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AIXONION = 'TWO-CHOUS JAR'?

Kruit, N.; Worp, K.A.

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MISCELLANEA

ΔΙΧΟΝΙΟΝ = ‘TWO-CHOUS JAR’?

P.Oxy. LVIII 3942 (Oxyrhynchus, 22.ii.606) contains a ‘Potter’s Work Contract’ in which it is stated that (ll. 15 ff.) the potter has received the full price of 3 solidi by ‘private standard’ for (ll. 18-20) ‘καινοκούφ(ων) γεουχικ(ῶν) | χιλίων και μεγάλων σκευῶν ἑξ | και διχονίον ἑξ’, translated as ‘one thousand new wine jars of the landowner’s pattern and six large vessels and six two-*chous* jars’. The Greek phrase is recapitulated as (ll. 21-22) ‘κ[α]ι[ν]οκούφ(ων) γεουχ(ικῶν) ,α (και) μεγάλ(ων) σκευῶ[ν] | ζ’ (και) διχον(ίων) ζ’’, respectively on the verso (ll. 37-38) as ‘καιν[ο]κούφ(ων) γεουχ(ικῶν) | ,α και σκεῶ(ν) (l. σκεῶ(ν)) ζ’ (και) διχ(ονίων) ζ’’. Finally, the critical apparatus added to the text records for l. 20 that διχονίον should be considered a spelling error for διχονίων (hence the resolution of the endings as -ιον in this word in ll. 22 and 38).

Furthermore, the editor remarks in his notes that (ll. 18-20n.) “By comparison with <P.Oxy.> L **3595-7**, where the two sizes are 2-*chous*, 4-*chous* and double (i.e. 8-*chous*), we can guess with some probability that the καινόκουφα here were 4-*chous* and μεγάλα σκεύη 8-*chous* jars” and that (l. 20n.) the word διχόνιον is an *addendum lexicis*. “The beginning of the word is clear in 22 and 38. For δίχοα cf. L **3595** 12, 48; **3596** 12, 18, 30; **3597** 9, 42, with H. Cockle, JRS 71 (1981), 95-96.”

This approach raises problems; in Archiv f. Papyrusforschung 45.1 (1999), 96-127, we attempt to demonstrate that from the 4th century A.D. onwards in Egypt the *chous*, standing as a metrological unit in between the *kotyle* and the *metretes* (144 *kotylai* = 12 *choes* = 1 *metretes*), disappears completely from the Greek documents from Egypt (likewise, the *kotyle* and the *metretes* also disappear). Therefore, one would not expect the *chous* to re-appear in an early 7th-century papyrus and this raises the question whether the editor’s interpretation of the *add.lex.* διχόνιον as a ‘2-*chous* jar’ (taken over into LSJ’s *Revised Supplement* [Oxford 1996], p. 96 s.v. διχόνιον), is really unassailable. We have 2 more preliminary considerations to offer:

1. Though the parallel offered by the 3 kinds of jars enumerated in P.Oxy. L 3595-97 seems attractive for the interpretation of the 3 different jars in P.Oxy. LVIII 3942, it is not self-imposingly evident that this parallel is complete in every aspect. All one can say with confidence is that there were 3 kinds of jars delivered; the rest is, to paraphrase the editor’s note, a matter of ‘guess work’.

2. If διχόνιον is taken as a compound consisting of an element ‘δι-’ = ‘2’ and an element ‘-χόνιον’ apparently disguising some form of the Greek word χούς, the -ν- after διχό- is difficult to explain; under normal circumstances no known compound noun with a second element -χους ever

features such an intrusive -v-. One might counter this objection, of course, by reckoning with some form of idiosyncratic scribal spelling error in the element -χους; to us, however, this way of thinking seems incorrect.

In fact, it is quite possible to separate δι- from -χόνιον while assuming (as Worp's colleague Prof. Dr. C.J. Ruijgh suggests) that the latter element represents an apparently still-unattested diminutive form of the Greek substantive χώνη, a contracted form of χοάνη = 'funnel' (cf. LSJ s.v.). Of course, the supposition of an erroneous spelling of -χόνιον for -χώνιον is quite acceptable, in particular in this specific case where the scribe has already spelled the gen.pl. ending as -ίον instead of -ίων. We have also considered alternative approaches by supposing that the -χ- might represent a spelling error for -κ-; this would yield a compound spelled *δι-κόνιον which one might wish to connect with Greek nouns like κόνιον = 'dust' (hence, a *δι-κόνιον might be taken as a 'twice dusted' [= 'painted' or 'pitched?'] jar), κώνιον 'cone' (hence, a *δι-κόνιον might be a 'jar equipped with two cones'), or even κώνειον = 'hemlock' (hence, in principle a *δι-κώνειον might be regarded as a 'jar suitable for taking a double [!] portion of hemlock'). For various reasons, however, we strongly prefer to adopt the approach suggested by Ruijgh.

A διχώνιον, then, should be a kind of 'two funnel' jar, i.e. a jar equipped with two spouts intended for facilitating the pouring of water, wine and other liquids. As to the size of this jar and the others mentioned in this papyrus (καινόκουφα γεουχικά and σκεύη μεγάλη), in Byzantine Oxyrhynchus jars are known to have contained a variable number of ξέστατα/*sextarii* (recorded there under various designations are jars containing 4, 5, 6 and 8 *sext.* (1 *sext.* = ± 0.5 l.); cf. our paper referred to above, pp. 111-116). No other papyrus, however, uses the same terminology as found in P.Oxy. 3942.¹) Therefore, in this case the question of size/maximum content of the jars mentioned in this text is unanswerable and must be left open.

LEIDEN, Universiteit
AMSTERDAM, Klassiek Seminarium

N. KRUIT
K.A. WORP

1) We observe, however, that the problem with the abbreviated vessel name 'διχ()' in P.Stras. V. 394.5, Verso (Prov. Unknown, V/VIP) and in P.Laur. IV 185.A.16 (Oxyrhynch., cf. BL X 94; VII^p), discussed already in Archiv 45 (1999), 109, is now solved; one may also resolve here the applicable forms of the noun διχ(ώνιον). The same proposal may be considered for διχ() in the papyrus published by P. Tidemandsen, *A revision of P.Oslo inv. 1525*, ZPE 128 (1999), 165-66; see esp. ll. 4 and 18 of this papyrus (from Oxyrhynch., A.D. 494).