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A FOURTH CENTURY PETITION FOR RELIEF FROM EXTORTION

This document (Cairo, *Journal d'Entrée*, no. 57049) is in a good state of preservation, apart from breaks at the top and bottom of the sheet which are responsible for the lacunae indicated in the text. The papyrus measures 26.5 cm. in length and 13 cm. in width. There is a margin of about 1.3 cm. in the left and a similar one at the top, but none at the right or the bottom of the sheet.

The main hand is an upright cursive typical of the early fourth century with the idiosyncrasy that the terminal strokes of certain letters, e.g. α , ι , κ , are at times, but not regularly, prolonged in sweeping fashion so as to extend as far as the second line below that to which they belong. In most of the lines the writing is careful, but towards the close the letters become smaller, more cramped, and somewhat less legible.

The petition is addressed to Aurelios Chrestos, strategos of the Arsinoite nome, by Aurelios Isidoros of Karanis. His complaint is that a certain Akotas, of the same village, whose status is not further elucidated, has sought to extort from him certain payments for farm lands which the petitioner claims that not he but Akotas himself has had and still has under cultivation. Isidoros offers as proof of this the evidence derived from the investigation of the boundary inspector in collaboration with his neighboring landholders. He further alleges that the reason for the conduct of Akotas is that the latter wishes to force him out of his own property (either by fear of prosecution or inability to meet the amount demanded).

Finally, he requests the strategos to summon Akotas before him and to require proofs from the boundary-inspector and his neighbors with respect to his own cultivation of the land in question, so that his defence may be substantiated.

Unfortunately, the date of the petition is uncertain, owing to damage to the papyrus. Beyond question, however, it

belongs to the early fourth century, as the handwriting taken together with its presence among the papers of Aurelios Isidoros, son of Ptolemaios of Karanis, indicates.

TEXT

- Αὐρηλί[ω X]ρήστῳ στρατηγῷ Ἀ[ρσινοεῖ]το(ν)
 παρὰ Αὐρηλίου Ἰσιδώρου Πτολεμαίου ἀπὸ κω-
 μης Καρανίδος τοῦ αὐτοῦ νομοῦ. πολλάκις μὲν
 προστέτακται ὑπὸ τῶν νόμων ὥστε μηδένα
 5 ὑπερανακρατῖσθαι ἢ παραταράττεσθαι καὶ αὐ-
 τὸς τοίνυν οὐ δεόντως καὶ ριψοκινδύνως
 ἀπαιτηθεὶς χρυσίου γράμματα τρία καὶ ἀσήμον
 γράμματα ὀκτῶ ὑπὸ Ἀκοτᾶ Πτολεμαίου ἀπὸ τῆς
 αὐτῆς κώμης ὑπὲρ ὧν αὐτὸς αἰεὶ γεωργί
 10 ἀρουρῶν πρότερον Ὀρίωνος Ἀρείαντος βουλευ-
 τοῦ καὶ τελεῖ πάντα τὰ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν δημόσια
 καὶ ἀννώνας μεχρὶ σήμερον, μηδέποτέ
 μου μισθωσαμένου ἢ γεωργήσαντος ταύτας
 τὰς ἀρούρας καθὰ καὶ διὰ τῶν ἀγρογιτόνων καὶ ὀρι-
 15 οδίκτου αἰ ἐξετάσις γείνονται, καὶ μὴ ἀπλῶς πα-
 ρανομίσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, μάλιστα ἐμοῦ
 πληρώσαντος ὑπὲρ ὧν ἐσωματίσθην [ὑπὲρ]
 (ἀρουρῶν) ρμ τὸν χρυσὸν καὶ ἄσημον καὶ τὰ πάντα τῷ
 ταμίῳ διαθέροντα. ταῦτα πεποίηται ὁ Ἀκο-
 20 τᾶς οὐκ ὑπὲρ ἀλυσιτελείας τῶν ἀπαιτήσεων
 ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀνατραπῆναι με τῆς ἰδίας παρὰ τοὺς
 θίους νόμους μὴ εὐλαβηθεὶς τὸν φόβον τοῦ κυ-
 ρίου μου διασημοτάτου Σοσσιανοῦ Κοκλέως καὶ
 τοῦ κυρίου μου διασημοτάτου καθολικοῦ Αὐρ(ηλίου) Σερῆν(ου)
 25 μάλιστα ἐπιδημοῦντος αὐτοῦ. καὶ εἰ προεχώρει
 τοῦτο τοῖς ἀγνωμονοῦσι [μαι] λάλαις ἄν οὐδὲς τῶν
 μετρίων συνέστηκεν. ἀναγκαίως ἐπιδίδωμί σοι
 ταῦτα ἔνγραφα ἀξιῶν ἀχθῆναι ἐπὶ σοῦ καὶ τὰς
 ἐνεργίτας ἀποδίξις πιήσασθαι διὰ τοῦ ὀριοδίκτου(ου)
 30 καὶ ἀγρογιτό[νω]ν εἰς ὅτε ἐγεώργησα ταύτηναι
 τὴν γῆν [πρὸς τὸ μέ]νιν μοι τὸν λόγον δ[ίκαιον] καὶ βέβαιον.
 ὑπατίας μα. [.] μ. κω[. . . .]—

εὐτύχ [ει] (2nd hand) [Ἀυρή]λιος Ἰσιδῶ[ρος ἐπιδέδ(ωκα)]
 Ἀυρήλιος [. ἔγραψ]α ὑπὲρ αὐτο(ῦ) [ἀγγραμμάτου].

4. τῶν νόμῶν. Taken in conjunction with *πολλάκις* of 1.3, the reference seems to be to imperial or prefectal edicts issued from time to time in the past. Cf. Taubenschlag, *Law of Greco-Roman Egypt*, 19-26.

5. ὑπερανακρατῖσθαι. The verb ὑπερανακρατεῖν does not appear in Preisigke's *Wörterbuch*, nor in Liddell-Scott-Jones' *Lexicon*. The context, however, makes it clear that this compound form is meant to be a more emphatic form of ὑπερκρατεῖν, "to overpower," rather than the rarer ἀνακρατεῖν, "to support."

παραταράττεσθαι. Not hitherto attested in the papyri.

7-8. χρυσίου γράμματα τρία καὶ ἀσήμου γράμματα ὀκτώ. No explanation of this demand is given in the text, nevertheless the fact that part of the sum is reckoned in gold bullion and the rest in silver bullion may offer some clue as to its character. In P. Leipzig 62 the military tax known as the χρυσὸς τρωῶνων or *aurum tironicum* was paid in this way, and in P. Thead. 33 of 312 A.D. occurs an ἐπιβολή likewise paid in gold and silver bullion which is almost certainly another instance of the raising of the *aurum tironicum*. Accordingly, it is very probable that the sum demanded of Isidoros is to be regarded as the recruit tax. This is all the more likely since it was assessed against the land, just as was the *aurum tironicum* (P. Thead. 33, introd.). On the *aurum tironicum* in general, see Wilcken, *Grundz.* 409-410. The γράμμα was a weight and not a coin. Since the *solidus* of Constantine I which weighed 1/72 of a lb. was considered equal to 4 gr. (P. Oxy. 1430, introd.) the gr. must have equalled 1/288 of a lb. In P. Oxy. 1653, 22-23 (306 A.D.), 58 gr. are reckoned as equal to 12 aurei. The aureus in question is that of Diocletian which equalled 1/60 of a lb. (Mickwitz, *Geld und Wirtschaft*, 68). On this basis the gr. was reckoned as 1/290 of a lb. and the aureus as equal to 4 5/6 gr. Since our papyrus is of approximately the same date as P. Oxy. 1653, the gr. in question here would be translated into gold value on the same basis as in the latter. ἄσημον without further

qualification, refers to uncoined silver, cf. P. Theod. 33, 19, 25-26, 33-35; P. Oxy. 1524, 2.

8. Ἀκοτᾶ Πτολεμαίου. If the conjecture is correct that we have to do here with the *aurum tironicum*, Akotas may well have been of the ἀποδέκτης χρυσοῦ τινώνων of Karanis. (Cf. Wilcken, *Grundz.* 49.).

14. ἀγρογίτονες. The ἀγρογείτονες were the landholders whose properties adjoined any given estate.

15. ἐξετάσις: read ἐξετάσεις. These were the surveys conducted to check census declarations, to determine the extent of cultivated areas, and so forth. In each case the name of the occupant of the land in question would be recorded.

18. (ἀρουρῶν) ρμ. In his census declarations of 299 A.D. (P. Cairo Boak 9; 10 and 11, *Etudes de Papyrologie* III, 10ff.) Aurelios Isidoros appears as the owner of 73 59/64 arouras. Since he states here that he is assessed for 140 arouras, we may assume that this figure includes properties which he cultivated under lease. Possibly, he had also acquired more land by inheritance or purchase since 299 A.D. In that year his mother owned 30 49/64 arouras besides an olive grove (P. Cairo Boak, 2 and 9), and some or all of this may have passed to Isidoros.

τὸν χρυσὸν καὶ ἄσημον. This reference tends to confirm the interpretation of the χρύσιον and ἄσημον of 1. 7 given above.

20. ἀλυσιτελείας. The noun is new to the papyri, but the adjective ἀλυσιτελής is well attested. I have translated the phrase ἀ. τῶν ἀπαιτήσεων as "carelessness in collecting the taxes," but it may mean "inability to meet his taxes."

22. θίους νόμους: read θείους. "Divine laws," that is, "imperial constitutions." See 1. 4, note.

23-24. διασημοτάτου Σοσσιανοῦ Κοκλέως καὶ τοῦ κυρίου μου διασημοτάτου καθολικοῦ Αὐρ(ηλίου) Σερή(νου). The first of this pair of *perfectissimi* apparently was the prefect of Egypt who was the only official in Egypt with this rank who would be senior to and named before the καθολικός or *rationalis Aegypti*. His Roman name also supports this view. On the *perfectissimi* at the time, see W. Ensslin, *RE.* 19, 1 S. 667. On the *rationalis*, see Wilcken, *Grundz.* 162-63.

Neither Sossianus Cocles or Aurelios Serenos are known from other sources. The former is referred to here as the head of the judicial administration and the latter as the chief representative of the *fiscus* in Egypt who supervised the collection of all taxes paid in money.

26. [μαι]: cancelled by the scribe. λάλαις. Probably for aor. opt. λαλήσαις.

29. πήσασθαι: read ποιήσασθαι.

32. I have been unable to read the name of the consuls or consul recorded in this line. The κω— before the second lacuna seem to stand for Κω(υσταντίου) or Κω(υσταντίνου) but the letters which precede do not appear to fit into any of the formulae in which the consulships of either of these are recorded. The mark of abbreviation following this lacuna probably indicates the presence of a month date, or a numeral indicating the number of the consulship.

TRANSLATION

To Aurelios Chrestos, strategos of the Arsinoite nome, from Aurelios Isidoros of the village of Karanis of the same nome.

Oftentimes indeed it has been proclaimed by the laws that no one is to be oppressed or terrified, but now I have unjustly and audaciously been called upon for three grammata of gold bullion and eight grammata of uncoined silver by Akotas, son of Ptolemaios, of the same village, on account of the arouras formerly belonging to Horion, son of Areias, which he has always cultivated and for which he has paid all the public taxes and the annonas, right up to today. These arouras I have never leased or cultivated, just as the inquiries conducted through the adjoining proprietors and the boundary inspector show. Nor have the men broken the law in any way, especially since I have fully paid the gold and silver bullion taxes and everything due to the treasury from the 140 arouras for which I have been inscribed. Akotas has done this not through carelessness in collecting the taxes but for the purpose of ousting me from

my property contrary to the divine laws, since he has entertained no fear of my lord the *perfectissimus* Sossianus Cocles and my lord the *perfectissimus rationalis* Aurelios Serenos who is even now visiting (the nome) in person. And even if this had happened to persons who neglect their obligations, you would have said that no reasonable man had brought it about. So I am constrained to submit to you this petition, asking that he be brought before you and that the effective proofs be made through the boundary inspector and the adjoining proprietors as to when I ever cultivated this land, so that my cause may remain just and secure.

In the consulship of Farewell. (2nd hand) I, Aurelios Isidorus submitted it. I, Aurelios.....
.....wrote for him since he is illiterate.

A. E. R. BOAK.