

NIKOLAOS GONIS

INCESTUOUS TWINS IN THE CITY OF ARSINOE

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 133 (2000) 197–198

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

INCESTUOUS TWINS IN THE CITY OF ARSINOE

P.Duk.inv. 491¹

8.1 x 10.7 cm

Second century

<http://odyssey.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/records/491.html>

Plate III

The papyrus preserves the upper part of a declaration submitted to Dios and Apollonios, γραμματεῖς μητροπόλεως, by a married couple. Physical damage obscures the exact purport of the text, but parallels suggest that it concerned the registration of a child in the parents' status, compare in particular *W.Chr.* 211 of 156.² No date has survived, but we may form some idea about it if Dios and Apollonios are to be identified with known office holders active in the second half of the second century, see further 1 n.

The man and the woman are siblings, in fact twins. Although there is plenty of evidence for endogamous marriages in the early Roman Arsinoite documentation, this is the first time that we hear of such a union between twins. It is also noteworthy that the union very probably produced an offspring.

Brother-sister marriage in Greco-Egyptian context has been the subject of a number of important studies in recent years, culminating in W. Scheidel, *Measuring Sex, Age and Death in the Roman Empire: Explorations in Ancient Demography* (*JRA* Suppl. 21: 1996) 9-51.³ But several problems remain unresolved.⁴

The writing is along the fibres. The back is blank.

[Δ]είωι καὶ Ἀπολλωνίωι
 [γ]ρ(αμματεῦσι) μητροπόλεως
 παρὰ Καβείνου τοῦ Πτολε-
 μαίου τοῦ Ἡρακ(λ-) μητρὸς
 5 Εὐδαίμωνίδος καὶ τῆς γυ-
 ναικὸς Θερμίου οὔσης μου
 καὶ ὁμοπ(ατρίου) καὶ ὁμομητρίου
 ἀδελφῆς διδ(ι)ύμου μετὰ
 κυρίου ἐμοῦ Καβείνου
 10 ἀμφοτέρων τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς
 μητροπ(όλεως) ἀναγγραφομένων
 ἐπ' ἀμφόδου Γυμνασίου. ἀπο[γραφομέθα

1 Δίωι 2 γρ 3, 9 Καβείνου 4 ηρακ 7 ομο 11 μητρο

¹ The papyrus was purchased from the University of Mississippi in 1988 (formerly P.Miss. 57), and is now held in the Special Collections Library of Duke University, by courtesy of which the image is reproduced here.

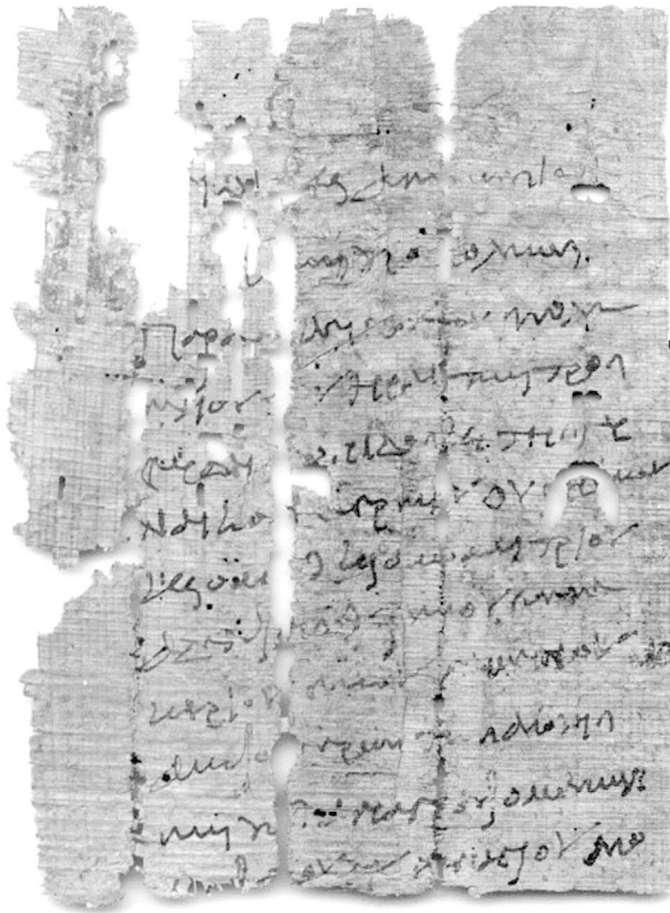
² On this type of document see most recently N. Cohen, 'A Notice of Birth of a Girl', in R. Katzoff, Y. Petroff, D. Schaps (eds.), *Classical Studies in Honor of David Sohlberg* (1996) 385-98 (list on pp. 391-92; add CPR XV 24.1-8, P.Col. VIII 231, P.Oxy. LIV 3754, LXV 4489), with the comment of N. Lewis, 'Registrations of Status, not Birth', in 'Notationes Legentis', *BASP* 34 (1997) 23.

³ See also K. Hopkins, 'Brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980) 303-54; B. Shaw, 'Brother-sister marriage in Graeco-Roman Egypt', *Man* 27 (1992) 267-99; Scheidel, 'Incest Revisited: Three Notes on the Demography of Sibling Marriage in Roman Egypt', *BASP* 32 (1995) 143-55; id., 'Brother-Sister Marriage in Roman Egypt', *Journal of Biosocial Science* 29 (1997) 361-71. In his discussions of incestuous unions Scheidel relies on the evidence from census returns as collected by R. S. Bagnall, B. W. Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt* (1994). His list of 'additional testimonies of brother-sister marriage' (*Measuring Sex, Age and Death* 11 n. 11) is not (and perhaps was not meant to be?) exhaustive, and this suggests that the declarations of birth and death have not been studied systematically (cf. e.g. *W.Chr.* 211, P.Oxy. XXXVIII 2855).

⁴ See R. S. Bagnall's review on Scheidel in *BMCR*, consultable at <http://ccat.upenn.edu/bmcr/1997.8.17>.

‘To Dios and Apollonios, scribes of the metropolis, from Sabinos son of Ptolemaios grandson of Herakl..., mother Eudaimonis, and my wife Thermion, being my twin sister by the same father and mother, with her guardian me, Sabinos, both of those from the metropolis, registered in the quarter of the Gymnasion. We register ...’

- 1 [Δ]είωι. It is uncertain whether Dios is the same person as the one who appears in P.Stras. VI 528 = C.Pap.Gr. II/1 50.1 [...]τῶ κ(αὶ) Δείῳ γραμματεῦσι μητροπόλεως]. It is also doubtful whether the addressees of this fragmentary notification of death were two. At the start of line 1 the papyrus has]τῶ^κ; this suggests reading]τῶ κ(αὶ), i.e. an alias, rather than]τῶ κ(αὶ), cf. e.g. C.Pap.Gr. II/1 40.1 (c. 150) Πτολεμαίῳ τῶ κ(αὶ) Ἐραπίωνι, where a similar abbreviation has been employed. But a declaration directed to a single γραμματεὺς μητροπόλεως would appear to be an exception; the annotation γραμματεὶ μητροπόλεως in C.Pap.Gr. II/1 24.14 (110), or the census return P.Corn. 16.ii = SB XX 14303.40 (133), whose addressees include a single γραμματεὺς μητροπόλεως, are not real parallels. The date of P.Stras. 528 also poses a problem. Ed. pr. dated it to the period 161-69; the re-edition placed it in 145-60, but this is impossible. In l. 10 the plate (C.Pap.Gr. II/1, Tav. LI) indicates that κυ]ρίῳ(ν), later changed to κυ]ρίῳ, is virtually certain (cf. already B. Kramer, P.Stras. 500-800 index, p. 106 = BL VIII 422). κυ]ρίῳ(ν) in combination with Ἄντωνίῳ in l. 9 suggests that the text either dates to the reign of M. Aurelius and L. Verus (161-69) or to that of M. Aurelius and L. Commodus (176-80). Ἀπολλωνίῳ. Apollonios may well be recognised in the γραμματεὺς μητροπόλεως who figures in SB XIV 11341.2 of 174. If the identification holds, it is just possible that the Duke papyrus dates to 174.
- 2 [γ]ρ(αμματεῦσι) μητροπόλεως. On these officials, entrusted with the keeping of records on the population of the city, see the literature assembled in BGU XV 2471.2 n., and N.Lewis, *The Compulsory Public Services of Roman Egypt*³ (Pap. Flor. XXVIII: 1997) 18. They were the usual recipients of Arsinoite registrations of birth/status: cf. BGU I 110, 111 (both 138/9), P.Fay. 28 (150/1), and (P.Gen. I 33 =) W.Chr. 211 (= P.Meyer 3 = *Papyrological Primer*² 46).4-6 (156). The cases of Dios and Apollonios prompted me to examine whether the same person could have been appointed more than once, but I have found no conclusive evidence. (It is unclear whether Didymos, γραμματεὺς μητροπόλεως in 158 (C.Pap.Gr. II/1 46, BGU XV 2471), is to be identified with Didymos alias Tyrannos, attested in office in 150/1 (P.Fay. 28), or Didymos alias Patalos, in office in 164/5 (P.Berl. Leihg. 17); it is also very doubtful that Agathos Daimon, in office in 156, is the same as the official of this name attested in 175 (BGU I 55.ii).) It is also difficult to tell whether the term of office was one year or more, cf. P.Hamb. III 203.2-5 n. It is reasonable to assume that the appointment took effect on Thoth 1 (cf. Lewis, *ibid.*). But Herodes and Maron are attested in office on 22.7.133 (SB XX 14303) and on 4.2.134 (P.Mich. XI 603, cf. BL VIII 216); this implies that they either were reappointed on 29.8.133 (Thoth 1), or entered office on an earlier date.
- 4 Ἡρακ(λ-). Ἡρακ(λείδου) is the strongest candidate, but Ἡρακ(λέως) or Ἡρακ(λάτος) should also be considered.
- 5-8 For the formulation cf. W.Chr. 211.4-6 καὶ τῆς το[ύτ]ου γυναικὸς οὔσης καὶ ὁμοπα[τρίου] καὶ ὁμομη(τρίου) ἢ ἀδελφῆς Διδύμης (it might be that the name Διδύμη was given to her to indicate that she was a twin!).
- 8 διδύμου. It seems that the scribe first wrote διδι, and then continued with υμου. I am not sure whether the second iota was cancelled. Issues relative to twins have lately been discussed by W. Scheidel, ‘What’s in an age? A Comparative View of Bias in the Census Returns of Roman Egypt’, *BASP* 33 (1996) 25-59, esp. 48-58, and ‘Twins in Roman Egypt: Postscript to *BASP* 33 (1996)’, *BASP* 34 (1997) 35-37.
- 12 ἀμφόδου Γυμνασίου. See S. Daris, ‘I quartieri di Arsinoe in età romana’, *Aegyptus* 61 (1981) 145.



P. Duk. inv. 491