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P.Got. 9: The Subscription

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P.Got. 9: *The Subscription*

P.Got. 9 was published in 1929. It was subject to an immediate run of corrections proposed by distinguished reviewers (Bell, Schmidt, Schubart, and Zucker; see *BL* 2.2:69), but not until 1966 did it receive detailed re-examination. This was by R. Rémondon, “Papyrologica ...,” *CÉ* 41 (1966) at 173-178 (emendations recorded in *BL* 5:36) in a discussion praised by Jean Gascoü (*Fiscalité et société en Égypte byzantine*, Paris 2008, 47, n. 23: “son brillant commentaire de *P.Goth.* 9”), who himself offered a close analysis of the text and some of its difficulties (ibid. 177-178; original discussion dating to 1985).

The papyrus is a contract acknowledging receipt of a year’s wages, four *solidi* minus 20 carats, dating to AD 564. It is addressed by Aurelius Victor (Βίκτωρ), ταβουλάριος τοῦ ὀξέως δρόμου, “accountant of the express post (*cursus velox*),” to the chief (*epimeletes*) of the public treasury of Oxyrhynchus. The word ταβουλάριος appears twice, once with its opening intact, once with its close: ταβ[ουλάριος, line 5, ταβ]ουλαρίου, line 15. For a parallel example, see *P.Harr.* 2.238.10-11 (Oxyrhynchus, AD 539, lease of a *symposion* [restored]):] . ταβουλαρίω | τοῦ ὀξέ[ως δρόμ]ου.

Surprisingly overlooked in discussions of *P.Got.* 9, including its own commentary, has been Victor’s subscription at lines 22-24, written in his own hand (ἐξῆ[ς] ὑπογράφω[ν] ἰδίους γρ[άμμασιν, line 7). As published these read:

22 Αὐρήλιος Βίκτωρ υἱὸς Φοιβ[άμ-
 23 μωνος ὁ π[ρ]ογεγ[ρ]αμμέν[ος]
 24

22 read υἱός

A minor point is that the *editio princeps* does not record the *paragraphos* that runs above the alpha-epsilon-rho of Αὐρήλιος (the dot under the rho that is not needed) at the start of line 22. More importantly, the image of the papyrus, *P.Got.* plate 2, shows that the beginning of line 23 is only occupied by mu-omega-nu, crudely drawn. There are no omicron and sigma. Instead nu is immediately followed by ὁ π[ρ]ογεγραμμέν[ος]. (The editorial dots are unnecessary.) In other words, Victor simply wrote his patronymic without declining it into the genitive case. The next line, 24, in fact begins with the expected πε[π]οίη[αι]. More can be discerned after this, but nothing is secure, except for a horizontal superlinear stroke and a likely omicron before the very last break. The supralinear stroke is probably the oversized top of Victor’s tau (compare that in his own name in line 22). It has been impossible to reconcile these and the several preceding traces with what the body of the text (see lines 19-20, cf. 9) calls for, namely, something like ταύτην τὴν (or τὴν παρούσαν) πληρωτικὴν

ἀπόδειξιν ὡς πρόκειται, which, given the size of Victor's handwriting, would have to have run over into a twenty-fifth line, with no guarantees as to spelling and draftsmanship.

Accordingly, lines 22-24 should now be read as follows:

22 Αὐρήλιος Βικτωρ υἱὸς Φοιβ[άμ-]

23 μων ὁ π[ρ]ογεγ[ρ]αμμέν[ος]

24 πε[π]οίημ[αι . . .] . . . το[- - -]

22 read υἱός 22-23 read Φοιβάμμωνος

More important than such corrections in detail, however, is recognition from the *P.Got.* plate that Victor was a “slow writer,” laborious in his penmanship. He may even have been, as both Traianos Gagos and Arthur Verhoogt were independently quick to point out (in Ann Arbor, June 9, 2009), left-handed. The lambda of Aurelius is worth special remark: it is written in reverse with a long left leg and short right. Thus it is amusing to read the comments by A.C. Johnson and L.C. West (*Byzantine Egypt: Economic Studies*, Princeton 1949) on this text, especially when they opine (p. 166): “Probably the tabularius [i.e., Victor] was employed as a secretary at the posting station.” Secretary indeed, but apparently one “qui ne savait pas écrire” (H.C. Youtie, *Scriptiunculae* [Amsterdam 1973] 2, chapter 34) – or at least not very well.¹

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¹ I had earlier convinced myself that the solution to this conundrum lay in emended readings: σταβ[ουλάριος in line 5 and σταβ]ουλαρίου in line 15, a Latin loanword (*stabularius*) equivalent to the Greek σταβλίτης (“stable man”); but, as the *BASP* referee pointed out, reasons of space and palaeography make these changes impossible. Surprising to me is the Aureliate status both of Victor and the *P.Harr.* 2.238 *tabularius*.