

Two Notes on Byzantine Papyri

Ἰ Ἀρσαστικός

L. C. West and A. C. Johnson, *Currency in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (Princeton 1944) 121, make the following statement concerning this adjective, a monetary *terminus technicus*:

"Three examples of this term come from Herakleopolis (*Kl.Form.* 59, 86; *BGU* I 314) and one from the Fayum (*CPR* I 30, possibly also *Kl.Form.* 69, 586). The term is always used with *solidi* or with *holokottini* (*Kl.Form.* 59). There is insufficient evidence to determine the meaning of the word. Dr. Gehman suggests the possibility that it may be derived from the Persian *arsha* and equivalent in meaning to ὄβρυζα. Since *BGU* I 314 is dated after the Persian occupation, it is possible, if this theory is correct, that all the documents may belong to this period."

Furthermore, they refer to the same term elsewhere in *Currency*, viz. on pages 137 ('expression of quality') and 151, where they propose this word as a resolution for an abbreviation Ἰ Ἀρσ() in *Kl.Form* 86.

Unfortunately, this statement gives a distorted view of the documentation referred to, because:

- (a) one of the documents has been given a wrong provenance;
- (b) the adjective's use appears not to be restricted only to *solidi*/*holokottinoi*;
- (c) an additional reference of possible relevance may be noticed, and finally
- (d) some of these documents may, after all, be completely irrelevant.

To back up these sweeping allegations it should be mentioned that:

- (a) the authors have overlooked that *CPR* I 30 (evidently, fr.ii of this papyrus is meant) actually comes from Herakleopolis (cf. *CdE* 56 [1981] 133),
- (b) in *Kl.Form.* 586 the adjective occurs in combination with *carats* rather than with one or more *solidi* (*holokottinoi*), and
- (c) they do not mention *Kl.Form.* 964, though, at least in principle, this papyrus should also be taken into consideration.

In order to establish whether all the texts referred to by West and Johnson are relevant it will be necessary to scrutinize the available evidence. Therefore I present the documentation arranged according to provenance and in the form as presented by the various first editors.¹ Since the publication of *Currency* in 1944 no new attestations of the adjective under review seem to have been published. It occurs either written out in full, ἄρσατικός, or abbreviated as ἄρ() or ἄρσ().²

1) Herakleopolis

SPP III 86.5 (ca 575)

χρυσοῦ νομισμ(άτιον) ἐν
'Ἀρσ()³

SPP III 59.3,6 (VI)

χρυσίου νομισμάτια (6:
ὀλοκόττινα) ἐπτὰ ἄρσατικά,
γί(νεται) νο(μ.) ζ ἄρ/
χρυσοῦ νομισμ(α)τ(α) πέντε
ἄρσατικ(ά) καὶ κεράτια ἐπτὰ,
χρ(υσοῦ) νο(μισμάτια) ε
αρσS, (κερ.) ζ⁴

BGU I 314.15-16 (630)

CPR I 30 fr.ii.44 (VI/VII)

-- νομισμάτων ἑκατὸν
ἄρσατικῶν

Comment: in Herakleopolis the adjective ἄρσατικός is well-attested, i.e. both written out in full and in abbreviation, in documents from the VIth and VIIth century.

¹I prefer, however, to refer to SPP III and VIII, rather than use the abbreviation *Kl.Form.*

²There is no entry in LSJ s.v. ἄρσατικός. The term is also not discussed by M.F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy* (Cambridge 1985), cf. his index 5b, p. 768.

³For the date of this document based upon the notarial signature cf. now J.M. Diethart and K.A. Worp, *ByzNot* 58 # 23.1.1-2; on this ground a date to A.D. 623 (cf. J. Gascou, *Trav&Mém* 9 [1985] 70 n.387, 75 n.424) is excluded and, as a consequence, the consul Apion referred to in line 2 must be Apion II († ca. A.D. 577-579) rather than Apion III. For the resolution of the abbreviation 'Ἀρσ() cf. L.C. West and A.C. Johnson *op.cit.* 151, where ἄρσατικά (but for the correct spelling cf. now below, n.4) is proposed. If one does not accept this, one has to face the question why in a text from Herakleopolis coins would have been weighed by the standard of Arsinoe, rather than by its own local standard.

⁴Dr. G. Poethke kindly informs me by letter (30.x.1990) that the first editor's reading ἄρσατικ(ά) is not necessarily correct and that one can safely read ἄρσατικ(ά). There are no other instances of the spelling ἄρσατικ(ός). ~ 1319

2) Fayum

SPP III 69.2 (V)

χρυσού νο(μισμάτια) β
'Αρσ()⁵

SPP III 586.4-5 (V)

χρυσού κερατίου ἡμί[σ]
'Α]ρσ(), [γί(ν.) χρ(υσού)
(κερ.)] (ἡμίσι) 'Αρσ()

Comment: No document from the Fayum provides us with an attestation of the adjective ἀρσατικός written out in full. Nothing prevents us from expanding in both of these texts 'Αρσ() to 'Αρσ(νοϊτικῶ, sc. ζυγῶ) and this is what Wessely actually seems to have had in mind himself, cf. *SPP* VIII, p.301 col. a, bottom, though his resolution of the abbreviation in *SPP* III 69.2 stands in opposition to this idea and the Arsinoite standard is not mentioned in his index, *ibidem*, p.260, s.v. ζυγόν. It seems to have been F. Preisigke who took the initiative of expanding 'Αρσ() into ἀρσατικός on a wholesale basis, cf. *Wörterbuch* III, Abschn. 17, s.v., where he lists *CPR* I 30, *Form.* 59, 69, 86 and *BGU* I 314 (but where he omits our next item, probably by this omission causing it to remain unknown to West and Johnson).

3) Other

SPP VIII 964 (Hermop.?, VI)

νο(μισμάτια) γ 'Αρσ()

Comment: it is likely enough that one should resolve ἀρσ() either into 'Αρσ(νοϊτικῶ ζύγω) or into ἀρσ(ατικά), but both solutions entail further questions: If one resolves 'Αρσ(νοϊτικῶ ζύγω) the question arises why in Hermopolis one would have weighed coins with the Arsinoite standard (this same problem may arise in a text from Herakleopolis, *SPP* III 86, cf. above). On the other hand, if one resolves the abbreviation as ἀρσ(ατικά), the question arises whether the attestations of this adjective (now apparently restricted to the Herakleopolite nome) should be attributed to one more province (see below). It may be, however, that, after all, this papyrus never came from Hermopolis, but from either Herakleopolis or the Fayum, and the context is uninformative enough to allow both resolutions, ἀρσ(ατικά) and 'Αρσ(νοϊτικῶ ζύγω). For some reason (cf. above) this text was not referred to by West and Johnson, *Currency* 121, though in itself there is no principal distinction between the 'Αρσ() occurring in this text and

⁵Ed.: 'Αρσ(ατικά?).

in the other *Kl. Form.* texts they mention and though the text is listed in the indices to *SPP* VIII, p. 301, col. a, bottom.

To sum up: (a) At present the use of the adjective under review seems restricted to papyri from the Herakleopolite nome.

(b) The statement that it refers only to full *solidi*, seems to be, after all, correct, now that we have found another interpretation for 'Αρσ() in *SPP* III 586.5; cf. especially *BGU* 314, where the full *solidi* are provided with the adjective, while the carats are lacking it.

(c) The meaning of the adjective remains as uncertain as before, but, if the resolution of the adjective in *SPP* III 86.5 is correct (cf. *BGU* I 314.16), it follows from the date (ca. A.D. 575) of the *SPP*-text that a Persian origin of this adjective is unlikely. It is an attractive hypothesis to assume with West and Johnson (*Currency*, 137) that the adjective refers to an expression of quality (compare the use of the adjective λίτος, mainly confined to the Fayum in combination with κεράτια, for which see *Currency* 131), but what kind of quality was involved, escapes us. Apparently, the adjective consists of at least two elements, ἄρσα- and -ικός (or ἄρσα- and -τικός?), but I have not succeeded in finding a convincing connection between the element ἄρσα(τ)- and an otherwise known Greek word. The adjective's etymology, therefore, remains unknown.

II A Ghostname in *P. Wash. Univ.* I 7

P. Wash. Univ. I 7 (V/VI cent. A.D., prov. unknown) contains a fragmentarily preserved, but nevertheless fascinating letter to a *praeses* (?) regarding a forthcoming investigation regarding the cleaning of Trajan's canal. The *ed. princ.* reads lines 10-12 as follows:

----- χρεία δέ ἐστιν ταύτης τῆς ὑπομνήσ(εως) τῆς ἐξετάσεως
καὶ Κάνον τὸν
σκρινιάριον ἢ τὸν νουμεράριον τῆς τάξεως τῆς σῆς λαμπρότητος
παρεῖναι, κτλ.

The editor translates: "But there is need for this reminder of the audit and for the presence of Kanos the scriniarius or numerarius of the office of your highness ...".

χρεία δέ ἐστιν is thus construed ἀπὸ κοινοῦ with the following genitive ταύτης τῆς ὑπομνήσ(εως) and with the accusative c. infinitive Κάνον τὸν σκρινιάριον ... παρεῖναι. This does not strike me as good

Greek. Moreover, it should be noticed that the editor introduces a name Κάνοϛ that does not occur in the regular papyrological onomastica.⁶ A check of the plate (pl. VII) convinces me that the name Κάνον is not correct. In fact, I read κάμων and this form must be related to the verb κάμνω = "to toil, to make a great effort" (cf. Preisigke, *WB* I, s.v., 2), i.e. it is the 2nd ps.sg. of the aorist imperative. According to the rules of standard classical Greek one would have expected κάμε, but it is well known that in later Greek the endings of the first and the second aorist act. could be (and were) confused.⁷

That is not the end of the matter, however. In the addenda and corrigenda to *P. Wash. Univ.* I provided by Klaus Maresch and Zola M. Packman at the end of the newly-published *P. Wash. Univ.* II (= *Pap. Colon.* 18), this passage also comes in for scrutiny (p.240). They offer three proposals for these lines: in line 10, they propose ταύτης τι ὑπομνησ(θῆναι) in place of ταύτης τῆς ὑπομνήσ(εως) and Κύρον τι in place of Κάνον; in line 11, ἦγουν in place of ἡ τὸν. The last of these corrections had been reached independently by P.J. Sijpesteijn, who will comment elsewhere on the implications of the reading. *ZPE* 70 (1992), p. 243, n. 26

As the discussion above indicates, I do not think that their second proposal is either syntactically satisfying or palaeographically acceptable. The first proposal, however, contains the important observation that τι is a much more plausible reading than τῆς at this place. Even if one accepts this reading, however, it is not obvious how one is to understand the words χρεια δέ ἐστιν ταύτης τι ὑπομνησ(θῆναι) τῆς ἐξετάσεως. Moreover, the hyperbaton required by having the element τι ὑπομνησ(θῆναι) intervene between the demonstrative ταύτης and τῆς ἐξετάσεως seems extreme in a routine documentary text. Both for sense and for language, then, this suggestion poses problems.

On the basis of discussion of the passage with my colleague Sijpesteijn and renewed study by both of us of the published plate, I suggest the following reading of the whole passage, which is not, I think, vulnerable to the kind of objections I have raised:

----- χρεια δέ ἐστιν ταύτης γιγνομένης τῆς ἐξετάσεως καὶ
κάμων τὸν
σκρινιάριον ἦγουν νομειάριον τῆς τάξεως τῆς αἰς λαμπρότητος

⁶) But cf. Pape-Benseler, *Handwörterbuch der Griechischen Eigennamen*, s.n.

⁷) Cf. B.G. Mandilaras, *The Verb in the Greek Non-Literary papyri* (Athens 1973) §683-684.

παρεῖναι, κτλ.

"But there is need for this audit to take place and (therefore) make an effort that the scriniarius or the numerarius of the office of your highness be present ..."

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