

Letter of the Emperor Claudius to the Alexandrians, 41 CE
[P. London 1912, CPJ I 151]

[i, Edict of the Prefect of Egypt]

“Lucius Aemelius Rectus announces: Seeing that all the populace, owing to its numbers, was unable to be present at the reading of the most sacred and most beneficent letter to the City, I have deemed it necessary to display the letter publicly in order that reading it one by one you may admire the greatness of our God Caesar and you may feel gratitude for his goodwill towards the city. Year 2 of Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator, 14th of Neos Sebastos.”

[Letter of Claudius]

“Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, Imperator, Pontifex Maximus, Holder of the Tribunician Power, Consul Designate, to the City of the Alexandrians, greeting.

Tiberius Claudius Barbillus, Apollonius son of Artemidorus, Chaeremon son of Leonidas, Marcus Julius Asklepiades, Gaius Julius Dionysios, Tiberius Claudius Phantias, Pasion son of Potamon, Dionysios son of Sabbion, Tiberius Claudius Archibius, Apollonius son of Ariston, Gaius Julius Apollonius, Hermaiskos son of Apollonius, your ambassadors, having delivered to me the decree, discoursed at length concerning the city, directing my attention to your goodwill towards us, which, from long ago, you may be sure, had been stored up to your advantage in my memory; for you are by nature reverent towards the Augusti, as I know from many proofs, and in particular have taken a warm interest in my house, warmly reciprocated, of which fact (to mention the last instance, passing over the others) the supreme witness is my brother Germanicus addressing you in words more clearly stamped as his own.

Wherefore, I gladly accepted the honors given to me by you, though I have no weakness for such things. And first I permit you to keep my birthday as a *dies Augustus* as you have yourselves proposed; and I agree to the erection in their several places of the statues of myself and my family; for I see that you were anxious to establish on every side memorials of your reverence for my house. Of the two golden statues, the one made to represent the Pas Augusta Claudiana, as my most honored Barbillus suggested and entreated when I wished to refuse, for fear of being thought too offensive, shall be erected at Rome; and the other according to your request shall be carried in procession on the eponymous days in your city, and it shall be accompanied by a throne adorned with whatever trappings you choose.

It would perhaps be foolish, while accepting such great honors, to refuse the institution of a Claudian Tribe and the establishment of groves after the manner of Egypt. And so I grant you these requests as well, and if you wish you may also erect the equestrian statues given by Vitrasius Pollio my procurator. As for the erection of those in four-horse chariots which you wish to set up to me at the entrances into the country, I consent to let one be placed at Taposiris, the Libyan town of that name, another at Pharos in Alexandria, and a third at Pelusium in Egypt. But I deprecate the appointment of a high priest to me and the building of temples, for I do not wish to be offensive to my contemporaries, and my opinion is that temples and such forms of honor have by all ages been granted as a prerogative to the gods alone.

Concerning the requests which you have been anxious to obtain from me, I decide as follows. All those who have become *epheboi* up to the time of my Principate I confirm and maintain in the possession of the Alexandrian citizenship with all the privileges and indulgences enjoyed by the city, excepting those who have contrived to become

epheboi by beguiling you, though born of servile mothers. And it is equally my will that all the other favors shall be confirmed which were granted to you by former princes and kings and prefects, as the Deified Augustus also confirmed them. It is my will that the *neokoroi* of the Temple of the Deified Augustus in Alexandria shall be chosen by lot in the same way as those of the Deified Augustus in Canopus are chosen by lot. With regard to the civic magistracies being made triennial, your proposal seems to me to be very good; for through fear of being called to account for any abuse of power your magistrates will behave with greater circumspection during their term of office. Concerning the *Boule*, what your custom may have been under the ancient kings I have no means of saying, but that you had no senate under the earlier Augusti, you are well aware. As this is the first broaching of a novel project, whose utility to the city and to my government is not evident, I have written to Aemilius Rectus to hold an inquiry and inform me whether in the first place it is right that a *Boule* should be constituted, and, if it should be right to create one, in what matter this is to be done.

As for the question, which party was responsible for the riots and feud (or rather, if the truth be told, the war) with the Jews, although in confrontation with their opponents your ambassadors, and particularly Dionysios the son of Theon, contended with great zeal, nevertheless I was unwilling to make a strict inquiry, though guarding within me a store of immutable indignation against whichever party renews the conflict. And I tell you once and for all that unless you put a stop to this ruinous and obstinate enmity against each other, I shall be driven to show what a benevolent Prince can be when turned to righteous indignation. Wherefore, once again I conjure you that, on the one hand, the Alexandrians show themselves forbearing and kindly towards the Jews who for many years have dwelt in the same city, and dishonor none of the rites observed by them in the worship of their god, but allow them to observe their customs as in the time of the Deified Augustus, which customs I also, after hearing both sides, have sanctioned; and on the other hand, I explicitly order the Jews not to agitate for more privileges than they formerly possessed, and not in the future to send out a separate embassy as though they lived in a separate city (a thing unprecedented), and not to force their way into gymnasiarchic or cosmetic games, while enjoying their own privileges and sharing a great abundance of advantages in a city not their own, and not to bring in or admit Jews who come down the river from Egypt or from Syria, a proceeding which will compel me to conceive serious suspicions. Otherwise I will by all means take vengeance on them as fomenters of which is a general plague infecting the whole world. If, desisting from these courses, you consent to live with mutual forbearance and kindness, I on my side will exercise a solicitude of very long standing for the city, as one which is bound to us by traditional friendship. I bear witness to my friend Barbillus of the solicitude which he has always shown for you in my presence and of the extreme zeal with which he has now advocated your cause; and likewise to my friend Tiberius Claudius Archibius. Farewell.”