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On P.Oxy. XXVII 2479

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ON P. OXY, XXVII 2479

P. Oxy. 2479 is an unusual document in that, while it concerns an ἐναπόγραφος γεωργός, it does not fit into either of the two classes of documents to which mentions of ἐναπόγραφοι γεωργοί are otherwise almost exclusively restricted -- sureties and receipts for parts of agricultural machinery. 1) It is instead a petition to his landlord from an ἐναπόγραφος γεωργός who had absented himself from his farm for three years and who has now asked for re-instatement. 2) The body of the text is written, as the editor observes, "in a straggling sixth-century hand with a marked inclination to the right." It is a very difficult hand to read and the text that is printed is very well done indeed. Nevertheless, in reviewing a photograph of the papyrus 3) as part of a more general concern with Byzantine Egyptian ἐναπόγραφοι, it seemed to me to be possible to make a few suggestions toward advancing the text, without (it is hoped) adding to whatever puzzles and problems remain.

1

Lines 3-6, as printed, read:

3 τὸ φιλόπτωχον καὶ φιλόχριστον τῆς ὑμετέρας πανευκλεοῦς δεσπο-
  τελας
  παρὰ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐξελθὼν πολλοὺς ταύτῃ προσφέρειν αὐτῇ πα-
  ρεσκεύασεν,
5 σῶτινες προσέρχοντι ὁμοιοί τοῦ δικαίου καὶ πάσης ἔλει[μοσό]γης
  τυχ[ά]νοσι
  ]καὶ τῷ ἐλε[π]ροσέρχομαι ματάβασκρο[ν καὶ δι][δάσκων] [κα-]
  τὰ ἔμαυτὸν


2) General appreciation of the papyrus by J. Triantaphyllopoulos, REG 80, 1967, 353-62. A number of the text's major problems are owed to the horizontal break running across the middle of the papyrus.

3) The papyrus is housed in The British Library. I am grateful to Mr. T.S. Pattie for arranging for the photograph.
It is of course the opening of line 6 that poses the problem here. Toward its solution, but apparently without having seen the papyrus or a photograph, Professor van Groningen is reported in BLV as proposing:

\[ \text{ὡν μὲν} \ ψαλ τῶν ἐλέων. \]

As it turns out, this reading only partly accords with the traces on the papyrus and does not, so far as I can judge, fully restore the passage’s sense. My own proposal is:

\[ \text{ὁδὸς ὕππος ἐλέειν[ὅς] προσφέρομαι κτλ.} \]

A series of observations on the proposed reading may here be listed:

1. The reading supposes the necessity of a stop at the end of line 5 and suggests that line 6 should be construed more closely with what follows than with what precedes.

2. \[ \text{ὁδὸς}: \] some such word is needed and \( \text{ὅς} \) is too short, \( \text{οὔτως} \) apparently too long for the available space.


4. \( \delta \): absolutely certain.

5. \( \text{ἐλεειν[ὅς]} \): though this may not be apparent from the P.Oxy. transcription, there is sufficient room for this restoration. Perhaps an abbreviated form of \( \text{ἐλεεινῶτατος} \) should not be ruled out as a possibility.

Suggested revised translation: "- - - has caused many of its people to have recourse to your lordship and they all approach and receive justice and every mercy. So I, too, the wretched one, approach, weeping," etc.

2

In line 11, I would propose to change \( \text{Ἀναγραφὴν} \) to \( \text{Ἀπογραφὴν} \). Pi and nu are often identical in this writer’s hand. 4) The letter that follows is obscured by the rho from παραμένων from the line

4) To such an extent that, at the end of line 8, \( \text{ἀπέστη} \) would be equally acceptable on palaeographical grounds, and perhaps preferable in sense to \( \text{ἀνέστη} \).
above (written with a double tail, one a descending, the other an
ascending stroke). Nevertheless, it looks to me more like omicron
than alpha. If this is so, then one of the alternative explanations
offered by the editor in his commentary note must be ruled out.
The farmer does not refer to his registration in a list of runaways
but asks to be "registered" as farmer of landlord's land. The in-
finitive ἀπογραφῆναι is in technical conformity with the status of
the γεωργός as an ἐν-ἀπό-γραφος.

At the very beginning of line 20, I would change οὐ to ἄν, the
latter being preferable on palaeographical grounds, with the follow-
ing sentence the result (running over from line 19):

ἀδυνάτως γὰρ ἦχω, δέσποτα, συντελέσαι ὑπὲρ οὗ ἄν σπείρω.
"For I am unable, master, to pay contributions for what I sow."
Instead, he offers to pray to Christ for his master (17ff.). The
point of the passage is therefore that he has already sown (cf.
ἐπείρα in line 16), but that he needs to harvest everything he can
for himself and his family. He has in fact asked for exemption from
exactions (line 15: μὴ ἄμαυς[τ]ηθήναι με). He is quick to point out
that there are others who have sown and can pay (a slightly revised
interpretation of line 20):

εἰσὶν γὰρ οἱ σπείραντες καὶ δυνάμενοι συντελέσαι.
Our ἐναπόγραφος γεωργός has accomplished the former (sowing), but
is incapable of the latter (paying his dues).

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