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*APATOR METROS: THE RISE OF A FORMULA IN
BUREAUCRATIC PERSPECTIVE.*¹
RESPONSE TO MARIA NOVAK

Maria Nowak bases much of her discussion of fatherless individuals on the terms ἀπάτωρ, and χρηματίζων μητρόσ. In her view, these terms designate an illegitimate child—i.e., a child born “out of illicit union.”² I am not familiar with any document that states this explicitly, nor do I understand what the term “illicit union” means in the law of the papyri.³ In any event, while I have dealt with the institution of marriage in the past, my interest on this occasion lies elsewhere—namely, the method of identification of persons in the papyri. I have discussed this on three different occasions. The first discussion focused on a unique text—*BGUXIV 2367*, a *diagramma* from the early part of the third century BCE—setting out the terms to be used by contracting parties in double documents.⁴ In that paper, I considered the extent to which the rules documented in that papyrus managed to create an effective system of identifiers of the users of documents in practice. I later extended that study, with the

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² See Nowak’s discussion here with further literature.

³ See, in particular, Bagnall, forthcoming.

⁴ Yiftach, 2014.

aim of understanding the guidelines for identifying individuals in various types of applications and legal documents in the early Roman period, and how they differed in form and in content from the identification method introduced by *BGUXIV 2367*.⁵ A third paper—given at a conference in Vienna in 2014 on the *gnômôn* of the *idios logos*—was aimed at establishing the population categories applied in the *gnômôn* in the broader context of population categories listed in documentation applied by other branches of the provincial administration in the early Roman period.⁶

In the case of the latter paper, in particular, my focus was on the *κατ' ἄνδρα* reports—i.e., reports recording individuals.⁷ Since the term *ἀπάτωρ*—which Nowak discusses at length—figures prominently and was possibly pioneered in those reports before spreading to other genres, this may be a good opportunity to ask: If indeed all the *ἀπάτορες* were illegitimate children—and I certainly do not rule out that they were—why not identify them by just their personal name, by their vocation or by some other non-specific forms of identification? The term *ἀπάτωρ* can only make sense in a documentary context where the father's name is deemed essential—or at least customary. So the emergence of the term *ἀπάτωρ* in the first century CE in the context of *κατ' ἄνδρα* reports may be indicative of a substantive change in the status of the patronymic in comparison with earlier periods, in that it has now become the norm. More generally, it may mark the introduction of new *Nomenklaturregeln* as a framework for such a change.

Creating *Nomenklaturregeln* for *κατ' ἄνδρα* reports would certainly fit in well with the *Zeitgeist*. The first century of Roman rule was noted for several terminological innovations, particularly with regard to population categories: the triad *Ῥωμαῖοι - ἄστοί - Αἰγύπτιοι*, used primarily by the procuratorial offices in Alexandria; the dichotomy *δημόσιοι γεωργοί - κληροῦχοι*, embracing the entire land-holding population in *sitologi* reports from the western Arsinoite nome; and a range of terms concerning registration status, tax liabilities and occupations in census declarations and related material.⁸ But is the introduction *ἀπάτωρ* really indicative of the formation of a new, standardized identification method in reports? I should point out from the outset that while I believe that the invention of the term *ἀπάτωρ* does mark a fundamental change in the *Nomenklaturregeln* of *κατ' ἄνδρα* reports, I argue that searching for evidence of a change in the father's status is, in a sense, barking up the wrong tree.

Let us turn first to the Ptolemaic period: in one of the regulations of *BGU XIV 2367*, concerning the identification of soldiers in double documents, the use of the patronymic is consciously omitted—and surviving double documents of the third-century BCE, which were drafted following the rule of the said *diagramma*, show that the regulation was followed in practice.⁹ But this is an exception: for all

⁵ Yiftach, forthcoming, Gnomon.

⁶ Yiftach, forthcoming, Flexible template.

⁷ Cf. my edition of *P.Bagnall 70* with further literature there.

⁸ Yiftach, both forthcoming, Gnomon and Flexible; Reggiani, forthcoming, *Identifying*.

⁹ *BGU XIV 2367.5-8* (III BCE, Alexandria): οἱ μὲν ἐ[ν τῷ στρατι]ωτικῷ τεταγμένοι

other categories of individuals listed in *BGU XIV 2367*, identification by the father's name is the general rule which is closely adhered to in the same double documents.¹⁰ Identification by the patronymic is also prescribed in rules about other types of administrative documents, such as reports of the types dealt with in this response—namely, the papyrus of the revenue laws, the law on the sale of immovable property from third-century Alexandria (*P.Hal.* 1.242–259), the regulation on the registration of the owners of taxable and exempt cattle in Phoenicia and Syria in 261 BCE (*SB V 8008*) and others.¹¹

The same picture emerges in the reports themselves: of the 175 Ptolemaic *κατ' ἄνδρα* reports that I have reviewed, I have found several instances of erratic texts, where the patronymic is absent—either omitted entirely or replaced by other identifiers, such as physical features, occupation, etc.¹² But in no edition of Ptolemaic reports—such as *P.Count.*, *P.Tebt.* IV 1103–1150 and others—are these anything more than an eccentric exception. While we cannot always find an adequate explanation for these individual cases, their existence does not invalidate the rule that in the Ptolemaic period the patronymic was the only constant identifier—apart from the person's personal name—for all population groups, and in virtually all types of *κατ' ἄνδρα* reports. In fact, so pervasive was the identification by the father's name, that over time it even extended to the identification of soldiers—the only clear deviation from the *Nomenklaturregeln* of *BGU XIV 2367* in the Ptolemaic period.¹³ With regard to the father, then, there was no drastic change under the Romans: the patronymic was always the most central identifier in Egyptian Greek papyri. So, what *did* change?

Most identifiers applied in the Ptolemaic period were “unit identifiers”—that is, a person was identified by his population unit: in *BGU XIV 2367* these were his *demos*, *patris*, military unit, military rank and occupation. The patronymic was

ἀπογραφέσθω[σαν τὰς τε] | πατρίδας ἑαυτῶν καὶ ἐξ ὧν ἂν ταγ[μάτων ὦσι] | καὶ ἄς ἂν ἔχωσιν ἐπιφοράς: Yiftach (2014) 106–107.

¹⁰ *BGU XIV 2367.8–12* (III BCE, Alexandria): [οἱ δὲ πολῖται[ι τοὺς τε] | πατέρας καὶ τοὺς δήμους: ἔαν δὲ καὶ ἐν τ[ῶι στρα]ῖ¹⁰τιωτικῶι ὦσι καὶ τὰ τάγματα καὶ τὰς [ἐπιφοράς] | οἱ δὲ ἄλλ[οι] τοὺς τε πατέρας καὶ τὰς πατρ[ίδας καὶ] | ἐν ὧι ἂν γένει ὦσιν: Yiftach (2014) 106–107.

¹¹ *P.Hal.* 1.246–249 (III BCE, Alexandria): [οἱ δὲ ταμίαι ἀναγρὰ]φρόντωσαν τὰς ὠνάς κατὰ δήμους καὶ κατα[- ca.10 - τῶι τοῦ] | ἀποδομένου δήμωι, ἐγγράφοντες πρῶτομ μ[ὲν] τοῦ ἀποδομέ[ν]ου το ὄνομα πατριαστί καὶ δήμου, ἔπειτα [δὲ τὸ τοῦ πριαμένου] | κατὰ τὰ ἀυτὰ; *SB V 8008.17–21* = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* I 3 (261 BCE, Unknown Provenance): ἀπογράφεσθαι δὲ καὶ τ[οὺς] μεμίσθωμένους τὰς κ[ῶμι]ας κα[ὶ] τοὺς κωμάρχας ἐν τ[ῶι] αὐτῶι | χρόνωι τ[ῆν] ὑπάρχ[ουσαν ἐν] ταῖς κώμαις λείαν ὑποτελῆ | ²⁰ καὶ ἀτελῆ καὶ ὧν [ἔστ]ε] πατρόθεν καὶ πατρίδος καὶ δι' ὧν νέ[με]ται. Cf. also *P.Par.* 65.12–14 = *UPZ I* p. 596 (146 BCE, Memphis); *P.Rev.* col. 7.3 (259/8 BCE, Arsinoitēs).

¹² Cf., e.g., *CPR XXVIII* 9 (late III– mid II BCE Tebtynis); *P.Count* 34 = *CPR XIII* 30 (254–231 BCE, Trikomia); *P.Tebt.* IV 1144 = *P.Tebt.* I 171 descr. (after 116/5 BCE, Kerkeosiris), [in particular column 4]; *SB XXIV 16272* (mid III BCE, Sakkara).

¹³ Yiftach (2014) 108 n, 18.

an exception, in that it was genealogical. At the start of the Roman period things changed, as most of the former units ceased to exist. The patronymic persisted, but was left as the sole universal identifier apart from the personal name—but not for long. In the first century CE, two further genealogical identifiers were gradually added that had almost never appeared in the Ptolemaic period: the name of the paternal grandfather, and (especially in the latter half of the first century) that of the mother.¹⁴

The metronymic is common in some documentary genres, but rare in others.¹⁵ Even where the metronymic is common, it is never a rule without exception: it appears in some *κατ' ἄνδρα* reports, for example, but not in others.¹⁶ But even if the metronymic was kept out of a specific document, it always remained a viable option. Moreover, if there was no father, or the scribe chose to omit the father's name for some reason,¹⁷ the mother's name was the only viable genealogical identifier, and was inserted—typically under the label *μητρός*—where the father's name normally appeared. This is where the term *ἀπάτωρ* is introduced. The term is first recorded in *P.Lond.* II 256 D (l. 18), dating to 11 CE¹⁸ where it appears without the mother's name, and it still appears independently of the mother's name in later periods as well, but once the mother's name had become a routine identifier, the term *ἀπάτωρ* and the *μητρός* formula usually became one: X *ἀπάτωρ μητρός* Y.¹⁹

The close association between the designation *ἀπάτωρ* and the metronymic is also evident in reports where the scribe decides to abandon genealogical identifiers altogether, and identify the person solely by his occupation, or public position. Such is the case, for example, of in *BGU* II 392 of 208 CE Soknopaiou Nêsos. In this report (from the village *praktōres argyrikôn* to the strategos), most individuals are recorded by their patronymic, but there is also one case of an *ἀπάτωρ μητρός*, and four—two stonemasons and two weavers—who are identified by their occupation.²⁰ Why the scribe decided to add these designations in the first place is not entirely clear—nor is the broader question why, in census declarations, some individuals are identified by their occupation, and others are not.²¹ The main difference between the two sources is that in census declarations the designation of occupation is added to the father's

¹⁴ Cf. in particular, M. Depauw 2010, Yiftach (2014) 114.

¹⁵ References to the mother invariably appear in *epikrisis* applications, and are fairly common in census declarations, but almost entirely absent in other types of documents—especially declarations of camels, livestock and *abrochia*. For a detailed discussion, cf. Yiftach, *supra* n. 6.

¹⁶ For discussion of rules, especially Depauw (2010) 127–128.

¹⁷ E.g. *P.Bour.* 42.564 (166/7 CE, Hiera Nêsos). Perhaps also *P.Lond.* II 324 = *WChr* 208 (161 CE, Prosôpitês), but the formulation here (l. 7) is hardly unequivocal.

¹⁸ I thank Dr. Nowak for providing me with a list of attestations.

¹⁹ In the DDBDP, the nominative *ἀπάτωρ* is used in nineteen reports independently, and in 85 next to the *μητρός* formula.

²⁰ *ἀπάτωρ*: l. 10; weaver: ll. 29, 35; stonemason: ll. 40, 46. The profession may have been recorded for tax purposes. Cf. Wallace (1938) 200–201, 204. This does not explain the omission of the patronymic, however.

²¹ For the census, cf. Hombert—Préaux (1952) 104–105.

name,²² while in *BGUI* 392 and other similar cases it is recorded in its stead. Why is this so? Is it because the person is fatherless? I do not think so. Rather, it appears that for some population categories the genealogical identifies may have been superseded by others, that were based on occupation. But even if the person were fatherless, the combination NN-ἀπάτωρ-occupation is never used in the papyri—rather, it was applied only with the metronymic when the scribe wished to stay within the sphere of designation by family—but could not, or would not, use the father’s name.

I would like to stress, however, that I do not rule out other explanations. It may well have been the case that illegitimacy was a Roman, rather than Ptolemaic problem. But there is, I think, one useful lesson from this discussion: when we seek to explain ἀπάτωρ, our attention is focused on the absent father, but when we do the same with ἀπάτωρ μητρόζ—as I think we should—our attention is drawn to the mother, who is known and can in the Roman period, for the first time, be used for the purpose of identification in κατ’ ἀνδρα reports, alongside the paternal grandfather. I accept the various socio-political explanations for this change, and that it probably did not happen overnight—but once it was in place, no later than the beginning of the second century CE, the provincial administration had at its disposal an effective and universal set of identifiers that could be applied to identify every inhabitant of the province. Above all, the creation of ἀπάτωρ embodies the triumph of genealogy as the principal means of identification in Roman Egypt.

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²² Cf. e.g., *BGUI* 115 = *WChr* 203 (Arsinoe, AD 189), col. i.

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