assigned an eponymous priesthood of Apollo at Cyrene for A.D. 56/7,³ but this inscription does not make

¹ R. M. Smith, E. A. Porcher, *History of the Recent Discoveries at Cyrene* (London 1864) 113. The inscription appears as IGRR I 1034, and E. M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero* (Cambridge 1967) no.161. The text was cut “on a block of blue marble, 2 feet 3½ inches by 2 feet 9½ inches by 12½ inches”; Smith, Porcher *loc.cit.* For the possibility of topicality cf. P. Romanelli, *La Cirenaica romana* (1943) 211, “l’epiteto . . . suggerito probabilmente da qualche avvenimento contingente della vita dell’imperatore per cui la dedica fu posta . . .”

² Other usages suggest a specific interpretation; *Inschriften von Olympien* no.57 line 36; L. Robert, *Études anatoliennes* (Paris 1937) 20; K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *Klio Beiheft* 14 (1923) 135 n.1; cf. L. Robert, *Hellenica* 5 (1948) 75f.

³ Smallwood, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.1). Gemellus appears on a fragmentary list of (probably eponymous) priests of Apollo (G. Pugliese Carratelli, “Supplemento epigrafico Cirenaico,” *ASAtene* n.s. 23–24 [1961/62] 223); two succeeding names, Ti. Claudius Istros and Ti. Claudius

clear his status at the time of the dedication.⁴ The text may thus not belong to an early date in Nero's reign,⁵ when no journey is attested to provide any relevance to or explanation of the Apolline epithet. Nero, in fact, is known to have travelled outside Italy only once, for the Hellenic tour of A.D. 66/7. In mentioning the safe arrival of Nero after a near shipwreck in his description of the return voyage in the winter of 67, Dio (63.19.2) notes a circumstance which does provide a reason for an offering to Apollo of Safe Landing.⁶ A *naufragium* is recorded in certain terms in an anecdote at Suetonius, *Nero* 40.3, which may be a variation of the material in Dio.⁷

A second dedication from Cyrene is identical to the one above in all respects save for a variation in spacing of the last two lines and for the use of Myrtoos instead of Apobaterios.⁸

ὑπὲρ τῆς Νέρωνος Κλαυδίου
 Καίσαρος νίκης καὶ σωτηρίας
 καὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ παντὸς
 Ἀπόλλωνι Μυρτώω Μ. Ἀντώνιος
 Γέμελλος ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος.

It is not essential to look for topicality here. Myrtoos has been explained by association with the Hill of Myrtles at Cyrene (Callim. *Ap.* 91; *Apoll.Rhod.* 2.505), which is perfectly plausible.⁹ A dedication to Apollo Myrtates has been compared in this respect.¹⁰ But if the first inscription has some allusive quality, then so might the second. Also, it is worth noting the comment of the editor of *CIG* III 5138, that Myrtoos is derived from *Μυρτώων πέλαγος*, the stretch of sea between

Asclapous, can be assigned respectively to A.D. 59/60 and 60/1 from *SEG* 20 (1964) no.737. From the same list Gemellus' predecessor, Ti. Claudius Pancles, may possibly be also assigned to A.D. 55/6 from his appearance on an unpublished inscription in the possession of Miss J. M. Reynolds, to whom I am grateful for supplying this information.

⁴ Cf. the formula ἐπὶ ἱερέως τοῦ δεινός with L. Robert, *Hellenica* 1 (1940) 9, for examples.

⁵ Smallwood, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.1).

⁶ καὶ ἐγένετο μὲν τις ἐλπὶς ὑπὸ χειμῶνος αὐτὸν φθαρῆεσθαι, μάτην δὲ πολλοὶ ἤσθησαν ἐρώθη γάρ.

⁷ . . . amissis naufragio pretiosissimis rebus non dubitaverit inter suos dicere pisces eas sibi relatueros.

⁸ No dimensions of the stone, "a block of blue limestone," are provided by Smith and Porcher. The inscription appears also as *IGRR* I 1035 and *CIG* III 5138.

⁹ L. Vitali, *Fonti per la storia della religione Cyrenaica* (Padua 1932) 127f; Romanelli, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.1).

¹⁰ Kruse, *RE* 16 (1933) 1151 s.v. MYRTATES; cf. Vitali, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 128.

the Peloponnese and the Cyclades, so called *ab insula parva, quae cernitur Macedoniam a Geraesto petentibus haut procul Euboeae Carysto* (Pliny, *NH* 4.51; cf. Strabo 7.7.4).¹¹ No details have survived of the route taken by Nero on the return crossing, but it is at least possible that this area was covered. Conceivably, therefore, this text contains a hint of the location of the near shipwreck.

It thus seems possible that this pair of inscriptions should be assigned tentatively to A.D. 68 after the news of the difficult crossing had become well known. In that case they may be taken as signs of continuing local loyalty to Nero at a difficult stage of his principate. Further, the phrase common to both texts, *ὑπὲρ τῆς . . . νίκης*, otherwise conventional, assumes some significance: not merely a reference to the emperor's safety but also to his aesthetic triumphs in Greece, or even to his iselastic entrances in Italy.¹²

What then of the date of M. Antonius Gemellus' priesthood in Cyrene? A.D. 56/7 must be allowed to stand for the eponymous tenure, but there seems to be no reason why a second, non-eponymous priesthood could not have been held at a subsequent date. If so, one must imagine that the man had been empowered to make dedications on behalf of the full college.

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¹¹ V. Burr, *RE* 16 (1933) 1169–70 s.v. MYRTOISCHES MEER.

¹² Suet. *Nero* 24–5; Dio 63.20. For Nero's victories at Olympia cf. L. Moretti, *Olympionikai*, *MemLinc SER.* VIII 8.2 (1957) 158. Both dedications, it is possible, were made to commemorate military victories or escape from conspiracies; but A.D. 56/7 is not suited to either point of view.

II

A Note on Q. Veranius, cos. A.D. 49

THE SUGGESTION was made in the original publication and discussion of the sepulchral inscription of Q. Veranius, cos. A.D. 49, that Veranius presided over Nero's *ludi maximi*, which are known from Suetonius, *Nero* 11.2.¹ The idea has been subsequently adopted by other scholars,² but there is reason to believe that the view is incorrect. Suetonius provides no means of dating the games, but in the description he gives of them the item, *notissimus eques R. elephanto supersidens per catadromum decucurrit*, is comparable to a statement at Dio 61.17.2: ὅτε δὴ καὶ ἐλέφας ἀνήχθη ἐς τὴν ἀνωτάτω τοῦ θεάτρου ἀψίδα, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐπὶ σχοινίων κατέδραμεν ἀναβάτην φέρων. Dio says that the games to which he refers were given in honour of Agrippina and has his information under the year 59. The cited texts may have come from a common source, but at any rate the parallelism means that the two sets of games can be identified and the date of 59 be applied to the *ludi maximi*. By 59, however, Q. Veranius was dead.³

An alternative set of games is thus required for line 11 of the inscription. A clue is offered by the last clause of line 11, *cuius liberalitas erat minister*, which suggests the idea of a *congiarium* or donative.⁴ An occasion is needed when games and largesse were given together before Veranius' death. The best solution comes from Tacitus, *Annales* 12.41.3–4: at Nero's coming of age in 51 Claudius gave a *congiarium* in Nero's name which was followed by *circenses*.⁵ This date is perfectly possible for Veranius to have assisted in the distribution of the largesse.⁶

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¹ A. E. Gordon, *Quintus Veranius, Consul A.D. 49*, *CPCA* 2 (1952) 262ff; 271. Lines 10f of the inscription were presented as, *ludis | [maximis praefectus (or praesidens) factus est cum non p]etierit ab Augusto principe cuius liberalitas erat minister*.

² J. H. Oliver, *AJP* 75 (1954) 206ff, revised Gordon's restoration but retained the *ludi maximi: ludis | [maximis praefectus est, ut ipse praemium p]etierit*, etc. Cf. also E. M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius, and Nero* (Cambridge 1967) no.231(c); A. Garzetti, *From Tiberius to the Antonines* (London 1974) 618.

³ Tac. *Ann.* 14.29.1, *Agric.* 14.2 (with Ogilvie *ad loc.*).

⁴ For the association cf. e.g. Suet. *Aug.* 41, *Nero* 10.1; Plin. *Pan.* 25; *BMC Imp* I p.224.

⁵ *additum nomine eius donativum militi, congiarium plebei. et ludicro circensium . . .*

⁶ Cf. Dio 60.25.8.