

ВСЕОБЩАЯ ИСТОРИЯ

Looking for *Arabia Nova**M. D. Bukharin*

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The administrative structure of the Roman Empire is still not fully understood. Some questions remain unanswered due to the unique nature of historical sources. A number of notions are mentioned only once or in a very unclear context. For example, the notion of “New Arabia” (ἡ νέα (ἐπαρχία) Ἀραβία) is raised in a several papyri of the 2nd and 4th century AD. The explanation for the earlier documents is clear: the newly created province of Arabia is mentioned there. A letter P. Oxy 50. 3574 (beginning of the 4th century AD) is a much more complicated example of such denomination. Scholars believe that it refers to a province although Roman sources do not mention any province called “Arabia”, except for the one created in 106 AD under Trajan. In fact, “New Arabia” in P. Oxy 50. 3574 does not allude to a newly created province (ἐπαρχία) around Eleutheropolis instead of the former nomos Arabia in Egypt or in Idumaea, as is assumed in contemporary studies. “New Arabia” in this document most likely refers to τοπαρχία (“district”, normally, a part of a *nomos*). The borders of this τοπαρχία had changed several times, and it moved from Lower to Upper Egypt. The enigmatic notion of “ἀπὸ ὀρίων Ἐλευθεροπόλεως τῆς Νέας Ἀραβείας” maybe interpreted that the “New Arabia” did not refer to the city of Eleutheropolis but rather to its borders: “...from the Eleutheropolis — the border of New Arabia”. Whether Eleutheropolis lay inside or outside this border, remains an open question. “New Arabia” cannot be connected with information of *Laterculus Veronensis* or *Tabula Peutingeriana* either.

Keywords: Roman Arabia, province, administrative structure, Egypt, papyri, Eleutheropolis, Oxyrinchos.

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В поисках Новой Аравии

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В истории административного устройства Римской империи до сих пор имеются крупные лакуны, в особенности это касается Римского Египта и Восточного Средиземноморья IV в. н. э. Некоторые вопросы остаются без ответа из-за уникального характера исторических источников. Определенные понятия упоминаются только один раз или в очень неясном контексте. Например, понятие «Новая Аравия» (ἡ νέα (ἐπαρχία) Ἀραβία) упоминается в нескольких папирусных письмах II и IV вв. н. э. Толкование более ранних документов в современной науке правдоподобно: в письмах упоминается вновь созданная провинция Аравия. Письмо Р. Оху 50. 3574 (начало IV в. н. э.) — гораздо более сложный пример такого обозначения. Исследователи считают, что в нем речь шла о провинции, хотя римские источники не упоминают ни одну провинцию, называемую Аравией, кроме той, которая была создана в 106 г. н. э. при Траяне. Фактически же обозначение «Новая Аравия» в Р. Оху 50. 3574 не относится к провинции (ἐπαρχία), вновь созданной вокруг Элевтерополя вместо бывшего нома под названием Аравия в Египте или Идумее, как предполагается в современных исследованиях. «Новая Аравия» в этом документе, скорее всего, относится к топарχία — «району», то есть иной, более мелкой административной единице (части нома). Границы этой топархии несколько раз менялись, и они перемещались от Нижнего до Верхнего Египта. Загадочный оборот «ἀπὸ ὁρίων Ἐλευθεροπόλεως τῆς Νέας Ἀραβείας», возможно, нужно интерпретировать следующим образом: обозначение «Новая Аравия» относилось не к городу Элевтерополь, а скорее к его границам: «от элевтеропольской границы Новой Аравии». Располагался ли Элевтерополь внутри или за пределами этой границы — остается открытым вопросом. Происхождение понятия «Новая Аравия» также не может быть связано с информацией таких источников, как “Laterculus Veronensis” или “Tabula Peutingeriana”.

Ключевые слова: Римская Аравия, провинция, административная структура, Египет, папирусы, Элевтерополь, Оксирих.

In the first thirty years of the 2nd century AD, the Roman Empire rapidly expanded its possessions in the East. One of the most important achievements in the eastern politics of Roman Empire was the annexation of the Natabean kingdom and the creation of the province of Arabia under the emperor Trajan in 106 AD. The province of Arabia occupied a significant territory that stretched to the northwest of the Arabian Peninsula, the Sinai Peninsula, and to the Eastern Mediterranean east of the river Jordan. The least known period in the history of the province of Arabia is the 4th century AD, when the province was divided into several new administrative units. The dating of the final stage of the existence of the province of Arabia as well as the details of its reconfiguration cannot be verified with sufficient accuracy. One of the obstacles in better understanding of the history of the Roman province of Arabia and the history of the Roman East as a whole pertains to the absence of clear interpretation of the designation of “New Arabia” known from the papyri documents of the 2nd and 4th centuries AD¹. The main questions related to the history of

¹ The latest work in this respect does not touch on this subject: Fisher G. Rome, Persia, and Arabia. Shaping the Middle East from Pompey to Muhammad. London; New York, 2020.

this designation are as follows: what caused the appearance of a “new” Arabia? If Arabia is “new”, then what should be considered an “Old Arabia”? Did the “old” and “new” Arabia coexist, or was the first one created to replace the second one? The answers to these questions can be found in the sources on political history of the Roman East of the 2nd–4th centuries AD, primarily in papyri documents.

“New province Arabia” in the 2nd century AD

The earliest references to the “New Arabia” in the form of “τῆς νέας ἐπαρχίας Ἀραβίας” came to be known from the Babatha archive. Babatha was a woman who lived in the city of Mahoza (Maoz) at the south-eastern tip of the Dead Sea (presently located in Jordan). It was discovered in 1960 by Y. Yadin in the so-called “Cave of Letters” in Nahal Hever (Israel). For this reason, the documents from the Babatha archive are known under the name of Babatha herself, or under that of their discoverer, or after the name of the place where this discovery took place (P. Hever). The documents are dated after the era of the province of Arabia (τῆς ἐπαρχίας Ἀραβίας). In some documents it is called “new”:

P. Babatha 16 = P. Yadin 1 16 / 9-10 (127 AD): κατὰ δὲ τὸν τῆς νέας ἐπαρχίας Ἀραβίας ἀριθμὸν ἔτους...

P. Babatha 17 = P. Yadin 1 17 / 2 (128 AD): ἀριθμῶ δὲ τῆς νέας ἐπαρχίας Ἀραβίας...

Similar designations are known from other documents: P. Hever 62 / 9 (127 AD), P. Babatha 18 = P. Yadin 1 18 / 2, P. Babatha 19 = HGV P. Yadin 1 19 / 9 (128 AD), P. Babatha 31 = P. Yadin 1 31 / 2 (after 127 AD), P. Hever 64 / 2 (129 AD), P. Hever 65 / 2 (131 AD).

Dating of some documents is given after the era of Arabia, but without additional designations as “new”, e. g.: κατὰ δὲ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῆς ἐπαρχίας Ἀραβίας (P. Babatha 14 = HGV P. Yadin 1 14; 125 AD). The document P. Hever 65 = P. Yadin 37 is also interesting in this respect. Though it is dated after the era of “new province Arabia”, in line 3 the province is called simply “Arabia”: ...Πέτραν μητρόπολιν τῆς Ἀραβίας.

Apparently, Babatha hid her archive due to the fear of the revolt of Bar Kokhba and reprisals of the Roman army. In the documents from the Babatha archive the notion ἡ νέα ἐπαρχία Ἀραβία seems easy to understand. The province of Arabia was created in 106 AD, and for this reason in the documents of late 120s — early 130s it could be called “new”. Therefore, one does not have to look for a province “New Arabia”². However, the interpretation of a document of the 4th century AD is less clear as it also mentions “new Arabia”.

“New Arabia” in the 4th century AD

Information about the administrative structure of the Roman Empire during the 4th century AD is uncertain, especially regarding the creation of new administrative units or

² For details see: Cotton H. M. Ἡ νέα ἐπαρχία Ἀραβία: The New Province of Arabia in the Papyri from the Judaean Desert // Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik. 1997. 116. S. 204–208. — See for alternative view (creation of a province Arabia Nova in late 120s — early 130s AD): Wasserstein A. A Marriage Contract from the Province Arabia Nova: Notes on Papyrus Yadin 18 // The Jewish Quarterly Review. 1989. 80 (1–2). P. 93–130.

changes in their names and their borders. One of such enigmatic notions of the Roman administrative nomenclature is the so-called “new province Arabia” or “province New Arabia”. It is mentioned in a letter to Aurelius Antonius, the governor of *Aegyptus Herculeia*, written by Aurelius Malchus (P. Oxy. 50. 3574; 314–318 AD). The beginning of this letter is as follows:

Αὐρηλίω Ἀντωνίω τῷ διασημοτάτῳ ἡγουμέ[νῳ] Αἰγύπτου Ἡρκουλείας παρὰ Αὐρηλίου Μάλχου Ἐιωνάθου ἀπὸ ὀρίων Ἐλευθεροπόλεως τῆς Νέας Ἀραβείας...³

There are very few references to Eleutheropolis in ancient sources: only several documents mention its location. A credit contract, also from Oxyrinchos (P. Oxy. 77. 5119; November — December 403 AD), describes the location of Eleutheropolis in Judaea:

3. [...ἀπὸ].

4. τῆς Ἐλευθεροπόλεως Ἰουδαίᾳ ...

Another document (SB 26 16607) with uncertain dating (5th century AD) points to Eleuthropolis as situated between Gaza and Jerusalem:

15. Γάζα.

16. Ἀσκάλων.

17. Ἐλευθρόπολις[*].

18. Ηλια[.]. εἰερο[σαλ]ημ[*].

19. Ἰεριχώ.

It is also mentioned in P. Petra 1/2 (10th May 538 AD) as τῆς Ἐλευθεροπολι[τῶ]ν [πόλεως]

Ancient Eleutheropolis was located in Southern Israel near the modern settlement of Beit Gurvin (ancient Betogabri; Βαιτογαβρεῖ/Βαιτογαβρά on Ptolemy's map — V. 16. 6) on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, 53 km from Jerusalem. Eleutheropolis belonged not to the province of Arabia, which was created by Rome in 106 AD, but to the province of Judea established in 6 AD. This province included several regions of Judea, Samaria and Idumaea. Shortly after the suppression of Bar Kokhba's revolt in 135 AD, this province received a new name — “Syria Palaestina” (i. e. “Palestinian Syria”).

It is only at the end of the 4th century AD, most probably in 390–392 AD⁴, that Syria Palaestina was divided into three parts, and Eleutheropolis became a part of the province of Palaestina I.

A later source (Suida) points to Eleutheropolis as “one of the <cities> of Palaestine Γ”: “...Ἐλευθρόπολιν, μίαν τῶν τῆς πρώτης Παλαιστίνης...” It follows that Eleutheropolis was then situated in the same province, which was, however, neither “new” nor *Arabia*.

³ See the latest digital editions: <http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;50;3574> (accessed: 02.09.2020); <http://163.1.169.40/cgi-bin/library?e=q-000-00---0POxy--00-0-0--0prompt-10--4----ded--0-11-1-en-50--20-about-3574--00031-001-0-0utfZz-8-00&a=d&c=POxy&cl=search&d=HASH01d5-edc0ae5a93a24a7f70ff> (accessed: 02.09.2020). Before the discussion of this fragment in detail any translation is going to be inaccurate.

⁴ *Mayerson Ph.* Justinian's Novel 103 and the Reorganization of Palestine // *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.* 1988. No. 269. P. 65–71.

The views of those scholars who interpreted P. Oxy 50. 3574 and searched for νέα Ἀραβία in the structure of Roman Empire could approximately be divided into two groups: those who connected the location of New Arabia with Egypt (D. T. Barnes, G. W. Bowersock), and those who believed that Palestinian Eleutheropolis was situated in a new province — *Arabia Nova* — in the Eastern Mediterranean (J. R. Rea, Ph. Mayerson).

D. T. Barnes on the basis of P. Oxy 50. 3574 assumed that this source referred to the existence of a new province of *Arabia Nova*, which was created after the division of *Aegyptus* into three provinces: *Iovia*, *Herculia* and *Arabia Nova*⁵. To support this point of view, one has to believe that Egypt was divided into three rather than two parts, and that *Arabia Nova* was a province. Other sources are silent on this matter.

G. W. Bowersock regarded this document as “exciting discovery”, saying that the author “came from the territory of Eleutheropolis in Νέα Ἀραβεία, ‘New Arabia’”. The discussion proceeds from the statement that Νέα Ἀραβεία was the name of a certain Roman province unknown before this document which was introduced to modern historians: “We had never before heard of a province called New Arabia or, presumably, Arabia Nova”⁶. Looking for the origin of Arabia Nova, G. W. Bowersock points to the vicinity of Bubastis, where the Egyptian nome Arabia — the homeland of Malchus — had to be located at that time. Hence, “if Malchus lived in Egyptian Arabia, then there must have been an Eleutheropolis in it. One thing is certain: the Eleutheropolis near Jerusalem, even with a large territory around it, lay far outside the confines of old Arabia and its successor province... It thus seems clear that the nome Arabia was elevated to the status of a province when the two Egypts were created. Because of the existence of another province of Arabia it was obvious that the nome as a province would have to be distinguished by the adjective *nova*”⁷.

At the same time, G. W. Bowersock is of opinion that this “new” Arabia is to be identified with the second Arabia in *Arabia item Arabia* of the “Verona List” (*Laterculus Veronensis*; further on — LV) (Fol. 255r. 17–18). Thus, “the problem of the second Arabia may perhaps be near to a solution”⁸.

The editor of P. Oxy 50. 3574 J. R. Rea thought that Eleutheropolis was the only known place of that name in that period, and that there was a province “New Arabia,” which was to be identical with one of the Arabias of the “Verona List”. The contacts between Oxyrinchos and Eleutheropolis in Palestine were already confirmed, and the question of the existence of the nome called Arabia seemed less important⁹.

Ph. Mayerson identified New Arabia of P. Oxy 50. 3574 with the territory of Idumaea (Western Edom). In his opinion, only Eleutheropolis could be in Palestine; and the only possibility of locating *Arabia Nova* is to look for it around Eleutheropolis. This conclusion is based on the understanding of the phrase “ἀπὸ ὁρίων Ἐλευθεροπόλεως τῆς Νέας Ἀραβείας” “from the confines of Eleutheropolis of the new Arabia”¹⁰, i. e. Eleutheropolis belonged to New Arabia. More specifically, Ph. Mayerson explains the origin of the name *Arabia Nova* in connection to a region which had never been called Arabia in the administrative terminology of the Roman Empire as a result of confusion: “It is with the

⁵ Barnes T. D. *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*. Cambridge, 1982. P. 211.

⁶ Bowersock G. W. *Roman Arabia*. Cambridge; London, 1983. P. 145.

⁷ Ibid. P. 146.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Rea J. R. “P. Oxy 3574” // *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. 50. London, 1983. P. 183–188.

¹⁰ Mayerson Ph. P. Oxy. 3574: “Eleutheropolis of the New Arabia” // *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*. 1983. No. 53. P. 251–258.

confusion of provincial names — Palaestina vs. Arabia — in mind that the evidence, such as it is, for locating Eleutheropolis and *nea Arabia* in Palestine merits further investigation”¹¹. Ph. Mayerson had no doubt that the “New Arabia” in P. Oxy. 3574 designated a province: “Be that as it may, the region dominated by Eleutheropolis in the 4th century was extensive, the largest in Palestine and large enough to have been considered a province... What is being suggested here is the likelihood that sometime during the reign of Diocletian a province similar to that of Idumea was carved out of Palestine and out of part of Palestinian Arabia Petraea (i. e. the Negev). Eleutheropolis was designated its administrative center...”¹² The name of the new province could be given after the lifestyle of the Edomite population — Arabs converted into Judaism¹³. As Mayerson suggests, “the name was used to distinguish a Palestinian Arabia from the former Petraean Arabia”¹⁴.

Contesting the views of Ph. Meyerson, G. W. Bowersock confirmed his previous opinion and raised other questions about Meyerson’s viewpoint, namely the reason for denominating Idumaea as Arabia. Mayerson’s treatment of population of Idumaea as Arabs seems to contradict the known sources as well. “Idumaea, therefore, could not have furnished any basis for a provincial name of Arabia...”, concluded G. W. Bowersock¹⁵.

Ph. Mayerson has in his turn formulated the following key-question: “The bone of contention between these two points of view has to do with the reliability of the information provided by Eusebius and later writers as to whether two cities, Petra and Phaeno, were in Palestine or in Arabia. If in Palestine, then Eleutheropolis of Nea Arabia would of necessity be elsewhere other than in Palestine, unless of course Nea Arabia was carved out of a portion of Palestine”¹⁶. Mayerson’s conclusion is: “In short, we have no evidence of substance for the volatile eight or nine decades of the 4th century that can give us a reasonably accurate picture of what administrative or territorial changes were being affected in the provinces of Palestine and Arabia. The picture for Palestine is particularly unclear. Apart from P. Oxy. 3574, we do not have a document or an inscription to help us out of this quandary”¹⁷. Nevertheless, Mayerson continues to insist on his previous opinion, leaving the questions raised by G. W. Bowersock unanswered: “In sum, the province of Palaestina experienced a number of territorial and administrative changes during the first eight or nine decades of the 4th century. If our analysis of P. Oxy. 3574 is correct, the document is evidence for only the earliest of these changes”¹⁸.

In the *addendum* to the first article, Ph. Mayerson confirmed his view, “...that Eleutheropolis was the well-known city in Palestine and that Nea Arabia corresponded to the region previously known as Idumea and the Palestinian portion of Arabia Petraea”¹⁹. Mayerson also provides references from the relevant sources and literature to population of Idumaea as to Arabs and concludes: “I believe, that what had been known of Idumea in the

¹¹ *Mayerson Ph.* P. Oxy. 3574: “Eleutheropolis of the New Arabia”. P. 255.

¹² *Ibid.* P. 256.

¹³ *Ibid.* P. 255–256.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* P. 256–257.

¹⁵ *Bowersock G. W.* Naming a Province: More on New Arabia // *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik.* 1984. No. 56. P. 222.

¹⁶ *Mayerson Ph.* Palaestina” vs. “Arabia” in the Byzantine Sources // *Ibid.* P. 223–224.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* P. 228.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* P. 229.

¹⁹ *Mayerson Ph.* Nea Arabia (P. Oxy. 3574): An Addendum to ZPE 53 // *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik.* 1986. No. 64. P. 139.

first century BC as a region bordering on Beersheba to the south, was viewed in the second and fourth centuries AD as extending deep into the region known as Arabia — “from Eleutheropolis all way to Petra and Aila” — the Arabia that embraced both Palestine and Transjordan... That portion of Nea Arabia that encompassed first-century BC Idumea lay cheek by jowl to “Old” Arabia; the remaining portion had already been part and parcel of the province of Arabia. Its people in the second and fourth centuries AD — at least those in places cited by Ptolemy (Birsama, Elusa, and Mampsis) and by Jerome (Petra and Aila) were certainly Arabs. I therefore believe that the weight of evidence makes southern Palestine the more reasonable choice for “Eleutheropolis of Nea Arabia” than the former Egyptian nome of Arabia”²⁰.

These views have been later confirmed again: “It is certain, amid all the conflicting evidence, that the boundaries of Palestine were in considerable flux during the fourth century. As early as 318, a papyrus document, P. Oxy. 50. 3574, mentions Eleutheropolis “of New Arabia” (τῆς νέας Ἀραβείας). This “New Arabia” was most likely carved out of Palestine and consisted of a good portion of what had formerly been Idumea”²¹.

The following could be said regarding the interpretations of P. Oxy 50. 3574.

The argument of G. W. Bowersock is based upon several suppositions, which would require confirmation from other sources: elevation of the nome Arabia to the status of a province, existence of the second Eleutheropolis, and the absence of other possibilities of interpreting the phrase “ἀπὸ ὀρίων Ἐλευθεροπόλεως τῆς Νέας Ἀραβείας” as if Eleutheropolis was to be located in *Arabia Nova*.

A. H. M. Jones gave an exhaustive outline of Roman Egypt as administrative unit²²: nothing is known about the elevation of the *nomoi* to the higher status; there are no references to any other city of Eleutheropolis in the sources. *A posse ad esse non valet consequentia* — one may not accept conclusions made on suppositions.

The creation and existence of a new province around Eleutheropolis still has to be confirmed. Ph. Mayerson does not do it definitively, but he is persuaded “that there was a need for the creation of such a province during the late 3rd or early 4th century”²³. In any case, such statements are doomed to be pure suppositions until direct confirmations are found.

The way of the name-giving of the New Arabia proposed by Ph. Mayerson is hardly acceptable: the name *Arabia Nova* (*Nea*) distinguishes this unit only from *Arabia vetus*, or simply *Arabia*. If one wanted to distinguish it as “a Palestinian Arabia” from “Petraean Arabia”, as Mayerson thought, other options must have been used.

If the evaluation of the views of D. T. Barnes and G. W. Bowersock by Ph. Mayerson²⁴ could be regarded as justified, at least partly, his own position is grounded in ideas, all of which have to be confirmed from other sources. In any case, all the participants of this discussion are of the opinion that New Arabia was a province, and Eleutheropolis (Egyptian or Palestinian) belonged to this province.

²⁰ Mayerson Ph. Nea Arabia (P. Oxy. 3574): An Addendum to ZPE 53. P. 140.

²¹ Mayerson Ph. Justinian's Novel 103 and the Reorganization of Palestine. P. 66.

²² Jones A. H. M. Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces. Oxford, 1971. P. 295–338. See also: Barnes T. D. The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine. P. 195–200.

²³ Mayerson Ph. P. Oxy. 3574: “Eleutheropolis of the New Arabia”. P. 257.

²⁴ “In sum, the evidence at present does not favor the position taken by Barnes and Bowersock that Eleutheropolis of *nea Arabia* is to be located in Egypt close to Aegyptus Herculia, a position at best controversial and which should be cited as uncertain” (Ibid. P. 258).

Since we do not have a confirmation regarding the creation of a province of New Arabia and/or its location, we cannot be certain if the New Arabia mentioned in P. Oxy 50. 3574 was a province. We have to consider other interpretations of this source: e.g., not a province but another kind of administrative unit with omitted designation in feminine: νομος is excluded since this is masculine. In addition, Ἀραβία itself is also feminine, and it could also be used without any omitted designations.

If one regards the application of the name Arabia on the administrative map of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, one might see that it designated (1) an administrative unit in the Eastern Delta in the 3rd century BC, then (2) an administrative unit in the Lower Egypt in the 2nd–1st centuries BC, (3) an administrative unit again in Delta in the 1st century BC, the (4) territory in the Southern Egypt in the 3rd century AD.

Lower Egypt

In fact, the earliest reference to Egyptian Arabia (in the 20th Lower Egyptian nome, with center in Faqus) in the papyri documents (P. Rev. 31, ctr/9) is dated 263 BC; it was located then near Bubastis.

Upper Egypt

Then comes quite a long series of papyri and ostraca, in which Arabia designated the district in the 4th Upper Egyptian nome:

- O. Cairo 25 = O. Cairo Cat. 9675 (176, 165 BC);
- SB XVI. 12709/3 and SB XVI. 12710. B/3 (160–159 or (?) 93–92 BC (?));
- SB 6 9419 (3) / 5 = O. Cair. Cat. 9652 / 5 (149 or 138 BC);
- P. Coll. Youtie II. 121/5 (148 or 137 BC);
- BGU. VI. 1440 / 3, 6 = SB. I. 4634 (142 BC);
- O. Cairo 28 = O. Cairo Cat. 9532 (134 BC);
- O. Cairo 30 = O. Cairo Cat. 9549 (131 BC);
- P. Dryton I. 3 and P. Dryton I. 4 (126 BC);
- O. Cairo 32 = O. Cairo Cat. 9626 (121 BC);
- O. Edfou III. 352 (120–119 BC);
- BGU. VI. 1435 (119 BC);
- SB 6 9553 (4) DAHT 5786 / 3 (119 BC);
- P. Dryton I. 34 (115–110 BC);
- BGU VI. 1441 (107 BC);
- P. Baden II. 8/7 (end of the 2nd century BC);
- P. Baden II. 7/5 (2nd century BC);
- O. Edfou II. 245 = RMNW 2 (1957), p. 145 & fig. 6 descr. and O. Edfou II. 246 (94 BC).

To this series also belongs the mention of Arabia in “De mari Erythraeo” of Agatharchides of Cnidus: “Περὶ γὰρ τὰς ἐσχατίας τῆς Αἰγύπτου καὶ τῆς ὁμορούσης Ἀραβίας τε καὶ Αἰθιοπίας τόπος ἐστὶν ἔχων μέταλλα πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα χρυσοῦ”²⁵ (apud Diod. III. 12. 1).

²⁵ “At the extremity of Egypt and in the contiguous territory of both Arabia and Ethiopia there is a region, which contains many large gold mines...” (translation after *Diodorus of Sicily*. Library of History: in

Here, the *nomes* in Lower Egypt on the imaginary frontier with Ethiopia are definitely considered.

Lower Egypt

In the middle of the 1st century AD references to Ἀραβία return again to Delta:

P. Oxy. IV. 709/5 = Chrest. Wilck. 32 (ca 50 AD);

P. Flor. III. 312/6–7 (91 AD) — this document is particularly interesting as it mentions Εὐδαίμονα πρεσβύτερον Ἑρμαίου τοπαρχ[ι] (ήσαντα) Ἀρ[α]βίας ἄνω; evidently Ἀραβία was a toparchy and there were two Arabias — Upper (mentioned here) and Lower, which had to be distinguished from each other;

P. Sijp. 30/66 (2nd cent. AD);

PSI. I. 56/10–12 (107 AD) — here again the Upper Arabia is referred to (εἰς τὴν Ἀραβίαν ἄνω);

O. Krok. 1.51/32 (109 AD);

P. Med. 1.36 = SB VI 8997 (117–118 AD) — here the Lower Arabia with the city *Alabastron* is referred to (τῶν ἀπὸ Ἀλαβ[άστρων] πόλεω[ς τῆ]ς Ἀραβίας κάτω);

P. Ross. Georg. II. 16/9 (121 AD) mentions “τῆς Ἀραβίας τοῦ Μεμφίτου”; here Arabia is a part of agoranomy of Memphis, as in P. Ross. Georg. II. 23/1 (156 AD);

SPP 22 4 (127–128 AD);

CPR. XXIII. 3 / 2, 13 (138–161 AD) — here we meet *agoranomos* and *strategos* of Arabia (Θέωνι στ[ρα]τηγῶ Ἀραβίας]; ἐπ’ ἀ[γορανόμ]ων τῆς Ἀραβία[ς...]);

P. Ross. Georg. II. 23/1 (156 AD);

P. Oxy. LX. 4063/1 (183 AD) — here a *strategos* of Arabia is mentioned (Ἀμμωνίωι στρατηγῶι Ἀραβ[ί]ας);

P. Oxy. LX. 4064/1 (183 AD) — again the same *strategos* is mentioned (Ἀμμωνίωι στρατηγῶι Ἀραβ[ί]ας), in line 5 Arabia is called τοπαρχία, the same is referred to in P. Oxy. LX. 4066/1 (183 AD) and P. Oxy. LX. 4067/1 (184 AD);

P. Flor. II. 278 R 2/3 = ChLA 25 779 = Cavenaile, Corpus papyrorum Latinarum (CPL) 145 (203 AD) — here also a *strategos* of Arabia is mentioned;

SB. XVIII. 13333 = P. Oxy. 9 1197 (208 AD) mentions a *strategos* of Arabia;

P. Oxy. 60 4070 (208 AD) — mentions a *strategos* of Arabia with the capital in Phacussai (Faqus).

From the end of the 1st cent. AD there were two Arabias — Upper and Lower mentioned in the sources. Arabia was τοπαρχία, and it, at least in the second half of the 2nd — beginning of the 3rd cent. AD was governed by a *strategos* — normally they governed *nomoi*.

12 vols. II. Book II (continued) 35 — IV, 58 / with an English Translation of C. H. Oldfather. London, 1967. P. 115).

Upper Egypt

From 252 AD Arabia is being again mentioned in connection to the Upper Egypt: O. El-ph. DAIK 66 from Elephantine mentions δεκάπρωτοι τοπαρχ(ίας) Σοή(νης) Ἀραβ(ίας).

See also in this respect: BGU. XI. 2074R (after 286–287 AD) and P. Panop. Beatty 1 Z. 276–331/328 (298 AD).

Lower Egypt

Next comes P. Oxy. 50 3574 with “ἀπὸ ὀρίων Ἐλευθεροπόλεως τῆς Νέας Ἀραβείας”; then — P. Ammon 1 3 = P. XV. Congr. 22 Ro from Alexandria (324–330 or 348), however the location of Arabia there is unclear. There are other references in papyri and ostraca, earlier and later, but the location of Arabia in them is not clear either.

One may see that the references immediately preceding chronologically to P. Oxy. 50 3574 point to Arabia as located in the Upper Egypt, while P. Oxy. 50 3574 — in the Lower Egypt. It looks as if the name Arabia moved again from the South to the North, and thus, an administrative unit under such circumstances became “new”. Possibly, Upper and Lower Arabia could be united given that they are never mentioned as two units again. This is a reasonable explanation of the designation “new”.

Sources of the 3rd century AD refer to Arabia as τοπαρχία, which fits the context of the letter of Aurelius Malchus. If the borders of Arabia moved north in the direction to Eleutheropolis, this could be the reason why they were called after Eleutheropolis. Instead of a ghost-province of New Arabia, we have a real τοπαρχία Arabia, which often changed its location and borders.

The given interpretation suggests that the borders of τοπαρχία Arabia were located somewhere in the vicinity of Eleutheropolis. This is not surprising: Procopius of Caesarea informs us that the lands between Ayla and Gaza were called Arabia “since the ancient times”: «τὰ γὰρ ταύτης ἐκτὸς ἐκπλέοντι ἄχρι ἐς τὴν ἡϊόνα καὶ Αἰλὰν πόλιν Ἀραβικὸς ὠνόμασται κόλπος. ῥα γὰρ ἡ ἐνθένδε. Χώρα γὰρ ἡ ἐνθένδε ἄχρι τῶν Γάζης πόλεως ὀρίων Ἀραβία τὸ παλαιὸν ὠνομάζετο, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ βασιλεία ἐν τοῖς ἄνω χρόνοις ἐν Πέτραις τῇ πόλει ὁ τῶν Ἀράβων βασιλεὺς εἶχεν» (De bellis. I. 19. 19–20)²⁶.

It is through Gaza that the northern border of the area in the possession of Nabataeans annexed by Trajan in 106 AD passes; Eleutheropolis did not belong to them. As it seems, we have the situation in P. Oxy 50. 3574 that after Eleutheropolis was called the border of (toparchy) of New Arabia, and not the city of Eleutheropolis after New Arabia.

Arabia item Arabia in Laterculus Veronensis

The interpretation of P. Oxy 50.3574 is sometimes connected in the studies quoted above, with information of *Laterculus Veronensis*²⁷. In one of the latest edition of LV (dat-

²⁶ For the sea which one traverses beyond this point as far as the shore and the city of Aela has received the name of the Arabian Gulf, inasmuch as the country which extends from here to the limits of the city of Gaza used to be called in olden times Arabia, since the king of the Arabs had his palace in early times in the city of Petrae (translation after *Procopius. History of the Wars, Books I and II: in 7 vols. Vol. 1.* London; New York, 1914. P. 183).

²⁷ *Bowersock G. W. Roman Arabia. P. 146.*

ed with some caution at the end of 314 and 324 AD²⁸) the fragment in question — the list of the provinces in diocese of Orient (Fol. 255r. 16–20) — is published in the following way:

...*libia superior. libia inferior. thebais.*
aegyptus. iouia. aegyptus. herculea. arabia.
item arabia. augusta libanensis: palestina.
fenicen. syria ecohele, augusta euphatenses.
*cilicia. isauria. tupus. Mesopotamia. osroaena*²⁹.

Not all of these names could be identified with confidence. Some of them, e.g., *augusta libanensis* or *augusta euphratenses*, occur only in this source. However, one may find certain logic in this enumeration. It begins in the West African part of diocese and ends in the Northeast of the Near Eastern one. From the description of two Libyan provinces, the description passes to the Egyptian ones: the first is Thebais lying in the South, then two provinces, which occupy Western and Eastern part of Delta of Nile. Then follows a fragment of three names (*arabia. item arabia. augusta libanensis*), of which one of the names is the name of the province of Arabia created by Trajan in 106 AD. The following three provinces occupy entire Eastern Mediterranean: Palestina (*Palaestina Syria*, former Judaea), Phoenicia (*Phoenicia Syria*) and *Syria Coele*. After *Augusta euphratenses* (according to Ammianus Marcellinus (XIV. 8. 7) — territory of *Commagene*) follow the provinces of Asia Minor (Isauria and Cilicia), then two provinces from Northern Mesopotamia — Osroene and Mesopotamia.

Thus, there is a certain geographical sequence in this description: from west to east, from south to north. One might suppose in this context that the structure of the diocese of Orient has been copied from a map.

The names of the provinces in LV are given in a very precise way with all the necessary designations. If under the names *arabia. item arabia* New Arabia of P. Oxy 50. 3574 were meant, the designation “new” must have been given too. Since it is not the case, the warning by Ph. Mayerson must be still taken into consideration: “... the three words *arabia item arabia* are as yet unexplained and remain a conundrum. The Verona List is very explicit in naming the imperial provinces. Provinces having the same name are distinguished from one another with such characterizing or qualifying words as *superior, inferior, augusta, prima, secunda, nova, or vetus*. It is only *arabia item arabia* that lacks a similar modifier. If *nea Arabia* were known to the compiler of the List, it would be a reasonable expectation to find it designated as *arabia nova* or *augusta arabia*. It is apparent that the compiler of the List did not know the official name of the two Arabias, or that whatever official document that he had in hand did not provide him with the correct information. Hence, I believe that P. Oxy. 50. 3574 has not given us the answer to *arabia item arabia*”³⁰.

There is an obvious parallel to *arabia item arabia* in another source, namely in *Tabula Peutingeriana* (Xb–XI). *Tabula Peutingeriana* (TP) is a map, while *Laterculus Veronensis* could be an explication of a map, such as TP. If so, *arabia item arabia* in LV could have appeared in the process of copying the names from a map, like TP.

²⁸ Barnes T. D. The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine. P. 204–205.

²⁹ Ibid. P. 202.

³⁰ Mayerson Ph. P. Oxy. 3574: “Eleutheropolis of the New Arabia”. P. 258.

In this case, one must take into consideration arguments of G. W. Bowersock on the inclusion of Canatha into the structure of Roman province of Arabia, while some sources say that Canatha was ἐπὶ Συρίας. In the same way G. W. Bowersock regards the location of Bostra in Syria, however, Syria in a province of Arabia could be used not in the narrow administrative sense but in the larger geographical context³¹. One should remember that Arabia is a larger notion than Syria, consequently, the sphere of its application must have been larger. Several examples below testify to that.

In the second half of the 1st century AD Sinai belonged to “Arabia”, which follows from the “Epistle to Galatians”: “τὸ δὲ Ἄγαρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ, συστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ, δουλεῦει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς” (IV. 25). The date of its composition is still debated (the dates between 49 and 58 AD are discussed³²), however Arabia here could not belong to the province, annexed only in 106 AD, although Sinai was its part³³. Consequently, Ἀραβία was not a political-administrative unit but a geographical notion — as Arabia Petraea, described by Ptolemy in “Geography” in V. 17.

Two papyri say that Dura-Europos belonged to “Arabia”: ἐν Εὐρωπῶι τῇ πρὸς Ἀραβίαι in P. Dura. 22 (133–134 AD) and P. Dura 25 (180 AD). This information supposedly comes also from the inscriptions. The undated inscription SEG. VII. 507 says about location of Dura-Europos:

μνησθείης Χαιρέας Νίκωνος
τοῦ Μενάνδρου Εὐρωπαῖος πρὸς [Ἀραβία].

Trajan took Dura in 114 AD and occupied it for some time, however, Dura-Europos was not under Roman political power until 164 AD when it was conquered and included into the province of Syria. From 194 AD Dura-Europos was a part of the province *Syria Coele*.

One must see in Arabia, in which Dura-Europos was situated, *Arabia Deserta*, described by Ptolemy (V. 19). In particular, he mentions Ἐροῦπα (V. 19. 5), which was earlier referred to by Pliny the Elder as being in Syria: *in Syria oppida Europum* (V. 87).

Quite in the same way one might regard the information of P. Oxy 14.1722/3 (315–323 AD): ἀπὸ Συρίας Ἐλευθεραπόλεως: Syria is used here as a general, purely geographical notion without any political and/or administrative sense. However, it is obviously called “Eleutheropolitan Syria”. Earlier interpretations like “from Syria (more precisely) from Eleutheropolis”³⁴ seem far too complicated.

The existence of New Arabia, whatever it was, is obviously not connected with and not reflected in one of two Arabias on LV or TP.

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³¹ Bowersock G. W. *Roman Arabia*. P. 116.

³² See: Cole R. A. *Epistle of Paul to the Galatians. An Introduction and Commentary*. London, 1965. P. 35; Fung R. Y. K. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, 1988. P. 26–27; Tenney M. C. *Galatians. The Chapter of Christian Liberty*. Grand Rapids, 1989. P. 64.

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