

GRACE IOANNIDOU

A NOTE ON συνακτικός

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 118 (1997) 162

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In P.Kellis I 67<sup>1</sup>, a private letter dated “early to mid IVth century,” we read:

Il. 17ff.: (2nd Hd.)     πινακίδιον εὔμετρον καὶ  
                               ἀστεῖον δέκα πτυχῶν πέμ-  
                               πον τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου Ἰσίωνι.  
                               Ἐλληνιστῆς γὰρ γέγονεν  
                               καὶ ἀναγνώστης συνακτικός.

The editors state that “συνακτικός seems to be new in the papyri, but cf. *LSJ* s.v. where its principle rendering is given as ‘able to bring together’; it is not quite clear what a ‘reader able to bring together’ would mean precisely; we think that the wording must refer to an accomplished/comprehensive reader.” The editors also – and rightly so – list the word ἀναγνώστης in the Indices under “*Professions, Trades and Occupations*”. However, they simply translate ἀναγνώστης συνακτικός as “a comprehensive reader.” I believe that συνακτικός refers to the reader at a religious congregation.

According to Sophocles<sup>2</sup> συνακτικός, except for ‘capable of bringing together’ and ‘conclusive, consequential in logic’, can be ‘pertaining to a religious meeting (σύναξις)’, while συναξάριον is 1. ‘a book containing directions with reference to divine service’, or 2. ‘a register of the life of a saint’. Similarly συνάξιμος, -ον means ‘belonging to a religious meeting’, and συνάξιμος ἡμέρα is ‘a day on which religious services are performed at church’. Σύναξις is 1. a ‘religious meeting’, 2. ‘religious service = ἀκολουθία’, 3. ‘place of meeting’, or 4. ‘congregation = ἐπισυναγωγή’.

Ἄναγνώστης is ‘anagnostes, lector, reader’, or, more specifically, ‘lector, reader in a church’. Always according to Sophocles, ‘the ἀναγνώσται form one of the lower ecclesiastical orders’. In the Orthodox Church, the ἀναγνώσται are laymen who have been tonsured, whereas in the Synagogue any member of the community can undertake the reading.

Therefore, we could assume that Ision has become a reader of the Church or the Synagogue. I even ventured to believe that the latter would be more probable because of the word ἑλληνιστής. Ἐλληνιστής, according to Sophocles and Lampe s.v., could mean someone who uses the Greek language without being Greek himself, a defender of paganism, a pagan, a heathen, but also a Jew whose language was the Greek. The hypothesis that Ision was a Jew, though barely defensible, would also account for the high concentration of Jewish names in P.Kellis 61 (see comment of the editors).

However, the Syrian name “Loui Shai” read on the back of the papyrus, turns us into a different direction. Θεόγνωστος, the recipient of the letter, also occurs in two other Greek letters of the Kellis collection, i.e. in 71.9 and 72.9. Both letters hint towards a Manichaean background, and this is corroborated by their similarities to Manichaean letters from Kellis, written in Coptic. The editors of P.Kell. I 67 also note (n. 2, p. 179), that in the Coptic letter P.68.G a Person is called both Θεόγνωστος and Loui Shai. Therefore, if “brother” Ision is of the same confession as Θεόγνωστος, we can assume that he became a reader at Manichaean religious meetings. Syria was a bilingual country, and religious works were almost always translated into Greek (and/or subsequently into Coptic) and vice versa<sup>3</sup>. We can therefore expect that reading of holy texts at religious meetings of Mani followers in Egypt demanded the skills of a knowledgeable Hellenist.

Athens

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<sup>1</sup> Worp, K.A. in collaboration with Whitehorne, J.E.G. and Daniel, R.W., *Greek Papyri from Kellis: I, Nos. 1-90*, Dakhleh Oasis Projekt: Monograph No. 3, Oxbow Monograph 54, Oxbow Books, Oxford 1995. Ed. princ. in the *Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrology*, Copenhagen 1992 (1994) 277-83. The papyri of the collection come from the excavation in Kellis, Dakhleh Oasis. The papyrus in question comes from House 3, where the greatest bulk of the collection’s documents was found.

<sup>2</sup> E.A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, Cambridge, Mass. & Leipzig, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. H.J.W. Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, London 1984, pp. 25 and 174-75.

[Anm. d. Red.: Während der Drucklegung dieser Miscelle erschien *Kellis Literary Texts*, Vol. I, ed. by I. Gardner, wo auf S. 187 eine Korrektur desselben Inhalts mitgeteilt wird.]