NIKOLAOS GONIS

SOME ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΕΥΣΑΙ WITH FALSE IDENTITIES

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn
SOME ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΕΥΤΑΙ WITH FALSE IDENTITIES

Two curious πραγματευταί, or the story of a ghost and its victim

Among the taxes listed in Preisigke’s Wörterbuch III there appears one with the name οθυνιακόν; no translation is offered there, but we find one in LSJ: ‘tax on cloth’. The word made its way into the lexica after its supposed occurrence in SB I 5941.3. SB VIII 9856.1 was thought to attest a second example. In both texts the word appears in the genitive, and qualifies πραγματευταί. Nevertheless, as I intend to show, οθυνιακόν is a delendum lexicis, and the functions of these πραγματευταί should be redefined.

SB I 5941.3¹ (510, cf. BL VII 189) runs παρὰ Αὐρηλίου τοῦ διὸ πραγματευτοῦ οθυνιακοῦ. Aurelius X was understood as a πραγματευτής οθυνιακοῦ, a juxtaposition recalling that used with reference to πραγματευταί in the capacity of tax collectors.² This gave rise to the assumption that there existed a tax called οθυνιακόν. But there are serious difficulties. The tax is difficult to place within the framework of sixth-century taxation (as we know it); and this would be the latest occurrence of a πραγματευτής who is a tax collector: all the other known πραγματευταί concerned with tax collecting appear exclusively in papyri dating from no later than the third century. In my view, Aurelius X is not a tax collector, but a trader. In Byzantine Egypt the πραγματευτά (Lat. negotiatores) were usually private traders (the word is still in use in Modern Greek with this meaning).³ οθυνιακός invariably means ‘dealer in οθόνη [= fine linen]’ (LSJ s.v.), and occurs as a substantive in a number of papyri. This must be the profession of Aurelius X; οθυνιακός, which here should be an adjective, specifies his trade.⁴ Although the word is not attested as an adjective anywhere else, it is in harmony with what we know about the formation of adjectives in Greek (οθονι adj. + adjectival suffix -ακο). For the collocation πραγματευτής οθυνιακοῦ, cf. POxy XL 2925.2 (c. 270?) ἱππικοῦ πραγματευτοῦ (the πραγματευτής of this text is not a trader).

The misunderstanding discussed above led on to another in SB VIII 9856.1 (240/1, cf. BL VI 160), a tax receipt issued by an Aurelius Isidorus πραγμ( ) ὧα( ). On the basis of SB I 5941.3, the editor resolved πραγμ(ατευτής) ὧα(νιακοῦ),³ and Isidorus was taken as an official ‘der das οθυνιακόν, d.h. die Steuer auf Leinen oder Tuch (vgl. PREISIGKE, Fachwörterbuch. 132, LIDDELL-SCOTT, Greek-Engl. Lex. [1958] 1200), einnahm.’⁶ It was also noted that this is the earliest instance of this expression. But the chronological gap between the two SB documents is considerable, and one may question the validity of the parallel. Moreover, the reference to the Fachwörterbuch is partly false, inasmuch as οθυνιακόν does not figure among its entries; instead, one finds οθυνιηρα, and this points in the right direction.

² Cf. e.g. PTebt II 580 (155) πραγματευτῶν ἐνυκηλίου, PGrenf II 58.1 (175) πραγματευτής ἔρημοφυλακίας Προσσαπίτου καὶ Ἴλαιου, WChr 88.6 (213) πραγματευτοῦ πύλης Φιλαδέλφειας. J. D. Thomas, JJP 18 (1974) 241 (with n. 9) describes them as ‘[m]inor government officials who act as Hilfsbeamte of tax collectors’.
³ See Thomas, ibid. (with n. 7); PSorb II 69.21.5 n. To be sure, there are a few examples in which the term seems to have been used with reference to agents, as in earlier times, see POxy LV 3805.121 n. (a further instance in CPR X 121.4 of 543).
⁴ πραγματευταί dealing in clothes also figure in PRossGeorg V 61 r frA.11, frB.9, 20, v frA.18, frC.7 (after mid-iv century, see BL IX 227), and possibly PHerm 30.20 (551/2, cf. BL VIII 149).
⁵ So listed in consequence in WB Suppl. 2 s.v. (p. 281).
Úyonihrã is the only securely attested tax beginning with ὀθο- in papyri of the Roman period. I would therefore propose to expand πραγμ(ατεύτης) ὀθο(νηρᾶς).

Three and one ghost πραγματικοί

The officials known as πραγματικοί are attested in numerous texts of the Roman period, mainly in relation with tax collection (see PVindWorp 18.7 n.). There are also a handful of texts from the first half of the third century in which the term is applied to komogrammateis. These officials seem to disappear thereafter, but a search of the DDBDP gives three instances in Byzantine papyri. In all three cases the word is abbreviated; and there is little doubt, I believe, that all three concern πραγματεύτης.

(i) SB VI 9139, a sixth-century business letter, is addressed κυρίῳ μου Κοκμᾶ πραγματικῷ (back, line 17). Professor H. Harrauer, who kindly inspected the original at Vienna for me, communicated that the iota of πραγματικῷ is in fact an abbreviation sign. There is nothing, therefore, that could compel one not to read πραγματεύτης.

(ii) The same considerations apply to PGrenf II 88.10 (602), where πραγμα(τεύτη) should replace πραγμα(τικῷ) of ed. pr.; read τῷ αἰείδεσιμῷ ἱοάννῃ τῷ πραγμα(τεύτη). (This resolution has already been suggested as an alternative, see BL X 80.)

(iii) Similarly, in POxy I 153.6 (618) τῷ κυρῷ Θωμᾶ πραγμα(τικῷ), read πραγμα(τεύτη).

Last, in PMich XV 742.1 (VI), where the editor prints πραγμα( ), and notes ‘πραγμα(τεύτη) and πραγμα(τικῷ) are equally possible’, we should confidently expand πραγμα(τεύτη).

Wolfson College, Oxford

Nikolaos Gonis

---

7 For this tax see OWilck I pp. 266ff.; POxy XII 1414 introd.; S. L. Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian* (1938) 440.

8 The same abbreviation also occurs in PRyl II 374.6, where it is resolved as ὀθο(νηρᾶς).

9 Cf. J. D. Thomas, *ZPE* 19 (1975) 119. The latest instances of πραγματικοί in the papyri are in (PLEit 16 =) PWisc II 86.27 (245-47, cf. BL X 284), and POxy I 78 (244-49, or slightly thereafter).