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## A Loan of Money

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# A Loan of Money: P. Sorb. Inv. 2253\*

Mit Abbildung 4

S.B. 6. 12786

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This papyrus contains a loan of money dated in A. D. 502. The form of the contract, so far as it is preserved, is standard for the period. A good discussion of Byzantine loans in money is provided by Cl. Préaux, *Cd'E* 36 (1961) 353–364, and the Theban loan of the sixth century published there by Préaux (P. Brooklyn gr. 2) is one of the closest parallels to our text. Some further remarks may be found in *P. Wisc.* I 10.<sup>1</sup>)

The interest of the text lies in two facets. First, one and probably both parties describe themselves as from the *Castrum* of Thebes, which was otherwise attested only in *P. Lips.* 97 xxii. 9 (A. D. 338). The late Roger Rémondon mentioned P. Sorb. inv. 2253 in this connection in his well-known article of 1961 on “Soldats de Byzance”.<sup>2</sup>)

Secondly, the consular date differs from that found elsewhere for that year: Probus appears alone, while in other papyri we find his colleague Avienus mentioned. The problem raised by this date is discussed in our note to line 1 (below), leading to the conclusion that the papyrus is to be dated to the consular year itself and specifically to the period between May and August, 502.

P. Sorb. Inv. 2253

13 × 9,9 cm

v – viii. 502

(Collection Weil)

[ ̣ Υπατείας Φλ(αουίον) Πε]όβου του λαμπροτάτου

[Month, day ] α τῆς ἐνδεκάτης ἡδικ(τίονος)

[ ± 13 ] ρος μεκηνάριος ἀπὸ Κάσ-

4 [τρον Θεβῶν . . . . .]ς Πέτρος υἱὸς Ὁρ[ι]γένους

[ . . . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτ]οῦ Κάστρου Θεβῶν χαίρ(ειν)-

[ὁμολογῶ ἔχει] καὶ χρ(ε)ωστ(εῖν) σοι εἰς

[ἐκτισιν καὶ ἀπόδοσ]ιν χρυσοῦ δοκίμου

8 [νομισμάτων] εὖστα]θμον παλαιοχάρακτον

[ ± 11 ἐν,] γί(νεται) χρ(υσοῦ) νο(μισμάτων) ἐν μόνῃ, καὶ τοῦ-

[το ἐτοίμως ἔχω π]αρασχεῖν σοι καὶ πληρῶ-

[σαι ± 10 ] χρ(υσοῦ) . . [ . . . ] . . [

2 ἡδικ pap. | 3 μεκηνάριος (or -ίω ?) | 4 υἱὸς pap. | 9 μόνον | 10 πληρῶ pap.

\* We thank Professor J. Scherer for his kindness in permitting us to publish this papyrus, and Miss H. Cadell for supplying us with some bibliographical references.

<sup>1</sup>) Préaux cites P. Sorb. inv. 2253 on p. 363. *P. Lond.* V 1721 (also Theban, VI p) is another good parallel. Some general bibliography on loans of money may be found in *P. Vindob. Sal.*, pp. 71–72, and O. Montevecchi, *La papirologia* (Torino 1973) 225–229.

<sup>2</sup>) *RechPap* 1 (1961) 81 n. 5. For other military *castra* in the Theban region see *P. Lond.* V 1719–1721 and J. Maspero, *L'organisation militaire de l'Égypte byzantine* (Paris 1912) 59.

[In the consulate of Flavius] Probus the most illustrious, [date] of the eleventh indiction. . . . ros, *mechanarius* from Castrum Thebon, to [ . . . ] Petros son of Horigenes [ . . . from the] same Castrum Thebon, greeting. [I acknowledge that I have received] and owe to you for [full payment and repayment] [one solidus] of tested gold, of proper weight and old currency, that is, one solidus of gold only, and [I am prepared] to furnish this to you and to pay . . .

1. The only eleventh indiction which falls in a year with a consulate or postconsulate including a name ending in -οβος is 502/3, coinciding with the consulate of Probus and Avienus (502; p. c., 503). The restorations of the other lines (which it does not seem possible to lengthen significantly) suggest a loss of 13–16 letters in the lacuna at the left,<sup>1</sup>) which is supplied by the formula we restore (assuming an abbreviation stroke after Φλ). A postconsular formula is thus excluded. Nor is there room in line 2 for Probus' colleague Avienus, and in any case the singular τοῦ λαμπροτάτου indicates that only one consul was mentioned here. In all other papyri referring to this consulate, Avienus is mentioned: see R. S. Bagnall and K. A. Worp, *The Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* (Zutphen 1978) App. D, s. a. 502–503.

Rémondon cites this papyrus (Atti del XI Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia [Milano 1966] 143) as an example of a supposed phenomenon «qu'au 5e siècle la transmission des nouvelles et de la diplomatie des actes a cessé de se poursuivre scrupuleusement.» It is not impossible that we are dealing with a scribal error, but our investigations of consular dating have shown that aside from "consulate" written where "postconsulate" was needed, such scribal errors are much rarer than editors have supposed. See especially our remarks in *BASP* 17 (1980) 19–25. We have found, in particular, that the dissemination of knowledge of the naming of consuls was remarkably uniform throughout Egypt, and that the careless omission of one of the two consuls is not to be expected. It is preferable, instead, to suppose that at first Probus was announced alone, with no indication that another consul was to be proclaimed (hence the absence of any καὶ τοῦ ἀποδεχθησομένου phrase or the like); and later, Avienus was proclaimed.<sup>2</sup>) As the earliest papyrus referring to the consuls of 502 comes from August (*P. Stras.* 229, cf. *CSBE* App. D, s. a. 502), as it seems, and indiction 11 would have begun on Pachon 1 (or 1 May) in Upper Egypt, the most reasonable conclusion is that the papyrus dates from a date after Pachon 1 but before the date, presumably in August, of *P. Stras.* 229. (Cf. *CSBE* 68 for the start of the indiction in Upper Egypt.)

2. Possibly the month name was indented, and the alpha is the day numeral (1, 11 or 21); or the date may have been written out in full: δευτέρα.

3. At the start of this line one expects a personal name, Flavius or Aurelius plus the personal name which ends in -ος. There does not seem to be room for a patronymic. In line 4 again Aurelius or Flavius must be lost. We cannot be sure whether the form was ὁ δέστω τῷ δέστω or τῷ δέστω ὁ δέστω. As we have nominatives in both cases, we cannot be sure. For the *mechanarii* see M. San Nicolò, *Vereinswesen* I, 126, and

<sup>1</sup>) For the exceptional line 6 (only 11 letters restored) cf. note ad loc.

<sup>2</sup>) Those who wish to speculate about scribal error in the consular formula of *P. Sorb. inv.* 2253 are referred to BGU XII 2155 where the element καὶ τοῦ ἀποδεχθησομένου is lacking, though it occurs in another papyrus dated after the postconsulate of Fl. Basilus in A. D. 481. For the situation in this year cf. *CSBE* 120 and *CNBD* IV 40 in *BASP* 17 (1980) 7–8.

Maspero, *op. cit.*, 59; references in *WB II*, s. v. The presence of the camp makes it rather more likely that we are dealing with a military than a civilian profession in this case.

6. For the restorations at the start of this line and of line 7, which seem to be a local peculiarity of the Theban region, see Préaux, *op. cit.*, 358. The restoration in line 6 seems a bit short, but there may have been a large initial omicron in *ὁμολογῶ* as in Préaux's contract (*Cd'E 36* [1961] 355, plate). The scribe is in general extremely regular in his use of space: 18 or 19 letters in every line but one in the preserved side of the text.

7-9. For the qualification of the money as *παλαιοχάρακτον* cf. L. C. West and A. C. Johnson, *Currency in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (Princeton 1944) 137 and *P. Lond.* V 1722. 31. We need at least one more epithet at the start of line 9 in the lacuna, but we do not know what should be restored. Perhaps *δίζωδον* (cf. *P. Ross. Georg.* III 9. 18 and *P. Lips.* 13. 10n.) was written, but this by itself gives too short a restoration.