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P. Oxy. VI 988 : loan of wheat and barley

The Journal of Juristic Papyrology 28, 19-23

1998

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Nikolaos Gonis

P. OXY. VI 988:

LOAN OF WHEAT AND BARLEY

The lower part of a loan of wheat and barley written out in duplicate by the same hand. Grenfell and Hunt published a short description of the papyrus with a transcript of col. ii. 2-10 in volume VI of The Oxyrhynchus Papyri (p. 324). I am grateful to the authorities of the Cambridge University Library, where the papyrus is now kept, for their permission to publish this text here.

The document is drawn up in the form of a cheirograph, typical for this type of contract at the time. To judge from the date of the repayment, after the harvest (Pauni), this is probably a loan for sowing. Loans of wheat are common in our documentation, but loans of barley, or involving barley, are relatively few. This should occasion no surprise, given the dominance of grain in

1 (Near-)contemporary Oxyrhynchite loans of wheat made through informal cheirographs include P. Oxy. XLIX 3493-3494 (175), XII 1474. 11 ff. (216), P. Mich. XI 614. 15-33 (225), P. Oxy. XXII 2350 (223/4), LXI 4117 (240); P. Oxy. LXIV 4439 (258/9), a loan of barley, is also a cheirograph. The contracts P. Oxy. VII 1040 (225), P. Col. X 277 (225), P. Oxy. XIV 1640 (250) are styled as γράμματα.

2 As far as I can see, barley is mentioned in the following loans of the Roman and Byzantine periods: Loans of barley: P. Berl. Möller (= SB IV 7341) (3), P. Oxy. LXIV 4439 (258/9), P. Col. X 283 (306), P. NYU. 23 (326/7), BCU XII 2197 (VI) (for P. Vind. Siip. 11 [IV], cf. H. C. YOUTIS, Scriptio属 [Amsterdam 1973] I 410 f.); of wheat and barley: P. Kron. 9 (111), PSI I 42 (IV); of money and barley: P. Flor. I 72 (128/9), P. Stras. IV 230 (143-44), P. Mert. III 110 (154), P. Gen. I 43 (226); of money, wheat and barley: P. Stras. III 143 (III). Cf. also P. Ross. Georg. II 18. 28. 120-4, an abstract of a loan of barley and other commodities, P. Oxy. XII 1472 (136), which refers to a καρποθηκη of wheat and barley made in 127-28. Of the 24 repayments of loans in kind collected in P. Heid. VII p. 104, only 3 relate to barley, as opposed to 22 involving wheat. Also in the so-called “sales in advance of delivery” dating up to 300 (for lists of these documents see H.-A. RUPPRECHT, Kleine Einführung in die Papyruskunde [Darmstadt 1994] 119; add P. Leid. Inst. 25 introd.), the ratio of wheat to barley is about 4 to 1. But in the Byzantine period we witness a very different picture: of the 145 such examples listed in P. Heid. V, pp. 296-301, (at least) 19 involve barley, but only (at least) 15 relate to
the crop schedules in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. For a concise discussion of loans in the papyri and bibliography see H.-A. Rupprecht, Kleine Einführung in die Papyruskunde (Darmstadt 1994) 118 ff. For duplicate documents of this kind see P. Ups. Frid. 5, 27 n., P. Col. X 287 introd.

The back of the papyrus carries a memorandum concerning the sale of unproductive land; that text was fully transcribed in P. Oxy. VI.

CUL Add. Mss. 5888  
15 x 18. 4 cm  
26 November 224  

col. i

traces

τῇς δὲ κριθής ἀρτάβας τρεῖς. ἀπο-  
δόλω δὲ οἱ τὰ προκείμενα κεφάλαια  
σὺν τοῖς διαφόροις τῷ Παύνι μινι  
τοῦ ἐνεκτότος τετάρτον ἄτομον ἐρ' ἄλω  
'ICίου Παγία νέα καθαρά ἀδολλα ἀβώλα  
κεκομὲνα, τὸν μὲν πυρὸν (καὶ)  
4 ἀκρεῖθην ὡς εἰς τὸ δημοσίουν μετροῦμε-  
νον, τῇ ν δὲ [κ]ριθῆν ἡν καλῶς πεπατημέ-  
νην; ἄθερος παρὰ καὶ οὐδὲν, πάντα  
mέτρῳ τὸ προκείμενον ὡς καὶ παρείληφα,  
ἄνευ πάντων ύπερθέρευσε[ω] καὶ εὐρύσυλογι-  
ας, γινο[μέν]ς σοι τῇς [κ]ραξιοκοπαρὰ  
τε ἐμοῦ] καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὕπαρ[χων] τῶν μοί πάν-  
των. κύριον τὸ χειρόγραφον  
8 γραφέν] ὡς ἐμοῦ τοῦ Αἰτηλίου Σερήνου  
tοῦ καὶ λαξιάνδρου πανταξῆ ἔπιροφό-  
μενον καὶ παντὶ τῷ ὑπὲρ σοῦ ἐπιφεροντι.  
περὶ δὲ τοῦ ταύτα ὅρθως καλῶς γεγενης-  

wheat (see ibid. p. 303 nn. 16, 17). This of course requires explanation, but that goes beyond the scope of this note.

3 See M. Scheebel, Die Landwirtschaft im hellenistischen Ägypten (München 1925) 97 f.; D. Crawford, Kerkeosiris. An Egyptian Village in the Ptolemaic Period (Cambridge 1971), tables XIII-XVII; H.-J. Drexhage, Preise, Miete/Pachten, Kosten und Löhne (St. Katharinen 1991) 11; R. S. Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity (Princeton 1993) 25. Another good example of the predominance of wheat is provided by P. Berl. Leihg. 11 verso: this document of 164, which records the total amounts of seed disbursed for the various categories of public land at Theadelphia, shows that the seed-loans issued to cultivators of the oisiac land consisted of some 426 artabas of wheat, as opposed to only c. 29 artabas of barley (ii 16-20, iii 5-7). (For this text see M. L. Sharp, "The village of Theadelphia in the Fayum: Land and population in the second century AD" [In] A. K. Bowman, E. Rogan [eds.], Agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic to Modern Times, Oxford 1998 [Proceedings of the British Academy 96] 161 n. 10.)
... three artabas of barley. I shall give back to you the aforesaid capital with the addition of the accrued yields in the month (of) Pauni of the current fourth year at the threshing-floor of Ision Panga (in wheat and barley which are) new, pure, free of fraud and earth, sieved, the wheat free of barley as if it were being measured in the public granary, the barley well trodden and free of darnel and chaff, everything (measured) by the aforesaid measure, by which I have also received them, without any delay or excuse, you having the right of execution from me and from all my property. The cheirograph, written in duplicate by me, Aurelius Serenos alias Alexandros, is binding to be presented in evidence in any place and for any
person who presents it in evidence on your behalf. On being asked whether this has been rightly and fairly done, I assented. The fourth year of Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander Pius Felix Augustus, Hathyr 30."

COMMENTARY

i 1 = ii 1. τῇδε κριθή: όρταβας: τρεις must have been preceded by τοῦ μὲν πυρός όρταβας followed by a numeral.

i 4 = ii 3. διαφόρος: For the term and its translation as 'yield' see P. Col. X 277, 11 n. It should be borne in mind, however, that "διάφορον basically, of course, means 'difference.' Hence it ... is used to denote interest (which is, after all, the difference between what the borrower receives and what he repays). . . διάφορον, like ημιολία, was used only of interest in kind on loans in kind." (N. LEWIS, TAPA 76 [1945] 128 = On Government and Law in Roman Egypt: Collected Papers of Naphtali Lewis., ed. A. E. HANSON, Atlanta 1995 [= American Studies in Papyrology, 33] 19).

ii 2-3. ζωασθεμεν[ον]. This is the first instance of the word applying to διαφόρον, but its use with τοκος is common. The participle does not appear in the first copy; this is the only point where the two copies differ.

τῷ Πούνι μηνι. "[O]f loans of wheat, 42 out of 61 are to be repaid in Payni" (Z. M. PACKMAN, JJP 19 [1983] 21).


i 7-8 = ii 6-7. πυρὸν {και} ἀκρεῖθον. I have bracketed {και} bringing the text into line with P. Berl. Leihg. I 20. 24 (149) and P. Oxy. XLVII 3354. 41 (257). The same idiosyncratic sequence also occurs in P. Harr. I 80. 32 (249), where the suggestion recorded in BL III 79 should be abandoned.

i 10 = ii 9. αἵρεια: διε.: ed. pr. The correction was made in P. Köln III 149. 33 n. (= BL VII 133), and has now been confirmed on the original.

i 10 = ii 8-9. καλὸς: πεπατημένην χωρὶς: αἵρειας καὶ ἀθέροσ. The phrase seems to be peculiar to Oxyrhynchite documents: besides this, cf. also P. Fouad 43. 46ff. (land lease; 190-1), P. Köln III 149. 32f. (ditto; III) P. Oxy. XLVII 3354. 41 f. (agricultural agreement; 257). But note that the χωρὶς: αἵρειας καὶ ἀθέροσ clause is absent from the loan of barley P. Oxy. LXIV 4439 (258/9).


i 15-17 = ii 13-15. For the formula cf. P. Oxy. LXI 4117. 16-18 (240) κύριον τὸ χιρόγραφον ἴ ἀπλο[δε]ν γραφέν ὑπ᾿ ἐμοῦ τοῦ Αὐρηλίου τῷ Δ[ε][[ενίον] with the editor's note (where the reference to P. Vind. Tand. 32 is a misprint for P. Vind. Tand. 23); cf. also P. IFAO 16. 9 (197).

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i 15 = ii 13-14. χειρόγραφον. For the term see WOLFF, op. cit. 106ff.
i 16-17 = ii 14-15. An Aurelius Serenos alias Alexandros is not known from elsewhere.
i 17-18 = ii 15-16. πανταχι ἐπιφερόμενον. For the formulation and its changes across the centuries see B. E. NIELSEN, BASP 27 (1990) 100.
i 17-19 = ii 15-18. The formulas also in P. Oxy. XXII 2350. i. 27-30 (223), P. Col. X 277 (29. xi. 225); cf. also P. Mich. XVIII 792. 27-29 n.
i 19 = ii 18. ἐπερωτήθη εἰς ὀμολόγησις. Cf. SIMON, op. cit. 44ff., with the remarks of C. PRÉAU, CÉ 42 (1967) 140ff.
i 23. Αθηρ λ is awkwardly shaped, as if it was written by a second hand and with a different pen. But the second copy has nothing similar at this point.

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