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## El Naqlun 1990 : The Greek Papyri

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## EL-NAQLUN 1990: THE GREEK POPYRI

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Hermitage 89, described above by W. Godlewski (see p. 48ff.), was in use for a relatively long time. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that only some tiny scraps of papyrus were found in particular rooms and their identification as Greek is often only hypothetical. In room A.1, beside the scraps of two other presumably Greek papyri (inv. nos 49 and 90/90), there was a small piece of an account (inv. no. 51/90) written in chancery cursive of the 6th-7th centuries AD. In room C only one Greek fragment was found (inv. no. 13/90); it is a piece of another account written in upright chancery cursive.

Of much greater importance was the contents of the storage pit in room A.1 which had been filled in and covered with a floor during a renovation of the hermitage interior in the 7th century (the date for the renovation is set by the finds, the papyri among them).

Three papyri (inv. nos 87, 96 and 99/90) preserved in many fragments were found in this pit. There is complete certainty that even the smallest fragments belonged to one of these three. All three papyri are legal documents.

The first one, inv. no. 87/90 (top and left margin are lost), is a document, most probably a receipt for the repayment of a loan, recorded by a notary of the Arsinoite nome; his subscription partly preserved at the bottom of the document cannot be identified with the subscriptions known from the other documents from this nome.

The second document, inv. no. 96/90, preserved in two big fragments (bottom with the notary's subscription lost), is also a receipt for the repayment of a loan; the debtor is a certain Aurelius Makarios son of Jakob, from the village of Alexandrou Nesos in the Arsinoite nome, the creditor is a monk whose name is partly destroyed by a *lacuna* his function being called *proestos Pyrgou*, i.e., the abbot of a Pyrgos monastery. Although papyrological lexica do not men-

tion the toponym Pyrgos, the reading seems to be fairly assured. The document begins with the indiction date (20th Phaophi of the 4th indiction), there is no invocation with the Christ formula.

The third document, inv. no. 99/90, is preserved in many small, separate fragments. The only part which can be reconstructed at the moment is the top of the document (the first three lines) containing an invocation with the Christ formula EN ONOMATI TOY K(YPIO)Y KAI ΔΕCΠOTOY I(HCO)Y X(PICTO)Y TOY Θ(EO)Y (KAI) ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ, "In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, (our) God and Saviour", and the indiction date (15th Mesore of the 12th indiction). Many small fragments from the middle and bottom parts of the document seem to suggest that this was also a notarial document as the two texts described above, constituting most probably a receipt for the repayment of a loan.

From the archaeological point of view, of greatest importance is the question of the date of these three papyri. As stated above, two of them (inv. nos 96 and 99/90) have their headings preserved; it is significant that there is an invocation with the Christ formula in the latter, while there is none in the first.

The invocation as an element of legal documents was instituted by imperial decree of Mauricius; its force was felt in Egypt first in the year AD 591, and all known legal documents dated after September 591 have the invocation. There were in use, however, four main versions of the invocation and this is very important for setting a date for a document. First, under Mauricius (591-602) only the Christ formula was used; under Phocas (602-610) this formula was replaced by a new one invoking the Holy Trinity; under Heraclius (610-619; 629-641) a major division took place in which the Upper Egyptian nomes used the Trinitarian formula introduced under Phocas, while the Lower Egyptian nomes reverted to the formula of Christ that was in use under Mauricius; after the Arab conquest a slightly modified version of the Trinitarian formula was reestablished in the whole of Egypt (it is difficult to determine

which version of the formula was in use during the Persian domination in the years 619-629, since we have only a few documents dated surely to that period).

Papyrus Naqlun inv. no. 99/90 is dated 15th Mesore of the 12th indiction. This gives two possible dates: 8 September 593 or the same day in the year 638. We should, however, prefer the first date, if we assume that the papyri found in the storage pit in room A.1 were written more or less simultaneously. On this assumption P. Naqlun inv. no. 96/90, dated 20th Phaophi of the 4th indiction, might be dated either to 17 October 585 (i.e., to the last possible date before the decree of Mauricius) or, less convincingly, to the same day 15 years earlier.