

JOHN SHELTON

A DIVISION TABLE AT TRIER

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A Division Table at Trier

The archaeological collection at the University of Trier has on loan from a private owner part of a wooden tablet both sides of which were honed down in antiquity to hold a layer of wax, presumably for use by a schoolboy. Four holes were pierced so that the tablet could be bound together with others; each hole is accompanied by a notch to keep a binding thong from slipping. The general appearance is very much like that of Würzburg inv. K 1014, illustrated in *Enchoria* 13 (1985) Tafel 8-9, which is, however, somewhat smaller than the Trier tablet.

One side of the tablet has lost any wax it may once have contained and the wood shows only a few scratches which I cannot interpret as letters. The side with wax, if held with the writing upright, has the holes on the left; this will have been an inside right-hand "page" of the bound pugillares. It is broken off on the right, so that probably about a half or two thirds of the original object is missing. There are traces of glue on the broken edge: apparently someone tried to join the wood to another piece in modern times. I have not been able to identify the missing portion in any publication I have seen.

Preserved is one column of a list of fractions: the halves of 6000, of the figures 1 through ten, then of twenty through fifty; there was no room for more before the break. Similar texts are common. For the most recent list see D. H. Fowler, "A Catalogue of Tables", *ZPE* 75 (1988) 273-280 at pp. 274-278. Wooden tablets of this type are generally dated on palaeographic grounds to about the 6th or 7th century AD; that would do for the specimen at Trier too.

Dimensions: height 21.5 cm, top margin 6.5, lower margin 7; holes ca. 0.4 wide spaced 3.5, 3.5, 7, 3.5, 4 cm from top and 0.5 cm in from the edge; wood ca. 0.6 cm thick, of which ca. 0.1 cm was honed off on each side to make a depression for the wax.

Inv. OL 1988.21

Text

1	τὸ ἄ ενψ[υφων ᾿Γ]	
2	τῆς α'	
3	└	
4	τῶν β	α
5	τῶν γ	α _L
6	[τ]ῶν δ	β
7	τῶν ε	β _L
8	τῶν ς	γ
9	τῶν ζ	γ _L
10	τῶν η	δ
11	τῶν θ	δ _L

12	τῶν ι	ε
13	τῶν κ	ι
14	τῶν λ	ι ε
15	τῶν μ	κ
16	τῶν ν	κ ε

1 Numerous parallels show that this restoration gives the expected text, see W. Brashear, “Quisquiliae”, *Bull. de la Soc. d'Archéologie Copte* 26 (1984) 19-21 at 19-20 and *Enchoria* 12 (1984) 3 with further examples in his texts published in *Enchoria* 13 and 14. The letters before Ὑ are generally read ἐν ψύφων; the latter is taken to be an error for ἐν ψήφοις, meaning “in calculations”, on the supposition that 6000, being the number of drachmas in a talent, was the number par excellence for those learning arithmetic. This is not very satisfying: if the texts are really so late as one would think from the script, drachmas will have ceased to circulate hundreds of years previously and their relation to the talent will have been only of antiquarian interest (cf. e.g. D.S. Crawford, *Aegyptus* 33, 1953, 227f.); the texts never say that they are speaking of drachmas; and they never get the grammar right. What we really need is a term for 6000 in the genitive,¹ and a more convincing explanation of its significance. ἐνψήφων as one word (otherwise only known as an adjective meaning ‘gem-studded’) would supply the genitive, so I prefer a text which does not eliminate it as a possibility; but I do not see how it would supply the desired sense. P.Michael. 62 has instead ἀριθμῶ(ν), which is presumably also to be read in P.Achmim instead of ἀριθμῶ; again the genitive, but it does not seem to help with the meaning.

A further theory deserves mention: P. Cauderlier (REG 101, 1988, 181-183) would retain the dative, comparing Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* IX,22: He understands τῶ ἀριθμῶ there as “en valeur arithmétique” and τῶν σκεπομένων καὶ γυμνουμένων χαραγμάτων - - - μετρομένων as genitive absolute; so also in passages like P.Michael. 62 ἀριθμῶ would indicate that the written characters were used as numbers rather than letters. But the traditional view of Heliodorus is to my mind superior, for other reasons and because he does not actually cite any figures which could be confused with letters; and Sijpesteijn's discussion of P.Michael. 62 in *CE* 56 (1981) 100 seems right to me.

Trier

John Shelton

¹ In MPER N.S. XV 154.49 the expression is in fact replaced by ἐξακισχιλίων, if the reading is correct; but the editors call it “sehr undeutlich” and I cannot make it out on their Tafel 73.