

UTE WARTENBERG

PSI VII 795 REVISED

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PSI VII 795 Revised

This papyrus was first published by G. Vitelli in the seventh volume of PSI in 1925. He gave it the vague title of ‘Dichiarazione riguardante l’annona’. Since then, the number of published papyri has increased, which enables us to suggest some corrections and define more closely the nature of the document, which is often referred to in discussions of the *annona militaris*.¹ Furthermore, this papyrus belongs to the small family archive of Aurelius Sarapion alias Dionysos, and adds some points of interest about this family.

The papyrus is 10 cm wide and 13.2 cm long; it consists of two fragments and is almost U-shaped. A large part of the middle of lines 1 - 13 is broken off, whereas only about two letters are missing in lines 14 - 17. The script is a rapid cursive; it looks similar to P. Oxy. XLV 3300, pl. V, which is assigned to the late 3rd century, and to P. Mil. 55 (= O. Montevicchi, *La papirologia*, 146-7, pl. 82), which carries the date A. D. 307.

The content of this document of A. D. 253 sheds some light on the collection of the *annona militaris*. Aurelius Sarapion alias Dionysos writes to the ἀπαιτητής ἀνώνης to acknowledge a deposit of grain for the payment of the annona. This, together with the papers, is to be collected by the representatives of the ἀπαιτητής. The κυρία clause and the stipulation indicate that this papyrus is not a private communication but a contract. Aurelius Sarapion is a well known citizen of Oxyrhynchus; he and other members of his family are mentioned in papyri, but as the revised version of PSI 795 proves, this is the first, and so far only, reference to a son.²

Parallels for this type of document are rare; the nearest parallel that I have found is P. Oxy. XLII 3049. Two versions of this document are preserved, with minor differences between them; it was described as ‘Deposit of Grain’. Although concerned with different taxes, P. Oxy. 3049 and PSI 795 bear remarkable resemblances in several features. The most unusual of these, however, must be the fact that the men who deposit the grain are in both cases councillors of Oxyrhynchus, but there is no further indication of a liturgy that would explain their activities. ‘One wonders why it [the activities] should have been necessary, and what profit Didymus-Antonius and the others made from the transaction, which is at their own expense’, Peter Parsons asked in the introduction to P. Oxy. 3049 (p. 126). B. Palme briefly touched on this problem in his book on the office of the ἀπαιτητής, but he could not find an official linkage between ἀπαιτηταί and land-owners, a result which may be partly due to the restriction to one particular group of tax-collectors.³ One should not exclude the possibility that the councillors were actually involved in collecting taxes; such a case is clearly attested in BGU VII 1611 (A.D. 283), where we find some councillors as δεκάπρωτοι. A second possible example may be BGU VII 1610 (A.D. 259) in which councillors appear to act as δεκάπρωτοι, without, however, referring to this liturgy in the document. Since the creation of town-councils in the reign of Septimius Severus, the tax collection lay in the hand of the βουλή, and thus the councillors were ultimately responsible for it.⁴ It seems therefore less sur-

¹ I am most grateful to Dr. Rosario Pintaudi (Florence) for providing me with two very good photographs of this papyrus. Further I would like to thank Herwig Maehler, who checked my readings on the original. Peter Parsons, Revel Coles, and in particular John Rea, discussed this piece with me and offered valuable help.

² See 2n. for a discussion of the family.

³ *Das Amt des ἀπαιτητής in Ägypten*, 143-144 for the third century. Papyri that document the connection between ἀπαιτηταί and the βουλή are discussed on 60-62.

⁴ S. Wallace, *Taxation*, 292; B. Palme, *Das Amt des ἀπαιτητής*, 59, 67.

prising to find individual councillors involved in such menial tasks as tax collection. One should note that most of these cases date to the second half of the 3rd century, a period when it became increasingly difficult to find suitable candidates for all types of liturgies.

Despite the abundance of material about taxes in papyri, the exact procedure of collecting the *annona militaris* is not entirely clear. S. Wallace says that ‘little is known concerning the method of obtaining supplies for the Egyptian legions before the end of the second century’ and claims that this tax ‘was organized in a more regular fashion, particularly the annona of grain, which became a surtax in kind levied upon grain-land’⁵. This date is based on an ostrakon⁶, on which only a number for the year (κε) and the month (Φαμενωθ β), but no emperor are mentioned. Wilcken interpreted this date as 26 Feb. 185, year 25 of Commodus, but as he expands in *Grundzüge*, 360, it could refer equally well to Caracalla. Already J. Lesquier⁷ had criticised this early date, and this view of a later date, possibly in the Severan period, is indeed more likely. Some further changes in the general system of taxation must have been introduced in the reign of Philippus Arabs.⁸ In this context, PSI 795 provides the earliest document that mentions an ἀπαιτητῆς ἀννώνης.

The main controversy in these investigations is the question whether the *annona militaris* is exacted from the tax payer as a separate tax, or is later deducted from the general grain tax.⁹ The evidence from Egypt seems to favour the former, since documents refer to special payments that are made to the account of the *annona militaris* (P. Cair. Isid. 35; 36; BGU III 974), but some scholars take Egypt as an exceptional case, and not as representative for the whole Roman empire.¹⁰

Transcript of the *editio princeps*

- 1 Αὐρηλίος Σεπτίμιος εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς
- 2 Αὐρηλίου Σαραπίωτος ους Θέωνος
- 3 Αὐρηλίω Ὁρείωτι ἢ ἀπαιτητῆ ἀν-
- 4 νόνας Χανῶ [..... τῷ φιλιτάτῳ χαίρειν.
- 5 Ἔχω παρ' ἐμαυτῷ]νημ. ἐπὶ τῆς
- 6 ἄνω τοπαρχίας [τοῦ Ὁξυρυγχι(ίτου) νομοῦ ἰς λόγον
- 7 ἀνώνης] π[..... τεσσαρακοιντα-
- 8 τέσσαρας [.....]
- 9 ἡμισυ [.....] / — α Λ χ β

⁵ *ibid.*, 23

⁶ U. Wilcken, *Ostraca*, 273. 3-4: ὑπ(ερ) ἀννώνης) μερισμοῦ στατίωνος . . .

⁷ *L'armée romaine*, 354, 4n.

⁸ See P.J. Parsons, ‘Philippus Arabs and Egypt’, *JRS* 57 (1967), 134-141; J.D. Thomas, ‘The introduction of dekaprotoi and comarchs into Egypt in the Third Century A.D.’, *ZPE* 19 (1975), 111-119.

⁹ See for the former view D. Van Berchem, ‘L’annone militaire est-elle un mythe?’, *Armées et fiscalité dans le monde antique*, (Paris, 1975) 331 - 339; this thesis was first presented by the same scholar in an article ‘L’annone militaire dans l’empire romain au IIIe siècle’, *Mém. Soc. Nat. Antiq. France* 8e série, 10 (1937), 117-202. For a more cautious view see J.-M. Carrié, ‘Le rôle économique de l’armée dans l’Égypte romaine’, in: *Armées et fiscalité dans le monde antique*, 374 - 393, who seems to envisage a different interpretation of the papyri.

¹⁰ See for example A. Cérati, *Caractère annonaire et assiette de l’impôt foncier au Bas-Empire*, Paris (1975), 103-151.

Commentary

- 1 Αὐρήλιος Σεπτίμιος [: The last letters of Σεπτίμιος are damaged; at the end, a horizontal stroke is visible, which is more likely to be part of σ than of \omicron , as was suggested in the *ed. pr.*

δι' ἐμοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς:] μο is clear, and not] μα, which is palaeographically improbable. The small round loop in the middle of the line has all typical features of \omicron in this hand. After] μο, I can see a small dot, which is visible on the left end of the vertical stroke of the following τ . This looks like υ , since in this script, τ has relatively straight bars, whereas oblique strokes, as for example in υ or ξ , tend to end in small dots. On the basis of these readings, there seems an obvious solution for a restoration of this line: since the name of the father follows not only in the next line, but also in lines 13-14, I assume that the father acts as an agent for this son ('Aurelius Septimius X, through me, his father'). This is often expressed by the formula διὰ, and I therefore suggest δι' ἐμοῦ; cf. P. Coll. Youtie II 71. 3-4; P. Charite 18 (= P. Cair. Goodsp. 11 = W. Chr. 421); P. Oslo III 111. A. col i. 16-17.

- 2 Αὐρηλί(ου) Σαραπίων[ος τοῦ καὶ Διονυσιοῦθέρωνος: This name can be restored here; it is better preserved in 14. Vitelli separated this name into two components, assuming that Dionysous was the wife of Aurelius Sarapion and mother of Aurelius Septimius. The same man is also mentioned in P. Oxy. XLVII 3365 (A.D. 241), XXXVI 2795 (A.D. 250), P. Laur. IV 156 (A.D. 257), P. Oxy. ined. (probably of A.D. 252); cf. my paper on this family, forthcoming in the *Acts of the XIXth Congress of Papyrologists in Cairo*.

- 3 Αὐρηλίω Ὀρειώ[νι 7 - 10]: None of the other ἀπαιτηταί of that rather common name, which are listed in Palme's book, can be identified with this man.

After the gap, a trace of a small oblique at upper line-level is visible: this would suit best for υ , but may also be compatible with ν or ω . The gap is relatively large, so that one might expect a further name, possibly connected by (τῷ) καί, or the father's name in the genitive. However, one should note that a patronymic for an ἀπαιτητής would be unusual, as Palme (*Das Amt des ἀπαιτητής*, 16) pointed out.

- 3 - 4 ἀπαιτητῆ ἀννώνας {χ} ἄνω [τοπαρχίας. On this office see N. Lewis, *Public Services*, 14 - 15; and more specifically B. Palme, *Das Amt des ἀπαιτητής*. The title of the ἀπαιτητής is often specified through the tax and, in some cases, the area of jurisdiction.

The *ed. pr.* of PSI VII 795 reads in these lines ἀννώνας Χανω[. χαν is clearly legible, whereas the next letter is slightly damaged, but probably correctly read as ω . The editor suggested in 4n., with reference to P. Cair. Preis. 34. 18 (ἀπαιτηταῖς ἀννώνης κώμης χ), that these letters should probably be the beginning of the name of a local village - a view which has been widely accepted; see P. Pruneti, *I centri abitati*, 217 with ΧΑΝΩ; A. Calderini and S. Daris, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici* V, s.v. Χανω[; and most recently by B. Palme, *Das Amt des ἀπαιτητής*, 243, 122n.

However, no such name has been found in any other papyrus, so that this identification appears doubtful; a re-examination of the traces on PSI 795 may indeed suggest a different reading. If we accept the assumption that an area of jurisdiction may have followed ἀπαιτητῆ ἀννώνας, the most obvious solution for the combination χανω[is to read {χ}ἄνω τοπαρχίας. The toparchy is very frequent in this context; see B. Palme, *Das Amt des ἀπαιτητής*, list for testimonia, 131-132. The χ before ἄνω could be a scribal error: in fact, one of the strokes in this letter is much thicker than the other, and appears to have a second stroke which is supposed to delete the letter. The scribe probably intended to end the greeting formula with

χαίρειν, but crossed out χ when he noticed that he had not yet finished the title of the ἀπαιτητής. (I owe this idea to John Rea)

- 5 8 - 10] . . . μ . . . : The first trace is the right half of a slightly oblique stroke, as in υ, ι, η, or ν. The next trace is an upright and a small horizontal. What follows after μ, looks like ου or οι in a rather squeezed form. No entirely convincing restoration has been printed for these remains, although they may suggest the name of the village Ἐπιλήμου, which is situated in the upper toparchy of the Oxyrhynchite nome, as mentioned in the next line. But this reading though possible was already rejected in the *ed. pr.*, and I would like to suggest it only to show a possible restoration. Somehow a precise location of the grain deposit is missing which makes a place name quite plausible.
- 6 ἄνω τοπαρχίας [τοῦ Ὀξυρυγχίτου] νομῶ : The restoration suggested in the *ed. pr.* is kept here, although it has to be noted that it is only mentioned here, and not already in line 4, if the new reading of χανω[] in that line is correct. An alternative reading would something like εἰς ὄνομα [] μου, but this seems a little short for this gap.
- 7 - 8 πυροῦ ἀρτάβας τεσσαράκοντα τέσσαρας, (γίνονται) [—] μ[δ] καὶ κριθῆς ἀρτάβην μία(ν) : This solution, which is based on the editor's reconstruction, takes into account that the sum given at the end (one and a half and a quarter) does not coincide with the beginning (forty-four).

Although the letters before the gap are not very clear (a left-hand upright and part of the cross-bar could be π, only minimal traces of the next letter are visible), πυροῦ fits very well in this context. After this we can expect the amount, which was most probably specified in ἀρτάβας, since the number 44 cannot refer to *choinikes* (40 *choinikes* equal one *artaba*). What follows after τέσσαρας looks very much like /, (for γίνονται), which is slightly curved in this case, as used at end of the next line.

The ἀρτάβην μία(ν) mentioned in line 8 must refer to a different kind of grain, most probably barley; see for such a combination for example P. Tebt. II 404. 2-3 (late 3rd cent.), where the λόγος ἀνώτης consists of εἶτος and κριθή.

- 9 ἥμισυ (I. ἥμισυ) τέταρτον χοίνικας δύο] (γίνεται) — α Λ d χ^β: Because of the misreading of the sum at the end of the line, the editor wrongly restored ἥμισυν (sic) καὶ χοίνικας δύο / ο etc. For change of υ and ι in ἥμισυ see F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, I, 267, 270.

What Vitelli read as υν looks more like υ τε, in which a cursive ε joins the cross-bar of τ. After this small traces are left, which are compatible with ταρ[] . In the sum, we can read a d-shaped sign, which represents a quarter.

- 10 ἄς καὶ παραδώσω τοῖς ἐπιστελλομένοις: This part of the contract specifies the delivery of corn and receipts. Although the participle στελλομένοις, which the editor suggested, expresses the right idea, it is not only too short for the gap, but also not idiomatic in this formula, and should therefore be replaced by ἐπιστελλόμενοις. It is more specific in its meaning, since it implies that the envoys have been issued with an ἐπίσταμα, an official order. This compound verb is by far the most common word for 'to send' in papyri, and is used in our closest parallel text, P. Oxy. XLII 3049, A. 12-13 (in B. 15-16 as a main instead of a relative clause): ἄς καὶ παραδώσομεν τοῖς ἐπισταλθεμένοις ναυκλήροις; it is used in receipts or other documents concerning the sitologia; see for example P. Oxy. XXXVI 2769. 17-18; for the meaning and frequency of στέλλω, ἀποστέλλω, and ἐπιστέλλω see F. Preisigke, *WB*, s.v. On the ἀπαιτητής and his auxiliary personnel see F. Oertel, *Die Liturgie*, 410-423, and B. Palme, *Das Amt des ἀπαιτητής*, 149.

tax-payer. (Note that the word ‘receipt’ is misleading in this context: what seems to be more appropriate is to see this document as a kind of pay-in slip). This is most easily understood if one takes ὄνομα as the account of the official, possibly in the θησαυρός into which the grain is paid. According to these parallel cases we suggest to restore εἰς ὄνομ[ά] σου.

- 13 γραφέντα [5 - 8] . . . [] . . . υ: This part of the papyrus remains puzzling. There are roughly 4 cm of damaged papyrus surface which shows a considerable number of traces, which are not identifiable. These are followed by the abbreviated name of Aurelius Sarapion alias Dionysos. One would therefore suspect that the preceding words belong to the κύρια-clause.

But back to the traces: the only legible letter seems to be an υ which is preceded by a letter that resembles a damaged α, or possibly ο. The remaining traces are very faint, and I have not been able to identify them. Herwig Maehler writes that this group of letters vaguely resembles ἡρου, but this does not offer any satisfactory solution either.

After γραφέντα, δι’ ἐμοῦ or ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ would be a possibility, though the name’s son as the subject of ὠμολόγησα should be somewhere in the nominative. However, in these standard formula a grammatical ‘error’ seems plausible, since it would cause little misunderstanding.

- 14 Σαραπίωνο[ς τοῦ καὶ] Διονυσοθέωνος: In this line, most of this characteristic name is preserved: διονυσο is clear, and a long vertical which precedes δ could be ι of καί. Faint traces of a wide θ and ε which joins ω can be seen.
- 15 καὶ ἐπερωτηθ[εῖς] ὠμολόγησα: It seems unnecessary to assume that ἐπερωτηθεῖς was abbreviated, as the editor suggested (ἐπερωτη[θ(εῖς)]). The gap is large enough; note that in 17 two wide letters (υχ) and part of τ are missing.