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## Posting a Public Notice on Papyrus: A Frequent Phenomenon?\*

*Posting a Public Notice on Papyrus: A Frequent Phenomenon?*

Public notices were frequently posted in the cities, towns, and villages of Graeco-Roman Egypt. The available data makes it possible to answer several questions related to this topic: What material was used for posting notices? Did the authorities issue any instructions on the format of public notices? For how long should a notice be posted? This should make it possible to make a fresh evaluation of the famous Peukestas order, a notice posted in the Saqqâra religious complex and directed at Greek soldiers.

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### Introduction

«It is in fact a notice intended to be pinned up (no doubt many such will have been written on papyrus, but few have survived).» Eric Turner was describing one of the best-known of all Greek papyri, the Peukestas order, posted in the Saqqâra temple complex shortly after 331<sup>a</sup> (1). Stating that «few (notices) have survived» seems like an understatement: there are no known parallels

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(1) TURNER 1975, p. 251. The full publication of the papyrus appeared in TURNER 1974 (SB XIV 11942).

to this notice among some sixty thousand published documents preserved over a period of roughly one thousand years. Therefore, a survey of the direct and indirect evidence we possess on the posting of public notices may prove useful, in order to assess what role papyrus may have played in this context.

The available data on the posting of public notices comes for the most part from the period of the Roman principate; it is often associated with ordinances issued by the Praefect of Egypt that were to be disseminated throughout the province. In addition, material from the Ptolemaic period seems sufficiently homogeneous and consistent to also be exploited alongside. A useful listing of much of the evidence from the Roman period – papyri and inscriptions – was provided by Andrea Jördens, whose focus was primarily set on the administrative dimension of the posting of public notices in relation with the Praefect of Egypt (2). This material, however, may also serve to identify some more specific aspects of the procedure, *e.g.*: What material was actually used for posting notices? Did the authorities issue any instructions on the format of public notices? For how long should a notice be posted? After a short reminder on the general appearance of the Peukestas order, I shall try to bring some answers to these questions within the limits of Graeco-Roman Egypt.

### The Peukestas order

This document was found in a dump of a necropolis at Saqqâra in the excavation season of 1972/1973. It consists of a large sheet of papyrus (w 35.8 × h 13.4 cm), with the text written across the fibres, *transversa charta* (3). The width of the sheet thus corresponds to the height of the roll; it was tall, at least in comparison with rolls from the subsequent periods (usually about 18-30 cm). Turner noted the presence of several holes along the top edge in the right half of the sheet. They may have been used for posting, but inexplicably there are no corresponding holes in the left half.

The layout of the three lines of writing suggests that the scribe took some care in positioning his text on the sheet. There is a generous and regular margin on the left and bottom; the top margin, however, is somewhat narrower, and on the right the text is not quite aligned. Using a rush, the scribe drew large, sepa-

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(2) JÖRDENS 2001, pp. 58-59 and 67-69.

(3) Reproduced in full scale in TURNER, PARSONS 1987<sup>2</sup>, pp. 138-139, n° 79.

rate letters. The absence of any cursiveness in the writing is not surprising if we compare it to the style of the few preserved fourth-century hands (4). In this specific case, it produces – as it were – an epigraphic effect; and it adds to the legibility of the notice. The text, established and translated by Turner, runs as follows:

[[μ]] Πευκέστου	<i>Peukestas' order.</i>
μὴ παραπορεύεσθαι μη-	<i>No one is to pass.</i>
δένα· ἱερείως τὸ οἶκημα.	<i>The chamber is that of a priest.</i>

The scribe apparently started writing the order itself, beginning with the μ of μὴ, then erased it and wrote ΠΕΥΚΕΣΤΟΥ, which Turner identified as the name of Peukestas, one of Alexander's generals, left behind in Egypt after the king departed for his eastern conquests. The scribe obviously put some emphasis on the name: it was written as a single word in the first line, with larger letters and a wider spacing than in the following two lines.

The picture that emerges from this document is that of a large notice posted to the attention of Greek-speaking readers, presumably soldiers under the command of Peukestas, marking a priestly building as being off-limits. Peukestas' name at the beginning lends authority to the order. The writing is very clear, and the wording and syntax are remarkably concise and straightforward, making it easy to understand the order for anyone but a totally illiterate soldier; but within the context of an Egyptian sacred enclosure where Graeco-Macedonian soldiers were presumably roaming, the readership of such a notice must have been rather limited. This last point is in sharp contrast with the public notices that will be examined below, which were designed to reach virtually every individual in the country.

### Orders to post a notice

When local officials posted a public notice, they were normally following instructions from a higher authority. This could consist of a one-word order such as προτεθήτω, “*let it be posted*”, placed at the end of the copy of an edict from

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(4) See in particular P.Eleph. 1 (310<sup>a</sup>) and UPZ I 1 (IV<sup>a</sup>), images of which can be accessed through the *Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis*.

the Praefect of Egypt (5). The chancery could also provide a more elaborate wording: ταύτης μου τῆς ἐπιστολῆς τὸ ἀντίγρ(αφον) δημοσίᾳ προτεθή[ω] πρὸς τὴν πάντων γνῶσιν, “*of this letter of mine, a copy should be publicly posted so that all may know*” (6).

Elsewhere, we find an *epistrategos* giving an even more elegant turn to his order: οὐ περισσὸν ἡγησάμην τὸ καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς αὐτὰ ποιῆσαι φανερά, ἣν καὶ αὐτὴν βούλομαί σε ἐν δημοσίῳ [πρ]οθεῖναι τόπῳ, “*I have considered it not to be superfluous to make these points evident also through my letter, which I also want you to post in a public location*” (7). To this, the *strategos* of the Oxyrhynchite nome reacts by posting the letter (4-5): ἀντίγρ[αφον] δημοσίᾳ π[ρ]οῖέθηκα ὡς [ἐκε]λεύσθη, ἵνα πάντες εἰδῶσι ἃ δ[ι]ετάξατο, “*I have made a public posting (of the letter) according to the orders, so that all may know the regulations he has made*”.

### Notices for posting and their copies

As a matter of fact, the public notices that appear in papyri were not posted; they were for the most part copies to be filed by those in charge of the posting. Below the copy of a royal ordinance from the I<sup>a</sup>, a local scribe added the following note:

(3<sup>rd</sup> h.) [[ἀντειλ[ημμένος]]

(1<sup>st</sup> h.) (ἔτους) γ Φαῶφι κγ

(2<sup>nd</sup> h.) Ὡρος τοπογραμματοῦς . . . δι’ Ὁγίου γρα(μματοῦς) ἐκτέθεικα ἐναντίον τοῦ προεκ[κε]μένου προστάγματος.

(ἔτους) γ Ἀθὺρ . ε.

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(5) BGU I 288, 11 (144<sup>p</sup>-147<sup>p</sup>); P.Oxy. I 34 v, ii, 16 and iii, 14 (= M.*Chr.* 188, 127<sup>p</sup>). The verbs προτίθημι and ἐκτίθημι correspond to the normal Greek usage outside Egypt too; see WILHELM 1909, p. 285.

(6) P.Oxy. XLVII 3339, 25-28 (191<sup>p</sup>). For a similar order, see also SB XIV 11935, 21-35 (210<sup>p</sup>).

(7) P.Oxy. XLII 3025, 10-12 (118<sup>p</sup>). The understated wording οὐ περισσὸν ἡγησάμην, “*I have considered it not to be superfluous*”, only underlines the actual power of the official. See also JÖRDENS 2001, p. 69, on the litotes used in P.Oxy. XXXIV 2705, 11-12: ὡς μηδένα ἀγν[ο]ῖ[σ]αι τὰ διηγορευμέν[α]. In P.Oxy. XLII 3025, the *epistrategos* knows his power and does not refrain from using βούλομαι, a verb typical of orders issued by the Praefect and his direct subordinates, as noted also by Jördens.

*Docketed.*

*Year 3, Phaophi 23.*

*I, Horos, local scribe (...) through Onias, scribe, have posted (the above ordinance) next to the previously posted ordinance.*

*Year 3, Hathyr 15 (or 25) (8).*

The reading ἐναντί[ον τοῦ προεκ]κε[ι]μένου προστάγματος is Ulrich Wilcken's correction from the *editio princeps*, where the editors had read ἐν ἀντί[γραφον τοῦ πρ]οκε[ι]μένου προστάγματος, "one copy of the above ordinance" (9). More importantly for the present inquiry, Wilcken added a word of caution about the nature of the document: «Natürlich ist dieser Papyrus nicht der Aushang selbst; das zeigt die Subskription, wie man sie auch deutet. Vielmehr ist es eine Abschrift, die mit der Subskription des Unterbeamten wohl an das Bureau des Strategen zurückgeht». In other words, this copy of the ordinance was evidently not posted publicly; it was a record to be filed by an official service. The same applies to the mention of a copy made of a notice posted in the *IP*: ἀντίγραφον προγράμματος ἐκτεθέντες (l. -τος) ἐν Μέμφ[ε]ι· Γάιος Αἰὺίδιος Ἡλιοδωρος ἑπαρχ[ος] Αἰγύπτου λέγει (...), "copy of an ordinance posted in Memphis: the praefect Gaius Avidius Heliodorus says (...)" (10). This copy consists in a record of the actual notice that was posted following an order from the Praefect of Egypt, who was in Memphis on the occasion of the *conventus*.

In another case, the copy of a public notice about runaway slaves was pasted into a τόμος συγκολλήσιμος for registration: Σύρος ὑπηρέτης διὰ Ἡρακλήου υἱοῦ τοῦ ὑπογράφοντο[ς] αὐτοῦ προτέθειμαι δημοσίᾳ καὶ κατεχώρισα, "I, Syros, assistant, through Heraklios, son of the signatory himself, have posted (the notice) publicly and entered it into the book" (11).

(8) BGU VIII 1730, 16-20 (= SB IV 7419 = *C.Ord.Ptol.* 73, 79<sup>a</sup> or 50<sup>a</sup>).

(9) WILCKEN 1935, pp. 120-121, who expresses his doubts about the original reading («Das wäre schwer verständlich und auch ohne Parallele») and provides a plausible interpretation for his correction («Nun meldet er, dass er es 'gegenüber dem vorher ausgehängten königlichen Erlass' veröffentlicht habe»). To Wilcken's arguments should be added the fact that the word order in ἐν ἀντί[γραφον] seems awkward.

(10) PSI XIV 1406, 1-3 (138<sup>p</sup>-142<sup>p</sup>), in the revised reading produced by BASTIANINI 2016, p. 40. For a similar instance, see SB XIV 11374, 1 (ca. 168<sup>p</sup>).

(11) P.Harr. I 62, 21-22 (150<sup>p</sup>). See also P.Oxy. XIV 1633, 37-38 (275<sup>p</sup>): δημοσίᾳ προετέθη(η) καὶ κατεχω(ρίσθη), "(The notice) was posted publicly and entered into the book". The presence of abbreviations suggests that this corresponded to a routine procedure.

Therefore, explicit instructions about the posting of public notices, which will be presented below, suggest that we should distinguish copies of posted notices from the notices themselves.

### Stone vs. papyrus

The evidence adduced so far does not provide any clues on the kind of support used for writing public notices. For the posting of information that was meant to be preserved over a long period of time, Egypt does not differ from other areas of the Mediterranean: stone was an appropriate support, as a sizeable epigraphic corpus testifies (12). Therefore, a few explicit cases of epigraphic posting should be recalled, before we revert to less durable material.

In the village of Theadelphia in the Arsinoite nome, the right of *asylia* was confirmed through an ordinance of Ptolemy XII Auletes and Cleopatra VI Tryphaena (13). An inscription records the text of the petition submitted to the king and queen, together with their positive response. The petitioner also requested the right to erect some stone steles (47: *στήλας λιθίνας*) that would preserve the royal ordinance.

In the Great Oasis, stone was used to engrave an edict from the Praefect of Egypt about the prohibition made to soldiers from seizing local resources without proper authorization (14). The instructions given by the Praefect to the *strategos* of the Great Oasis in his circular letter are worth quoting in full (8-13):

[Οὐεργύλιος Κ]α[ρίτων Ποσειδωνίωι, στρατηγῶι Ὀάσε[ως, χαίρειν· οὐ ἐπὶ] τῆς πόλεως προέθηκα διατάγμα[τος τὸ ἀντίγραφον ἔ]πεμψά σοι· β[ούλομαι οὖν [σ]ε ἐν [τόπῳ φανερώ]ι ἔν[ τε τῇ μητροπόλει τοῦ νομοῦ καὶ καθ' ἐ[κ]άστην κώμη]ν α[ὐ]τὸ προθεῖναι σαφέσι καὶ εὐσήμοις [γράμμασιν] καὶ φρο[ν]τίσαι ἵνα γένηται ταῦ[τ'] ἐμοῦ.

*Vergilius Capito to Poseidonios, strategos, greetings. The copy of the edict posted by me in the city [Alexandria], I have sent you. I thus want you to post*

(12) For inscriptions from Egypt, see BÉRARD *et AL.* 2010<sup>4</sup>, pp. 87-89, n° 467-493.

(13) SB III 6236 (= TM 7237 = *C.Ord.Ptol.* 68, 70<sup>a</sup>).

(14) I.Egypte prose 37 (= SB V 8248 = OGIS II 665 = SEG VIII 794, 48<sup>p</sup>). The serious issue of improper military requisitions is also addressed in an edict of Germanicus from the year 19<sup>p</sup>, SB I 3924, 1-30.

*it in a conspicuous place in the metropolis of the nome and in every village, in clear and intelligible letters, and to see to it that my order is enforced.*

In this case, the Praefect's edict was engraved on a stone slab. It seems very unlikely, however, that the *strategos* would have taken the trouble to erect a stele in every village of the Oasis, and the Praefect did not specify this point: his instructions pertained only to the legibility and ubiquity of the posting.

Before further examining the issue of the writing support for public notices, it should be added that stone and papyrus are not mutually exclusive ways of preserving the same information. The text of an honorific inscription for the poetic victor Apion Pleistonices was preserved on papyrus (15). We cannot tell if it was copied from the actual stone inscription, or whether it was a textual model provided to a stonecutter. The same uncertainty applies to a splendid fragmentary drawing of a Latin inscription, which could be either a reproduction of the text as carved on the stone, or a full-fledged draft for a stonecutter, with the precise shape of letters (16).

An inscription found in Gizeh, dating from 22/23<sup>p</sup>, records a decree by which the inhabitants of Busiris (in the Letopolite nome) honour the *strategos* Gnaeus Pompeius Sabinus:

[ἐ]κρίναμεν τιμῆσαι τὸν π[ρο]γεγραμμένον Γν[αῖον Π]ομπηῖον Σαβεῖνον τὸν στρατηγὸν στήλῃ[ι λιθίν]ῃ πε[ρ]ιεχούσῃ τόδε τὸ ψήφισμα, ἥν κα[ὶ] στήσαι ἐν τῷ τῆς κώμης ἐπισημοτάτῳ τόπ[ῳ], ἀποδο]ῦναι δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ ἀντίγραφον [ὑπογ]εγραμμένον ὑπὸ ὅσων πλείστον, ὃ καὶ κύριο[ν ἔ]στ[αι].

(...) *we have decided to honour the aforementioned strategos Gnaeus Pompeius Sabinus with a stone slab bearing this decree, to be erected in the most conspicuous place in the village. He should also be provided with a copy undersigned by as many individuals as possible, and it shall also be valid* (17).

Beside the text inscribed on stone that would perpetuate the memory of Sabinus for a long time, the *strategos* thus received a copy, which could only have been made on papyrus since it was to be signed by numerous individuals. Sabinus

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(15) P.Oxy. LXXIX 5202 (I<sup>p</sup> ex.).

(16) P.Oxy. XLI 2950 (post 285<sup>p</sup>).

(17) SEG VIII 527, 30-32 (= SB V 7738, 22/23<sup>p</sup>).

nus could also use the copy to avail himself of the honours bestowed upon him. We can but speculate whether he framed and hung it on a wall at home.

Sabinus' copy is lost, but the beginning of a copy of another decree, honouring a gymnasiarch, was preserved (18). The bottom part, where signatures may have been added, is missing. This document was written with great care by a skilled scribe. It mentions a statue (7-8: *τιμῆσαι αὐτὸν ἀνδριάν[τι]*), the base of which may have carried the text of the decree.

The cases mentioned above show that there may be some overlap between the use of stone and that of papyrus, or at least that the same text could be copied on both writing supports, depending on the intended use. This does not imply, however, that papyrus was necessarily the only alternative to stone for posting public notices. On the contrary, as will now become apparent, our evidence points towards another kind of writing support, namely wooden boards.

## Writing the notice

A document produced a few decades after the Peukestas order provides us with an explicit mention of the requested writing support for the posting of some laws issued by Ptolemy II Philadelphos: the notice was to be written *εἰς λεύκωμα*, “on a white board”, i.e. a wooden board covered with gypsum (19). According to Alan Boegehold, «such boards often served to advertise or publish announcements that were not meant to be permanent (...)» (20). This practice was widespread in the Greek world at large; in Egypt, it must have endured through the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, as it appears again at the end of the II<sup>p</sup> (21). Between the near eternity of a text engraved on stone and

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(18) P.Oxy. III 473 (= *W.Chr.* 33, Naukratis, reign of Antoninus Pius [138<sup>p</sup>-160<sup>p</sup>]). Image available in TURNER, PARSONS 1987<sup>2</sup>, pp. 116-117, n° 69.

(19) P.Hib. I 29, 9 (= *W.Chr.* 259 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* I 6, ca. 265<sup>a</sup>).

(20) BOEGEHOLD 1990, p. 151; see also TURNER 1968, p. 6. A detailed survey of the use of *λεύκωμα* is provided by WILHELM 1909, pp. 246-247, who also quotes (240) HOMOLLE 1887, p. 13 about the practice on the island of Delos in the Hellenistic period: «Le bois servait à l'affichage des documents destinés à une publicité temporaire. On achetait à cet effet chaque année un certain nombre de tablettes ou de panneaux, que l'on faisait enduire de couleur blanche et sur lesquels on peignait ensuite, au *minium* sans doute, les communications que l'on voulait porter à la connaissance du peuple».

(21) SB XIV 12144 (quoted above), 15 as corrected by John Rea: *[εἰς λεύκωμ[α] προθ[ι]ναι]*, *BL* VIII 379.

the relative fragility of papyrus, wooden boards must have offered an intermediate solution, with some durability at a moderate cost. Indeed, the choice of material support may have been conditioned by constraints of time: for a posting, the Praefect Tiberius Claudius Subatianus Aquila requested μὴ ἔλαττο\ν/ τριάκον[τα ἡμερῶν τηροῦντες τὴν πε]ρίοδον, “*respecting a period of no less than thirty days*” (22). The combination of the two elements mentioned here, *i.e.* wooden boards and durability of posting, speaks against the widespread use of papyrus for the posting of public notices. We shall come back to this in the conclusion.

The same copy of Ptolemaic laws quoted above provides us with some additional information on the writing of the text itself, namely on the size of the lettering: μ[ε]γάλοις γράμμασιν, “*in large letters*” (23). In the inscription from the Great Oasis quoted above, the Praefect requested that the notice be posted σαφέσι καὶ εὐσήμοις [γράμμασιν] “*in clear and intelligible [letters]*” (24). Legibility was a frequent criterion in the instructions: εὐδήλοισ γράμμασιν, “*in easily distinguishable letters*” appears in two separate documents (25). Readability was deemed important, as the expression φανεροῖς καὶ εὐαναγνώστοις τοῖς γράμμασιν, “*the letters being visible and easy to read*” makes clear (26).

## Language and script

Readability was also conditioned by the choice of script and language, in a country where Greek always coexisted with Egyptian, the former being often preferred for written communication, while the latter remained widely spoken. Ptolemy Philadelphos ensured that his Revenue Laws were made accessible to both linguistic groups:

ἀφ’ ἧς δ’ ἂν ἡμέρας τὴν ὥνῃν παραλάβωσιν, οἱ ἐν τῷ ἐμπορίῳ λ[ο]γευταὶ [ἐκ]τιθέτωσαν ἐ[ν τ]ῷ τελωνίῳ ἐν ἡμέρα[ις] δέκ\α/ τὸν τ[ῆ]ς [ὥνῆς νό]μον γράψαντες γράμμασιν Ἑλλη[νικοῖς τε καὶ ἐγγ]ωρίοις

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(22) P.Oxy. VIII 1100, 4-5 (206<sup>p</sup>).

(23) P.Hib. I 29, 9.

(24) I.Egypte prose 37, 12-13.

(25) P.Oxy. VIII 1100, 3 (206<sup>p</sup>); XXXIV 2705, 10 (225<sup>p</sup>). In P.Lips. II 145 r, 84 (189<sup>p</sup>), the editor restored [φανεροῖς γ]ράμμασι[ν δημοσίᾳ] προτεθῆ[ναι]. An alternative restoration, [εὐδήλοισ γ]ράμμασι[ν], seems also possible.

(26) SB XIV 12144, 14 (= P.Coll. Youtie I 30, 198/199<sup>p</sup>).

*From the day they receive the sale, the market accountants shall post in the customs-house, within ten days, the law on sale, writing it in Greek and local [i.e. Egyptian] letters (27).*

In the VI<sup>p</sup> public notices are still made accessible to all, including those who cannot read Greek: τῇ ἐπιχωρίῳ μεθερμηνεῖ[ν]θῆναι διαλέκτῳ καὶ προτεθῆ[ν]αι, “(...) *to translate it in the local tongue [i.e. Coptic] and to post it*” (28). In the Roman legions too, language differences had to be taken into account: a letter sent by the emperor Hadrian to Quintus Rammius Martialis, Praefect of Egypt, was translated from Latin to Greek before being posted:

ἀν[τί]γρα(φον) ἐπιστ[ολ]ῆς τοῦ κυρίου με[θη]ρμ[ην]ευμένης [κατὰ τὸ δυνατ]όγ (...) προε[τέ]θη ἐν Ἀλεξ(ανδρείᾳ) ἐν τῇ παρεμβολῇ τῇ[ς] χειμασία[ς] λεγιῶνο(ς)

*copy of a letter from our master, translated inasmuch as possible. (...) It was posted in Alexandria, in the winter camp of the legion (...) (29).*

### Accessibility

Although the inhabitants had to be provided with a text in their own language, it was nonetheless expected that they be able to read the notice. Among edicts and ordinances from Egypt, few mentions are made of public reading by heralds of any kind, with the notable exception of emperor Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians. This case is especially interesting because the Praefect explicitly states that the letter was read out, but also that this measure was insufficient due to the size of the city's population; therefore, a copy had to be posted in public. In this particular version of the letter, the scribe's spelling was rather hesitant.

Λούκιος Αἰμίλλιος Ῥήκτος λέγει· ἐπειδὴ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς ἱεροτάτης καὶ εὐεργετικωτάτης ἰς τὴν πόλιν ἐπιστολῆς πᾶσα ἡ πόλις παρατυχεῖν οὐκ ἡδυνήθη {ν} διὰ τὸ πλῆθος αὐτῆς, ἀνανκαῖον ἡγησάμην ἐκθεῖναι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἵνα

(27) P.Rev. Laws<sup>2</sup> ix, 1-5 (259/258<sup>a</sup>).

(28) P.Cair. Masp. I 67031, 16 (ca. 543<sup>p</sup>-545<sup>p</sup>).

(29) BGU I 140, 1-2 and 5-6 (= M.Chr. 373 = Sel. Pap. II 213, 119<sup>p</sup>).

κατ' ἄνδρα ἕκαστον ἀναγινώσκων αὐτὴν τὴν τε μεγαλιότητα/α/ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν  
Καίσαρος θαυμάσητε καὶ τῇ πρὸς τὴν πόλιν [ομοία] εὐνοία χάριν ἔχητε.

«*Proclamation of Lucius Aemilius Rectus. Since, because of its numbers, not all the populace was able to be present at the reading of the most sacred letter which is so beneficent to the city, I have thought it necessary to publish the letter so that each one of you may read it and wonder at the greatness of our god Caesar and be thankful for his goodwill towards the city*» (30).

This passage was used as supportive evidence to propose a possible mention of public reading for a different papyrus, by changing π[ροε]τή ή ἐπ[ιστο]λή δημ[ο]σία ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ, “the letter was posted publicly in the agora” to ἀ[νε]γνώσθη ή ἐπ[ιστο]λή δημ[ο]σία ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ “the letter was read out publicly in the agora” (31). Parallels for the use of ἀνεγνώσθη in papyri from Egypt are limited to the opening of wills. Therefore, given the extent of the restoration (hardly any significant letter is preserved) and the absence of convincing parallels, it seems preferable to revert to π[ροε]τή, “(the letter) was posted”, not “read” (32).

Imperial rescripts were routinely posted in Alexandria (33). In the countryside, the choice of a favourable location for the posting was considered an important matter:

τούτου τοῦ ἐμα[υτοῦ] δόγματος ἀντίγραφα τοῖς κατ' ἐκάστην π<ό>λιν  
ἄρχουσιν γενέσθω ἐπιμελὲς εἰς τὸ δημόσι<ο>ν <ἐκθεῖναι ὅπου> μάλιστα  
ἔστα[ι] σύνοπτα τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσ<ιν>.

*Of this edict of mine, let the magistrates in each city take care that copies are publicly posted where they will best be in full view of the readers* (34).

Accessibility had to be universal:

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(30) P.Lond. VI 1912, 1-10 (= *C.Pap.Jud.* II 153 = *Sel. Pap.* II 212, 41<sup>p</sup>); the translation is borrowed from Tcherikover in *C.Pap.Jud.*

(31) PUG I 10, 8 (= SB X 10615, 8, 5<sup>p</sup>). Correction proposed by WILLIAMS 1975, p. 42, note 11; it was taken up in the *BL* VII 142, but should presumably be ignored.

(32) On the plate published by TRAVERSA 1969, p. 720 (tav. XLI), the remains of the letter following the lacuna could fit either an *epsilon* or a *theta*.

(33) E.g. BGU I 267 (199<sup>p</sup>); P.Oxy. LX 4068, 21 (200<sup>p</sup>); P.Oxy. XII 1405, 12-13 (236/237<sup>p</sup>).

(34) SB XIV 11648, 49-51 (222<sup>p</sup>).

ὅπως τοῦτο πάντες εἰδῶσι τῆς ἐπιστολῆς μου τὸ ἀντίγραφον προτεθῆναι  
ἐν τε τῇ μητροπόλει καὶ καθ' ἐκάστην κώμην.

(...) *in order that all may know this, to post the copy of my letter in the metropolis and in every village* (35).

In the third century, the wording implies a broader coverage, with a mention of the “*most conspicuous locations*” (36).

The responses (so-called ἀποκρίματα) to petitions submitted to the emperors were also posted in Alexandria. For inhabitants of the countryside, the long journey required to copy only a few lines of text would have been rather inconvenient. It seems, therefore, that groups of individuals in the nomes, or lawyers, pooled their resources and sent someone down to copy many subscriptions at once; one such copy was preserved (37). The inconvenience of travel was lifted by an edict of the Praefect Subatianus Aquila, who ordered that petitions from individuals living in the Arsinoite nome, once they had been posted for a sufficient period of time in Alexandria with their responses, should also be posted for three days in Arsinoe (38). Villagers could thus be informed of the decisions in the nome capitals, instead of having to travel down to Alexandria (or sending someone in their stead). In all likelihood, given the short period of posting, com-

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(35) SB XIV 11374, 7-9 (ca. 168<sup>o</sup>). See also P.Iand. VII 140, 5-6 (151<sup>o</sup>); BGU II 646, 5-6 (= W.Chr. 490 = Sel. Pap. II 222, 193<sup>o</sup>).

(36) E.g. P.Oxy. VIII 1100, 3-4 (206<sup>o</sup>): [ἐν τοῖς τῶν νομῶν φα]νερωτάτοις τόποις; P.Oxy. XII 1408, 17-18 (ante 210<sup>o</sup>): [ἐν τε ταῖς μη]τροπόλεσι καὶ τοῖς ἐπισημοτάτοις τῶν νομῶν <τόποις>; P.Oxy. XXXIV 2705.10-11 (ca. 225<sup>o</sup>): ἐν τε τῇ μητροπόλει καὶ τ[οῖς ἐπι]σήμοις τοῦ νομοῦ τόποις. P.Cair. Isid. 1.16 (297<sup>o</sup>) states εἰς ἐκάστην κώμην εἴτ' οὖν τόπον, “*to each village or place whatsoever*”, on which the editors say: «The reason for supplementing κώμην with τόπον is obvious. No one was allowed to evade the terms of the edict by claiming that copies of it had been sent only to κῶμαι because these alone were specified in the text» (BOAK, YOUTIE 1960, p. 28).

(37) SB VI 9526 (= P.Col. VI 123 = P.Apokrimata; 200<sup>o</sup>). For a summary of various interpretations of this document, together with a defence of the thesis according to which SB VI 9523 was not intended for public posting, but was a copy made from the subscriptions posted in Alexandria, see SCHILLER 1977. The purpose of this collection of subscriptions may have been to provide precedents for further petitions.

(38) P.Yale I 61 (ca. 208<sup>o</sup>-210<sup>o</sup>). This document mentions an astounding 1804 petitions submitted in Arsinoite polis in three days. This could, however, correspond to the total of petitions submitted since the last visit of the praefect; see SCHILLER 1977, p. 77. Public posting took place also elsewhere in Egypt; see e.g. BGU III 970, 5 (posting in Iouliopolis, 177<sup>o</sup>); P.Oxy. XVII 2131, 4-5 (posting in Antinoopolis, 207<sup>o</sup>).

bined with the huge quantity of petitions with their subscriptions that had to be put on display, papyrus – and not wooden boards – was the preferred writing support.

Likewise, public announcements of nomination to liturgy (so-called προγράμματα) were posted for all to see (39).

### Speed and duration of posting

Unsurprisingly, authorities expected their subordinates to proceed to the posting without delay. Explicit mentions of this appear consistently in the Ptolemaic (ἐν ἡμέραις δέκα/, “*within ten day*”) and Roman periods (ἐξ αὐτῆς, “*at once*”; ἢ τάχιστα, “*as speedily as possible*”) (40). Instructions could presumably not be more specific because the speed for transmitting information could vary considerably within the country. Failure to act with the appropriate speed could be punished with a fine: ἡ δ’ ἂν ἡμ[έρ]αι ἡ ἔκθ[εσις] μὴ γίνηται ἀποτινέτω (δραχμάς) . ἐπίτιμ[ο]ν, “*(...) for each day where the posting is not made, let him pay a fine of [...] drachmas*” (41).

Speed in posting a notice mattered also because a prompt reaction was expected of the inhabitants, as for instance in the case of a royal ordinance: ἂφ’ ἧς ἂν ἡμέρας τὸ πρόσταγμα ἐκτεθῇ ἐν ἡμέραις ε, “*within five days counting from the day when the ordinance was posted*” (42). Depending on the kind of measure, a longer period could be granted, as when the Praefect Marcus Sempromius Liberalis requested all villagers back to their home locations: ἔστω π[ρο]θεσμία [αὐτο]ῖς, ἐξ οὗ ἂν τοῦτ[ό] μου τὸ διάταγ[μα] ἐν ἐκά[στ]ῳ νομῷ προτεθῇ, μῆνες γ, “*let them have a time limit, from the time my edict is posted in every nome, of 3 months*” (43).

Public posting seems to have been effective, since some declarants in the Ptolemaic period refer to it:

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(39) STROPPA 2017, pp. 11-12, on his n° 8 (= P.Leit. 11). See in particular n° 3b, 17-20 (= P.Leit. 5 = SB VIII 10196, ca. 180°): κατὰ προτεθὲν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ [δημοσ]ία πρόγραμμα οὕτως ἔχων (...), “*according to a public announcement made by him, with the following wording (...)*.” Also 3a, 14-16. N° 10-18 are original announcements and therefore were intended for public posting.

(40) P.Rev. Laws<sup>2</sup> ix, 3 (259/258°); P.Ryl. IV 675, 6 (16/17°); P.Cair. Isid. 1, 17 (297°).

(41) P.Hib. I 29, 10-11 (= W.Chr. 259 = C.Ptol. Sklav. I 6, ca. 265°).

(42) SB XXVI 16531, 6-7 (uncertain date, the writing suggests II°).

(43) SB XX 14662, ii, 16-18 (= BGU II 372 = W.Chr. 19, 154°).

ἀπογράφ[ο]μαι [ε]ἰς τοὺς περὶ Κροκοδίλων πόλιν κατὰ τὸ ἐκτεθὲν ἕκθεμα  
{εἰς τοὺς} φυλακίτας.

*I am being registered among the guards in the Krokodilopolis area in accordance with the public posting (44).*

### Responsibility for posting

Local officials were held answerable for the posting ordered by their superiors, who in their letter could request that they sign the notice:

τὸ δ' ὑποκείμενον πρόγραμμα ἐκτεθήτω {ι} καὶ διὰ τῆς τοῦ κωμογραμμα-  
τέως γνώμης, ὅς κ[α]ὶ μεθ' ὑμῶν ὑπὸ τὴν ἐντολὴν {ε} ὑπογράφει.

*Let the following proclamation be published with the concurrence of the komogrammateus, who shall append his signature to the edict together with yours [i.e. the village epistatai] (45).*

Below the letter itself, after the final greeting and the date, the official added the precise text of the public notice that had to be posted by the village *epistatai*. This confirms the notion that public notices found on papyrus were for the most part not intended for actual posting. The signature requested from the local officials was probably meant to be appended to a copy that would be filed in an archive. This is the interpretation given by Ulrich Wilcken to a partly preserved document, where a *strategos* circulates a copy of a letter he received from the Praefect of Egypt in 34/35<sup>p</sup> regarding the right to bear arms (46). The heading

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(44) PUG III 101, 4-6 (221<sup>a</sup>). A similar formula appears in P.Hels. I 11, 5-6 (163<sup>a</sup>). See also UPZ I 116, 2-3a: ἀπογράφομαι κατὰ τὸ ἐκτεθὲν πρόσταγμα, “*I declare according to the posted ordinance (...)*”.

(45) P.Tebt. I 35, 8-11 (= W.Chr. 309 = Sel. Pap. II 223, 111<sup>a</sup>). Translation by Grenfell and Hunt, who chose to translate ὑπογράφει by a future «*shall append*». The scribe was presumably influenced by the wording διαγραφὴν ὑφ' ἧν ὑπογράφει NN ὁ ἀντιγραφεὺς, “*a contract under which the checking-clerk adds his signature*”, found in many documents from the Ptolemaic period.

(46) W.Chr. 13. No image of this document is available, and the papyrus' location remains unknown. See also WILCKEN 1912, p. 369 (W.Chr. 309 = P.Tebt. I 35, quoted above), who makes an explicit connection with W.Chr. 13.

(l. 1) is followed by a short introduction to the Praefect's letter (l. 2); then comes the Praefect's letter itself (ll. 3-11); there follows the signatures of some village leaders (ἡγούμενοι, ll. 12-20), and finally a date. If the identification is correct, it merely continues a practice already in place in the late Ptolemaic period.

### **Conclusion: the Peukestas order, an exceptional case of posting on papyrus?**

Coming back to the starting point of this survey, a reappraisal – or at least some qualification – of Turner's claim that «no doubt many such [notices] will have been written on papyrus, but few have survived» seems necessary. *Prima facie*, the absence of parallels to this notice is hardly surprising: papyrus being a relatively fragile material, it could be used only for short-term display, after which a notice would be discarded. Peukestas' order, after all, was found in a dump. We cannot exclude that, in some Egyptian homes, people with a sufficient level of literacy would have posted reminders and notes on their walls, as we do nowadays on the doors of our refrigerators. The Peukestas order, however, as well as public notices, are of another kind. At least two points in the survey presented above suggest that papyrus was not a suitable writing support for the posting of public notices: a) when the writing support is explicitly mentioned, it is a *leukoma*, *i.e.* a wooden board with a layer of gypsum, following the regular practice in the Greek world; b) posted notices had to be accessible for a while, sometimes for a whole month.

In the case of the Peukestas order, we are dealing with an improvised device established within the context of an army that had recently taken its quarters in Egypt. It is specific to its immediate context and would have no relevance if it had been posted elsewhere. The scribe did not know exactly how to prepare his notice, hence his initial hesitation when he started writing the order and then, on second thought, inserted the general's name at the top. The civil administration that soon took over could resort to a more elaborate procedure when it came to posting notices for all to read, in every town or village in Egypt. Whether papyrus was used, perhaps for informal posting, especially in protected places such as closed buildings, is anyone's guess. The absence of parallels to Peukestas' order, however, suggests that this was not as widespread a practice as Turner had surmised.

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