

NIKOLAOS GONIS

ON THE DOSSIER OF GEORGIUS SON OF SILVANUS

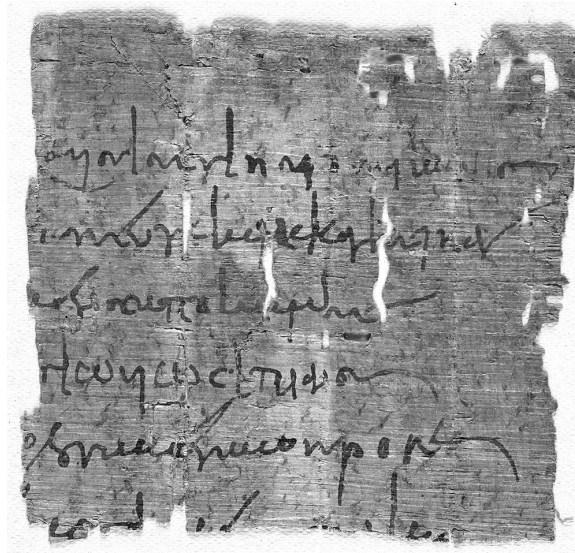
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## ON THE DOSSIER OF GEORGIUS SON OF SILVANUS

The Hermopolite soldier Silvanus and his family have received a fair amount of attention over the last three decades or so. In the latest discussion, I. Marthot-Santaniello refers to my brief comment on P.Lond. III 1304b desc. in *ZPE* 209 (2019) 241 n. 24, a papyrus that mentions one Georgius son of Silvanus, and notes that a ‘future edition may ascertain’ whether it belongs to the dossier.<sup>1</sup> I present below a full edition for completeness’ sake. Though the text is too short to tell us much, it offers the opportunity for a fresh look into the dossier of Georgius, once considered ‘the individual responsible for safekeeping most, if not all, of the family papers that have survived’.<sup>2</sup>

The papyrus was described in P.Lond. III, p. lxxii, as a ‘Fragment of a document dated in the fifteenth indiction in the reign of the emperor Flavius Justinus [II, = A.D. 566–567]. In a rather small, upright, cursive hand. 2¾ in. × 3 in.’ The hand is very similar to that of P.Lond. V 1872 (548). The text is written along the fibres. The back, hidden by the mounting, is presumably blank.



P.Lond. inv. 1304b – © The British Library Board

[βασιλείας καὶ ὑπατείας τοῦ θειοτάτου ἡμῶν δεσπότη Φ]λαυίου Ἰουστίνου τοῦ αἰωνίου  
 [Αὐγοῦστου καὶ Αὐτοκράτορος ἔτους c. 15 ]α πεντεκαίδεκάτης ἰνδ(ικτίωνος).  
 [ c. 40 ὁρμώ]μενος ἀπὸ κώμης  
 [ c. 15 τοῦ Ἑρμοπολίτου νομοῦ Αὐρηλίω Γεωρ]γίω υἱῷ Σιλβανοῦ  
 5 [τῷ θαυμασιωτάτῳ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑρμοπολιτῶν χαίρειν. ὁμο]λογῶ ἐγὼ ὁ προγε-  
 [γραμμένος c. 35 ]ε . ο . ι [ . ] . ε [ . ] ω . κα

2 ινδ/

‘In the reign and consulship of our most godly master, Flavius Iustinus the eternal Augustus and Emperor, year (first/second), (*month*) \_1 of the fifteenth indiction. I, ..., originating from the village ... of the Hermopolite nome, to Aurelius Georgius son of Silvanus, the most admirable, from the (city) of the Hermopolites, greetings. I, the aforesaid ..., acknowledge ...’

<sup>1</sup> See I. Marthot-Santaniello, An Important Family in Sixth-Century Hermopolis: New Insights from the Basel Papyrus Collection, in S. Hübner et al. (edd.), *Living the End of Antiquity. Individual Histories from Byzantine to Islamic Egypt* (2020) 97–107, at 98 n. 8. See further the edition of P.Lond. III 1330b desc. in A. Benaissa, *ZPE* 223 (2022) 163–164, whom I thank for a preview and for comments on drafts of this article.

<sup>2</sup> J. G. Keenan, *Pap. Congr.* XX (1994) 450.

2 Restore ἔτους πρώτου or δευτέρου. Justin's *dies imperii* was 15 November 565, and indiction 15 in Hermopolis ran from 1 May 566 to 30 April 567; see *CSBE*<sup>2</sup> 151.

3 ἀπὸ κώμης. Ναγώγειος (see the discussion below) will not fill the lacuna in the next line.

5 For the restored τῷ θαυμασιωτάτῳ, see the passages cited below. The implications of this title are discussed by N. Kruit, *Tyche* 9 (1994) 85.

Almost all the papyri that certainly refer to members of this family are housed in the British Library and stem from acquisitions made through Chauncey Murch.<sup>3</sup> The majority belong to the group purchased on 8.vi.1901 (inv. 884–1178). This includes five of the texts in Georgius' dossier: P.Lond. III 997 desc. = SB XXII 15597 (537); P.Lond. III 1013 desc. = SB XVIII 13587 = P.Bas. II 53 (538); P.Lond. III 1000 (538); P.Lond. III 1001 (539); P.Lond. III 1020 (541/556/571). In P.Lond. 1000 and 1001, he is called Flavius Georgius son of Silvanus. A few other papyri are part of the lot bought on 8.xii.1906 (inv. 1545–1753). One of them offers a date by which Silvanus was dead: P.Lond. inv. 1682 = P.Lond. V 1766.4–6 (559) Φλαυίου Γεωργίου υἱῷ τοῦ τῆς Ἰ μακαρίας μενήμ[η]ς Κυλβανοῦ τῷ θαυμασιωτάτου ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑρμοιπολιτῶν. The text is an acknowledgement of debt for rent on land leased by someone from the Hermopolite village of Nagogis. This is the place of origin of the person who leases house property in P.Lond. inv. 1689 = P.Lond. V 1872 (548), addressed Αὐρηλίῳ Γεωργίῳ υἱῷ Κυλβανοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑρμοιπολιτῶν (ll. 4–5). The different gentilicium creates ambiguity, but the connection with Nagogis makes the identification with Flavius Georgius likely. We find something similar in P.Lond. III 1330b desc. = no. 13 in Benaissa, *ZPE* 223 (2022) 163–164, a land lease of 553, addressed Αὐρηλίῳ Γεωργίου (l. 6) by a person from Nagogis. Even if his gentilicium is Aurelius and the name of his father is lost, the reference to Nagogis suggests that this must be the same Georgius. This papyrus is part of a lot bought on 20.xi.1903 (inv. 1200–1520), which included P.Lond. III 1304b desc., edited above. This fragment tells that, if his name was correctly restored, there was a Georgius son of Silvanus active in Hermopolis in 566/7, whose father was mentioned as if he were still alive at that time. On present evidence, it is difficult to decide whether the mode of referencing to Georgius' father was correct or not, i.e. whether or not this is the same Georgius son of Silvanus. One of the documents purchased in 1906, P.Lond. inv. 1714a = P.Lond. V 1774 (570), a sale of vegetable seed on delivery, is addressed Αὐρηλίῳ Γεωργίῳ Ἰ [ . . . . . ] ο] τῷ θαυμασιωτάτῳ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑρμοι[πο]λιτῶν (ll. 5–6). [Κυλβανο]ϋ would have the right length for the lacuna, and this could be the latest dated document in this dossier, but other names too would fit.

By way of conclusion, I mention two other papyri acquired in 1906 that may be part of this dossier. One is P.Lond. inv. 1631 = P.Lond. V 1765, a land lease of 554, addressed θαυμασιωτάτῳ υἱῷ Κυλβανοῦ (l. 2): apart from the father's name, the document type, date and acquisition history would suit the identification with our Georgius. The other is P.Lond. inv. 1674 = P.Lond. V 1873 = SB XVIII 13587, a land lease of 556/7, addressed [ c. 25 τῷ θαυμ]ασιωτάτῳ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑρμοιπολιτῶν (l. 3). Given the loss of the names, the indications that the text refers to Georgius son of Silvanus are tenuous but still worth considering.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The exceptions are a fragment in Basel, part of the same papyrus as P.Lond. III 1013, now re-edited as P.Bas. II 53, and perhaps P.Stras. VIII 780.9 [Γε]ώργιος Κυλβανοῦ (BL XIII 142). The Coptic P.Bas. II 66 may also be related.

<sup>4</sup> We find something similar in a Vienna papyrus, the lease SB XIV 12131.2 (553), τῷ θαυμ]ασιωτάτῳ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑρμοιπολιτῶν, but not every lessor called θαυμασιωτάτος in a Hermopolite text of this date has to be identified with Georgius.