# Gonis, Nikolaos

# Permission to circumcise

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Nikolaos Gonis

## PERMISSION TO CIRCUMCISE

A RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS before an *archiereus* concerning an application for permission to circumcise a boy; this was a prerequisite for the boy's admission to priesthood. Our text narrates that a father introduced his infant son and requested permission to circumcise him, presenting a letter (to the *archiereus*) from the *strategos*, who had already received proofs for the priestly origin of the boy. Following consultation with the *hierogrammateis*, who confirmed that the boy was without blemish, the *archiereus* granted permission.

Parallels, onomastics, and the reference to the Arsinoite division of Herakleides indicate that the papyrus comes from Soknopaiou Nesos, the provenance of most texts of this kind. The boy to be circumcised may be known from later documents from this village; see below 3–4 n.

The papyrus is complete at the top, left and foot, but has lost the ends of lines; with a single exception (l. 7), all lines may be restored with confidence: the text is very similar to *BGU* I 82 (18.ix.185). Comparable also are *SB* VI 9027 (148/171; see *BL* VII 201), *W. Chr.* 77 (149), *SPP* XXII 51 (153; see *BL* III 238), *SB* I 16–17 (156), *BGU* XIII 2216 (156), 347.i (= *W. Chr.* 76 = *Sel. Pap.* II 244) *&* ii (171), and *P. Oxy.* L 3567.14–25 (252). Such texts could be used as proofs for priestly status; cf. *P. Tebt.* II 291.33–35 (162), and especially *P. Oxy.* L 3567.

For a list of documents related to this procedure see Francisca A. J. Hoogendijk & Klaas A. Worp, "Drei unveröffentlichte griechische Papyri aus der Wiener Sammlung", *Tyche* 16 (2001), p. 51 n. 12;[1] all of the second-century texts are of Arsinoite provenance, while those of the third and fourth centuries are Oxyrhynchite (the latest is *PSI* v 354 of 320). On the issue in general, the old study of Ulrich Wilcken, "Zur Geschichte der Beschneidung I: Die ägyptischen Beschneidungsurkunden", *APF* 2 (1903), pp. 4–13, remains very useful, even though it was published at a time when only a handful of such documents were available (the most important text published since is *P. Tebt.* II 293 = *W. Chr.* 75 – and that was in 1907).

A *kollesis* runs *c*.2 cm from the extant upper right-hand edge. Blots and spots of ink, apparently of no consequence, are visible on the back.
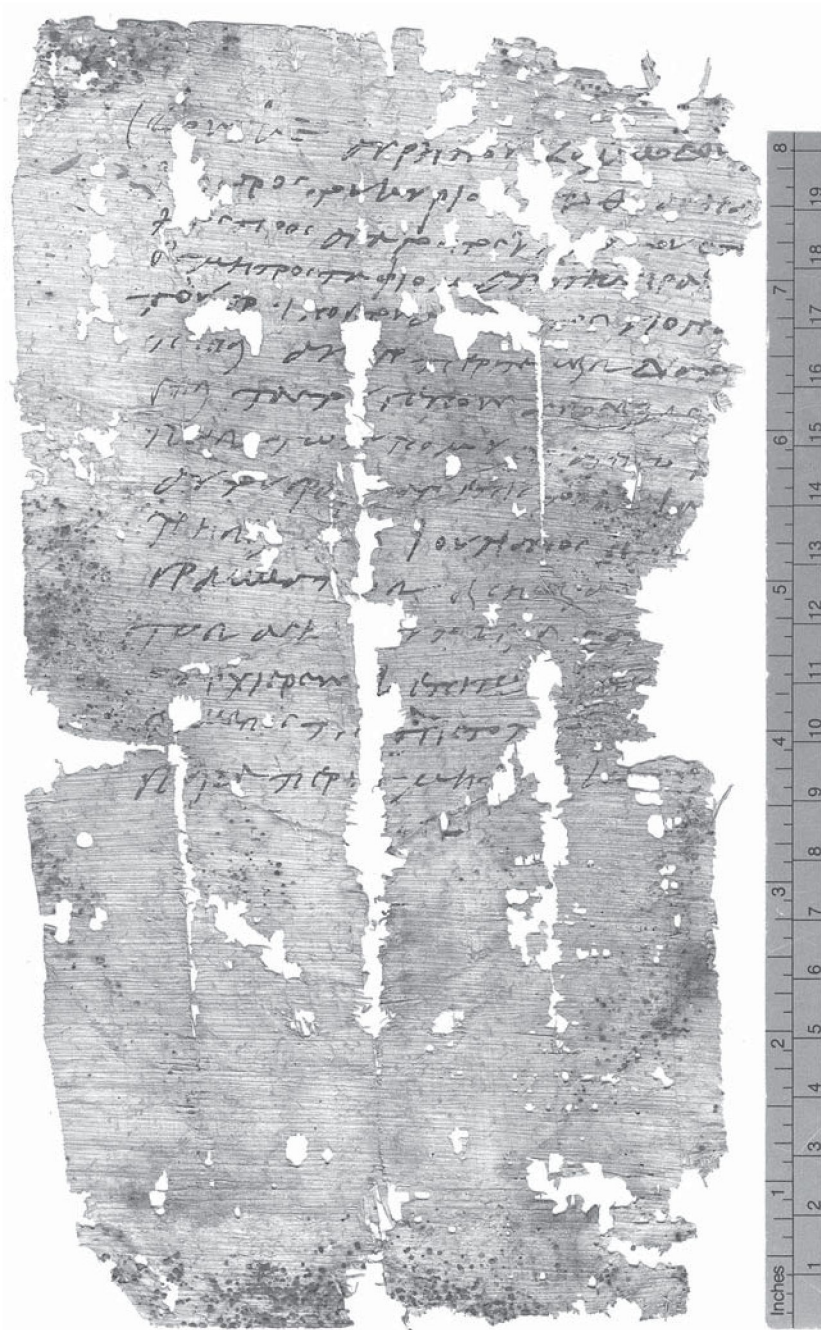
P. EES 89A/138(a)[2]                12.7 x 22.2 cm                29 August 185

ἔτους $\overline{κ ϛ}$ Αὐρηλίου Κομμόδου Ἀ[ντωνίνου
Κ[α].ίϲαροϲ τοῦ κυρίου, Θωθ α. Παν[εφρέμμεωϲ Ϲτοτο-
ή[τ].ιοϲ προϲαγαγόντοϲ υἱ[ὸ]ν αὐτοῦ Ϲτο[τοῆτιν
4  ἐγ μητρὸϲ Ταφιομ ἀπὸ τῆϲ Ἡρακ[λείδου μερίδοϲ
τοῦ Ἀρϲινοείτου, ἀξ[ι]ῷ ϲ[α]ντοϲ υἱὸν α[ὐτοῦ ἐπιτρα-
πῆναι αὐ[τ]ὸν περιτεμεῖν διὰ τὸ [παρατεθεῖ-
ϲθαι τὰϲ τοῦ γένουϲ ἀποδείξειϲ [ - - - -
8  νων τῷ τοῦ νομοῦ ϲτρατηγῷ κ[αὶ ἀναδόντοϲ τὴν περὶ
αὐτοῦ γραφεῖϲαν ἐπιϲτολὴν κε[χρονιϲμέ-
νην εἰϲ τὸ κ[ε] (ἔτοϲ), Ἰουλιανὸϲ ἐπύ[θετο τῶν ἱερο-
γραμματ[έ]ων εἰ ϲημεῖα ἔ[χοι ὁ παῖϲ. εἰπόν-

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[1] But from their list remove *BGU* xv 2470, whose association with an application for circumcision, as shown on p. 53 n. 13 of their article, rests on false premises. Another text thought to relate to circumcision is *SB* xx 14387, but this is very dubious; see Th. KRUSE, *Der Königliche Schreiber und die Gauverwaltung* II (*APF* Bhft. 11/12), München 2002, p. 730.

[2] The papyrus was bought by B. P. GRENFELL (and A. S. HUNT?) in Egypt, perhaps in 1895/1896, and is kept at the Papyrology Rooms, Sackler Library, Oxford. It is the property of the Egypt Exploration Society, courtesy of which it is published here.

Permission to circumcise (P. EES 89A/138(a)

12  των ἄcημ[ον] αὐτὸν εἶναι, Cάλ[ουιοc Ἰουλιανόc,
    ὁ ἀρχιερεὺc [κ]αὶ ἐπὶ τῶ[ν] ἱερῶ[ν, παραcημειω-
    cάμενοc τὴ[ν] ἐπιcτολ[ὴ]ν ἐκ[έλευcεν τὸν
    παῖδα περιτμηθ[ῆν]αι κατὰ τὸ [ἔθοc.

4. l. ἐκ   5. l. Ἀρcινοΐτου

## Translation

Year 26 of Aurelius Commodus Antoninus Caesar the lord, Thoth 1. After Panephremmis, son of Stotoetis, brought forward his son Stotoetis, mother Taphiom, from the division of Herakleides of the Arsinoite nome, and requested permission to circumcise his son on the grounds that he had deposited the proofs of his lineage ... with the *strategos* of the nome, and after he submitted the letter written about him (= his son), dated to the 25th year, Iulianus enquired of the *hierogrammateis* whether the child had (any) marks. When they said that he was without marks, Saluius Iulianus, the *archiereus* and superintendent of the temples, put his subscription to the letter and ordered that the boy be circumcised according to the custom.

## Commentary

2. Θωθ α. *BGU* I 82, which closely resembles our text, is dated to Thoth 21 of the same year.

2–3. Παν[εφρέμμεωc Cτοτο]|ή[τ]ιοc. The restoration of the name of the father relies on the assumption that the boy to be circumcised recurs in *SPP* II 3.3.3; see below, 3–4 n. But this is not the only possibility; e.g. Παν[ούφιοc would also do (note that the trace before the break would not allow κ, and that not much can be made of the length of the lacuna, since line-length is variable).

If this person is the father of the priest in *SPP* II 3.3, his mother was Tauetis, and he was grandson of Satabus; this may be inferred from *SPP* II 3.3.10, which refers to a brother of Panephremmis, [Cτο]τοήτιν Cτοτ[οήτ]εωc τοῦ Cαταβοῦτο[c] μητρ[ὸc Ta]ουῆτιc. This Panephremmis son of Stotoetis is not to be identified with Πανεφρέμμιc Cτοτοήτεωc ἀνθ' οὗ Cαταβοῦτοc πρεcβυτέ[ρο]υ | τ[ο]ῦ Πανεφρέμμεωc μητ(ρὸc) Θαcῆτ[ο]c τῆc Πανεφρέμμεωc in *BGU* II 406.ii.16–17 (II), who recurs with his son

Panephremmis in *W. Chr.* 76.5–6 (171) Πανεφρέμμ⟦εως⟧ʼεί̣ [C̣]τοτοήτιος ἀνθʼ οὗ Caτα|βοῦτος π[ρεϲ]βυτέρο[υ] ἱε[ρέ]ωϲ,³ and (as priests of the second φυλή) in *SPP* XXII 96.52–54 (II) Πανεφρέμμ(ις) Cτοτοήτ(ιος) [ἀνθʼ οὗ (?)]⁴ | Caταβοῦτος μη(τρὸς) Θαϲῆτ[ος ] | Πανεφρέμμις υἱὸς μη(τρὸς) Ταφιώ[μιος; cf. also *P. Vindob. Tandem* 25a.2 (II) and *SPP* XXII 51.6–7. It is probably a coincidence that Panephremmis' mother is also called Taphiom(is).

3–4.  υἱ̣[ὸ]ν̣ … C̣το[τοῆτιν] | ἐγ μητρὸς Ταφιομ. If the name of the father is Panephremmis, it is tempting to identify the son with Αὐρήλιος Cτοτο-ῆτις Πανεφρέμμεως μητρὸς Ταφιώμεως in *SPP* II 3.3.3 of 217, where he is said to be in his thirty-third year of age (= thirty-two years old),⁵ and is described as a priest of the third φυλή; other possible occurrences in *P. Amh.* II 119.5 (200), *CPR* XV 46.3 (214/215?), and *SPP* XXII 81.4 (III). He would have been born in 183/184, and in our text he would have been one year old (or, "in his second year"); cf. *BGU* XIII 2216.23, where a boy candidate for circumcision is said to be ἐτῶν β.

3.  υἱ̣[ὸ]ν̣ αὑτοῦ. There does not seem to be enough space to restore [ἑ]αυτοῦ on the model of other documents of this kind from Soknopaiou Nesos (*BGU* I 82.3, 347.ii.4, XIII 2216.2, *W. Chr.* 77.i.12).

4.  μητρὸς Ταφιομ. This person is most probably not to be identified with the priestess of the same name (Taphiomis), wife of [Onno]phris, in *P. Rain. Cent.* 58.8 (*c.*156). On the name Ταφιομ and its various spellings see my 'Two Female Ghost-Names', *ZPE* 119 (1997), p. 155.

Hoogendijk & Worp, *Tyche* 16 (2001), p. 57, have argued that in documents of this type "alle Mütter, die namentlich erwähnt werden, sind tatsächlich auch Priesterinnen." But contrast *BGU* I 82, in which the father is stated to be a priest, but nothing is said of the status of the mother, though the latter is mentioned by name. Here too the mother of the boy is not said to be a priestess, but this need not be significant: the father is not called a priest, though he certainly was one. Given the chronological proximity of the two texts that make no reference to the priestly function of the parents, we may only be dealing with a caprice of the notary responsible for the records of proceedings. Cf. also next note.

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³ The translation in *Sel. Pap.* II 244 has 'senior priest', but in this text π[ρεϲ]βυτέρο[υ] should be taken with the name and not with ἱε[ρέ]ωϲ (cf. *BGU* II 406.ii.16–17).

⁴ Restoration mine. The edition does not indicate a break at this point, but none of the adjacent lines is complete.

⁵ For the inclusive reckoning in calculating a person's age, see *BL* XI 1 (but see already J. M. Carter, "Eighteen Years Old?", *BICS* 14 [1967], pp. 53–55).

ἀπὸ τῆς Ἡρακ[λείδου μερίδος. Cf. *BGU* I 82.3–4. Soknopaiou Nesos was part of the division of Herakleides. It is not clear why the village is not indicated.

5–6. ἀξ[ι]ώς[αν]τος υἱὸν α[ὐτοῦ ἐπιτρα|πῆναι αὐτ[ὸ]ν περιτεμεῖν. This is a somewhat garbled version of the formula, which in *BGU* I 82.4–5 runs ἀ[ξι]ῶν ἐπιτρα|πῆν[αι] αὐτῷ περιτμηθῆναι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ. In view of αὐτ[ό]ν in l. 6, υἱὸν α[ὐτοῦ here is not necessary, and may be an influence from l. 3. Alternatively, one may consider whether αὐτ[ό]ν is a mistake for αὐτῷ.

7. τὰς τοῦ γένους ἀποδείξεις. Such proofs consisted of documents showing that the boy's family was of priestly origin (copies of a census return, of the registration in the public record office of the nome (εἰκονισμός), and of the boy's birth declaration), accompanied by a report from the local priests that the evidence was satisfactory. The proofs were summarised in the letter of the *strategos* to the *archiereus* (see below, 9 n.); see e.g. *W. Chr.* 77.i.13ff., *BGU* XIII 2216.12–20, or *P. Rain. Cent.* 58.10–22, where such 'proofs' are specified.

7–8. At the start of l. 8, ͙νων rather than ͙των. Parallel documents are of little help with restoring the break in l. 7; ͙νων may recall the participle ϲυνθεμένων, which occurs in similar contexts (ϲ. ταῖϲ ἀποδείξεϲι, 'having agreed on the evidence'), but I do not see what the construction would have been here. The line length varies, so that no reliable estimate of the letters lost is possible.

8. τῷ τοῦ νομοῦ ϲτρατηγῷ. *BGU* I 82.6–7 has τῷ τοῦ νομοῦ βαϲιλικῷ | διαδ[ε]χομένῳ τὴν ϲτρατηγίαν.

9. ἐπιϲτολήν. In this letter, addressed to the *archiereus*, the *strategos* will have stated that he had received an application for permission to circumcise with accompanying documents, he will have supplied the details, and will have requested that the applicant and his son be summoned before the *archiereus*. Such letters concerning applications from priests from Soknopaiou Nesos are *W. Chr.* 77.i.7ff., *SPP* XXII 51.1–15, *BGU* XIII 2216.6–25 (all three embedded in records of proceedings), *P. Rain. Cent.* 58 (extract of proceedings or copy of letter; see the editor's introd. (para. 2), and *Tyche* 16 (2001), p. 53), and P.Vindob. G 25719 (192/193) (copy).[6]

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[6] Ed. *Tyche* 16 (2001), pp. 51–57. The heading of this document as restored runs [ἀντίγ]ρ[(αφον) ἐπιϲ]τολῆϲ [Ἀρτεμιδώρου ϲτρατηγοῦ Ἀρϲι(νοΐτου) Ἡρακ(λείδου) μερίδ(οϲ)]; but given that nothing seems to have preceded the heading, the latter is more likely to have run [ἀντίγ]ρ[(αφον) ἐπιϲ]τολῆϲ *tout court*: when the collocation ἀντίγραφον ἐπιϲτολῆϲ comes at the heading of a document, the author of the letter is normally not indicated (but there are exceptions; cf. *W. Chr.* 28.1).

9–10. κε[χρονιϲμέ]|νην εἰϲ τὸ κ[ε] (ἔτοϲ). Cf. *BGU* I 347.i–ii, which add the day of the month; also *SB* VI 9027.17. Given that our text dates from the first day of Year 26, the letter of the ϲτρατηγόϲ to the ἀρχιερεύϲ was certainly written in the course of Year 25.

10–12. *SPP* XXII 51 does not report on the exchange between the *archiereus* and the *hierogrammateis* at this point. But the later *P.Oxy.* L 3567.21–23 (252) is more elaborate: ἐπύθετο μή | [τι τῶν] ἀπηγορευμένων ἢ ἄλλο τι ϲημεῖον ἐπὶ τοῦ ϲώ|[ματοϲ] ἔχει. εἰπόντων καθαρὸν καὶ ἄϲημον κτλ.

11. εἰ ϲημεῖα. ϲημεῖα is usually qualified by τινά; cf. *BGU* XIII 2216.25, *SB* I 16.15, VI 9027.18. We find τι ϲημεῖον in *BGU* I 82.8–9, ϲημεῖόν τι in *BGU* I 347.ii.11–12, and ϲημεῖον alone in *BGU* I 347.i (= *W.Chr.* 76).14.

ἔ[χοι. I have restored the optative on the evidence of *BGU* I 347.i (= *W.Chr.* 76).14, ii.12, and VI 9027.18–19, but this is not guaranteed; the indicative (plural) occurs in *BGU* XIII 2216.25, *SB* I 17.16, and has been restored in *BGU* I 82.9 (nominative), and *SB* I 16.15 (plural).

12. ϲάλ[ουιοϲ Ἰουλιανόϲ. Saluius Iulianus is attested as ἀρχιερεύϲ only here and in *BGU* I 82. He succeeded Ulpius Serenianus, who was in office again in 192/193.

13. ἀρχιερεὺϲ [κ]αὶ ἐπὶ τῶ[ν] ἱερῶ[ν. The latest (published) study of the office remains that of M. Stead, "The High Priest of Alexandria and All Egypt", *Pap. Congr. XVI* (1981), pp. 411–418.

*Nikolaos Gonis*

Wolfson College
Oxford OX2 6UD
UNITED KINGDOM
e-mail: *nikolaos.gonis@classics.ox.ac.uk*