

# AULUS LICINIUS ARISTOTELIS

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Among the hundreds of letters of Cicero there is one in which he recommends Aulus Licinius Aristotelis — a Maltese friend of his — to a certain Rex. (1)

This letter was written in the autumn of 46 B.C. (2), at a time when the Civil War between the Caesarians and the Pompeians had already been clearly decided in favour of the former and at a time when Cicero, greatly disturbed by the recent political developments and deeply embittered by family troubles, had all but withdrawn from public life and was employing himself in writing on the theory and practice of oratory and on philosophy.

The letter is headed with the name of Cicero in the nominative and that of the recipient, Rex, in the genitive governed by the greeting S. (salutem dat). Abela in his "Malta Illustrata" contends that the recipient of this letter was Juba, King of Numidia (3). It is extremely difficult to accept such a view. We have here a familiar letter written to an intimate friend of Cicero, as testified by the brief greeting, which Cicero reserved for his close friends, (4) and the words **mi Rex** (my dear Rex), which denote intimacy (5). Had Cicero really sent this letter to King Juba, for whom, incidentally, he entertained the greatest contempt (6), he would have employed the more formal manner of writing. (7)

When Cicero wrote to his close friends he invariably used only 'the cognomen' of his correspondent and dropped the 'nomen' and 'praenomen' (8). So Cicero never wrote to Titus Pomponius Atticus, but simply to Atticus (9). In this letter likewise Cicero wrote to an old friend, the cognomen of whom was Rex. We know only four things about this, Rex: (a) That he had sided with Pompey in the Civil War; (b) that he was alive in 46 B.C.; (c) that he was Cicero's friend; (d) that his cognomen was Rex. We know of only two people who had all these requirements: Quintus Marcius Rex and Publius Rupilius Rex (10). It is well-nigh impossible to determine to which of the two the letter is addressed.

The letter speaks of a Maltese friend of Cicero, Aulus Licinius Aristotelis. The first thing to note here is the name. The cognomen Aristotelis — common

- (1) Ep. ad Fam. XIII, 52.
- (2) Cf Oxford Edition of Cicero's Letters, ad Fam. XIII, 52; R.E. XIV 2, 1930 p. 1581; id 1 A, p. 1231.
- (3) Bk I, IV, III: Onde a questo Re Juba siamo andati rintracciando che Cicerone raccomandasse la persona del nostro Licinio Aristotile.
- (4) Cf R.E. III, 1897, p. 389; cf also Cicero, Select Letters, edited by W.W. How, Oxford 1956, Vol. II, p. 134: The fulness of the names and the greeting was in inverse proportion to the intimacy of the correspondents. Official or other formal communications should give the full style and titles of both the writer and the recipient, and add longer greetings, 'S.V.B.E.E.Q.V.' or the like.
- (5) Cf for example Ad Att. X, VIII, 6: et tamen, *mi Attice* . . .
- (6) Cf ad Att. XI, 7, 8; ad Fam. VII, 3, 8.
- (7) Cf note above and ad Fam. V, VII: (Cicero to Pompey) M. Tullius M.F. Cicero S.D. Gn. Pompeio Cn. F. Magno Imperatori; ad Fam. I, 1; (Cicero to Lentulus): M. Cicero S.D.P. Lentulo Procos; ad Fam. XV, II; (Cicero to Senate): M. Tullius M.F. Cicero Procos. S.D. cos.; Pr., Tr., Pl. Senatui.
- (8) Cf W. How, op. cit. Vol. II, p. 184; Cf also R.E. Vol. III, 1897, p. 839.
- (9) Cf Letters to Atticus, passim.
- (10) Cf R.E. 1 A, p. 1231; id XIV 2, p. 1581.

throughout Sicily and other parts of the Greek-speaking world — indicates that the person concerned was of Greek extraction. Furthermore as Cicero's friend took on a Roman nomen and praenomen, he must, at some time, have become a Roman citizen. Non-Romans on becoming Roman citizens usually bore the name of their patron and retained their original name as a cognomen (11). There are many examples of non-Romans who assumed Roman citizenship. Thus the Carthaginian Muttines, sponsored by the consul Marcus Valerius Laevinus, became Marcus Valerius Muttines (12). The Greek poet Archias, who was defended by Cicero, on adopting Roman citizenship took the name Aulus Licinius Archias (13). This last example is interesting. Cicero's Maltese friend assumed the very same praenomen and nomen as Archias had done. It is known that Archias took the nomen **Licinius**, the name of the gens of which the Luculli, his great patrons, formed part. Why Archias took the praenomen Aulus it is difficult to say. Could it be that Aristotelis was also sponsored by the Luculli and that his benefactor was the same obscure Aulus who befriended Archias?

Cicero tells his friend Rex that Aulus Licinius is an 'antiquissimus hospes' of his, in other words that Cicero used to entertain Aulus Licinius in his home, when the latter was in Rome, and that Aulus Licinius, on his part, had been of some service to Cicero (14). One can only speculate as to when these two became acquainted. It is possible that Cicero made friends with him when Cicero was quaestor at Lilybaeum in Sicily (75 B.C.), or when he was defending the interests of the Maltese against Verres in 70 B.C.; it is equally possible, however, that Cicero had known him long before 75 B.C., in Rome perhaps, or in some other Italian city. One can take it as fairly certain that Aulus Licinius was a person of some special standing in Malta or in Sicily, otherwise he would not have been easily accepted in Cicero's circle.

Cicero claims that Aulus Licinius obtained his freedom from Caesar through his personal intervention. What is the meaning of this piece of information? Aulus Licinius had certainly never been Caesar's slave, otherwise he would not have become Cicero's friend. Furthermore, had he been a slave he would have assumed, on being manumitted, Caesar's nomen and praenomen. The obvious meaning, accepted by all scholars, is that he was a political enemy of Caesar, i.e. he took Pompey's side in the Civil War (15). Cicero goes on to say that Aulus Licinius had frequently been in Cicero's group of friends (that group which eventually fought with Pompey against Caesar), and that he maintained his adherence to the Senate's cause longer than Cicero did.

After the battle of Pharsalus (48 B.C.) Caesar issued a general edict banishing all Pompeians from Italy (16). Cicero himself, who after Pompey's debacle,

(11) Cf E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae* (264-70 B.C.), Oxford, 1958, p. 254; also ad *Fam.* XIII, 32; XIII, 35; *Verr.* IV, 37; also L. Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners* trans. by L.A. Magnus, London 1965, Vol. IV, p. 57.

(12) Cf Livy, XXVII, 5, 7.

(13) Cf Cicero, *Pro Aulo Licinio Archia poeta oratio*, edited by J.S. Reid, Camb. 1938.

(14) On the Roman concept of Hospitality, Cf *Foreign Clientelae*, by Badian, op. cit. p. 115; and also *Party Politics in the age of the Caesar*, by Liiv Ross Taylor, Los Angeles, 1964, p. 38.

(15) Cf note 10.

(16) Cf ad *Att.* XI, 7, 2.

had returned there, was within an ace of being thrown out of Italy (17). He managed to reconcile himself with Caesar and the relations between the two grew gradually warmer. In 46 B.C., taking advantage of his renewed friendship, Cicero played the part of a mediator between Caesar and the exiled Pompeians. He wrote constantly to console his friends in exile and to hold out hopes of a speedy return to their country. He also secured from Caesar the freedom of many of Pompey's active partisans. (18)

After the battle of Pharsalus, Pompey fled to be murdered in Egypt; but the remnants of his followers and the supporters of the Senate's cause crossed over to Africa where they were decisively beaten by Caesar. Cicero, on the contrary, after Pompey's defeat, returned to Italy. As Cicero avers that Aulus Licinius remained loyal to the cause longer than he did, we can safely infer that he fought at the battle of Pharsalus and after Pompey's flight, unlike Cicero, joined the supporters of the Senate in Africa. Later, through Cicero's intervention, he was pardoned by Caesar.

## A P P E N D I X

### Cicero Regi S.

Scr. Romae circ. med. m. Sept. a. 708 (46)

A. Licinius Aristotelis Melitensis antiquissimus est hospes meus et praeterea coniunctus magno usu familiaritatis. Haec cum ita sint, non dubito quin tibi satis commendatus sit; etenim ex multis cognosco meam commendationem plurimum apud te valere. Hunc ego a Caesare liberavi; frequens enim fuerat nobiscum atque etiam diutius in cause est quam nos commoratus; quo melius te de eo existimaturum arbitror. Fac igitur, mi Rex, ut intellegat has sibi litteras plurimum profuisse. (19)

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Aulus Licinius Aristotelis of Malta has very long-standing relations of hospitality with me; he is, moreover, a habitually close and intimate friend of mine. For these two reasons I have no doubt that he is already sufficiently commended to you; for I am well aware, as many have told me, that a recommendation from me carries considerable weight with you. I personally procured his liberty from Caesar; in fact in the past he had been frequently in our company and remained faithful to the cause even longer than we did. On this account you will think all the better of him, I imagine. My dear Rex, make sure that he realizes that this letter has been of considerable help to him.

(17) Cf ad Att. XI, 7, 2, 9, 1.

(18) Cf ad Fam. IV, 7-10, 13-15, VI, 1-14.

(19) Cf Oxford Edition, Cicero's Letters, ad Fam. XIII, 52.