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P. BEROL. 13981: A DOCUMENT FROM SOKNOPAIU NESOS

The document (29 × 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 *ἀπαιτήσιμον σιτικῶν*, 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 Ausfertigung", see W.Chr. 458 introd.

'Απαιτήσιμα κατ' ἄνδρα have been listed by Sh. L. Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian*, Princeton 1938, p. 369, n. 15.

For *ἀπαιτήσιμον σιτικῶν*, 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 IIrd/beginning of the IIIrd century A.D. For a list of references, see D. Hobson Samuel, *Greeks and Romans at Soknopaiou Nesos*, Proceedings of the XVI International Congress of Papyrology, Chico 1981, 401 n. 30; cf. D. Hobson, *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 καὶ αἰγιαλός* 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 *πράκτορες σιτικῶν*. 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 βιβλι[οθ]ήκης δημοσίων [λ]όγων ἐξ [ἀ-
2. παιτήσιμου σιτικῶν [(ἔτους) .] /

3. Διὰ δ[η]μοσίων γεωργῶν κώ(μης) Σοκν[οπαίου]
 4. Νήσου
5. Ἄρηος Ἐριεύτος μη(τρὸς) Τ[αο]γνώφρεως
 6. καὶ Μέλας Πουσίμε[ω]ς
 7. α⁻ σφρ(αγίδος) αἰγιαλοῦ (ἀρούρας) καθ' εἰ ἡ[...]
 8. (πυροῦ ἀρτάβας) ρδ̄ ἕσ̄
 9. Μέλας Πουσίμεως καὶ ὁ ἀδελφὸς
 10. α⁻ σφρ(αγίδος) αἰγιαλοῦ (ἀρούρας) β̄ (πυροῦ ἀρτ.) ζ̄

2 [L.] 3 κ̄ω̄ 5 μ̄η̄ 7-10 ἔ̄ ἀρουραι ἔ̄ πυροῦ ἀρτάβαι

"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".

1. For βιβλιοθήκη δημοσίων λόγων, see R. T a u b e n s c h l a g, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri*, Warszawa 1955, p. 223 ff.

ἀπαιτήσιμον σιτικῶν. 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 ἀπαιτήσιμον κατ' ἄνδρα σιτικῶν (l. 4) and was drawn by an *amphodokomogrammateus* of Soknopaiou Nesos (for the correct reading of the word in l.4, see Z. B o r k o w s k i, D. H a g e d o r n, *AMPHODOKOMOGRAMMATEΥΣ. 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 ἀπαιτήσιμον, see e.g. BGU II 457.5 or P.Fay 40.3 (both IIrd century A.D.). The other ἀπαιτήσιμα 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 o n's suggestion SPP XXII 26 and 88 are two parts of the same text. Also BGU I 274 and II 426 are possibly ἀπαιτήσιμα 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. Ἄρηος Ἐριεύτος appears in BGU II 659 ii 10 as a farmer of 11 arouras of δημοσία καὶ αἰγιαλός.

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. α⁻σφρ cf. BGU II 659 ii 9 *et al.* The editor interpreted this as ἀσφρ(άγιστος) 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. ἀσφράγιστος, cf. F. P r e i s i g k e, FW; 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.

Scott - Jones, *Dict.*). However, in BGU II 659 ii a may be a numeral. It has apparently the same meaning in our document. The stroke over a seems to be an important argument in favour of this interpretation.

Also in BGU III 831.6 the erroneous reading $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ τῇ α(ύτῃ) σφρα(γίδι) should be corrected to $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ τῇ α σφρα(γίδι). The above interpretation is confirmed by texts mentioning numbered σφραγίδες being arrears of land including plots holden 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 σφρα 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 α σφρα in our document as well as in BGU II 659 ii (A.D. 228/9) and BGU III 831 (A.D. 201) as ἡ 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.

αἰγιαλός is attested in several texts from Soknopaiou Nesos, see D. H o b s o n S a m u e l, *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 αἰγιαλός. This "shoreland" (called also αἰγιαλίτις 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 αἰγιαλός. It was cultivated by state farmers (l. 3; cf. D. H o b s o n S a m u e l, *Greeks and Romans...*).

From W.Chr. 354.11 - 12 we learn that αἰγιαλός was ἀναγραφόμενος περὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν κώμην. 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'Égypte romaine*, Paris 1911, p. 208-209).

The total area of αἰγιαλός is not stated (ὄν ἐν πλείστοις ἀρούραις W.Chr. 354.12). It could be cultivated after it had appeared from water (ὁπότεν ἀποκαλυφθῆ, l. 12-13 and leased at a habitual rent (κατὰ τὴν συνήθειαν ἐκφορίου κατ' ἄρουραν, 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 (δρυμός), marais du Fayoum, d'après la documentation papyrologique*, *L'Égyptologie en 1979. Axes prioritaires et recherches*, tome I, 1982, p. 181, quotes P.Tebt. II 308 = W.Chr. 319 (A.D. 174) to confirm the desiccation of the αἰγιαλός in the Roman times. Since, however, the text says that fishing was possible there, the adjective ἐρήμος 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 αἰγιαλός χέρσος. The end of the existence of Σοκνοπαίου Νήσος being close, we are allowed to assume that the desiccation of the αἰγιαλός might mean the fall of the village.

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

A general discussion of αἰγιαλός 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 Πουσίμωσ καὶ ὁ ἀδελφός: see above 1.6 n. Perhaps this unnamed ἀδελφός is identical with Pakysis (SPP XXII 67/167; see above, 1. 6 n.).

It is probable that all persons involved are members of the same family, cf. Μέλας Ἀρήντος W.Chr. 354.9 (A.D. 207); BGU II 659 ii 24 (A.D. 228/9).