



TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Herausgegeben von

Gerhard Dobesch, Hermann Harrauer
Peter Siewert und Ekkehard Weber

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Papyrologie und Epigraphik**

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Peter Siewert
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Ekkehard Weber
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H O L Z H A U S E N

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Tafeln 1–4

TETPAXPYΣON

In 331, an ex-logistes from the Dakhleh Oasis named Gelasios paid 9 talents for the cost of transportation „of statues being sent to Alexandria“, for which he was given a receipt by an ἀποδέκτης; this receipt was published in 1995 as P.Kell. I Gr. 29. The amount of money paid is described in this text by a phrase unattested in previously-published papyri, as far as the editor could see:

ἐν τετραχρύ-
σφ ν[ομ]ίσματι τάλαντα ἐννέα, γ(ίνεται) (τάλαντα) θ.

This was translated „nine talents of silver in ‘four-gold’ coinage, total 9 talents“. After some canvassing of possible meanings for the phrase, the editor concluded, „One wonders, therefore, whether there is a connection between the qualification ἐν τετραχρύσφ ν[ομ]ίσματι and the qualification ἐν νούμμοις; we see, however, no obvious connection“. This suggestion, we shall argue, was essentially correct.

There is, actually, another text which partially preserves this phrase. This is P.Yale *inv.* 217, published by G. M. Parássoglou in *BASP* 7 (1970) 52–57, with a plate, and reprinted as SB XII 10784. This is a sale of part of a house, of unknown provenance and without a preserved date, which its editor assigned to „beginning of the fourth century (?)“ largely on the basis of the price given in the text. The price is given in the edition as follows:

ἀργυρίου Σεβαστῶ[ν καινοῦ ἐν] χρύσφ
[νομίσματος] ταλάντων διακοσίων ἑβδομήκοντα

translated „two hundred and seventy talents of new imperial silver coin (? *sc.* paid) in gold“. The note points, like that in P.Kell., to phrases like ἐν νούμμοις as parallels, but observes that „the construction is not very smooth“. With the benefit of the papyrus from Kellis, it can be seen that a restoration of

ἀργυρίου Σεβαστῶ[ν ἐν τετρα]χρύσφ
[νομίσματος] ταλάντων διακοσίων ἑβδομήκοντα

now has at least the virtue of being paralleled. It remains to find a meaning for it.

First, however, it is worth a brief detour to argue that the Yale papyrus probably comes from the Great Oasis (in the inclusive sense, meaning today both the Kharga and Dakhleh Oases) and around the same time as the Kellis papyrus; if this is correct, the argument for adopting this restoration is strengthened¹. The critical point for pro-

¹ There is no external evidence to help. The papyrus was acquired by H. I. Bell from M. Nahman in Cairo in late 1926 as part of a large lot, which came to Yale in 1927. This hetero-

venance lies in a fragmentarily preserved βεβαία clause near the end: βεβαία ὡς ἐν δημοσίῳ κα]τακειμένη (line 17). The editor cited as parallels SB I 5679.18–19 and P.Grenf. II 76.21–22. Both of these texts come from the archive of the νεκροτάφοι of Kysis. So also do other examples: P.Grenf. II 68.75 (= CPG. I 40), 76 (= M.Chr. 295); SB I 4652 and 4656. The remainder come from Kellis, including P.Genov. I 21 and II App. 1 and a number of examples in P.Kell. I (see index p. 264 s. v. κατὰ-κειμαι). There are examples from Hermoupolis inserting the word ἀρχεῖον, but in the form quoted here there are no examples outside the Oases.

The editor's only basis for a date lay in the price of 270 talents for the fourth share of a house, or 1,080 talents for the entire house. After citing a few examples from the earlier part of the fourth century, he concluded: „Thus, if we were to judge by the price alone, the papyrus could very well be assigned to the first quarter of the fourth century, particularly in view of the fact that there are no palaeographic counter-indications“. This seemed a bit too early to Bagnall (*Currency and Inflation*, Atlanta 1985, 71), who assigned the papyrus to ca. 330–340. The basis for that view was the fact that houses tended to sell for amounts in the range 9–14 T. in the first part of the century. After the first quarter of the century (there were no figures to be cited between 324 and 337) rents for parts of houses had risen to the 20–25 T. per year range, suggesting that sale prices must be substantially higher. It is difficult to be precise, because of the variation to which house property is susceptible, but a sale price something like 40–50 times a typical rent may fit fairly well with what we know. At any rate, a date before Constantine's currency reform in 324/5 is hardly possible.

We believe that in line 19 a fragment of the original consular dating is still to be seen. The scribe seems to have written] λαπροτά[τ]ων Φ[. He then tried to correct his mistake by adding a μ, but he mistakenly squeezed it in just before the ρ, rather than before the π. We thus should have the remains of a consulate with two non-imperial consuls, whose names occupied about 20 letters followed by τῶν in the lacuna. Depending on how fully the consular names were written, there are several possibilities in the post-325 period². As we argue below, the decade 325–335 seems most likely; in that period, Paulinus and Iulianus (325) in their short form occupy 20 letters; Constantius and Maximus (327) occupy 21. These two seem, in the surviving documents, the years most likely to display short forms, i. e., without the consuls' first names being given. But it is possible that any of several other years could have been denoted with only one name per consul. The φ after λαμπροτά[τ]ων is the beginning of the name of the month (Phaophi, Phamenoth, or Pharmouthi).

But what was a τετράχρυσον νόμισμα? There is no direct evidence on this point, because as far as we know the word τετράχρυσον is not elsewhere attested. A possible indirect approach, however, is provided by Epiphanius' *Weights and Measures*. This work is preserved only fragmentarily in Greek, more fully in Syriac. Users will be aware that it is a mishmash of information, some good and some fanciful, some re-

geneous lot included papyri from Oxyrhynchos and other provenances, including others of unknown provenance.

² Bagnall has been able to inspect the original papyrus in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. It is worth noting that ἐλθῶν in line 5 is an error for ἐλθόν, which was transcribed already by John Shelton in the copy on file at Yale (mentioned by Parássoglou).

cent and some very old, thrown together with little historical sense. Nonetheless, there are valuable nuggets. One such seems to underlie this passage (Greek text, 82.47): δίχρυσον δὲ ἐκάλουν οἱ παλαιοὶ τὸ ἡμισυ τοῦ ἀργυροῦ. τὸ δὲ ἀργυροῦν τοῦτὸ ἐστὶν ὃ οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι μιλιαρῖσιον καλοῦσιν, ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται στρατιωτικὸν δόμα³. The Syriac is translated by J. E. Dean as follows: „But the ancients called half of the silver (*denarius*) the δίχρυσον. And the silver (*denarius*) is what the Romans call the *miliarision*, which is translated ‘military gift’“⁴. The insertion of *denarius* is unnecessary. For the rest, however, the versions agree that there was once a silver coin for the half of which the term δίχρυσον was in use. It seems logical to infer that the silver coin itself might have been called the τετράχρυσον, even though Epiphanius gives no direct indication to that effect. Unfortunately, there is no evidence for δίχρυσον elsewhere except in a Delian inventory (I.Delos I 338 Ba14): [κ]αὶ ἐν λιβανωτίδι λιθίνῃ δίχρυσον καὶ χ[ρυσσοῦν?]. The Supplement (1996) to LSJ defines the word here as „coin of value of two χρυσοῖ“⁵. This is a reasonable inference, but it is impossible to say what coin is meant.

A little later (Greek 82.49, Hultsch p. 267), Epiphanius says φόλλις ὃ καὶ βαλάντιον καλεῖται. διπλοῦν δὲ ἐστὶν ὑπὸ δύο ἀργύρων συγκείμενον, οἷ γίνονται ση' δηνάρια. The Syriac (p. 61, section 53) is translated, „the *folllis* is also called the purse, because it is a multiple; for it is 2¹/₂ silver (coins), which is 250 *denarii*“⁶. As Hultsch indicates, Salmasius had already emended CH in the Greek to CN, because 250 is a much more plausible number than 208 to find in such a context⁵. The ἄργυρος in Epiphanius' Greek text⁶ on this reckoning will have been 100 denarii at some point, when 2¹/₂ of them (= 1 *folllis*) were 250 denarii. Now it is generally accepted that the new standard billon coin introduced by Constantine was worth 100 den. in 325, and it has recently been possible to show on the basis of new evidence that the value of its successor was raised to 150 denarii, perhaps around 335 (P.Hamb. IV, pp. 149–152). If the ἄργυρος was also called τετράχρυσον, as we have suggested on the basis of Epiphanius' indication that half of one was a δίχρυσον, and if this

³ Hultsch, *Scriptores Metrologici Graeci*, Leipzig 1864, I, 266.

⁴ James E. Dean (ed.), *Epiphanius' Treatise on Weights and Measures: The Syriac Version*, (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 11), Chicago 1935, 61 section 52. Unfortunately, neither this passage nor the one discussed in the next paragraph is found in the Georgian version of the work published by M.-J. van Esbroeck, *Les versions géorgiennes d'Épiphanie de Chypre, Traité des poids et des mesures*, (CSCO 460–461), Louvain 1984.

⁵ Hultsch, p. 144 n. 4.

⁶ The reader will note that the two passages of Epiphanius, as transmitted by the tradition, show him treating the coin in question as a neuter ἀργυροῦν in § 82.47, but as masculine ἄργυρος (judging from the relative οἷ) in § 82.49. Although there was still room for doubt about the proper lemma for the form found in the papyri when J.-M. Carrié discussed P.Oxy. XXXIV 2729 in *Aegyptus* 64 (1984) 205, the suggestion of D. Hagedorn reported there, that the adjective's lemma would be ἀργυροῦς, adopted in P.Neph. 9 (introduction) seems to us correct. As the plural is known to be neuter (P.Oxy. 2729.6), the term must be neuter, presumably modifying an understood νόμισμα (cf. the term χρυσοῦν). On this basis, it seems likely that the form ἀργυροῦν in Epiphanius is the better tradition. For the complete record we note that other papyrological attestations of the ἀργυροῦν are found in P.Stras. V 330.3 (VP: ἀργυρᾶ ὀδοήκοντα δύο) and in P.Rein. II 108.9 (VIP: ἀργυρᾶ τριάκοντα ἐπτὰ; this attestation is not listed in LSJ Rev. Suppl. or in WB Suppl. I.3, Abschn. 17).

coin was worth 100 denarii, as Epiphanius clearly indicates, the date from which this information comes should be in the decade 325–335. Such a range of dates fits well with the other indications discussed above. It is possible, however, that once in use the name survived beyond this period.

Why would a coin of 100 denarii be called a τετράχρυσον? Only one explanation occurs to us, namely that the Roman imperial aureus was originally tarified at 25 denarii (that is, it was minted at 40 to the Roman pound)⁷. It has generally been thought that these aurei did not circulate in Egypt, and certainly they are rarely referred to⁸. But when Apion (or Antonius Maximus, to give him his military name) writes to his father Epimachos in BGU II 423 (2nd cent.), he tells him that „when I arrived at Misenum, I received three aurei (χρυσοῦς τρεῖς) as travel allowance from the emperor“. This passage suggests that, even if Epimachos did not often see aurei in Egypt, he knew what they were. By 325, to be sure, that aureus was long gone, replaced by the fourth-century solidus. Even a Constantinian solidus, at $\frac{1}{72}$ of a pound of gold, would have been worth around 36 talents, or 54,000 denarii, in the later 320s.⁹ If the term τετράχρυσον did refer to the old aureus, it would represent an historical memory, if not also a bit of sarcasm. The old aureus had in fact lost that peg to the denarius early in the third century. This may make this explanation seem unlikely; if so, we invite the reader to find another. Whether τετράχρυσον was a term peculiar to the Great Oasis, we cannot say. But it is at least surprising that with the wealth of fourth-century papyri available for a number of other districts of Egypt the term has not been found somewhere else so far.

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⁷ See, e. g., *Der Kleine Pauly*, Munich 1975, 1, 771 (H. Chantraine).

⁸ See L. C. West, A. C. Johnson, *Currency in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, Princeton 1944, 1–2.

⁹ See R. S. Bagnall, *Currency and Inflation in Fourth Century Egypt*, (BASP Suppl. 5), Atlanta 1985, 33–35, 61; and P.Kell. IV, p. 225, for more recently published gold prices.