A Loan of Money: P. Sorb. Inv. 2253

Mit Abbildung 4

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This papyrus contains a loan of money dated in A. D. 502. The form of the contract, so far as it is preserved, is standard for the period. A good discussion of Byzantine loans in money is provided by Cl. Préaux, *CdE* 36 (1961) 353–364, and the Theban loan of the sixth century published there by Préaux (P. Brooklyn gr. 2) is one of the closest parallels to our text. Some further remarks may be found in *P. Wiss. I* 10.1)

The interest of the text lies in two facets. First, one and probably both parties describe themselves as from the *Castrum* of Thebes, which was otherwise attested only in *P. Lips. 97* xxii. 9 (A. D. 338). The late Roger Rémondon mentioned P. Sorb. inv. 2253 in this connection in his well-known article of 1961 on “Soldats de Byzance“.2)

Secondly, the consular date differs from that found elsewhere for that year: Probus appears alone, while in other papyri we find his colleague Avienus mentioned. The problem raised by this date is discussed in our note to line 1 (below), leading to the conclusion that the papyrus is to be dated to the consular year itself and specifically to the period between May and August, 502.

P. Sorb. Inv. 2253 13 × 9.9 cm *v–viii. 502*

(*Collection Weil*)

[...] Υπατείας Φλα(ανυλου) Πρόβησιον τοῦ λαμπροστάτου
[Month, day] α τῆς ἐνδείκτης ἱδιω(τίονος)
[± 13] ος μεγαρδίς ἀπὸ Κάσω-
4 [θρ Θηβῶν . . . . . .] Πέτρος νῦν Ω[θε]γένους
[. . . . . . . . . ι] τοῦ τοῦ ἀντι[δ] Κάσωρ Θηβῶν χαί(εω)
[ομολογία ἐξει] καὶ χρεωστεῖν σοι εἰς
[ἐκτιμῶν καὶ ἀπόδοσιν] χρυσοῦ δοκίμου
8 [νομοματίων καθά] μον παλαιοχάραξιν
[± 11] οί (νεανι) ᾶρ (ναυ) νο(μαμάτιον) ἐν μόνα, καὶ τοῦ-
[to ἐπιμέλειας ἐχὼ π] αρασχεῖν σοι καὶ πληρῶ-
[σαι] ± 10 ἵρ (ναυ οῦ) [. . . . . . ] [. . . . . . ]

2 μικρ. παρ. | 3 μικράμος (ορ-ξυ) | 4 μικρ. παρ. | 9 μόνον | 10 πληρ. παρ.

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[In the consulate of Flavius] Probus the most illustrious, [date] of the eleventh indiction. - - - ros, mechanarius from Castrum Thebon, to [- - -] Petros son of Horigenes [- - - from the] same Castrum Thebon, greeting. [I acknowledge that I have received] and owe to you for [full payment and repayment] [one solidus] of tested gold, of proper weight and old currency, that is, one solidus of gold only, and [I am prepared] to furnish this to you and to pay...

1. The only eleventh indiction which falls in a year with a consulate or postconsulate including a name ending in -οβου is 502/3, coinciding with the consulate of Probus and Avienus (502; p. c., 503). The restorations of the other lines (which it does not seem possible to lengthen significantly) suggest a loss of 13–16 letters in the lacuna at the left, which is supplied by the formula we restore (assuming an abbreviation stroke after Φα). A postconsular formula is thus excluded. Nor is there room in line 2 for Probus’ colleague Avienus, and in any case the singular τοῦ λαμπροσόφατου indicates that only one consul was mentioned here. In all other papyri referring to this consulate, Avienus is mentioned: see R. S. Bagnall and K. A. Worp, The Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt (Zutphen 1978) App. D, s. a. 502–503.

Rémondon cites this papyrus (Atti del XI Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia [Milano 1966] 143) as an example of a supposed phenomenon «qu’au 5e siècle la transmission des nouvelles et de la diplomatique des actes a cessé de se poursuivre scrupuleusement. » It is not impossible that we are dealing with a scribal error, but our investigations of consular dating have shown that aside from “consulate” written where “postconsulate” was needed, such scribal errors are much rarer than editors have supposed. See especially our remarks in BASP 17 (1980) 19–25. We have found, in particular, that the dissemination of knowledge of the naming of consuls was remarkably uniform throughout Egypt, and that the careless omission of one of the two consuls is not to be expected. It is preferable, instead, to suppose that at first Probus was announced alone, with no indication that another consul was to be proclaimed (hence the absence of any καὶ τοῦ ἀποδειχθησομένου phrase or the like); and later, Avienus was proclaimed. As the earliest papyrus referring to the consuls of 502 comes from August (P. Stras. 229, cf. CSBE App. D, s. a. 502), as it seems, and indiction 11 would have begun on Pachon 1 (or 1 May) in Upper Egypt, the most reasonable conclusion is that the papyrus dates from a date after Pachon 1 but before the date, presumably in August, of P. Stras. 229. (cf. CSBE 68 for the start of the indiction in Upper Egypt.)

2. Possibly the month name was indented, and the alpha is the day numeral (1, 11 or 21); or the date may have been written out in full: δευτέρα.

3. At the start of this line one expects a personal name, Flavius or Aurelius plus the personal name which ends in -ογος. There does not seem to be room for a patronymic. In line 4 again Aurelius or Flavius must be lost. We cannot be sure whether the form was δείκτα τὸ δείκτα or τὸ δείκτα τὸ δείκτα. As we have nominatives in both cases, we cannot be sure. For the mechanariori see M. San Nicolò, Vereinswesen I, 126, and

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1) For the exceptional line 6 (only 11 letters restored) cf. note ad loc.
2) Those who wish to speculate about scribal error in the consular formula of P. Sorb. inv. 2253 are referred to BGU XII 2163 where the element καὶ τοῦ ἀποδειχθησομένου is lacking, though it occurs in another papyrus dated after the postconsulate of Fl. Basilios in A.D. 481. For the situation in this year cf. CSBE 120 and CNEB IV 46 in BASP 17 (1980) 7–8.
Maspero, *op. cit.*, 59; references in *WB II*, s. v. The presence of the camp makes it rather more likely that we are dealing with a military than a civilian profession in this case.

6. For the restorations at the start of this line and of line 7, which seem to be a local peculiarity of the Theban region, see Préaux, *op. cit.*, 358. The restoration in line 6 seems a bit short, but there may have been a large initial omicron in δυσλογω as in Préaux’s contract (Cd'E 36 [1961] 355, plate). The scribe is in general extremely regular in his use of space: 18 or 19 letters in every line but one in the preserved side of the text.

7–9. For the qualification of the money as παλαιοχαρακτος cf. L. C. West and A. C. Johnson, *Currency in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (Princeton 1944) 137 and *P. Lond. V* 1722. 31. We need at least one more epithet at the start of line 9 in the lacuna, but we do not know what should be restored. Perhaps διπλωθον (cf. *P. Ross. Georg.* III 9. 18 and *P. Lips. 13. 10n.*) was written, but this by itself gives too short a restoration.