

A BRIEF NOTE ON EUERGETISM, THE *HISTORIA APOLLONII REGIS TYRI*, AND A NEW INSCRIPTION FROM POMPEII

Keywords: *Historia Apollonii*, Pompeii Epitaph, Famine, Euergetism

In his 1988 book on famine and food supply Peter Garnsey tells the gripping story of survival of the poor in the eastern part of the classical world owing to the generosity of certain wealthy individuals who provided food at low prices: some wealthy people assume offices that then encourage them toward euergetism.¹

In this context I would like to bring forward a passage from the anonymous *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, Chapter 10, dated by me to the third century, but by many others to the fifth-sixth centuries, which shows euergetism in action. In the passage the chief protagonist Apollonius on his travels has arrived in Tarsus, which is suffering from a famine and lack of wheat, and he proposes to help the citizens:

*“dabo itaque vobis centum milia modiorum frumenti eo pretio, quo sum in patria mea mercatus, id est octo aereis singulos modios.” cives vero Tarsis, qui singulos modios singulos aureos mercabantur, ex hilarati facti acclamationibus gratias agebant certatim accipientes frumentum. Apollonius autem, ne deposita regia dignitate mercatoris videretur adsumere nomen magis quam donatoris, pretium quod acceperat utilitati eiusdem civitatis redonavit.*²

1) P. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis*, Cambridge 1988, 82 carefully defines what he means by euergetism: “1. Euergetism was not motivated by altruism. 2. The class that produced euergetists also produced speculators. 3. Euergetism had definite limits. 4. Euergetism was essentially an ad hoc response, not a lasting solution.” On the positive side he notes what some wealthy persons did: “What they, or some of them, were prepared to do, was undertake offices of public services for the community, and show generosity to the citizens in time of crisis.” Further passages in this area can be found in Garnsey, 82–86, 176–177, 258–268. M. Horster, *Urban Infrastructure and Euergetism outside the City of Rome*, in: C. Bruun / J. Edmondson (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, New York 2014, 515–536 discusses public euergetism related to building programs but unrelated to famine and food supply; M. Salzman, *From a Classical to a Christian City: Civic Euergetism and Charity in Late Antique Rome*, *SLA* 1.1, 2017, 65–85 mentions that in a famine Pope Sabinus (604–606) sold wheat from the papal granaries, but did not distribute it for free or show Christian charity.

2) The Latin text is that of G. Schmeling, *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, Leipzig 1988. It should be clear from the entire address of Apollonius to the citizens of Tarsus that he is seeking asylum.

Apollonius does two things for the citizens of Tarsus in the circumstances of famine: he sells them grain at a greatly reduced price, and then after considering his noble position, returns all the money the citizens had paid him.

Though the action of the *Historia Apollonii* takes place in the East, it was written in Latin.³ I have noted elsewhere many westward-looking elements in the *Historia Apollonii*, and read it as a family novel related to, but not dependent on, the canonical Greek novels.⁴ I would like to suggest that the euergetism of Apollonius is not necessarily the kind of generosity practiced only in the East, but has an example in the West (I realize that my example does not make a pattern). In his excellent and exhaustive commentary on the *Historia Apollonii* Stelios Panayotakis⁵ notes at Chapter 10 (quoted above): "... the selling of grain at a fixed or lower price by a private individual during a famine is an expression of euergetism, which is typical for the Hellenistic world (the Grk. technical term is *παράπρασις*), but incompatible with the Roman political practice ..." He bases this statement on the findings of a group of scholars who have studied euergetism, among whom is Garnsey.

It is not my aim to question the conclusions of Panayotakis or the scholars he cites, but to open the discussion about eastern euergetism and to consider a western example with the intention of reconsidering a passage in the *Historia Apollonii*.

Massimo Osanna⁶ has recently published a long inscription from Pompeii, which might belong to the epitaph of Cn. Alleius Nigidius Maius. I quote only that part in Latin with his English translation relevant to my argument about euergetism:

3) All the manuscripts of the *Historia Apollonii* are in Latin; Schmeling (see n. 2 above) and others hold that the novel was originally composed in Latin. This view has been opposed with vigor by G. A. A. Kortekaas from the time of his *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*. Prolegomena, Text Edition of the Two Principal Latin Recensions, Groningen 1984 to his massive Commentary on the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, Leiden 2007 published just before his death, who holds that the novel's original language was Greek. In a talk given on 6 February 2016 in London to promote funding for preservation of manuscripts of St. Catherine's, Monastery, Mount Sinai, Prof. Dr. Claudia Rapp of the University of Vienna noted that a large number of palimpsests now being read by new methods includes a sixth century text of part of Apollonius of Tyre. I can discover nothing more about this palimpsest beyond Rapp's verbal comment.

4) G. Schmeling, *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, in: idem (ed.), *The Novel in the Ancient World*, Leiden ²2003, 521. I have noted, for instance, that all the quotations and allusions from other classical authors are Roman. But this is no place to push an opinion.

5) S. Panayotakis, "The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre". A Commentary, Berlin 2012, 163. A third superb detailed commentary has just appeared in Italian: G. Vannini, *Storia di Apollonio Re di Tiro: Testo, Traduzione, Commento*, Milan 2018. Both Panayotakis and Vannini postulate a composition date of the fifth-sixth centuries and both are agnostic about a Greek original.

6) M. Osanna, Games, Banquets, Handouts, and the Population of Pompeii as Deduced from a New Tomb Inscription, *JRA* 31, 2018, 310–322. AE 2018 number has not yet been assigned.

... et cum / munus eius in caritate annonae incidisset, propter quod quadriennio eos pavit, potior ei cura civium suorum fuit quam rei familiaris; nam cum esset denaris quinis modius tritici, coemit / et ternis victoriatibus populo praestitit et, ut ad omnes haec liberalitas eius perveniret, vitum populo ad ternos victoriatibus per amicos suos panis cocti pondus divisit (hedera)...

Now, because his generosity coincided with a famine, for this reason he fed them for 4 years, and the care he showed his fellow citizens was greater than that for his own patrimony; when a peck (*modius*) of wheat was quoted (valued) at 5 *denarii* [= 20 sesterces], he bought it and made it available to the people for 3 *victoriati* [= 6 sesterces] a *modius*. Further, so that his generosity would reach everyone, through his friends he distributed to the people one by one an amount of baked bread worth 3 *victoriati* [= 6 sesterces].

Cn. Alleius Nigidius Maius does two things for the citizens of Pompeii in the context of a famine: he feeds the people with wheat at a greatly reduced price, and secondly so that his generosity⁷ would be extended to everyone, he distributes baked bread for free.

The fictional story in the East in Tarsus is remarkably similar in three aspects to the epitaph in the West in Pompeii, and we might want to use this new inscription and modify the view of euergetism in the *Historia Apollonii* as of eastern origin only.

Gainesville, Florida

Gareth Schmeling

7) Osanna has a nuanced translation of *munus*, employing the definition in the Oxford Latin Dictionary, 1996, *munus* 5 and 6, “something freely bestowed,” and “a kindness,” rather than Oxford Latin Dictionary, 1996, *munus* 2a and 2b, “a duty owed by a citizen.”