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NOTES ON P. ANTINOOPOLIS 15 (FR. COM. ADESP. 1084 KASSEL–AUSTIN)


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It seems now highly improbable that, without the discovery and identification of new papyri, any magical solutions will be found to the many problems posed by this papyrus. Decipherment of the extant text, often mutilated and abraded, has been taken as far as it can in the standard editions (Roberts, Barns−Lloyd-Jones, Austin, Sandbach, Kassel−Austin), and interpretation of the play opening that is preserved in P. Ant. 15 has been perceptively treated in a series of papers (especially those of Barns−Lloyd-Jones, Seeberg and Bandini). Two major points, to start with.

(i) In the heading to the play preserved in P. Ant. 15 the scribe wrote its title and the name of the author, but both are now badly abraded; only \[\text{[..]}\ \text{po} \ [\text{[..]}\ \varsigma\] can be read with any confidence. The author’s name is more likely to have been \[\text{M[\text{en}]}\text{ndrou}\] (so first Roberts, p. 35) than that of any other comedian – the readable traces seem consistent with this, although not enough ink remains for any positive identification – and there is nothing in the style and language of A. 15’s text that conflicts with, but much that suggests, Menandrean authorship. Too little of the play’s title, however, is preserved for confident supplementation there. All that can be made out in the ultra-violet photograph published by Barns−Lloyd-Jones is the top of a final sigma; in front of that, with the papyrus itself before him, Barns tentatively deciphered \[\text{to}\], but there is no sign in the photograph of a tau’s crossbar, and this absence decreases the plausibility of Austin’s suggestion (1967, p. 134) that the intended title was "\[\text{Apist}\text{t}o\text{ς}\] the one preserved Menandrean title ending in -tow. Of the other two attempts to identify the play’s title \[2\] Webster’s Δακτύλιος is the more promising. It appears to be a feature of some opening scenes in Menander’s plays that the play’s title, or words associated with it, is/are unobtrusively inserted into the spoken text here (\[\text{όσπιδα}\ Asp. 16, \[\text{δύσκολος}\ Dysk. 7, \[\text{Σαμιώς}\ \text{έτσι}\ Sam. 21; cf. \[\text{μισέ}\ \text{νέον}\] με \[\text{μίσος}\ Mis. 43}\) Arnott = A43 Sandbach, \[\text{ό Σικουώνιος}\ Sik. 13)\] In P. Ant. 15’s opening scene we find \[\text{ο δακτύλιος}\] mentioned at v. 27.

1 The following bibliography is as complete as I can make it:
E. G. Turner, CR 2 (1952) 184.
R. Merkelbach, APF 16 (1958) 105.
C. Austin, CR 17 (1967) 134; Comiconum Graecorum fragmenta in papyris reperta (Berlin 1973) 242–44 (P. Ant. 15), 244–46 (P. Berlin 13892), 368 (P. Berlin 21184: editio princeps, with H. Machler).


(ii) The play’s opening seems designed to engage its audience by its inclusion of features that are at the same time striking and puzzling. A young man emerges from one of the stage houses, followed by a woman carrying a sizable container and trying in vain to attract his attention. He turns away from her, however, in order to face the audience, informing them that it is night, and that he has been married for over four months, during which time he has been faithful to his wife and both have come to love each other. He married at his father’s bidding; at the time of the wedding apparently the young man was not in love with the bride.

By v. 13 the woman has induced the young man to notice the container, which conceals some recognition tokens, including half a moth-eaten old cloak. Presumably they had been placed there by a girl who, when violated before marriage by a drunken male, had snatched the cloak from him at the time of the rape. When that girl as a result of her forced pregnancy gave birth, she presumably had her offspring exposed along with the tokens. Two important details here have been shrewdly appraised by A. Seeberg (1970, 218–19). If the cloak was old and moth-eaten, the rape could not have been recent or involved the young husband and wife of the opening scene; most probably it was committed a generation ago by a character now middle-aged or elderly on a woman old enough to be the young man’s mother. Secondly, only half a cloak is present in the container. Seeberg ingeniously suggests that the pregnancy might have produced twins, with the babies exposed separately, each accompanied by its own tokens and half of the snatched cloak.

The young man on stage, however, has more immediate problems on his mind that make him postpone further investigation of the items in the container. These problems clearly concern his marriage, but the lines preserved in P. Ant. 15 do not identify them. Menander here has chosen to open his play with a striking and puzzling mime that he does not immediately explain. He would have unravelled all the mysteries later in the play, but experience has taught us that Menander’s solutions are usually more ingenious and effective than modern scholarship has been able to conjure up. It is accordingly more sensible here to admire the puzzle than to attempt its resolution.

A few further points deserve consideration:

(iii) The cast list prefixed to the play text in P. Ant. 15 seems originally to have contained nine or ten names, four or five of them in a torn and abraded left-hand column, five in a better preserved one on the right. If the names are arranged in the order of their first appearance on stage in the play, as they are in the cast list introducing the text of the Dyskolos in the Bodmer papyrus, it follows that the six decipherable names in the P. Ant. 15 list (Kratinos, Lysippos, Kantharos, Gorgias, Philinos and ἕρω-πανα, which would number four and six to ten in a sequence of ten, or three and five to nine in a sequence of nine, are characters who do not appear in that part of the opening scene preserved in the papyrus.

The young man and the female who follows him onto the stage at the start of the play would originally have been numbers one and two in the list; we no longer know the name of the young man,

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4 This interpretation of an opening mime, in which the young man enters with the woman behind him seeking his attention right at the start of the play before the first words are spoken, is based on Menandrean practice elsewhere. The Aspis opens similarly with a striking and puzzling mime – the entry of a group of Lycian captives and pack-animals carrying booty, along with a single slave carrying a badly buckled shield – before a single word is uttered, and the aim of the unexpected spectacle was clearly to puzzle the audience and thereby seize its attention. See the paper cited in n. 3.

5 Seeberg notes also that P. Berlin 13892 seems to mention a sword (v. 9) that cannot be drawn from its sheath (21–22) apparently because of rust (20). If this papyrus derives from the same play as P. Ant. 15, the rusty sword may be a further memento of that rape long ago. Could the victim of the rape have snatched both sword and cloak from her assailant, and left the sword and half the cloak with the twin boy as recognition tokens? The assailant would then have been young, perhaps an ephebe serving in the cavalry; did he later go on to be a mercenary soldier and thereby achieve wealth (cf. v. 23)? Was he in fact the Kantharos involved in this scene, given this name because, like other soldiers in later comedy (e.g., Bias in Menander’s Kolax, cf. Thrasonides in Mis. 765–66, Polemon in Pk. 470–73; W. Hofmann and G. Wartenburg, Der Brambaras in der antiken Komödie, Berlin 1973, 11, 29–39, 90–156), he was too fond of wine?

6 Indeed one possible interpretation of vv. 19–22 might make the young man’s mother the victim: see below.
but some details in or at the side of the text may allow us to confirm the status and perhaps also to make a guess at the name of the young man’s companion. δεικνύωσσα (v. 13) indicates that this companion was female, and her receipt of and obedience to a series of commands given to her by the young man (23, 27, 30, 33) imply that she is a slave rather than a free woman; the young man’s superior status is further confirmed by the fact that it is he, not the woman, who decides to seal the container after investigation of its contents (34). In the left-hand margin at v. 16 her name or status appears to be written, but a tear reduces the written information to a rho preceded by an attached high and slightly slanting crossbar. Elsewhere in the papyrus horizontal or slightly slanting crossbars attach α, γ, ε, π, τ, υ and χ to a following rho. Barns and Lloyd-Jones (1964) 26 interpret the marginal indication at v. 16 as a mutilated and abbreviated θεράπαινον, while Webster (1952) 58 and (1953) 218 = (1970) 238 identifies the young man’s companion as the θεράπαινον who appears at the end of P. Ant. 45’s cast list. This can hardly be correct; we have no reason to believe that the order of speakers in the cast list is inaccurate. It seems more likely that the young man’s companion was actually named in the papyrus margin, and Συραπάμα here would be an appropriate name for an elderly female slave; we may compare Men. Misoumenos 555 Arnott = 155 Sandbach7, Philemon fr. 117, Plaut. Mercator and Truculentus; in Ter. Hecyra we have Donatus’ testimony (on v. 59) that Syra there was a bawd, as also presumably in the Greek model by Apollodorus Car. (cf. fr. 8).

The entry in the cast list directly under Κράτεινος was deciphered as ἔρνημαι νύκτι’ ἀπόκοιτσ ζ ρόποτε’ ἐπούτι ζ γυναικι’ κόσος ἄσοσσον ἐρείχειν δ’, ὡς γέγον οὐκ... [μετὰ τοῦς γράμμας] δίκαιον ἡρων.

6–7 Suppl. Roberts. 7 ὄσον or ὄτον or ὄγον P. Ant. with one or two letters written above the second letter. 8 γέγονα or γέγονε P. Ant.

Mutilation of the papyrus provides most of the difficulties here, although in v. 7 most scholars have assumed an unhealable crux. Bandini (1984, 184) boldly suggested οῦ μόνην ἔχειν ἐδει’ with Roberts’ supplement, but P. Ant. 15’s text here may need lesser correction than that. If the scribe wrote ὄσον with an omitted i added later above the sigma, Menander might originally have written ὄσιον ἄν ἔχειν ἥν ἔχειν (μ’) ἔδει (or, taking account of the tendency of enclitics such as με to occupy the earliest possible position in their clause, ἄν ἄν ἔδει). For ἄσος in the sense of ‘(sexually) chaste’ cf. e.g. Eur. Hipp. 765 οὖν ἄσον ἐρώτον, Ion 150 ἄσος ἄπ’ εὔνας ἄν, Suppl. 1028–29, IA 5559.

7 Cf. my edition of Mis. in the Loeb Menander (p. 294 n. 1) and N. Gonis, in The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 64 (1997) 48.
8 J. Wackernagel, IF 1 (1892) 333–436 = Kleine Schriften 1 (Göttingen 1954) 1–104; cf. Barrett’s commentary on Eur. Hipp. 10–11. The addition of (μ’) here is not strictly necessary, but advisable because ὄσιος occasionally appears to be treated as of two terminations (e.g. Pl. Legg. 8.892d πράξει... ὄσιον τε καὶ ἄνοσον καὶ πάντως αἴσχρον, cf. Axioch. 371d, Dion. Hal. AR 5.71, Athenagoras Leg. 13.3), so that without (μ’) here the identity of the person claiming to be ὄσιον would be ambiguous. A scribe’s omission of (μ) (in both places after ν) could be explained as virtual haplography.
In v. 8 Roberts supplemented with [ἀπόκοιτοι]ος, but Lloyd-Jones (1964, 28 = 1990, 106; cf. Barns p. 23) noted the absence in the papyrus of the crossbar that normally in this hand links τ and ο. Bandini (1984, 150) suggested [ἀπόδημοι]ος, but such a repetition of the claim that he has never been physically absent from his wife seems to me less likely than a reiteration of his sexual fidelity to her, and so perhaps vv. 8–10 might be supplemented, exempli gratia, as follows:

8 οὐφτε[τε]πονηρ[οίς] γέγονα κούκ ἔρ[ι]ωτ’ ἐγὼ
    μετὰ το[ὺς] γάμους ἄνοσιον ἐνθάδ’, ἀλλ’ ἄεἰ
10 δίκαιον ήρων.

For Menander’s use elsewhere of πονηρός in a specifically sexual context see Georgos 3; cf. also e.g. Pl. Symp. 183d πονηρός δ’ ἐστὶν ἐκείνος ὁ ἐραστής ὁ πάνθημος. For the use of ἔρως with a cognate accusative see Eur. Hipp. 32 ἔρως’ ἔρωτ’ ἐκδήμον, 337 οἶον . . . ἡράσθης ἔρων; cf. Pl. Symp. 181b. For the use of ἄνοσιος in a sexual context cf. S. OC 945–46, Eur. Ion 1092–93, El. 926, 1261. As an alternative to ἄνοσιον some other adjective of similar meaning (e.g. ἄναγνον) might be preferred.

(v) The mutilation in vv. 19–21 has damaged, but not totally removed, a possibly valuable clue in the mystery of the container and its contents. If ἐμ’ ἥς γνωνά[κος ἐμ’ ἥς] suppl. Roberts) in v. 19 are the closing words of a speech by the young man that began in the lacuna before v. 19, and if everything thereafter up to the close of v. 22 is spoken by the female slave, that slave may be saying that the container originally belonged to the young man’s mother (τὴν μητρὸς 20; suppl. Roberts), who had given it to the young man’s wife (τῇ γυ[νατική σου] ἐδωκε 20–21: σου suppl. Mette). Was the young man’s mother the victim of a rape which had led her to bear twins, of whom the young man was one? Was the ring (v. 22) snatched from the raper, just as in Epitrepontes? The questions can be asked, but no longer answered.

(vi) At v. 31 τί [ποτε ταῦτα] βούλεται; (ποτε suppl. Roberts, ταῦτα Mette) undoubtedly introduces fillers that are too long for the 6 to 8 letter gap, but its resultant Greek here provides exactly the mots justes. It is worth noting that two lines later the five letters of ταῦτα are squeezed into a very narrow space, and that a scribe could easily have omitted the π of ποτε by virtual haplography after τί.