NIKOLAOS GONIS

SOME ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΕΥΤΑΙ WITH FALSE IDENTITIES

Some Πραγματεγται 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 ὀθονιακόν; 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, ὀθονιακόν is a *delendum lexicis*, and the functions of these πραγματευταί should be redefined.

SB I 5941.3[1] (510, cf. BL VII 189) runs παρὰ Αὐρηλίου τοῦδε πραγματευτοῦ ὀθονιακοῦ. Aurelius X was understood as a πραγματευτὴς ὀθονιακοῦ, 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 ὀθονιακόν. 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, Aurelios X is not a tax collector, but a trader. In Byzantine Egypt the πραγματευταί (Lat. *negotiatores*) were usually private traders (the word is still in use in Modern Greek with this meaning).[3] ὀθονιακός invariably means 'dealer in ὀθόνη [= fine linen]' (LSJ s.v.), and occurs as a substantive in a number of papyri. This must be the profession of Aurelius X; ὀθονιακός, 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 (ὀθονι- + adjectival suffix -ακο). For the collocation πραγματευτὴς ὀθονιακός, 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( ) οθο( ). On the basis of SB I 5941.3, the editor resolved πραγμ(ατευτὴς) ὀθο(νιακοῦ),[5] and Isidorus was taken as an official 'der das ὀθονιακόν, d.h. die Steuer auf Leinen oder Tuch (vgl. PREISIGKE, Fachwörter. 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 ὀθονιακόν does not figure among its entries; instead, one finds ὀθονιηρά, and this points in the right direction.

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[1] On this text see E. v. Druffel, *Papyrologische Studien zum byzantinischen Urkundenwesen im Anschluss an P.Heidelberg 311* (*Münch. Beitr.* 1: 1913 [²1970]) 17-20.

[2] Cf. e.g. PTebt II 580 (155) πραγματευτῶν ἐνκυκλίου, PGrenf II 58.1 (175) πραγ]ματευτὴς ἐρημοφυλακίας Προσωπίτου καὶ | [Λητοπολίτου], WChr 88.6 (213) πραγ(ματευτοῦ) πύλ(ης) Φιλαδελ(φείας). 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).

[6] H.-G. Gundel, *Aegyptus* 43 (1963) 399.

ὀθονιηρά is the only securely attested tax beginning with οθο- in papyri of the Roman period.[7] I would therefore propose to expand πραγμ(ατευτὴc) ὀθο(νιηρᾶc).[8]

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.[9] 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 πραγματευταί.

(i) SB VI 9139, a sixth-century business letter,[10] is addressed κυρίῳ μου Κοcμᾶ πραγματι(κῷ) (back, line 17). Professor H. Harrauer, who kindly inspected the original at Vienna for me, communicated that the iota of πραγματι(κῷ) is in fact an abbreviation sign. There is nothing, therefore, that could compel one not to read πραγματ(ευτῆ).

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

(iii) Similarly, in POxy I 153.6 (618) τῷ κυρῷ Θωμᾷ πραγμα(τικῷ?), read πραγμα(τευτῆ).

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

Wolfson College, Oxford   Nikolaos Gonis

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[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(νιηρᾶc).

[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).

[10] On this text see R. Bogaert, *ZPE* 116 (1997) 139.