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P. Berol. 13981 : a document from Soknopaiou Nesos

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.
The document (29 x 14,5 cm.) under discussion containing 10 lines written with red ink along the fibres is almost complete. There are only few lacunae in the text. The date is lost. The back of the piece is blank.

The text is an extract made at the state archive (βιβλιοθήκη δημοσίων λόγων) from ἀπαιτήσιμων σιτικών, i.e. list of lands subject to dues in grain. For a parallel extract, see BGU I 175, also with red ink (the writing points to II-III cent. A.D.). Perhaps the use of red ink was a sufficient indication of the official character of the copy, without necessity of any additional confirmation of the authenticity of the document. For the use of red ink for "offizielle Ausfertigungen", see W.Chr. 458 introd.

'Απαιτήσιμα κατ’ άνδρα have been listed by Sh. L. W a l l a c e, *Taxation in Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian*, Princeton 1938, p. 369, n. 15.

For ἀπαιτήσιμων σιτικών, see BGU II 659 ii 3 (below, l. 1, n.).

The category of land involved is aigialos, a shoreland of the Moeris lake, which usually appears in connection with Soknopaiou Nesos. It is often mentioned in documents of the end of the IIInd/beginning of the IIIrd century A.D. For a list of references, see D. H o b s o n, *Greeks and Romans at Soknopaiou Nesos*, Proceedings of the XVI International Congress of Papyrology, Chico 1981, 401 n. 30; cf. D. H o b s o n, *Agricultural Land and Economic Life in Soknopaiou Nesos*, BASP 21, 1984, p. 89. Aigialos is apparently a public land cultivated by state farmers (see below, l. 7, n.).

The rate of tax in grain which in our document amounts to 3,5 artabas of wheat per aroura agrees with the rate known from BGU II 659 ii (A.D. 228/9) concerning δημοσία και αιγιαλός of Soknopaiou Nesos.

Persons involved are two state farmers from Soknopaiou Nesos who appear also in some other texts from the village (see below, n.).

It is impossible to state the purpose for which the extract has been drawn. However, it does not seem probable that the document had to serve the official needs of πράκτορα σιτικών. Most likely the item was made for private purposes, presumably at a request from Melas son of Pousimis who was co-proprietor of both plots.

The parallels as well as the hand allow us to date the text early in the IIIrd century.

1. Ἐκ βιβλιοθήκης δημοσίων [λόγων] εξ ἀπαιτήσιμων σιτικών [ἵτιος]. /
3. Διὰ δημοσίων γεωργῶν κώτ(μη) Σοκνώπαιου

4. Νήσου

5. Ἀρήους Ἐρεβέτως μη(τρός) Τ[ανεν]ωφ[ρ]εως
6. καὶ Μέλας Πουσίμεως

7. α\(\)ς σφρ(αγίδος) αἵγιαλοῦ (ἀροῦφας) καὶ \(\eta[...]\)
8. (πυροῦ ἀργάβας) β\(\)ι ἀροῦ
9. Μέλας Πουσίμεως καὶ ὁ ἀδελφός
10. Α\(\)ς σφρ(αγίδος) αἵγιαλοῦ (ἀροῦφας) β (πυροῦ ἀρτ.) ζ

α[.L.] 3 κο\(\)ι 5 μη \(\gamma\) 7·1·0 ἄροιαι \(\tau\) πυροῦ ἀργάβαω

"From state archive, from register of lands subject to dues in grain of year ...

Concerning farmers of public land of the village of Soknopaiou Nesos.

Areous son of Herieus, his mother being Taonnophris, and Melas son of Pousimis, 1st sphragis, 29 3/4 1/8 arouras, 104 1/2 artabas of wheat.

Melas son of Pousimis and the brother, 1st sphragis, aigialos, 2 arouras, 7 artabas of wheat".


αμαθήσιμον σιτικών. BGU II 659 ii (A.D. 228/9) is a complete example of such a list of land subject to dues in grain. It is explicitly named αμαθήσιμον κατ' ἄνδρα σιτικών (I. 4) and was drawn by an amphodiokomogrammateus of Soknopaiou Nesos (for the correct reading of the word in I.4, see Z. Borkowski, D. Hagedorn, ΑΜΦΟΔΟΚΟΜΟΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΥΣ. Zur Verwaltung der Dörfer Ägyptens im 3. Jh.n. Chr., [in:] Le monde grec. Hommages à Claire Préaux, Bruxelles 1975, pp. 775-783).

For other examples of αμαθήσιμον, see e.g. BGU II 457.5 or P.Fay 40.3 (both 2nd century A.D.). The other αμαθήσιμα from Soknopaiou Nesos are: BGU I 275; II 659; CPR I 33; SPP XX 39; XXII 26; 71; 84; 88; 169; 174; P.Fay 208 descr. According to Professor D. H o b s on’s suggestion SPP XXII 26 and 88 are two parts of the same text. Also BGU I 274 and II 426 are possibly αμαθήσιμα from Soknopaiou Nesos.

2. The date disappeared in the lacuna, leaving but a scarce trace which would not encourage any sort of interpretation. However, on the basis of the documents in which the names of the persons involved appear (see below), we can point to the first quarter of the IIIrd century as the date of the document under discussion. This fits well the palaeographic features of the document.

5. Ἀρήους Ἐρεβέτως appears in BGU II 659 ii 10 as a farmer of 11 arouras of δημοσία καὶ αἵγιαλος.

6. Μέλας Πουσίμεως is found in P.Lond. II 369. 4,8 (p. 265) and also in P.Lond. II 180.3 (p. 94), SPP XXII 67/167 ii 8, iii 8, iv 8, vi 8, vii 7 (his brother is Pakysis here), SPP XXII 174.33, BGU II 659 ii 251.

7. ας σφρ cf. BGU II 659 ii 9 et al. The editor interpreted this as ἀσφρ(άγιετος) which consequently caused a series of explanatory entries based on this passage and telling us about "Acker, der nicht durch Grenzsteine ... odgl. gegen die Nachbargrundstücke abgegrenzt ist."(WB I s.v. ἀσφράγις, cf. F. Preisigke, F W; L i d d e l l -

1 I wish to record my gratitude to Prof. D. H o b s o n for useful information concerning prosopography of Soknopaiou Nesos.
Fig. 5. P. Berol. 13981; to A. Łukasiewicz, p. 71
Scott-Jones, Dict.). However, in BGU II 659 ii α may be a numeral. It has apparently the same meaning in our document. The stroke over α seems to be an important argument in favour of this interpretation.

Also in BGU III 831.6 the erroneous reading κατά την α σφρ(αγίδι) should be corrected to κατά την α σφραγίς. The above interpretation is confirmed by texts mentioning numbered σφραγίδα being arrears of land including plots held by different farmers. This is most evident in SB I 4325 ii 4 (III cent. A.D.) where the total area of a numbered σφραγίς is even bigger than the total of land listed in BGU II 659 ii as the holdings of farmers of a σφρ plots. The meaning of σφραγίς as e.g. "an area of the surface of the earth being a numbered section of the world map" (Strabo 2.1.22) fits quite well the application of the term to the defined and numbered land areas of the Egyptian villages. Therefore we propose to interpret a σφρ in our document as well as in BGU II 659 ii (A.D. 228/9) and BGU III 831 (A.D. 201) as η πρώτη σφραγίς.

P.Hamb.I 12.2 (A.D. 209/210) seems to indicate that the σφραγίς of that kind was not a sparse category of land but a gathered piece. αίγιαλός is attested in several texts from Soknopaiou Nesos, see D. Hobson, Greeks and Romans at Soknopaiou Nesos, Proceedings of the XVI International Congress of Papyrology, Chico 1981, p. 401 n. 30 a list of documents involving αίγιαλός. This "shoreland" (called also αίγιαλίτις γῆ: W.Chr. 355.7-8) at the edge of the lake is said to be the only cultivated land of Soknopaiou Nesos: W.Chr. 354. 16-17.

The status of this land is stated in BGU II 659 ii 7 where it is called δημοσία καὶ αίγιαλος. It was cultivated by state farmers (l. 3; cf. D. Hobson, S a m u e l, Greeks and Romans...)

From W.Chr. 354.11 - 12 we learn that αίγιαλὸς was ἀναγραφόμενος ἐπὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν κόμνην. The exact meaning of this passage is not clear. It is probably an allusion to records kept in the βιβλιοθήκη δημοσίων λόγων (cf. P. J o u g u e t, La vie municipale dans l’Egypte romaine, Paris 1911, p. 208-209).

The total area of αίγιαλὸς is not stated (διὰ ἐν πλέισταις ἄροιας W.Chr. 354.12). It could be cultivated after it had appeared from water (ὅπως ἀποκαλύφθη, l. 12-13) and leased at a habitual rent (κατὰ τὴν συνήθααν κατ’ αρουραν, l. 13-14).

We may consider our document, together with BGU II 659 ii or I 175 as positive evidence that the rate was at the time 3,5 artabas of wheat per aroura.

D. B o n n e a u, Le drymos (δρυμὸς), marais du Fayoum, d’après la documentation papyrologique, L’Egyptologie en 1979. Axes prioriteres et recherches, tome I, 1982, p. 181, quotes P.Tebt. II 308 = W.Chr. 319 (A.D. 174) to confirm the desiccation of the αίγιαλὸς in the Roman times. Since, however, the text says that fishing was possible there, the adjective ἔρημος may simply mean "deserted", "uncultivated", i.e. being a moor fitting for fishing.

Nevertheless BGU III 831 (A.D. 201) contains a positive mention of αίγιαλὸς χέρσος. The end of the existence of Σοκνοπαίου Νήσου being close, we are allowed to assume that the desiccation of the αίγιαλὸς might mean the fall of the village.

The extension of the αίγιαλὸς must have been considerable. In BGU III 831 information is found about the γίτνιαι of a plot of αίγιαλὸς, one of them being a border with the division of Themistos.

A general discussion of αίγιαλὸς will be the subject of a study by D. B o n n e a u, cf. e a d e m, op.cit., p. 181, n. 4

9 Μέλας Πουσίμεως καὶ ὁ ἀδελφός: see above l.6 n. Perhaps this unnamed ἀδελφός is identical with Pakysis (SPP XXII 67/167; see above, l. 6 n.). It is probable that all persons involved are members of the same family, cf. Μέλας Ἀριστός W.Chr. 354.9 (A.D. 207); BGU II 659 ii 24 (A.D. 228/9).

[Warszawa] Adam Ł u k a s z e w i c z