Klaas A. Worp

A Greek Papyrus and Two Mummy Labels from Durham, U.K.


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During a visit to the Oriental Museum at Durham (organized as part of the program of the Dakhleh Oasis Project Conference at Durham University [July 5-9, 1994]) I came across a Greek papyrus and two mummy labels which are apparently still unpublished. I am very grateful to Mr. John Ruffle (Keeper of the Oriental Museum) for his kind permission to publish these documents and to Mrs. Janet Starkey (Recorder at the Museum) for her kind help in making the objects available to me and for checking the museum’s archives. I am also very grateful to my colleagues S. Vleeming (Leiden), who provided me with a transcript of the Demotic part of the mummy label published below as text ‘b.2’, and J.D. Thomas (Durham) who kindly checked a problematical passage in the papyrus, provided the correct suggestion for its reading (cf. 1. 2 n.) and corrected a first version of this article.

(a) The Papyrus

Durham, Oriental Museum inv. # 1978.8. H. 9.5 x W. 14 cm. Margin at the bottom 2.5 cm. Writing across the fibers. Verso empty. The papyrus was acquired by the Museum in 1978.

Ptel, Oxy. Nome 5th century A.D.

1 Π(αρά) Ἀμμονίου πρεσβυτέρῳ ἐποικίῳ Πτέλ
2 Ὠρίων καὶ Ἀποφίτου υἱοῖς. Σμιῶν χάριν ὄν
3 ἔσχον παρ’ ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τιμής σπιτιῶν· τό πρῶτον
4 ἔσχον παρ’ ὑμῶν ἄργυριον (τάλαντα) Ἀ'/, τό δεύτερον
5 ἄργυριον τάλαντα (τάλαντα) Ἀ', τό τρίτον παρά Ὠρίων
6 μόνος ἄργυριον (τάλ.) ρ/ μόνας, καὶ τῇ γυναικεὶ μου (τάλ.) χ’
7 Νῦν οὖν ἄρτα δός τῷ ἀδελφῷ Ἐιρμοῦθίῳ· μου ὑπαπατών
8 ταῖς λιπαστισίοις παρ’ ὑμῶν ἄργυρί(ι)ου
9 τάλαντα (τάλ.) χά’. Φασώ ὑμῖν.
10 Ἐρρώσθαι {σε} εὐχόμαι ὑμῶν πολλοῖς χρόνοις.

1 πρεσβυτέρου 2 Ὠρίων, Ἀποφίτου, υἱοῖς (Ραβ. ὑποτεις), σμιῶν 5 Ὠρίωνος 6 μόνου, μόνα, γυναικί 6
2nd half of line (after μόνας) seems to have been added as an afterthought (squeezed in between il. 5 and 7), with the name Θερμοῦθίος written as a further addition between 11. 6 and 7; some letters seem to have been retraced 7-8 Σαραποδώτηρ (-οδω- ex α συν.) 8 τά (τ- ex α συν.) λιπαστισία, ἄργυριον

“From Ammonios, priest of the village of Ptel, to Horion and Aphous, sons, greetings. As proof of what I received from you from the price of hemp: the first time I received from you 1900 tal. of silver, the second time 1000 talents of silver, the third time from only Horion 100 tal. of silver in total. Now then give right away to my brother Sarapodoros the remaining 630 talents from (owed by) you, and to my wife Thermouthis 600 tal. Phaophi 14. I pray for your health (remaining) for many years.”

Apart from the mention of a priest only palaeographical criteria can be used for dating this text; the type of handwriting is compatible with a 5th-century date and this matches with what we know already about the village of Ptel (cf. l. 1 n.). The document contains a short notification by a priest Ammonios to two ‘sons’, Aphous and Horion, about money owed after a transaction concerning the price of hemp. Apparently amounts of 1900 + 1000 + 100 = 3000 talents had been paid by Aphous and/or Horion to Ammonios already in three instalments (11. 3-6), while other amounts were still to be paid by them, i.e. 630 Tal. to Ammonios’ ‘brother’ Sarapodoros (11. 7-9) and 600 Tal. to Ammonios’ wife Thermouthis
(cf., however, the note to 11. 6-8) = 1230 talents; the total amount of money involved in the sale of
hemp (cf. ἀπὸ τιμῆς σεπιάων) was, therefore, 4230 tal., but it is unknown how much hemp was de-
livered for this amount. Fifth-century prices of hemp seem to be lacking (P.Oxy. LI 3628-3633 give no
price indication for this product) and R.S. Bagnall (Currency and Inflation in 4th Century Egypt 69)
mentions only one late-4th century document, P.Oxy. XLVIII 3429 (from ca. 375-385 A.D.), stating the
price of hemp to be at 350 T./bundle. In P.Rain.Cent. 86 (A.D. 381) a delivery of 5 bundles (at 5 mna
each) of hemp is promised as monthly interest for a loan of 5 solidi. For the use of hemp according to
the papyri, cf. E. Wipszycka, L’industrie textile dans l’Egypte romaine.

1. For the village of Ptel in the Oxyrhynchite Nome cf. A. Calderini - S. Daris, Dizionario Geografico IV 200 and P. Pruneti,
I centri abitati dell’Ossirinche 156 (where add P.Oxy. I. 3585.4). Thus far it has been mentioned only in three 5th-
century documents1 and this papyrus yields a fourth attestation, again (probably) from the same century. Its precise
location within the Oxyrhynchite nome is unknown. A priest Ammonios in the village is also not known.

2. It remains to be seen whether Horion and Aphous really were ‘sons’ of the priest Ammonios (apparently married, cf. l. 6)
in the physical sense of the word; maybe they were members of his flock, hence ‘spiritual’ sons.

I owe the decipherment of the word before χάριν ὄν to J.D. Thomas (Durham) who came up with the absolutely
convincing suggestion to read σμιμου and to understand this as a misspelling of σμιμιοῦ; he refers to SB VI 9415
(17).14 and XVI 12265.3 where the same phrasing σμιμιοῦ χάριν found. As Thomas remarks, it must surely be
translated here as ‘As proof of what I received (όν ἐστόν) from you from the price of hemp (ἀπὸ τιμῆς σεπιάων), etc.’.

Cf. also H.C. Youtie in ZPE 6 (1970) 105-116 = Scriptiunculae II 963-975.

6-8. In the open space after μόνας (l. 6) Ammonios inserted as a kind of afterthought:

καὶ τῇ γανεκί μου (τάλλ.) χ’

θερμωθῆς,

in my view intended to go with δὸς τῷ ἄδελφῳ μου Σωροτσόδωρῳ (1. 7-8); I think (cf. the many Byzantine tax
receipts with μόνας closing off the amount actually paid) that μόνας probably closed off the third payment of 100
talents. One might, however, prefer to assume that in the third payment (11. 5-6) Horion alone paid only 100 talents to
Ammonios himself, and an extra 600 talents to his wife.

Elsewhere (cf. ll. 4, 5, 6) Ammonios writes the expected form ἀργυρίου, only here ἀργυροῦ. In general it is not common
to find ἄργυρον τάλλαντα instead of ἄργυριον τάλλαντα. So ἀργυροῦ is probably a mistake for ἄργυριο(ν).

It is worth noticing that there is no precise indication of the date of the document either by an Oxyrhynchite era year or an
indiction year; Phaophi 14 = 11/12.x.

10. Apparently Ammonios started writing the common salutation in the singular form (σε); then he realized that he was
addressing two persons and added the plural personal noun ζῆς above the line; he did so, however, without cancelling
σε and without putting ζήσας at the expected place, i.e. before εὐχόματι.

(b) The Mummy Labels

There is a considerable amount of literature concerning mummy labels; a most useful introduction into
the subject (with extensive further bibliography) is given by J. Quaegebeur in Pap.Lugd.Bat. XIX, pp.
232-259.

I Mummy Tag, Inv. Wel(come collection) 136. H. 3.6 x W. 9.2 cm. Writing parallel with the grain of
the wood. Verso empty. 2nd or 3rd century A.D.

1 Ἀπλωνία
2 γυνὴ Ἀσκλά-
3 τες εἰς Ἐρμῶντιν.

1 Ἀπολλωνία 2-3 Ἀσκλάτος (ασκλά- : λ ex a) 3 Ἐρμῶνθιν

1 As SB XII 10808 (ed. princ.: provenance unknown) mentions this village in l. 3, the papyrus may be attributed with P.
Pruneti (loc.cit.) to the Oxyrhynchite nome; if this attribution is correct, the bishop John mentioned there in ll. 1-2 may be a
5th-century bishop of Oxyrhynchus who is further unknown (for names of bishops mentioned in documentation from
Byzantine Egypt cf. ZPE 100 [1994] 283-318, for Oxyrhynchus esp. 288-89 and 303-04). Cf. now also A. Papaconstantinou
“Ap(ol)lonia, wife of Asklas, to Hermonthis. ”

For the provenance/destination of mummies as indicated on the mummy tags themselves, cf. in general J. Quaegebeur, loc.cit., 243-244, 250-51, and B. Boyaval, Corpus des Étiquettes de Momies Grecques (Lille 1976) 121-171, ## 1660-2179; for Hermonthis see esp. ## 1932-1938. The personal names on this undated mummy tag are Greek, but that is not sufficiently informative for dating it precisely (for problems connected with the dating of such tags cf. Quaegebeur, loc.cit., 240f.). As there are only palaeographical criteria (i.e. the letter forms) at hand, a late-2nd or a 3rd-century date would seem acceptable.


(2) Mummy Tag, Inv. N 2004 (formerly: collection Duke of Northumberland). H. 5 x W. 14 cm. Writing parallel with the grain of the wood. Late Ptolemaic/ Early Roman. Both sides inscribed, one side with a Greek text, the other with a text in demotic (the latter by courtesy of S. Vleeming [Leiden]; both the demotic and the Greek text were painted with a brush rather than written with a pen):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek side</th>
<th>Demotic side</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Σισόις Ἄμενωθ(ο)</td>
<td>Ἰγ-δυ Ἰμ-hton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 τοῦ Σισόιτος</td>
<td>Ἰγ-δυ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Sisois, son of Amenothes, the son of Sisois.”

The collection of the Duke of Northumberland was described by S. Birch (for him see W.R. Dawson - E.P. Uphill, Who was who in Egyptology2 [London 1972] 27-28) in his Catalogue of the collection of Egyptian Antiquities at Alnwick Castle (London 1880), where his transcript of the Greek and Demotic text of this mummy tag is printed on p. 335. Due to the special character of this catalogue Birch’s text was never reprinted in the Sammelbuch.

Amsterdam

K.A. Worp