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On P.Oxy. XXVII 2479

James G. Keenan
jkeenan@luc.edu

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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 papyrus³⁾ 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 φιλόπτωχο[ν] καὶ φιλόχριστον τῆς ὑμετέρας πανευκλεοῦς δεσπο-
τείας
παρὰ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐξελεθὼν πολλοὺς ταύτης προσφεύγειν αὐτῇ πα-
ρεσκεύασεν,
5 οἷτινες προσερχ[ό]μενοι τοῦ δικαίου καὶ πάσης ἐλεη[μοσύ]νης
τυγχ[ά]νουσι
]καὶ τῷ ελε.[π]ροσέρχομαι κατὰ δακρύω[ν καὶ δι]δάσκων [κα-]
τὰ ἑμαυτὸν

1) A.C. Johnson and L.C. West, *Byzantine Egypt: Economic Studies* (Princeton 1949) 29ff. Most fully on agricultural machinery receipts: S. Daris, *Aegyptus* 37, 1957, 89ff. Also not fitting into either of the two main categories: P.Oxy. XVI 1896 (agreement to supply wine).

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:

ὄν μὲν] καὶ τῶν ἐλέω[ν.

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:

οὔ[τω] κἀγὼ ὁ ἐλεειν[ός] προσέρχομαι 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. οὔ[τω]: some such word is needed and ὡς is too short, οὕτως apparently too long for the available space.

3. κἀγὼ: for *crasis* in a parallel situation (formal proem to a petition), see P. Mich. Inv. 4379 (in *ZPE* 34, 1979, 140), line 6; cf. P. Oxy. VI 904.2, and generally on *crasis* in papyri of the Roman and Byzantine periods, F. T. Gignac, *Grammar*, I, 321-24.

4. ὁ: absolutely certain.

5. ἐλεειν[ός]: though this may not be apparent from the P. Oxy. transcription, there is sufficient room for this restoration. Perhaps an abbreviated form of ἐλεεινόςτατος 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 ἀναγραφῆναι to ἀπογραφῆναι. Pi and nu are often identical in this writer's hand.⁴⁾ The letter that follows is obscured by the rho from παραμμένων from the line

⁴⁾ To such an extent that, at the end of line 8, ἀπίστην would be equally acceptable on palaeographical grounds, and perhaps preferable in sense to ἀνέστην.

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 infinitive ἀπογραφῆναι is in technical conformity with the status of the γεωργός as an ἐν-από-γραφος.

3

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

ἀδυνάτως γὰρ ἔχω, 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. ἔσπειρα 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 ἀπαι[τ]ηθῆναι 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 σπεύραντες καὶ δυνάμενοι συντελέσαι.

Our ἐναπόγραφος γεωργός *has* accomplished the former (sowing), but is incapable of the latter (paying his dues).