Three Duke Petitions
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P. Duk. inv. 698
8 x 29.5 cm.
III B.C.

http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/records/698.html

Oxyrhyncha

The recto of this papyrus contains 10 lines of text written across the fibers. A small upper margin (.9 cm.) is preserved at top left. The papyrus is broken on all sides. The first six lines have lost their left margin, and most of them (1, 2, 3?, 6?) have consequently lost a character or two. Lines are spaced approximately .25 to .5 cm. apart. Only slight traces of writing remain after line 7. The amount of text lost at left and right is uncertain. Yet given the document’s great width (29.5 cm.) it would be surprising if more than an additional centimeter or two has been lost. In Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome (2nd ed.: Oxford, 1951): 51, F.G. Kenyon suggests that the heights of conjoined sheets in Greek papyrus rolls rarely exceeded 13 inches (approx. 33 cm.). The calculation applies to our text, as it was written across the fibers. If we allow for a small original left-hand margin (i.e., less than 1 cm.), perhaps less than 2 cm. of text and margin have been lost at right.

The hand is generally clear, with thick and usually curved lettering. Palaeography and parallels of grammar and syntax suggest a third–century date (see notes). The scribe’s grammar is fairly poor. The petition begins with a pair of Genitives absolute (Θορτωμοῦτος... γεωργούντος χώρον, 3–4) followed by a finite verb (ἀνωτεράδεμενε, 4) with the subject of the Genitives absolute as its subject. This consequently calls the restoration of the case of the ensuing participle (προκεκτολαβόμενος, 4) into question.

The petition tells the story of an underage woman whose legal guardians have passed away. As a consequence she has been left at the mercy of a predatory land-grubber. P. Tebt. III.1 780 (Tebtynis, 171 B.C.) tells a similar tale, though in this document the complainant is a male, and the offending party a woman: the accused, a certain Thareus, built a tower (νυμχηγον, 11) on the petitioner’s inherited land. Thareus had since died, but her relatives remained on the property, much to the chagrin of the owner. For similar situations, see (e.g.) P. Dryton 33 (? , 136 B.C.), a petition to an epistratêgos from four orphaned sisters whose inherited home had been forcibly occupied and whose inherited belongings had been stolen; and SB VIII 9790 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.), a fragmentary petition from the orphaned daughter of a cavalry cleruch which clearly demonstrates that before the beginning of Roman rule in Egypt a daughter was legally permitted to inherit her father’s allotment in the absence of male heirs. Yet

as the evidence suggests, the letter of the law was not enough to dissuade opportunists from taking advantage of an orphan. As was true elsewhere in the ancient world, life in Ptolemaic Egypt could be very difficult for resourceless children.

Text and Translation

recto

↑ βασιλεύει Πτολεμαίωι χαίρειν Θ᾽ [ca? Θοτομούτος ca? ἀδικοῦμαι ὑπὸ Ταάρ-

μουτοῦς]

Στεφήνιος τῶν κατοικούντων ἐν Ὄξυρφαῖς τῆς Πολεμωνοῦ μερίδος. ναχτ?]

Θοτομοῦ[τος] γὰρ τοῦ πατρὸς μου εἰς τὴν προειρημένην κόμην [ca 14–24?]

4 γεωργώντος αὐτοῦ γῆν βασιλικὴν ἀνωκοδομήσειν οἰκίαν προκαταλαβώμενος[ς] μο...

[ca 0–5?]

μετὰ δὲ τινὰ χρόνον τελευτήσαντος αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲς μου νεατέρας καὶ τοῦ ἁδε[λφοῦ μου]

Μιθρίτος, ὡς τετελεύηκεν, Ταάρμους ὁ ἐγκαλοῦμενος εἰσοικήσθη εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν ca 0–3?]

[ca 24–34?] ἑν[παράστης] μου κατ’ αὐτοῦ πλευνάκις[ς] ca 0–2?]

8 [ca 30–40? ἡ[λικιά]τοι[ν] [οἰ][ε][πατ][η][α] [ca 0–3?]


verso

[ca ?]

L. (?)] Μεχεῖρ ἰ.]


(recto) "To king Ptolemy, greetings, (from) Th[...], daughter of Thotomous, ... I am being wronged by Taarmous, son of Stephenis (?) of those living in Oxyrhyncha of the Polemon meris. For my father, Thotomous, ... into the previously mentioned village, while he was farming his crown land, (he?) built a house, having previously occupied .... But after a certain period of time, he died; (and) since I was not of legal age, (nor) my brother, Mithres, who has (since) died, Taarmous, the accused, moved into the house ...; (and) although I have submitted (a petition) against him many times, ...."

(verso) "[... year (?)]6, Mecheir 16."

Notes

recto

1. Θ᾽: The second character is ω, α, or ε. Of the the third character, only a descender is preserved: hence one might restore ρ, χ, ς, ψ, or χ. It seems likely that these letters preserve the beginning of the petitioner’s name; if so, the possibilities are too numerous to propose a supplement. Aside from what has been restored, it is likely that the two (possible) lacunae in this line contained a total of 6–16 characters.

Θοτομοῦτος: See n. on 3. There appears to be room in the lacuna after her father’s name for the petitioner to have identified herself with an ethnic.

Ταάρμουτος: See n. on 6.

2. Στεφήνιος: The name is otherwise unattested. It seems likely that the scribe intended to write either Ἐστίφυνος or (less likely) Ἐστίφυνος. Both versions are attested in ten third–century documents from the Apollonopolite nome (P.Eleph. 6.2, 10 [225 B.C.]; 15.1 [223 B.C.]; 17.7–8 [223 B.C.]; 18.1 [Apollonopolis?, 222 B.C.]; 19.5, 6–7, 8 [ca 223–222 B.C.]; 21.4 [Apollonopolis?, 222 B.C.]; 23.16 [222 B.C.]; 24.4 [ca 223–222 B.C.]; 25.5 [ca 223–222 B.C.]; and 27.4, 6, 11 [222 B.C.]).

Ὁξυρόφαίοι: The description of Taarmous must run to the end of 2, for the narrative of the petition clearly begins with Ἐστίμουτος[ς] at the start of 3; hence the long restoration Ὅξυρφαίοις τῆς Πολεμωνοῦ μερίδος. It is likely that the remaining space (if any) after μερίδος was left blank.
The recto of this papyrus contains 35 lines of text written with the fibers, the verso six lines of mirror-image text diagonally imprinted from another document as well as a number of additional smudges. Margins for the recto are as follows: 2-2.3 cm., top; 1-1.5 cm., left; 1-2 cm., right; 6.2-6.5 cm., bottom. The papyrus consists of three joining pieces and is frayed at right, obscuring the ends of a few lines (3, 10, 12). A substantial section of text (10.5 x 8.5 cm.) has been neatly cut away from lines 32-33; ?aai(Aa)KOv, 33). The scribe's grammar in the preserved text is good, and orthographic variants are few (e1 for t: éxito, 4; ã trách, 6; μετέχουσαντος, 5; εισωσκόθησα, 6). Other compounds of διόδωμι (and perhaps simply διόδωσις) are possible but less likely.
Palaeography and parallels for grammar and syntax suggest that the text dates to the second century B.C. The tenth year mentioned in line 5 might therefore be that of Epiphanes (196/5). Philemter (172/1), Soter II (108/7) or Alexander I (105/4). P.Duk. inv. 676 was recovered from cartonnage along with P.Duk. inv. nos. 674, 675 and 677.2 674 is dated securely to a regnal year 14, Chosik 17 and 675 to a year 11 (line 16).3 677 was written soon after Epeiph 1 of year 3 (line 9). The date of 677 is secured by palaeography and prosopography to the 3rd year of Epiphanes, 203/2 B.C.4 Therefore, it seems most likely that 674 should be dated to his 14th year (January 24, 191 B.C.), 675 to his 11th year (195/4 B.C.), and our document to his 10th year (196/5 B.C.).

Further evidence that P.Duk. inv. 676 is to be dated to 196/5 B.C. is provided by prosopography. An archiphylakitês named Philon, active in the early second century is known from a number of documents. The Pros.Ptol. (4604) cites four texts that mention this official: P.Athen. 8.11–12 (Arsinoite, 193–192 B.C.); P.Tebt. III.1 741.25–26 (Tebtynis, 187–186 B.C.); 796.1 (Tebtynis, 185 B.C.) and SB VI 9104.14–15 (Arsinoite, 195 B.C.). The editors of P.Mich. XVIII 778–779 identify the Philon, archiphylakitês found in their texts (778.35 [Mouchis, after 193–192 B.C.] and 779.10 [Mouchis, after 192 B.C.]) with the archiphylakitês mentioned in P.Athen. 8 as well as the official mentioned in the present document, the only text in which Philon is given an administrative domain.5 Finally, date and provenance suggest that the Philon, archiphylakitês of P.Hels. I 2.1 (Arsinoite, ca 195–192 B.C.) is the same man. If these identifications are correct, Philon had a very long career as a police chief: at least ten years (195–185 B.C.). Similar terms of service were not unparalleled among the Ptolemaic police: cf. Patron, archiphylakitês of the Katô toparchy (Pros.Ptol. 4592 with P.Yale I pp94-97), who may have filled the post for eight years or more, and Apollonios, archiphylakitês and epistatês of Oxyrhynchus (see ZPE 146 [2004]: 167–169), who may have served anywhere from 17–25 years.

Our petition contains a complaint to the Arsinoite epimeletês, Theodoros from a pair of collectors for taxes on various flowers. They report that the archiphylakitês of the Polemon meris and a resident of Krokoðiolopolis, Philon, has not paid the requisite amount of tax on a rose garden he owns in the village of Arsinoe in the Themistes meris. Few details of the circumstances remain, but one assumes from context that Philon had somehow evaded or cheated the collectors. At end, the petitioners request that Theodoros have Philon arrested and arrange for an examination. If their complaints prove true, the rogue police chief is to pay a penalty of 6000 drachmas, a sum to be counted as a tax payment in their favor. We know nothing more of the case.


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3 On the date of P.Duk. inv. 674, see <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/records/674.html>.


To Theodoros, epimelētēs from Apollodotos and Dionysios, epergoi who have contracted to perform the collection of the sixth on roses and snowdrops and the other garland-flowers for the tenth year. We have been wronged by Philon, archiphylakitês of the Polemon meris, who lives in Krokodilopolis of the Arsinoite nome. For as there is a rosebed belonging to him in Arsinoe of the Themistes meris ... paying and .... [We ask, therefore, that ... so that,] summoning Philon to trial, they may investigate; and if what we write is true, (we ask) that you level the fine of 6000 drachmas against him, as specified by the
prostagma, and submit this to the crown as a tax payment on our behalf. With this having taken place, we will have encountered full aid and justice, and nothing owing to the crown will be forfeited. Farewell.”

Notes

1. Θεοδόροι ἐπιμελητής: This official is otherwise unattested. A roughly contemporaneous Arsinote toparchēs of the same name is known from P. Genova III 952–3 (Arsinoite, 216 B.C.?). Epimelētai were frequently the recipients of petitions concerning financial matters, e.g.: Chrest.Wilck. 166 (Arsinoite, after 218 B.C.); P. Coll.Youtie I 12 (Krokodilopolis, 177 B.C.); P. Tebt. III. I 782 (Tebtynis, ca 153 B.C.). On the Ptolemaic epimelētēs see B.C. McGing, Archiv 48 (2002): 51–64.

2. ἐπέργαν: All but two of the Ptolemaic instances of this term occur in texts from the third century and at least 20 years prior to our document. In P. Tebt. III. I 774.1–2 (Tebtynis, ca 187 B.C.), a statement of official business written (ostensibly) to a government addressee (name not given), a Krokodilopolite man named Ammonios identifies himself as basileikos | γεωργός καὶ ἐπέργως. As is clear from additional evidence, Ammonios had a lengthy career in the Ptolemaic financial sphere, serving first as an antigrapheus (Prosp.Ptol. 1752) and later as a sitologos (Prosp.Ptol. 1329). SB XXII 1558.2–8 (Arsinoite, 209–208 or 192–191 B.C.) provides a closer parallel to our text. The document, a copy of a petition to the king concerning a man who had not paid the apomoira on an orchard (paradeisos), was written by: Πολεμ[α][τος το[υ]] | Τοιρ[α][λ]β[ει]δο, Πέρσης τῶν ἐπέργων ὁ ἐξ[ε][πα][τό] Ἐ[πα][μ[έ]νος | ἐλευθέρας τὸ ἠμοίουσα εἰς τὸ τό τῶν ἄν[ο]ιτον | τῆς Φιλαδέλφου καὶ τῶν | Ἐπιμελητῶν. As is clear from additional evidence, the term epergus seems to have been used uncertain meaning, though it always applies to financial officials (G.W. Schwender, Literary and non-literary papyri from the University of Michigan collection [diss. Michigan, 1988]: 108–109, n. on 3). For a more detailed treatment of epergus (with a similar conclusion) and a list of Ptolemaic texts that mention them, see D. Kaltas, ZPE 142 (2003): 214–220, especially 215–217. The epergus mentioned here, Apollodotos and Dionysios, are otherwise unknown, though it is possible that the latter is the same Dionysios mentioned in P. Tebt. III. I 895.7, 60–61, 64–66, 109 and 114 (Berenikis Thesmohorou, ca 175 B.C.) who may have served as a sitologos for the Ptolemaic meris (Prosp.Ptol. 1353).

3. 3–4. τῶν συνεξεληφθόντων τὴν ἔκτην τοῦ ἐπέργαν: The wording is unparalleled. Cf. BGU VI 1310.1–2 (Apollonopolis, 146 or 135 B.C.): Ισσίδορος ὁ ἐξεληφθός τῆς συνεξεληφθούσης τοῦ ἀπομοιωθούσου λίτου εἰς τὸ θεῖον; P. Hels. I 36.3–8 (Heracleopolis, before 159 B.C.): ἡ ἑκατάκλιθη τοῦ ἑκατάκλιθος τοῦ ἐξεληφθούσος μετὰ μεταχείρισεν τοῦ συνεξεληφθέντος τοῦ τόπου καὶ τὴν τῆς συνεξεληφθόντος τῆς τοῦ ἐπέργαν. Additional evidence that roses were subject to the apomoira is found in PHels. I 11.13–17 (Herakleopolis, 165–163 B.C.); Δαμασίων τοῦ Χρηστίου ἐπέργαν τῆς τοῦ ἐξεληθὸς ἐπί τοῦ ἐξεληθοῦσαν ἀνθημοῦ; SB VI 9552.1–3 (Koptos, 138–137 B.C.): Μνήσαρχος καὶ Ἐρέμοφιλος οἱ ἐξεληθοῦσαι τῆς τοῦ ἐξεληθοῦσαν ἀνθημοῦ καὶ γυναικολαβοῦσαι εἰς τῷ λέγειν; Here the writer lays special stress on the fact that the petitioners have received the contract for the apomoira jointly. On the use of συνεξεληφθέντων ἄλλης τῆς τοῦ ἐξεληθοῦσαν ἄνθημος (specifically of the νερικῆς τοῦ θέου L, line 15); cf. 114.11.16–17 (Memphis, 148 B.C.); also Chrest.Wilck. 626.2–5 (Arsinoite, after 223 B.C.): Φίλανθος τοῦ συνεξεληθούσου; [μοι. (εἰς τοῦ ἐκείνου ἄνθημος)] ἔθνους καὶ ἔρημοσκόπους εἰς τῷ λέγειν L, lines 3–4). On the Ptolemaic apomoira see W. Clayrsse and K. Vandorpe in H. Melaerts (ed.), Le culte du souverain dans l’Egypte ptolémaïque au IIe siècle avant notre ère (Studia Hellenistica 34 [1998]): 5–42. The writing at the end of line 3 is puzzling, though the sense (“tax”) is clear. One might reasonably expect τὴν ἀνθημοῦ τῆς ἐπέργαν, but neither seems to correspond to the traces preserved. I have no explanation for the ξι (if correct).

4. τοῦ ῥόδου: Roses (rhodo) are mentioned in only four other Ptolemaic texts: P. Cair Zen. II 59269.6–7 (Philadelphia, after 252 B.C.), IV 59735.5 (Philadelphia, III B.C.), 59736.23–24 (?, III B.C.) and with P. Hels. I 11.13 (Heracleopolis, 163 B.C.); rose-gardens (rhodōnes) nowhere else. The flower was employed to make perfume (myrhon rhodonon): P. Cair Zen. I 59009.A.4 with BL 11.54), D.12 (Palestine, ca 259 B.C.); 59011.17 (with BL 11.54) (Palestine?, ca 259 B.C.); II 59196.9 (?) (? , 254 B.C.); P. Lond. VII 2141.39 (Ptolemais [Palestine], 258 B.C.); P. Mich. I 3.5 (?. 260–256 B.C.); P. Petr. I 34.6 (Arsinoite, III B.C.). Roses were also used for garlands: cf. Theocritus 7.63–64, where there is mention of a crown of roses oxleukōa (ῥόδων) ἐπεργός αὐτῆς καὶ γυναικολαβὸς. Additional evidence that roses were subject to the apomoira is found in P. Hels. I 11.13–17 (Heracleopolis, 163 B.C.), a declaration in which a tax-payer notes that he possesses ῥόδου καὶ συμφέροντο καὶ μέλας ἐπὶ τοῦ χόρων, ἀν τάξιμον τῇ ἐκτήνῃ ἐν τὸι δέντον κυρίῳ. ἔκτην: The term leukōion (literally “white violet”) is new to the papyri, though a leukoion-colored pattern (ἰεθωρία λευκοίνον) occurs in P. Oxy. I 1135.5 (Oxyrhynchus, II A.D.). Attestations of the flower in Greek literature are many (e.g: Aristotle, Problemata 909a; Athenaeus 8.1.8; Polybius 34.8.5.1). The term seems to have stood for at least two different flowers in antiquity: the gilliflower or hoary stock (matthiola incana) and the snowdrop (galanthus nivalis) (see LSJ; also A. S. F. Gow, Theocritus [Cambridge, 1950] vol. 2, p. 148 n. on 64 and Baumann, loc. cit. 84). The plant
was well-known to the medical writers and botanists, in one form or the other (e.g.: Dioscorides Pedianus, De materia medica 3.123.1.1; Hippocrates, De mulierum affectibus 46.7; Theophrastus, Historia plantarum 4.7.8.3). Theophrastus (Historia plantarum 6.8.1) notes that the leukolion was the first flower to appear after the rainy season (ροδόν τοῦ χειμάνους) in milder climates, later in harsher climates, and that it, as well as a flower known as the agrion, was by far the best flower for use in garlands. The mention of stephanomata in line 5 as well as another attestation for the flower’s use in garlands (also alongside roses: Theoreticus 7.64) suggests that it was this use for which the plant was harvested in Egypt.

4.-5. τῶν ἔτερον[ν] εἰς στεφανομα[τον]: Though the term is well-attested in the literary sources (e.g.: Euripides, Hercules Fures 355; Pindar, Isthmian 2.15; Theognis 1.1001), stephanomata occur nowhere else in the papyri. Context (cf. ρόδον and λευκοῦνα) suggests that the term is to be understood as a catch-all for a class of flowers employed in weaving garlands. Theophrastus gives a comprehensive description of the various plants considered fit for this use (among these the leukolion [see n. on 4]) in his Historia plantarum (6.6–7).

6.-7. Φίλανος ἀρχιχυλακτίης τῆς Πολέμουνος μερείδος: See the introduction. Where provenance is given, archiphylaktai are most commonly attested for villages (e.g.: BGU VIII 1798.1 [Herakleopolite, 64–44 B.C.]; P.Eneute 82.5 [Trickonia, 221 B.C.]; P.Giss.Univ. 7.1–2 [Euhemeria, II B.C.]) but they also supervised villages and surrounding areas (e.g.: P.Tebt. III.1 795.2–3 [Tebtynis, II B.C.]: ἀρχιχυλακτίης Κροκοδίλων πόλεως καὶ τῶν μεμεριζομένων τόπων; SB XI 11860.1–3 [Arsinoite, II–I B.C.]: ἁρτονικόν αὐτοφυλακτίτης τῶν ἐπὶ Ἁρτονικὸν χώρανι[v], merides (e.g.: P.Bürsch. 22.13–14 [Ghoran, 243 B.C.]; P.Tebt. III.1 731.4 [Ibion Eikosipentarourou or Tebtynis, 153–152 or 142–141 B.C.]), toparchies (e.g.: P.Hib. 7.139.9–10 [Oxyrhynchite, 244–243 B.C.]; UPZ II 187.1–3 [Thebes, 127–126 B.C.]), names (e.g.: P.Lond. VII 2188.91–92 [Hermonthis, after 148 B.C.]; P.Dryton 33.14 [? 136 B.C.]) and even temples (UPZ I 5.6 and 6.6 [Memphis, after 163 B.C.]).

9. ροδόνος: See n. on 4.

10.-11. εἰς . . . ἐκείνo: A number of restorations suggest themselves. A finite verb would fit at this point, and ἐκείνo (aorist indicative active of κτίσω, “build” or “found”; also, and more likely here, “plant”) would fit the space and context well. If this is correct, we should understand something along the lines of “he (i.e., Philon) planted (something, ostensibly roses) throughout (or ‘because of’) it (i.e., the rose-garden).” An adverb of place would also fit: εἰς δέκτεον ἐκείνοι would both imply activity in the rose garden. εἰς ὑπὸστη was well-attested in the Ptolemaic period, though the somewhat awkward combination εἰς δέκτει ἐκείσῃ is unparalleled; ἐκείνo is only attested in one other Ptolemaic text: Chrest.Wilck. 1.4.4 (Arsinoite, ca 246 B.C.). A Genitive form of the article with ἐκ and δέκτει is also a possibility: ἐκ τοῦ δέκτει, ἐκ τῆς δέκτει or ἐκ τῶν δέκτει. Yet in this case one would expect a Genitive noun at some point in what ensues, and it seems unlikely that such a form stood in the lacuna in line 11 or at the beginning of line 12. Each possibility is also perhaps a character too long. A similar problem arises with another possibility, the supplement ἐκείνo οὗτoς ἐκείνo or ἐκείνo δέκτει, both of which otherwise fit the nature of the complaint nicely. Finally, one might suggest the restoration ἐκ τοῦ δέκτει, where the demonstrative refers back to ροδόνος (9), but such usage is unparalleled in the Ptolemaic period.

12.-14. συν. . . . μ. . . . τῆν ἐπίσταον[κα] τῶν 11 ἀπὸ τῆς προσοσό βελ σιμ. If so, the sense seems to be “he agreed that he would pay . . . from the proceeds of . . . towards the apomoria.” Cf. P.Hamb. II 172.4–7 (Oxyrhynchite, 246 B.C.): διαίγαρναν ἐπὶ τῆς προσόδου τοῦ φυλακτικοῦ τοῦ λαοῦ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ προσφερόμενον τῶν ἡμερῶν τῶν ἰδιών ποιημάτων τῶν ἀρχιχυλακτικῶν; P.Köln V 220.4–9 (Arsinoite, 208 or 191 B.C.): ὁμολογεῖ· ἑρεμίαν παρ᾿ ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοιῶν τεσσαράκοντα πεντήκοντα πέντε μέρος τοῦ ἰδίου οὖς συνενεπράληθον δέσσεις τῆς ἐπίσταοι[κα] (Arsinoite, ca 246 B.C.): συνεπράληθον δότειν (σε. λ. γι. . . .) ἐπὶ τοῦ ἄρηγρου τοῦ λαοῦ. L. On the apomoria see n. on 3–4.

15. προστατ.: See n. on 28–29.


28.-29. παρασχέναι αὐτόν τῷ κτᾶτη πρόστασις(σίμμα) ἐπίτιμον ἐλικώνῳ: For the form of the stigma see SB V 8008.42 (? 260 B.C.) = C.Ord.Pol. 22.10) with plate at Pap.Flor. XXVII. Tav. IX. This text is a royal proclamation concerning the purchase of indigenous Syrians and Phoenecians as slaves. Those who obtained slave labor from the native populations of these areas were required to present their purchases to the local oikonomos within 20 days or be subject to slave–confiscation and a fine of 6000 drachmas per slave. For the assimilation in πρόστασις(σίμμα) see E. Mayser, Gram. I,1 156–157.

31–35. Cf. P.Hels. I 9.13–14 (Herakleopolite, 163 B.C.): τοῦτοῦ δὲ γενομένου ἐν θεῖον τοῦ βασιλεῖ μή διαπέσατ. The correction at the end of 31 perhaps demoted τοῦτο, but it is impossible to tell. The epsilon of the ensuing δ is difficult, though the delta is clear.
The petitioner in this case, a certain Empedion, relates that his father had been robbed and murdered by brigands. The thieves had made off with a contract of loan which one of them, a certain Seuthes, had recently sold to the original recipient of the loan, a certain Imouthes. Empedion asks the epistatēs Hegesandros to intervene. The evidence demonstrates that robbers and robbery were a fact of everyday life in Ptolemaic Egypt: see B.C. McGing, “Bandits, Real and Imagined, in Greco–Roman Egypt,” BASP 35 (1998): 159–183 with N. Lewis, “Brief Footnotes on Banditry in the Papyri,” BASP 37 (2000): 95–96 for citations and bibliography. Murder, on the other hand, seems to have been comparatively rare. Very few texts make reference to killings. In P.Tebt. III.1 730 (Tebtynis, 178 or 167 B.C.), a report to a basilikos grammateus, a police (?) official (without name or title) notes that he had encountered a great deal of blood (ἐκδέγγει ἄμαρτος, 3) near the village, but no body, and that a villager who had set off in that direction had not returned to the village. In BGU VIII 1857 (Herakleopolite, 64–44 B.C.), petitioners note that their missing brother had been discovered dead (τέλος ἐξοντα, 7) in a field, with his severed body parts cast into a road. On the crime of homicide in Ptolemaic Egypt, see A. Hélmis, Crime et châtiment dans l’Égypte ptolémaïque. Recherches sur l’autonomie d’un modèle penal (diss. Paris, 1986): 17–20.

Text and Translation

recto

→ [Ἡ]γεσάνδρως ἑπιστάτη
têleutisstantov' ōpō ληστῶν,
καὶ ἐνὸς αὐτῶν, Σεῦθου, ἐξενέγ-
καντος συγγραφὴν δανείου ζ ξ
κατὰ Ἰμούθου τοῦ προγεγραμμένου,

8 ἀποδιδόσαν αὐτῷ ἐνώπιον Ἀρ-
ψάλλως καὶ Ποῦτος, λαβὼν ζ ὦς.
ἀξίω ὦν σε ἄνακαλεσάμενον
[τ]όν τε Ἰμούθην καὶ Ἐρφάλλιν

Three Duke Petitions

12 [και Παϊντ-ον/-α? ...] και έ[άν] ἦ τά
[δή]λο τού ὑπομηνήματος
[όν]τα ἀβηθή, ἀπαναγκάσασα[1]
ἀυτόν το δίκαιον μοι ποιήσα[1].

16 [τ]ηοῦτον δὲ γενομένου, τεῦ-
[ξ]ομαι τῆς παρὰ σου φίλαν-
[θ]ροπίας, ἔρροσο.

versed

→ X

['Ἡ']ησάνδρος (...)?

recto 9. Ορ Ποήτου. 11. Ροδοτάνν. 12. Ορ Παϊντ-ον/-α. 13. Ροδοτάνν (??).

(recto) "To Hegesandros the epistatēs from Empedion. I am being wronged by Imouthes. For my father,
having died at the hands of robbers, and one of them, Seuthes, having made off with a contract of loan
for 60 drachmas outstanding against the aforesaid Imouthes, he (Seuthes) sold it to him (Imouthes) in
the presence of Harpsalis and Paus, (Seuthes) having received 16 drachmas (for it). Therefore, I ask that
you summon Imouthes and Harpsalis ...; and, if the things in this petition prove true,
force him (Imouthes) to do me justice. For if this comes to pass, I shall encounter your humanity.
Farewell."

(verso) "Χ To Hegesandros (...)"

Notes

1. ['Ἡ']ησάνδρος: Ptolemaic epistatai, civil officials who had supervisory and police powers over villages (most
commonly) but also (occasionally) over merides, toparchies, and names were frequently the recipients of petitions, e.g.: 
BGU III 1012 (Philadelphia, 170 B.C.); P.Tor.Choach. 11 (Thebais, 119 B.C.); SB XVI 12552 (? [Arsinoite?], III B.C.);
see especially E. Lavigne, De epistates van het Dorp in Ptolemaeisch Egypte (Louvain, 1945); also E. Van 't Dack,
introduction. The epistatēs Hegesandros is otherwise unknown. The name occurs in only one other Ptolemaic text:
P.Cair.Zen. IV 59651.8 (?, III B.C.).

2. Ἐμεθεῖδαιος: The name occurs in eight papyri from the third century B.C. and nowhere else. In every instance, it refers
to the grandfather of Ptolemais, kanēphoros of Arsinoe Philadelphos in the year 214/3 B.C. (see Pap.Lugd.Bat. XXIV
16–17 n. on #77 for citations).

3. Ἰμουθος: The name is common. Seven texts of Herakleopolite origin mention an Imouthes, all but perhaps one of them
from the first century B.C.: BGU VIII 1869.1 (64–44 B.C.); XIV 2370.26 (after 84–83 B.C.); 2435.7 (I B.C.); XVI
2573.4 (3 B.C.); 2577v.51, 68 (30 B.C.–A.D. 14); 2673.10, 71, 93 (I B.C.); and 2674.116 (I B.C.).

4. ληστεῖον: See the introduction. The word and its cognates occur in only a handful of Ptolemaic texts, e.g.: BGU VIII
1832.10 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.), where a petitioner complained that a group of men had broken into his home and left
thievishly (ληστεῖον) with some fodder; P.Cair.Zen. IV 59659.4 (Philadelphia, after 245 B.C.), in which crooks
(ληστεῖον) bound a petitioner and made off with two pack animals laden with goods; and P.Tebt. I 53.11 (Kerkosiris,
after 110 B.C.), a similar incident involving a shepherd assaulted in a thievish manner (ληστεῖον) of robbery
and deprived of 40 sheep. That the prevention of brigandage was considered a matter of great importance by the central government
is clear from P.Hib. II 198.52–140 (Arsinoite?, after 242 B.C.), a series of royal ordinances concerning the apprehension
of robbers, the safeguarding of ports and punishments for those caught aiding and/or abetting criminals. On this text see
73–118.


6. συγγραφήνας δανείου Λ. ξ.: Loans attested in the Ptolemaic period were for grain (e.g.: SB VI 9405.9–10 [Ibion Eikosi-
penatouron, 75 B.C.]: κατά συγγραφήνας δανείου ἐξαμάρτη),[1] or money (e.g.: SB VI 9420.5–6 [?, ca 129 B.C.]: κατά συγγραφήνην Ἀιγύπτιον ἐν δανείοις ἑκατ' ἀλληθήτικοι αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ Δ.).
60 drachmas was not an enormous sum in the second century B.C.: cf. P.Tebt. III.1 796.6–13 (Tebytynis, 185 B.C.),
where a petitioner reports the worth of two cloths for wiping perspiration (ῐδρώτα, 11) as 120 drachmas (total) and the 
value of a basket (σφυρίς, 8–9) as 20 drachmas. It seems excessive that Empedion would write a petition seeking the 
return of such a meager sum. One may speculate that he had perhaps been unable to achieve satisfaction at law in the 
aftermath of his father’s death and was determined to have the guilty parties pay, in any possible way, for both of his 
losses.

8–9. Ἀρψάλος καὶ Παῦτος; Ποιῆς is also possible. Forms of all three names (Ἀρψάλις, Παῦς, Ποιῆς) occur elsewhere 
in the Ptolemaic period, but no identification with the individuals mentioned here can be made.

12. [ ] [ ]: It is very likely that Seuthes is mentioned here (i.e., restore καὶ Σύλβην vel sim.). Empedion nowhere else 
explicitly requests that Hapesandros have the accused arrested, and such a request would seem only natural. There does 
not appear to be sufficient room for an imperative or infinitive verb form, unless it was abbreviated.

12.–18. The traces are difficult to make out, but the lines appear to be formulaic. Cf. SB X 10271.21–28 (Magdola, 231 or 
206 B.C.): καὶ ἔδει τὰ δίκαια τοῦ ὑπολογίσματος ἄλλα ἐλληξε, ἐπανεγκατάστατο εὐτυχῶς! τὰ δίκαια μοι ποιήσας, 
τοῦτο γὰρ γενομένου, ἐσομαι τετυχὼς τῆς παρὰ σοῦ φιλανθρωπίας. [ἐ]ὔτυχες.

verso: The traces here are especially difficult to read. Two descenders at the end (presumably) of the string suggest that the 
verso contained the name of the addressee, but the reading is uncertain.

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