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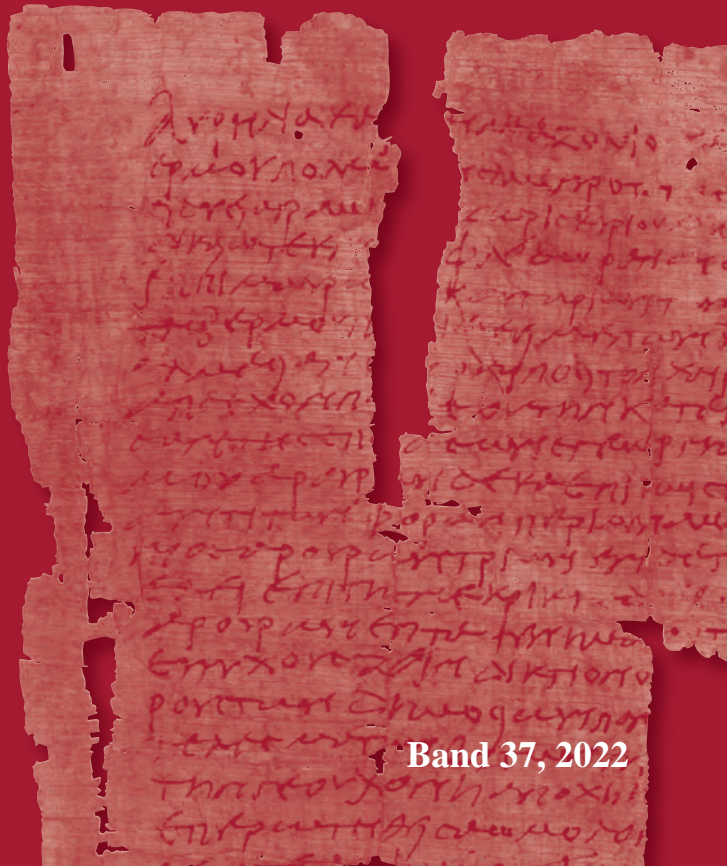
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N I K O L A O S   G O N I S

A View of Arcadia in the Seventh Century[*]

The focus of this note is a Berlin papyrus that derives from the early Fayum finds of 1877–1881 and was first published in the journal *Wiener Studien* in 1886.[1] In 1915, the following text was printed as SB I 5337:

1	ἀπὸ Ἡρακλέως	[
2	ἀπὸ Κυνῶν	[
3	ἀπὸ Μέμφεως	[
4	ἀπὸ Λητοῦς	[
5	ἀπὸ Νείλου πόλεως	ʃ ἀφ
6	ὁ(μοῦ) (λίτραι?) ἀφϛ	
7	γί(νεται) τ(ὸ) π(ᾶ)ν(?) ἀπὸ Ἀρκαδί(ας) .. [	
8	// ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀρσιν(οΐ)τ(ου) (λίτραι?) βψε .[	

The end of line 5 was rendered as (δραχμαὶ) Αφ in DDbDP, which led to an ambivalent dating of the document to the fourth century.[2] An image of the papyrus has since been published online, and shows that the text was written in a professional minuscule hand of the mid seventh century, perhaps not long after the Arab conquest.[3] The papyrus is broken after φ, and αφ[is not a number in the thousands; such are the numbers in lines 6 and 8, preceded by the dash marking the thousands, not present in l. 5. Before αφ[, the sinusoid is not a drachma symbol but stands for (καί). We should read ἀπὸ Νείλου πόλεως (καὶ) Ἀφ[ροδίτης.

The combined reference to Nilopolis (ϯⲗⲟⲝ, Dallāṣ; TM Geo 2427) and Aphroditopolis (ⲡⲉⲧⲡⲉⲍ, Aṭfīḥ; TM Geo 236) in SB I 5337 suggests that the two cities and their

[1] K. Magirus, *Griechische Papyri im Ägyptischen Museum in Berlin*, WS 8 (1886) 107. The version printed in *Sammelbuch* relies on a revision of the original by G. Plaumann.

[2] K. A. Worp, *A Note on the Use of Talents, Drachmas and Obols in Byzantine Egypt*, ZPE 172 (2010) 170: 'this text, purportedly featuring a ʃ-shaped symbol for drachmas in l. 5, is dated in the edition as 'Byz. Zeit', but the occurrence of drachmas, if real, should prevent us from dating the text later [than] ca. 360 C.E.'.

[3] The obvious comparison is to SB VI 9576 (643).

hinterland were administered jointly in the seventh century. The Nilopolite district remained independent throughout the fourth and for at least a good part of the fifth century; it seems to have been taken over by the Heracleopolite by 538, but by the end of the sixth century Nilopolis is distinct from Heracleopolis for fiscal purposes.[4] Nilopolis was the seat of a pagarchy in the later eighth century: we find παγαρχ(ίας) Νείλο(υ) πόλ(εως) or Νειλοπολ(ίτου) in SPP XX 264.10.[5] Nilopolis and Aphroditopolis often occur together until the mediaeval period; for example, a Coptic list of bishoprics gives Νίλου (καὶ) Ἀφρωδίδι, followed by their Coptic and Arabic names.[6]

The cities in SB I 5337 were located in Arcadia. The list may be compared with a snapshot of the province from two centuries earlier: P.Oxy. LI 3636.2, assigned to the fifth century, records tax payments from the Cynopolite, Oxyrhynchite, Heracleopolite, Nilopolite, Aphroditopolite, Memphite, Letopolite, Arsinoite, and Theodosiopolite districts.[7] Oxyrhynchus and Theodosiopolis appear to be absent from SB I 5337, but the former is there: [ἀπὸ Ὀ]ξ[υ]ρ[ύγ]χ[ων can be read in the traces at the top of the papyrus, not reported in the edition. As for Theodosiopolis, its nome is last attested in 644 (BGU I 320.10–11), but the combined pagarchy of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis last occurs in 622 (CPR XIX 32.5–6). The Theodosiopolite district would have been reintegrated into the Arsinoite by the middle of the seventh century.

The text is an account in pounds: (λίτραι?) may give way to certainty; the abbreviation is that usually transcribed as λί(τραι). The commodity is missing; it would have been stated in the heading now lost. Whatever this might be (there are various possibilities, but I see little point in speculating), it would be a levy on fiscal districts for a particular purpose. The context is probably that of requisitions, common after the Arab conquest.[8]

At this point, it will be useful to present the text afresh, incorporating the corrections indicated above and some other minor revisions.

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[4]   See M. R. Falivene, *The Herakleopolite Nome*, Atlanta, GA 1998, 137f. An administrative structure similar to other *civitates* is implied from P.Sijp. 23.11 (396), βοηθοῖς λογιστηρίου Νιλουπολίτου; cf. the βου(λευτὴς) Νείλου πόλεως in CPR VI 79.4, of the late fifth century.

[5]   This is a new reading, made on the basis of the online image. Wessely had read (ὑπὲρ) τ( ) . . .ρχ( ) Νειλοπολ( ); τ( ) is followed by other writing superscribed with χ, which I do not understand, and then by παγαρχ(ίας). The papyrus was assigned to the seventh/eighth century but is surely not earlier than the mid eighth. A. Grohmann, *Studien zur historischen Geographie und Verwaltung des frühmittelalterlichen Ägypten*, Wien 1959, 37b–38a, noted that Dallāṣ is not mentioned as a kūra in the papyri but P.Khalili I 2 = II 1 now attests the kūra of Dalāṣ in the late second century AH, i.e. around 800 CE.

[6]   See S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, 1, Wiesbaden 1983, 253. (καί) is my interpretation of a sign that Timm, 256 n. 11, found 'ungeklärt'. Timm, 256 n. 12, wrote the same about ⲕⲉ in ⲧⲓⲗⲟϫ ⲕⲉ ⲡⲉⲧⲡⲉϩ, the Coptic names of the two cities, but this must a phonetic version of καί, curiously used instead of the Coptic word for 'and'.

[7]   Κυν(οπολίτου) νο(μ.) ξβ⸍γ΄, Ὀξυρ(υγχίτου) νο(μ.) σϙη, Ἡρακλ(εοπολίτου) νο(μ.) σνα ϛ΄, Νιλ(οπολίτου) νο(μ.) ρο ω̄, Ἀφ(ροδιτοπολίτου) νο(μ.) οβ, Μεμφ(ίτου) νο(μ.) λζ ω̄, Λητ[(ο-πολίτου)] νο(μ.) ζ⸍, Ἀρσι(νοΐτου) νο(μ.) ρξγ, Θεοδ(οσιοπολίτου) νο(μ.) ιγ ϛ΄.

[8]   See most recently S. Schmidt, *Between Byzantine and Muslim Egypt. Mobilizing Economic Resources for an Embryonic Empire*, JAC 35 (2020) 243–246.

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1   [ἀπὸ Ὀ]ξ[υ]ρ[ύγ]χ[ων

2   ἀπὸ Ἡρακλέως   [

3   ἀπὸ Κυνῶν   [

4   ἀπὸ Μέμφεως   [

5   ἀπὸ Λητοῦς   [

6   ἀπὸ Νείλου πόλεως (καὶ) Ἀφ[ροδίτης

7   ὁ(μοῦ) λί(τραι) ͵αφϛ   [

8   γί(νεται) τ(ὸ) π(ᾶν) ἀπὸ Ἀρκαδ(ίας) λί[ί(τραι)] ͵[

9   ὁ(μοῦ) ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀρσιν(οΐ)τ(ου) λί(τραι) ͵βψε ̣[

From Oxyrhynchus …
From Heracleopolis …
From Cynopolis …
From Memphis …
From Letopolis …
From Nilopolis and Aphroditopolis …
    Total 1,506 pounds.
This makes a grand total from Arcadia of … pounds.
  Total from the Arsinoite 2,705(+?) pounds …

The following table juxtaposes the data relative to administrative geography from this text and P.Oxy. LI 3636.2, preceded by the lists of the cities of Arcadia in Hierocles, *Synecdemus*, and Georgius Cyprius, *Descriptio orbis romani*.[9]

Hierocles	*Georgius*	*P.Oxy. LI 3636.2*	*SB I 5337*
Cynopolis	Oxyrhynchus	Cynopolite	Oxyrhynchus
Oxyrhynchus	Heracleopolis	Oxyrhynchite	Heracleopolis
Heracleopolis	Cynopolis	Heracleopolite	Cynopolis
Arsinoe	Nilopolis	Nilopolite	Memphis
Theodosiopolis	Arsinoe	Aphroditopolite	Letopolis
Nilopolis	Theodosiopolis	Memphite	Nilop. & Aphrod.
Aphroditopolis	Aphroditopolis	Letopolite	
Memphis	Memphis	Arsinoite	Arsinoite
Letopolis	Letopolis	Theodosiopolite	

All the lists proceed from south to north, but in the two papyri the direction changes once it reaches the north, ending with the Arsinoite. The position of Cynopolis varies but it is always found with the cluster Oxyrhynchus–Heracleopolis. The sequences Nilopolis–Aphroditopolis and Memphis–Letopolis are maintained but in reverse order. Most remarkable is that in SB I 5337 the Arsinoite is separate from the other districts, following an entry that refers to a grand total from Arcadia and may be taken to imply that all the others were part of it. This is an Arsinoite view of the rest of the province,

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9   The table is informed by the tables and discussion in J. R. Rea, P.Oxy. LI, pp. 78–79.

as if the Arsinoite were its centre or even stood apart. The origin of this text would have been a government office in Arsinoe; the other side of the papyrus was reused for SB I 5338, a list of Arsinoite villages. Why would the local bureaucrats have this perception of their region? The distinction is not new; 'the seven nomes and the Arsinoite' was a standard expression in the administrative parlance of the earlier Roman period,[10] and the Heptanomia came to an end with the creation of the province of Arcadia. Nonetheless, it would be difficult to ascribe this separation to administrative memory of centuries long past.

All but one reference to the *dux* of Arcadia, an office created in the early seventh century and combining civil and military authority,[11] comes from Arsinoite documents.[12] The capital of the province in the fifth and sixth centuries was a curious share between Heracleopolis and Oxyrhynchus. This Arsinoite prominence in the record may be a mere coincidence, if we consider that the amount of the Heracleopolite documentation of this period is a small fraction of the Arsinoite, and that the torrent of papyri from Oxyrhynchus becomes a trickle after the Persian interlude. Our evidence is not strong enough for us to posit that Arsinoe became the main administrative centre of the province of Arcadia at that time, but we should keep our eyes open for possible clues.

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[10]   See J. D. Thomas, *The Roman Epistrategos*, Opladen 1982, 19–26.
[11]   See J. G. Keenan, *The Provincial Administration of Egyptian Arcadia*, MPhL 2 (1977) 202; B. Palme, CPR XXIV 33 introd.
[12]   Collected and discussed in CPR XXIV, pp. 204–205; an exception is the Heracleopolite SB VIII 9749 (642). CPR XXIV 33 (653) is of particular interest, as it shows that a *dux* doubled as the Arsinoite pagarch, provided that his title is correctly restored: τῷ εὐκλεεστάτῳ δουκὶ τῆς Ἀρκάδω]ν ἐπαρχίας καὶ παγάρχ(ῳ) ταύτῃ[ς τῆς] | [Ἀρσινοϊτῶν πόλεως (ll. 4–5).