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Mostafa El Abbadi

The Edict of Tiberius Julius Alexander, Remarks on its Nature and Aim.

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THE EDICT OF TIBERIUS JULIUS ALEXANDER

REMARKS ON ITS NATURE AND AIM[1]

BY

MOSTAFA ÉL ABBADI

It is superfluous to try to stress the importance of the edict of Tiberius Julius Alexander[2]. Its significance is undoubtedly accepted by most scholars. But in spite of the repeated studies devoted to it[3], I feel that the divergence of opinions so far expressed tend to leave one rather unsatisfied with regard to its nature and aim. I am aware that such an important document might admit different approaches, but hardly different interpretations. Fortunately, most scholars accept it as an official appraisal of the situation at a critical moment of the development of Roman

[1] The edict of Tiberius Alexander has been the subject of a recent study by G. Chalon, 'L'Edit de Tiberius Julius Alexander, étude historique et exégétique' *Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana,* Urs Graf-Verlag Olten et Lausanne, 1964. Unfortunately, this book was unknown to me till Mr. P.M. Fraser kindly sent me a copy of it, after I had handed in my paper for publication in *BIFAO.* After reading Mr. Chalon's impressive work, I found that our approaches and interpretations are entirely different. Although I agree with his rejection of Reinmuth's theory, yet where he follows Wilcken and Bell, our paths diverge.

[2] Conveniently found in Dittenberger, *OGIS,* 669 = *SB,* 8444; a more recent and revised text with good bibliography was published by H.G. Evelyn-White and J.H. Oliver, *The Temple of Isis in El Khargeh Oasis,* New York 1938, pp. 30-31 a; translation of the edict is given by A.C. Johnson, *Roman Egypt,* No. 440; part of the edict in *BGU,* VII, 1562, from Philadelphia.

[3] The basic studies are : Graf W. Uxkull-Gyllenband, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung,* IX, pp. 199 ff. Rostovtzeff, *Studien zur Geschichte des Römichen Kolonates* (1910), pp. 85 ff.; Wilcken, *Zu den Edikten,* Zeit. Savigny-Stiftung, 42 (1921), pp. 124-158, where he also published a papyrus fragment of the edict; O.W. Reinmuth, *The Edict of T.J. Alexander, TAPA,* 65 (1934), pp. 248-259; Schubart, *Archiv.* XIV, pp. 36-43; A doctorate dissertation at Leipzig Univ. by W. Müller, *Das Edikt des T.J. Alexander* (1950). Only part of this work was available to me, namely « Zum Edikt des T.J. Alexander » Fest. Zucker pp. 293 f. on sect. 3 of the edict.

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rule in Egypt, and therefore it is helpful for the understanding of the whole concept of the economic and administrative policy in the province. But judgements differ with regard to the limitations of the edict and its scope. One meets with four different attitudes in this respect.

First, those who claim that the edict is primarily an Alexandrian document addressed to the Alexandrians. Rostovzeff was the first to take this attitude, and his treatment of the edict, though sound, is coloured by this bias [1]. Wilcken, adopting the same attitude, offered a more amplified interpretation by suggesting that there were specific political motives behind the publication of the edict. Nero had just died and Galba had been proclaimed emperor only less than a month before the edict was published on 6th July 68 A.D. Wilcken sought to find in the recognition of the new emperor the occasion that prompted the prefect's declaration, who was trying through assurances and promises of reform to appease the turbulent Alexandrians and win them and the Egyptians for the new master [2].

Reinmuth, on the other hand, challenged Wilcken's interpretation and emphatically asserted that « the edict was not addressed particularly to the Alexandrians» [3], but that it was concerned with the well being of the city and Egypt. Considering that Alexander had been prefect since 66 A.D. under Nero, why did he wait almost two years to publish this edict? Reinmuth finds a clue to the answer in line 49, where the prefect commands the strategi of the several nomes that if any new taxes were imposed within the last « five years».....these be restored to the former order [4]. Thus he concludes, that our document was a provincial edict published at the end of one quinquennium and the beginning of another (*i.e.* a Lustrum). It provided for a revision of the tax administration in certain particulars, which could not be effective until the beginning of a new quinquennium [5].

A third point of view is that the edict is some sort of political speech which should be taken 'cum grano salis !' It was Milne who first doubted the seriousness of the edict and advised that one should not value it more than one would a modern political

[1] Rostovtzeff, *Kolonat.,* pp. 85 f. 108 ff.; also his *Soc. Ec. Hist. of the Roman Empire,* 2nd ed. revised by P.M. Fraser (1957), pp. 294 f., and pp. 673-674, notes 46-47.

[2] Wilcken, *op. cit.*

[3] Reinmuth, *op. cit.,* p. 251.

[4] *Ibid.,* p. 256.

[5] *Ibid.,* 2567. This interpretation seems to have been accepted by S. Le Roy Wallace, *Taxation in Roman Egypt,* p. 31 (and yet on p. 49, he speaks of systems of taxation incompatible with Reinmuth's conclusion); and by W. L. Westermann, *Apokrimata,* p. 19.

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speech [1]. Of this opinion, too, appears to be Turner who has, more recently, described the edict as a 'captatio benevolentiae' [2].

Finally, Bell defended the seriousness of the edict, which he exploited to prove that, together with other documents, it revealed an economic crisis in Egypt under Nero. He further maintained that though the edict was addressed primarily to the Alexandrians, it was equally certain that many of its provisions were of universal application [3].

To put it briefly, the edict deals with four main problems, namely, land taxes, debts, liturgies and administrative abuses. It is obvious that it is not mostly concerned with the Alexandrians, and that the two sections in which they are mentioned deal with them only in so far as they are connected with the aforementioned problems (section 6, lines 32-34, on their exemption from liturgies in the country '*λειτουργίαι χωρίκαι*'; and section 13, lines 59-62, on the ancient land in the Alexandrian district and the Menelaite nome). Besides, it is difficult to imagine how some of the reforms promised, such as the enactments about debts and officials could have pleased or appeased the Alexandrians and the upper classes, who practised money-lending and filled most of the offices which the prefect was now putting under control.

On the other hand, very little indeed in the edict helps to support the assumption that it was a political speech for the new emperor. Galba is mentioned only twice, and in a language that is merely required by the occasion. In the preamble (lines 13 ff.) the prefect welcomes the emperor's accession to power and describes him as, « the Emperor Galba Augustus, who has brought light to us for the safety of the whole human race». He goes on to say that, « the Gods have reserved the security of the universe for this most sacred age». The second reference to the emperor is made in a very matter of fact way in the conclusion, where the prefect promises to refer to the emperor the questions of longer standing (lines 64 ff.). « I shall write to the Emperor Caesar Augustus and report to him who alone above all others is able to eradicate such practises completely and whose constant kindness and concern is for the security of us all». In order to realize the meaninglessness of these lukewarm words of praise, we need only set them against what was said of

[1] J.G. Milne, *JEA,* 22 (1936), p. 113.

[2] E.G. Turner, *Tiberius Julius Alexander, JRS,* 44 (1954), pp. 54-64.

[3] H.I. Bell, *The Economic Crisis in Egypt under Nero, JRS,* 28 (1938), pp. 1-9. This paper was also read at the International Congress of Papyrology, 1937.

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Nero, his predecessor, at the beginning of his reign. In an inscription in honour of the prefect Balbilius, Nero is described as « ὁ ἀγαθὸς δαίμων τῆς οἰκουμένης[1] ». Similarly the death of Claudius and the enthronement of Nero in 54 were proclaimed thus in Egypt, « ὁ μὲν ὀφειλόμενος τοῖς προγόνοις καὶ ἐνφανὴς θεὸς Καῖσαρ εἰς αὐτοὺς κεχώρηκε, ὁ δὲ τῆς οἰκουμένης καὶ προσδοκηθεὶς καὶ ἐλπισθεὶς Αὐτοκράτωρ ἀποδέδεικται, ἀγαθὸς δαίμων δὲ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀρχὴ ὤν τε πάντων ἀγαθῶν Νέρων Καῖσαρ ἀποδέδεικται »[2].

Finally, there is no conclusive proof that it was a provincial edict of the kind known in other Roman provinces. The five years chosen by the prefect during which new irregular assessments were to be abolished may only have been a convenient period to prevent a flood of petitions and complaints from pouring in on him. In spite of the weight of Reinmuth's argument[3], it is not at all certain that the 'lustrum' cycle was used in Egypt, as other cycles seem in fact to have been in use in the different nomes of Egypt in the first and second centuries[4].

As for the occasion on which the edict was issued, we need not search further than what Tiberius Alexander himself informs us. The prefect, as Bell rightly remarked, mentions in several places in the edict that numerous complaints had been sent to him for which he sought solutions[5]. But with whose complaints was the prefect primarily concerned? Surely, not with the complaints of the poor, landless peasants who had abandoned their homes and families because of poverty and for fear of torture at the hands of the oppressive tax-farmers. Bell devotes the greater part of his paper to the description of their condition and assumes that Alexander was dealing with their problems[6]. But surely these were the people who paid the poll-tax[7] and the whole edict has not one single word concerning their plight, nor does it speak of runaways and the use of force in exacting taxes; for it must be remembered that the taxes mentioned in the edict are not the laographia but land-taxes. I think, the prefect himself gives us the answer to the above question in the preamble and in the first section of his edict. In lines 5-6 of the preamble the prefect says : « almost

(1) *OGIS*, II. 666.

(2) *P. Ox.* VII, 1021 (54 A.D.); W. Wilcken, *Chrest.* 113.

(3) *Loc. cit.*

(4) Wallace, *Taxation*, 49 f., shows that the assessments of the γεωμετρία were made at a variety of intervals from 4 to 12 years.

(5) Bell, *loc. cit.*, p. 2; Complaints are mentioned in the edict in the preamble and in sections 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 13 and in the conclusion.

(6) Bell, *loc. cit.*, p. 4 ff.

(7) Philo deals only with laographia (de spec. Leg. III, 159 f.) cf. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 492.

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from the moment of my entry into the city, I am entreated by petitioners both from the wealthiest classes here and from the country-farmers, not only in small delegations but also in large groups complaining about recent abuses». (*σχεδὸν δὲ ἐξ οὗ τῆς πόλεως ἐπέβην καταβοώμενος ὑπὸ τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων καὶ κατ' ὀλίγους καὶ κατὰ πλήθη τῶν τε ἐνθάδε εὐσχημονεσλάτων καὶ τῶν γεωργούντων τὴν χώραν μεμφομένων τὰς ἔγγισλας γενομένας ἐπηρείας.*)

This general statement in the introduction tends to limit the petitioners to a certain class, namely the class of land owners, whether wealthy absentees in Alexandria (*τῶν ἐνθάδε εὐσχημονεσλάτων*) or peasant proprietors who lived on their land in the country (*τῶν γεωργούντων τὴν χώραν*). We should not, however confuse these *γεωργοῦντες* with the *δημοσίοι γεώργοι*. The latter constituted the great mass of landless public peasants, whereas the words *γεώργος* and *ὁ γεώργων* usually indicate a farmer who owned his own land [1]. This class of land owners, whether big or small, formed the backbone of the new régime; of them were the tax farmers, the lessees of imperial estates, the purchasers of state land. And it was they who generally performed the higher liturgies and filled the different offices of the administration. A glance at the edict will show that it does not go beyond these matters and the problems connected with them.

This understanding is also confirmed by the first section of the edict in which the prefect addresses himself directly to this class at large : (lines 10, 11) « *ἔγνων γὰρ πρὸ πάντὸς εὐλογωτάτην οὖσαν τὴν ἔντευξιν ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ ἄκοντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς τελωνείας ἢ ἄλλας μισθώσεις οὐσιακὰς παρὰ τὸ κοινὸν ἔθος τῶν ἐπαρχειῶν πρὸς βίαν ἄγεσθαι* ».

[1] This interpretation is sufficiently attested in the papyri, *e.g.* in the Ptolemaic period, *SB*, 8033 (165-158 B.C.) where a '*γεώργος*' was married to a woman who owned 80 arourae, and when the land was confiscated he offered to buy 23 arourae of it. Another example is *P. Tebt.* 5,1.93 (118 B.C.) in which the cultivators of emphyteutic land are called *τοὺς γεω(ργούντας) κατὰ τὴν χώραν γῆν ἀμπιλῖτιν ἢι παραδείσους*. In the Roman period, the edict itself (l. 46) implies that *οἱ καθ' ὅλην χώραν γεωργούντες* owned lands upon which they paid irregular assessments; and in lines 32-33 the buyers of land paid taxes, whereas the *δημοσίοι γεώργοι* paid rentals (*ἐκφόρια*). We also meet in the Roman period with an exegetes of Alexandria who carried the honorary title of *ἀρχιγεώργος*, *P. Ox.* III, 477 (132-133 A.D.). In the Byzantine period this title seems to have undergone some change and meant simply 'foreman' who supervised the cultivation of an estate, *P. Lips.* 97 (338 A.D.); cf. Johnson and West, *Byzantine Egypt*, p. 41, n. 12.

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This section could not have been addressed solely to the Alexandrians, since they were not alone employed in tax farming (let alone leasing imperial estates). On the contrary there is evidence that the privileged groups of Romans, Alexandrians and veterans, unless compelled, tried to avoid the liturgy of tax-farming [1]. But the fact remains that any person with the necessary requirements of property garantee, unless legally exempted, was employed in tax-farming and in the other liturgies [2].

An important subject to which the edict devotes several sections, is connected with taxation problems, but only as mentioned before, where land taxes are concerned. For example, in section 8, the prefect promises this class of landowners throughout the country relief from recent irregular assessments (l. 46 : *οἱ καθ' ὅλην τὴν χώραν γεωργοῦντες καὶ ἐδήλωσαν ὅτι πολλὰ καινῶς κατεκρίθησαν, κ.τ.λ.*). We are fortunate to possess an extremely interesting document which illustrates this part of the edict. It is a recently published private letter dated 18th January 57 A.D., from Helenia (or Herania) to her father Pompeius about some extraordinary payments which were being collected as 'pious contributions' for the sanctuary of the Egyptian deity Souchos. From the letter we understand that the new assessment was being collected from everybody, including the privileged classes of Romans, Alexandrians and Katoikoi. Helenia informs her father, who presumably belonged to one of these classes, that the new payment was demanded from him and that she had not paid, awaiting his instructions. A few lines of this rather interesting, (badly spelt) = letter, may be worth quoting : (lines 1-10) « [Ἑ]λενία Πουπηγίωι τῶι πατρὶ [π]λεῖσ[τ]α χαίρειν καὶ διὰ πάντος [ὑ]γιαίνιν· ἠγόρακά συ [τ]ὰς ἐλέας· αἰτοῦσι παν[τ]αχόθην εἰς τὴν εὐσέβια τ[ο]ῦ ναοῦ Σούχου, πάντος ἀνθρώπους, καὶ Ῥωμαίους καὶ Ἀλεξανδρεῖς καὶ κτυκοῦτος ἐν τῶι Ἀρ[σ]ινοεΐτηι, κ.τ.λ.) [3].

[1] As in *BGU* 747 (139 A.D.) = Wilcken, *Chrest.* 35, in which the strategos of the Coptite nome complains to the prefect about Romans, Alexandrians and veterans in his nome who were engaged in tax-farming. « They are disobedient, « he says », and claim that they are not like the local practores (*ἐνχωρίοι πράκτωρες*), col. II, 1.5-6.

[2] *BGU* IV, 1046, Fayum (after 166 A.D.) = Wilcken, *Chrest.* 265 ; though of a later date than the edict, yet it is a good example of an already existing phenomenon that the majority of practores were drawn from local landowners (*γεουχοῦντες*). For the property garantee of various liturgies, see the lists in Oertel, *Die Liturgie,* p. 143 ff. ; and Johnson, *Roman Egypt,* p. 611, n. 22. *P. Tebt.* II, 329 (139 A. D.) shows how two men of means, one from the locality and the other from Alexandria, could share the collection of fisheries dues in a district in the Fayum.

[3] *P. Merton,* II. 63, Fayum (57 A.D.). Of the correspondence of Pompeius, four other letters are known, *P. Oslo,* Inv. Nos. 1444, 1460,

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It is this class of settlers and local bourgeoisie that the edict is mostly concerned with. It was still a young and growing class, many of its members were relatively small landowners who had benefited from the opportunities offered by the new Roman administration, through purchasing land at cheap or nominal prices [1]. They mostly lived on and cultivated their newly acquired property; hence the edict refers to them as '*οἱ γεωργοῦντες*', in contrast to the wealthy absentee landlords in Alexandria '*οἱ ἐνθάδε εὐσχημονεσ⌉άτοι*' (line 6). The prefect, as the executor of the Roman policy, wishes to preserve and encourage this new class, which was to a great extent a Roman creation [2]. The less wealthy members of their number often needed money in order to develop the land which they had bought (*γῆ ἐωνημένη*) or in order to fulfill their obligations towards the state by performing liturgies, taking up tax-farming or leasing imperial estates. They resorted to borrowing money, and soon slipped into the grips of greedy financiers, who were also frequently powerful officials who abused their authority. This state of affairs must have been so grave that the prefect devotes more than one section of the edict to it. We may quote one document which helps to illustrate the hopeless plight of such debtors in front of a powerful creditor who abused his authority as magistrate. The subject of the papyrus [3] is a petition from a certain Demetrius and his cousin Philotera, together with two uncles, all from Hermopolis, against Musaios who is styled gymnasiarch. They request the restitution of 83 ¼ arourae which had been given to Musaios as mortage against a loan of 4800 drachmae. Musaios had been exploiting the land for a very long time so that his profit had amounted to 5 talents. Meanwhile the debtors had presented several petitions and had obtained a verdict from the 'Juridicus' in their favour that they should pay their debt while Musaios kept what he had collected of rents. But when they requested Musaios to give them part of the land so that they could sell it and pay off the debt, he refused and continued to occupy the land, not caring about the verdict or their complaints. The language in which they plead their case reveals how desperate these people were in front of the obstinate gymnasiarch and his influence in the district : (lines 28 ff.). « We have been exploited on every side by this man, against whom we have presented numerous

1475 (all the three letters are published by S. Eitrem and L. Amundsen, *Aegyptus,* 31 (1951), pp. 177 ff.); and *P. Fouad,* 75, Fayum (October 64 A.D.).

[1] Cf. Johnson, *op. cit.,* p. 147 f.; Rostovtzeff, *SEHRE,* p. 294.

[2] Cf. Rostovtzeff, *SEHRE,* p. 278 ff.

[3] *P. Ryl.* II.119, Hermopolis (54-67 A.D.).

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petitions and offers of payment, but he never answered in virtue of his superior position in the district though we have officially notified him and his sons, Hermophilos and Castor with summons to attend in court, yet his sons disregarded the matter and did not come forward. We therefore beg you to give a decision on all this so that we may obtain justice and be relieved».

Demetrius and Philotera with their 83 arourae represent[1] one group of this new class of local bourgeoisie, technically called 'metropolites', to whom, I claim, the prefect was promising protection and justice. Another, even more important group of this class in the eyes of the Roman administration, was that of Roman veterans. Immediately after the conquest, Augustus very probably allotted his soldiers, who settled in Egypt, small plots of land, but the general practice thereafter was to pay the soldiers in cash and to encourage them to buy their own land from the state at nominal prices [2]. These new and, in the first century, still generally small landowners, occasionally slipped into debt too. A papyrus from Oxyrhynchos [3] preserves a loan contract (*συνχώρησις*), in which Lucius Pompeius, a Roman veteran, is stated to have borrowed 400 drachmae from a certain Didymé. In lieu of interest, Pompeius allowed Didymé and her family to dwell in part of a house that belonged to him; at the end of the period he was to pay back to Didymé the debt without interest. But if he were to violate the contract, he would be liable to pay the sum of 400 drachmae, plus half of it again, plus interest at the rate of 1 drachma per mina per month, in addition to 100 drachmae compensation. If he failed to do so, the law always allowed foreclosure upon property [4].

But there were other, causes of complaint among the veterans that were more widespread. The veterans were Roman citizens who enjoyed certain legal privileges not least among them, exemption from the liturgies. In the first century, they enjoyed complete exemption [5], but later, their exemption was limited to five years only

[1] Another example is *P. Ox.* II, 271 (56 A.D.).

[2] Cf. Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, pp. 287 ff., n. 44; Lesquier, *L'armée romaine d'Egypte*, p. 328 f.

[3] *P. Fouad*, 44, Oxyrhynchos (28 August 44 A.D.).

[4] For the right of execution on debtors' property and appropriation of mortgage (*ἐμβαδεία*) cf. Taubenschlag, *Law in Greco-Roman Egypt*, p. 214 f. The same right is confirmed by Septimius Severus in two responsa, Apokrimata, *P. Col.* 123, lines 13-17 and 18-21 (200 A.D.).

[5] Wilcken, *Chrest.* 463, col. I, 10-20 (87-89 A.D.).

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after their honourable discharge [1]. But it seems that even in the first century there were infringements on their right of exemption, and they were compelled against their will to take up tax-farming and the leasing of imperial estates, as in the words of the edict (lines 10-11, quoted above). Two documents dated 63 A.D. may serve to illustrate this point, and to shed light on the cause of confusion in this respect [2]. In both documents we have reports of proceedings of an audience or an interview by Prefect Tuscus with delegations of Roman veterans and other discharged soldiers. These soldiers seem to have settled in different nomes, hence the prefect speaks of writing to the strategi, each in his nome, to stop the abuses against them (*ἔγραψα τοῖς κατὰ [ν]ομὸν σ[τρατηγοῖς ἵνα ἡ χάρις ὁλόκληρος [ ]ου ὑμεῖν τηρη[θ]η κατὰ τὸ ἑκάσ[τ]ου δικαιον*) [3]. Although the exact nature of their complaint is not specifically stated, we understand that they were subject to some kind of abuse. In one case (Yale papyrus) they were molested and harassed (*παρενοχλεῖ* and *κόπους παράσχῃ*); in the other (Fouad papyrus) it is simply said that the subject of complaint was about their citizenship (*περ[ὶ] πολειτίας*). The point of interest is that in both cases, the prefect tells the petitioners that they were not all of the same category, and consequently not of the same status. In the Yale papyrus, the prefect says «(l. 17 f.), *ἄλλη ἡ ἀγωγὴι ἡ τῶν λεγεωναρίων, ἄλλο ἡ τῶν χορταρίων, ἄλλο ἡ τῶν κοπηλατῶν*». (*i.e.* there is one agogé of the legionaries, another of the cohortales another of the rowers of the fleet). Strictly speaking '*ἀγωγή*' means 'disciplina militaris'; but C.B. Welles rightly suggested that it must have been a broad enough term to include also the privileges of these various groups of retired soldiers. This suggestion is confirmed by P. Fouad 21, in which Tuscus uses other terms, namely *πολίτεια, ὑπόθεσις, δικαίον* [4]. In the former document 'agogé' seems to have been used to mean the same, and may be translated by the word 'treatment'. From

[1] *BGU,* IV, 1022, Caranis (172 A.D.) = Wilcken, *Chrest.* 396.

[2] *SB,* V. 8247; and *P. Fouad* 21. On these two documents see C.B. Welles, *The Immunitas of the Roman legionaries in Egypt, JRS,* 28 (1938), pp. 41-49; W.L. Westermann, *Tuscus the Prefect and the Veterane in Egypt,* Class. Phil., 26 (1941), pp. 21-29; 1, A. Segré, *P. Yale* inv. 1528 and *P. Fouad* 21, *JRS,* 30 (1940), pp. 153 ff.; Id. *Il diritto dei militari peregrini nell'esercito Romano,* Rend. Pont. Acc. Rom. d'Arch. XVII. (1940-1941), pp. 169 ff.; Id., *Byzantion,* 16 (1943), 569 f.; S. Daris, *Aegyptus,* 40 (1960), pp. 305 ff.; and *Aegyptus,* 42 (1962), pp. 123 ff., where he publishes *P. Oslo* inv. 1451 which preserves a copy of *P. Fouad,* 21, lines 11-16.

[3] *P. Fouad,* 21, ll. 15-16.

[4] Lines 10 ff.

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these two documents we understand that the privileges of the various categories of discharged Roman soldiers were not the same; hence, officials, whether through inexperience or through malice, used to force upon the upper grades, especially the veterans of the legions, obligations and liturgies such as tax-farming and cultivating imperial estates of which they should have enjoyed legal exemption.

Besides Roman veterans, certain other professions enjoyed, either complete or limited exemption from serving public duties; of such was the priesthood [1]. In 54 A.D. we hear that the priests of Socnopaiou complained to the prefect L.L. Geta that they were being compelled to lease lands of the state. The prefect answered, ordering the strategos of the Arsinoite nome to stop that kind of outrage [2].

These and similar petitions were obviously the ones that Tiberius Alexander had in mind in his attempts at reform. A fresh reading of the edict in the light of this interpretation, I believe, will show that the other sections too are primarily concerned with the class of landowners throughout the country. Surely it was the members of this class who were disturbed by corrupt methods of tax-farmers referred to in the edict, such as the disregard of their immunities and abatements of taxes (lines 26-29), when they were asked to pay rentals on their purchased land instead of the prescribed taxes (lines 30-32); and through levying taxes by the average of previous years and not according to the actual rising of the Nile (lines 55-59). They were equally harassed by informers who blackmailed them by introducing their cases for trial time and time again before the prefect and the idios logos (lines 35-45); and by the accountants and other officials who enriched themselves by false entries, so that some in fact preferred 'to make a cession of their property rather than spend more than it is worth...etc.' (lines 51-55).

A final question which may be asked is how far the measures of Tiberius Alexander were effective. It is certain that the enactments of his edict were put into force at once and remained so after his term of office. Subsequent documentary evidence from papyri shows that long after his praefectura, petitioners still quoted Tiberius Alexander's edicts and demanded amends and punishments according to their

[1] On immunities, see *P. Philad.* No. 1. (c. 103-124 A.D.) and the valuable commentary by Scherer; also cf. Wilcken, *Grundz,* p. 339 ff.; Oertel, *Liturgie,* p. 387 ff.; Johnson, *Roman Egypt,* p. 609 f.; Jouguet, *Vie Municipale,* p. 104 ff.; Lesquier, *l'Armée romaine,* p. 333 f.; Bell, *Antinoopolis, JRS,* 30 (1940), p. 133 ff.; Westermann, *loc. cit.;* Segré, *loc. cit.*

[2] Dittenberger, *OGIS,* 664 (54 A.D.).

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dispensations [1]. But to quote is one thing, and to assume that the edict bore fruit and that as a consequence conditions improved in the second half of the first century [2], is another. In view of the lack of conclusive evidence, any judgement in this respect remains tentative. Yet, I would like to draw attention to the fact that certain abuses which existed before the edict, can still be traced in the papyri after its publication. A case in point is that of Leonides of Alexandria, who exploited his debtors, between 69 and 79 A.D. in much the same way as Musaios the gymnasiarch had done, only a few years before the edict [3]. The case of Leonides, is not unique, similar examples can be found in the documents of the latter part of the first century [4]. I choose the cases of insolvent debtors because it is a good indication of the financial stability of the new class of local bourgeoisie. Such examples, however, practically disappear from the documents of the first half of the second century [5]. In view of this phenomenon, the argument that the edict in question was the cause of improvement is unconvincing, as the general stability and improvement in conditions achieved in the second century must have been the result of a change in the policy of the Roman administration, in the last third of the first century. This policy aimed at replacing Roman absentee landlords by men of moderate landed property who lived on, and cultivated their own lands [6]. The edict was published just when the Roman administration embarked on her new policy, hence its special significance. It is an excellent proof of the ultimate failure of the earlier economic policy as applied by Augustus and his immediate successors, who encouraged big landownership ; and it

[1] *P. Strasb.* 226 (90-91 A.D.), ed. J. Schwartz (1963). The papyrus is mutilated but the remains are enough to prove the point : (lines 12 ff.) « *τῆ*]*ν τῶν ἐγκεκληκότων ἐπηρείαν* — [15] *καὶ ζημίαις* [*καὶ ν*]*ουθεσίαις* — [17] *ἀπὸ διατάγματος Τιβερίου Ἰουλίο*[*υ*] *Ἀλεξάν-δρου* ; another example is *P. Ox.* VI, 899, l. 28 (200 A.D.) = Wilcken, *Chrest.* 361.

[2] As Bell assumes, *Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest,* p. 78.

[3] A fragment of this papyrus was first published in *P. Os.* IX, 1203, but later S. Möller identified it with another Berlin fragment and published the whole document in *P. Berl. Möller,* 2 (age of Vespasian).

[4] e.g. *P. Ox.* XII, 1471 (81 A.D.) ; *P. Flor.* I, 55, Hermopolis (88 A.D.) ; *P. Flor.* I, 86, Hermopolis (1st century, after 87 A.D.) ; *P. Ox.* VIII, 1118 (late 1st cent. or early 2nd).

[5] It is not until the 2nd half of the 2nd century that we begin to find similar signs of financial instability among this class, e.g. *P. Fouad* 26, Arsinoe (157-159 A.D.), *P. Ross.* V, 54, Arsinoe (2nd century A.D.) ; *P. Ryland* II, 115, Hermopolis (156 A.D.) ; *P. Ox.* IV, 712, Athribite (after 147 A.D.) ; *PSI,* XIII, 1328, Oxyrhynchos (201 A.D.).

[6] On the new policy, see Rostovtzeff, *SEHRE,* p. 294 f. and notes.

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is also an indication of the necessity for change. It is not surprising either, that the new policy of vast confiscations of large estates was carried out by Vespasian, in whose bid for power, Tiberius Julius Alexander played a decisive role and became one of his chief administrators [1].

[1] *P. Fouad,* 8 = Musurillo, *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs,* V b, p. 30-31; cf. Stein, *Die Praefekten von Ägypten in der Römischen Kaiserzeit* (1950), pp. 37 ff.; Turner, *Tiberius Julius Alexander, JRS,* 44 (1954), pp. 54-64.

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