P.Got. 9: The Subscription

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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 Gascou (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[ουλάριο, line 5, ταβουλαρίου, line 15. For a parallel example, see P.Harr. 2.238.10-11 (Oxyrhynchus, AD 539, lease of a symposion [restored]): ταβουλαρίῳ τοῦ ὀξ[ε]ῶς δρόμου.

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 (ἑξῆς ὑπογράφων ἰδίοις γράμμασιν, line 7). As published these read:

22 Αὐρήλιος Βίκτωρ υὸς Φοιβάμ-
23 μονὸς ὁ προγεγραμμένος.
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 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 προγεγραμμένος (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[ποίημαι. 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 παροῦσαν) 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 draftsman¬ship.

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

22 Αὐρήλιος Βίκτωρ ὑὸς Φοιβάμωνος
23 μον ὁ προγεγραμμένος
24 πεποίημαι ... το... [ - - -]

22 read ιός  22-23 read Φοιβάμωνος

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: σταβουλάριος in line 5 and σταβουλαρίου 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.