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PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL OF HERMOPOLIS A.D. 322

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The papyrus published below is heavily damaged. The text breaks off at line 14 and half of it is missing to the left. We have therefore not succeeded in restoring a satisfactory text. Nevertheless we feel that the papyrus deserves publication for a number of reasons. It is exactly dated to April 18, A.D. 322; it is the first example of a record of proceedings of a council meeting from Hermopolis in the fourth century A.D.; it refers for the first time to a shipyard at Cleopatra in the Hermopolite nome; and it mentions an official decree on persea trees. We shall first give our transcript of the text with a few notes and then a general survey of shipbuilding for the government as reflected in early fourth-century papyri.

P. Cairo inv. 10622

April 18, A.D. 322

Tafel IXb

[Μετὰ τὴν ὑπατείαν τῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν Λικιννίου Σεβαστοῦ τὸ ζ' καὶ [Λικ]ιννίου
τοῦ ἐπιφανεστάτου Καίσαρος τὸ β' μέλλουσι ὑπάτοις

[] vacat δευτέρα ἀμοιβῆ.

[Ἐξ ὑπομνηματισμῶν τῆς κρατίστης βουλῆς Ἑρμοῦ πόλεως] τῆς [μ]εγάλῃς καὶ
λαμπροτάτης, Φαρμουῦθι κγ', προσκλήτου βουλῆς.

[c. 45 letters] () εἶ(πεν)· οἶδα ἀφ' [όσου] χρόνου πέπηκται τὸ ναυπήγιον τὸ κατὰ τὴν
Κλεοπά-

5 [τραν c. 40 letters] νῦν ἐπὶ τοῖς τ... φ... ασι ἐκώλυσεν μὴ κόπτεσθαι τὰς περσίας· εἰ μὲν

[c. 45 letters] βείας κ[]... εστιν καὶ δεῖ πάντως ἀνυσθῆναι τὸ κεκελευσμένον

[c. 45 letters] χ() τὸν [σ]κρί[βα ...] ἐπισκεψάμενος ἀκριβῶς ἀπὸ τῶν κατακειμέ-

[νων c. 45 letters] []να [] τυγχάνοντα ἀποκρίνομαι. Θεόφιλος ἕναρχος

[c. 60 letters] numerous traces of broken letters [c. 10 letters] εστιν

10 [c. 60 letters] τοῦ σκρίβου [αὐτ]ῆς σὺν αὐτῷ γεν[ομένου πρὸς τὸ λογ[ισ]τήριον

[c. 60 letters] ἀντος [] [] Ἀχιλλεὺς [] [] εἰ ἀν[αβ]άλλεσθαι

[c. 60 letters] τῶν γεινομ[ένων] συνεχῶς μερισμῶν· οἶμαι οὖν

[c. 60 letters] ἀντῶν [] ε]ὑγνωμονεῖν [] [] εστιν

traces

— — — — —

1 ἐπιφανεστάτου; ὑπατοις pap. 4 χρόνου: v ex corr. 7 ἀκριβῶς 12 γινομένων

- 1-2 For the consular date see R.S. Bagnall - K.A. Worp, *Chronological Systems* 108 and R.S. Bagnall et alii, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* 178-179.
- 3 The supplement is based on the headings in P. Erlangen 18 (A.D. 248) and P. Oxy. XLIV 3187 (A.D. 300). The few other third-century records of proceedings of council meetings from Hermopolis are listed in A.K. Bowman, *Town Councils* 32-34. No fourth-century example from outside Oxyrhynchus has been published to date.
- προσκλήτου βουλῆς points to a special meeting of the council. This is confirmed by the date, the 23rd, which is not the usual date for meetings of the council. See Bowman, *Town Councils* 35, where the Oxyrhynchite evidence for a regular council meeting on the 30th is discussed.
- 4 The lacuna probably started with μετ' ἄλλα (σκέμματα) as in P. Oxy. XLIV 3187. Then the first speaker was introduced. It is perhaps possible to identify the speaker here with one of the two ἐπεῖκται ναυπηγίας Κλεοπάτρας mentioned in P. Cairo inv. 10569 + P. Vindob. inv. G 15014,¹ because that text also dates from A.D. 322.
- Before εἶ(πεν) there is a diagonal stroke indicating an abbreviated function or title.
- 4-5 τὸ ναυπήγιον τὸ κατὰ τὴν Κλεοπά[τρ]αν is known otherwise only from P. Cairo inv. 10569 + P. Vindob. inv. G 15014 of A.D. 322, where two ἐπεῖκται ναυπηγίας Κλεοπάτρας are mentioned. We are dealing with a shipyard for building or repairing government ships used for transporting wheat or military supplies. The council was held responsible for the construction and repair of government ships as appears from the phrase κινδύνω τῆς βουλῆς used in a similar context in P. Beatty Panop., App. I.
- Κλεοπά[τρ]αν is known as the harbour of Hermopolis on the Bahr Yūsuf; see St. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten* III 1273-1276. That on the Nile was called Κλεοπατρῖς; see P. van Minnen, *ZPE* 67 (1987) 121-122.
- 5 The lacuna contained the phrase dependent on οἶδα, possibly something like πολλὰς περσῖας ἐκκεκόφθαι. After that a high official's name and function or title were mentioned. One may restore something like ὁ δὲ καθολικός name] νῦν κτλ. The καθολικός is indeed more than once involved in the repair and construction of ships; in both P. Beatty Panop., App. I and P. L.Bat. II 14 the orders are seen to emanate from him. Moreover a καθολικός is known from SB XIV 11593 to have visited Κλεοπάτρα; this visit may be related to the shipyard there. See the note on line 6 as well.
- ἐπὶ τοῖς τ... ασι probably denotes the location of the persea trees that are not allowed to be cut down. We have not succeeded in finding a suitable word (sacred precincts or perhaps dikes?). It is in any case difficult to connect the phrase with ἐκώλυσεν. Persea trees are sometimes located near temples; see P. Lond. VII 1974 passim.
 - περσῖας (for the spelling περσῖα vs. περσῖα see F.T. Gignac, *Grammar* I 249) or persea trees were common in Egypt. Together with the acanthus trees they supplied the best wood for the construction of ships as appears from P. Beatty Panop. 2, 211-214 and App. I, 8 as well as from P. L.Bat. II 14, 5. In P. Lond. II 214 a ναυπηγός is accused of having stolen two acanthus trees from an imperial estate. Other types of wood used for particular parts of ships include ἰτέϊνον (P. Merton I 19) and κυπαρίσσινον (P. Beatty Panop. 2, 178) as well as ἐλάϊνον and συκαμίνιον (if SB XIV 12102 really concerns a ship).

See on trees in Egypt in general M. Schnebel, *Landwirtschaft* 292-315 and R. Meiggs, *Trees and Timber* 57-62; on the persea tree in particular the introduction to P. Oxy. XLI 2969. On government control of trees in Graeco-Roman Egypt see R. Taubenschlag, *Law*, 2nd ed., 661-663; D. Bonneau, *Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger* 47 (1969) 12-21; G.M.

¹ To be published by K.A. Worp as P. Adolph. 23.

Parássoglou, *Archiv* 24-25 (1976) 91-99; H. Cadell, *Chr. d'Ég.* 51 (1976) 344-347. Some trees were important for their roots, which protected the dikes. Most trees were held sacred by the Egyptians in one way or another and this also goes for the persea tree.

6] βείας may be restored to either εὐ]σεβείας or πρ]εσβείας. The first option perhaps fits the slight traces best. In the fourth century, εὐσέβεια, traditionally the respect for gods, emperors and relatives, is applied to officials as well; see SB XII 10989, 24, where perhaps the καθολικός is meant (c. A.D. 325), and P. Cairo Goodspeed 15, 15, where it is even used for a ῥιπάριος in A.D. 362. Εὐ]σεβείας is thus an attractive reading because the rest of the line also speaks of respect for superior authority, perhaps even the καθολικός himself; see the note on line 5.

7-8 ἀπὸ τῶν κατακειμέ[νων was perhaps followed by περσιῶν or more specifically δοκῶν.

8 ἀποκρίνομαι should probably be taken here as 'I am responsible'.

8-9 Θεόφιλος ἔναρχος[may be taken as an indication that the πρύτανις of the council is here introduced. No πρύτανις with that name is known as yet.

10 τ]οῦ σκρίβου [αὐτ]ῆς: we are probably dealing with the σκρίβα or γραμματεὺς τῆς βουλῆς; see Bowman, *Town Councils* 39-41. The genitive σκρίβου is regular; see C. Döttling, *Die Flexionsformen lateinischer Nomina in den griechischen Papyri und Inschriften* (diss. Basel, 1920) 21.

In A.D. 322 the government of Egypt ordered the construction of ships. It had done that before. P. Beatty Panop., App. I contains an extensive letter of A.D. 304 or 305 on this subject; the thirty ships for the transport of - - - are due in two months.² From among the councillors, presumably, ἐπιμεληταὶ ἤτοι ἐπέικται are to be selected for the job. The best candidates are also εὐπορώτατοι, as indeed Adelphius is who operates as an ἐπέικτης ναυπηγίας less than two decades later in A.D. 322 according to P. Cairo inv. 10569 + P. Vindob. inv. G 15014. An order for the repair of ships from a few years earlier is preserved in P. L.Bat. II 14; an ἐπίτροπος writes to the ἐξάκτωρ Ἑρμοπολίτου (lines 2-5):

[προσ]ταξάσης τῆς θείας τύχης τῶν πάντα νικῶντων δεσποτῶν
[ήμῳ]ν τὰ ἐν Μέμφι καὶ Βαβυλῶνι πολὺκωπα παλαιωθέντα τυχεῖν
[τῆς] προσηκούσης ἐπισκευῆς ἔγραψεν ὁ κύριός μου δ[ιασ]ημότατος καθολι-
[κὸς Ο]ὐιτάλιος³ δεῖν διὰ ταχέων ξύλων περσιῶν καὶ ἀκανθίνων κ.τ.λ.⁴

The ships in Memphis and Babylon were repaired with wood from Upper Egypt.⁵

According to P. Cairo inv. 10622 an official of some sort has prohibited the cutting of the first type of trees, the περσίαι, in particular areas (ἐπὶ τοῖς τ... ασι) in A.D. 322. This may have

² See also P. Beatty Panop. 2, 16-19, 176-179 and 271-273 for a government ship built in Ptolemais.

³ The Vitalis of P. Ryl. IV 623 and p. 104, in office c. A.D. 318; see R.S. Bagnall, *Currency and Inflation* 29 for the probable date of Theophanes' journey to Antioch and the approximate date for Vitalis' tenure of office, which results from it.

⁴ Incorporating a suggestion made in P. Beatty Panop. 2, 211n. We have substituted [προσ]ταξάσης for [ἐπι]ταξάσης; likewise we would restore [προστε]ταγμένην in line 7. For the rest of the text see also *BL* VII 94; on a photograph kindly put at our disposal by Dr H. Harrauer we hesitatingly read at the beginning of line 6: [...]γεστάτων καὶ ἐπικεστάτων (for ἐπιεικεστάτων). Note that the second part of the text (from line 9 onwards) is in a second column, not in a second hand as indicated in the edition.

⁵ Cf. those in Alexandria and Niciu in P. Beatty Panop. 2, 211-214.

delayed the construction of the ships and it would be important for the council to discuss the consequences.

The government of Egypt took the matter of the state-owned *περσία* very seriously in the first quarter of the fourth century A.D. This is shown by PSI IV 285 of A.D. 317,⁶ which contains a general prohibition to cut state-owned persea trees, no doubt because the government itself might need the timber soon. From P. Oxy. XXXVI 2767 and XLI 2969 and its duplicate 2993, both of A.D. 323, it appears that even inside the walls of Oxyrhynchus at least 17⁷ persea trees were officially planted and special care of them was arranged for. Perhaps this was done to make up for losses incurred in the meantime. Indeed persea trees were to be cut down for the repair of ships a few years earlier according to P. L.Bat. II 14 (see footnote 3), and they no doubt were in A.D. 322 for the construction of ships in Cleopatra. Already in A.D. 316 another persea tree was to be cut down for the municipal bath of Oxyrhynchus according to P. Oxy. I 53; this matter was dealt with in a rather circumspect way, no doubt because the need for timber of the local government had to compete with that of the central government. It is thus less likely that consideration for the popular sentiments of the Egyptian population led to a conservationist policy with regard to the persea tree. It seems more likely that such a policy alternated with consumptive policy, or even interfered with it as in P. Cairo inv. 10622, as is only natural with trees: once they are cut down it takes quite a number of years to grow new ones. Reference, however, should also be made to *CJ X 78*, 1, where persea trees 'all over Egypt' (*per Aegyptum* in the title) are put on a par with trees from the sacred grove at Daphne near Antioch. Both types of trees were not to be cut down according to the emperors Arcadius and Honorius.

In A.D. 324 Licinius' fleet was defeated by Constantine's in the Dardanelles. It seems possible that already in A.D. 322 the government foresaw such a battle somewhere and ordered the construction of warships. The order for the repair of the old *πολύκωπα* in P. L.Bat. II 14 has been interpreted in this way.⁸ But on the whole it is extremely unlikely that any of the ships repaired in about A.D. 318 or constructed in Upper Egypt in A.D. 322 were part of Licinius' fleet. First, ships used on the Nile are not fit to cross the Mediterranean. Second, the *πολύκωπα* in P. L.Bat. II 14 were no warships at all, but ships for inland transportation.⁹ Third, building warships is best done in coastal areas with a plentiful supply of wood. Upper Egypt simply cannot have been regarded by even the worst informed government as a suitable place for such activity.¹⁰

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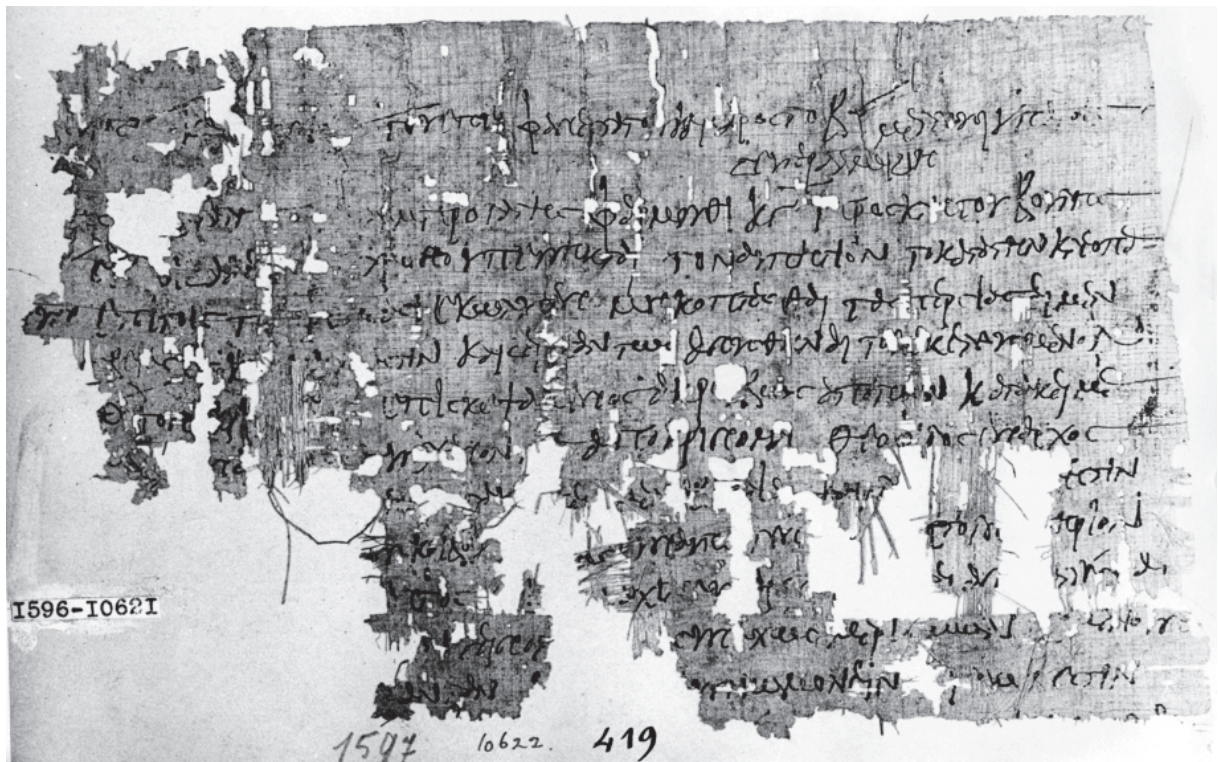
⁶ See *BL I 394*, where it is not stated that the papyrus actually reads $\iota\beta\varsigma \iota\beta\varsigma$ in line 14.

⁷ If $\eta \pi\epsilon\rho\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha \iota\zeta'$ in P. Oxy. XLI 2993, 15 indeed means 'the 17th persea tree'.

⁸ C.H. Roberts, *JEA* 31 (1946) 113 and P. Ryl. IV, p. 105.

⁹ See L. Casson, *Ships and Seamanship* 334, note 30; for references see E. Wipszycka, *Chr. d'Ég.* 35 (1960) 219. From SB XIV 12010 it appears that the crew of a military *πολύκωπον* consisted of four *ναῦται*.

¹⁰ We wish to thank the Egyptian authorities - especially the former President of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization, Prof.Dr. Gamal Mokhtar, and the former General Director of the Egyptian Museum, Prof.Dr. Abdel Qadr Selim - for their generous permission to publish this text. Through the efficient services of Dr. W.F.G.J. Stoetzer, then director of the Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies at Cairo, Dr. Dia Abu Ghazi kindly provided us with a photo of the papyrus. We also wish to thank our colleagues Dr. R.A. Coles, who checked a preliminary transcript of the text, and Prof.Dr. D. Hagedorn, who provided us with an enlarged photo of the papyrus. Dr. R.L. Hunsucker (Amsterdam) kindly corrected the English of an earlier version of this article.



Protokoll einer Ratssitzung (P.Cairo inv.10622)