

NIKOLAOS GONIS

A PETITION OF 296

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British Library Papyrus 958 first became known to the public from its description in P.Lond. III, p. xlix: ‘Letter from Aurelius Silvanus to Aurelius Hermaeus, perhaps on official business. Dated ... Oct., A.D. 296. Imperfect, only the left-hand portion being preserved; in a large, upright, cursive hand.’ It seems to have remained unnoticed until J. Schwartz, *ZPE* 16 (1975) 236, in a note on the office of πρωτοστάτης, offered the following report on the papyrus’ content and date:

‘Le P.Lond. 958 ... est un document de 30 lignes dont il ne reste environ que le quart de gauche. Encadré par une date consulaire (l.1) et une date régnale (l.27 à 30), il est du 28 sept. 296. Il provient presque certainement du nome Hermoupolite. Il s’agit d’une demande (ou plainte) concernant 5 aroures de terres, adressée d’un protostatès (l.3), dont les autres titres (bouleute, etc...) devaient être mentionnés dans la partie perdue de la l.2.’

The date bears on the dating of the revolt of L. Domitius Domitianus. In response to Schwartz’s views on the matter, J. D. Thomas, *ZPE* 22 (1976) 269–70, noted that the presumed Hermopolite provenance of the papyrus must be due to the fact that it ‘is one of a group ... which mostly come from the Hermopolite’, but this group includes texts from other areas too, ‘so that attribution to the Hermopolite on these grounds is not certain’. Thomas proceeded with the following comment:

‘P.Lond. 958 is a petition or application to Aurelius Hermaios, a protostates, dated to year 13, 12, 5, 1 Phaophi, i.e. to 28 September 296. It is clear from the imperial titles that something like three quarters of each line is lost, and among the parts lost is the indication of the place in which the protostates is functioning. At the end of the application (lines 25–6) the papyrus reads ἤδη γὰρ ἀναφε [loss of at least 30 letters] Θηβαΐδος Αὐρηλίου [. This would seem to prove that the document originated in the Thebaid and may be referring here to a previous petition sent to the praeses of the Thebaid or one of the two procurators. We know from P.Beatty Panop. 1 that by September 298 the Thebaid had been re-organised to constitute a separate province and from P.Beatty Panop. 2 that by February 300 its northern border had been extended northwards to include the Hermopolite. Skeat has shown good reason to suppose that this re-organisation had taken place by at least 295. [n. 76: P.Beatty Panop., pp. xvii–xix, re-editing part of P.Oxy. 43 recto = P.Lond. 748.] This ll strengthens the case for believing that P.Lond. 958 is from the Hermopolite.’

The regnal date clause was later discussed by K. A. Worp, *ZPE* 61 (1985) 98, in response to a remark by J. R. Rea, *JEA* 70 (1984) 189–90. There is also a brief mention of the text in J. E. G. Whitehorne, *ZPE* 62 (1986) 159–60.

In view of the amount of attention this papyrus has received without ever being published in its entirety, I thought it would be worth offering a full edition,<sup>1</sup> even if there is little to add to what has been said already. The text is too fragmentary to yield much connected sense. It refers to land, probably owned by the petitioner, which had been leased to someone; there was a problem with the lease and the land remained unsown, and there may have been a previous petition to an official in the Thebaid, as Thomas has observed. As for the provenance of the papyrus, the personal names Hermaios and Silvanos are well attested in the area of Hermopolis.

The reference to the Thebaid is another point of interest: it offers evidence for the existence of the province in autumn 296 and for an Aurelius in a position of authority. This could be Aurelius Isidorus, procurator of the Lower Thebaid, or, perhaps more likely, Aurelius Herodes, the *praeses* at that time; see below, 25–6 n.

<sup>1</sup> I have consulted a very rough transcription by F. G. Kenyon, extensively revised by T. C. Skeat, to whom due credit should be given for the text printed on the next page. The transcription was kindly made available to me by Cillian O’Hogan in July 2015. The image is reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

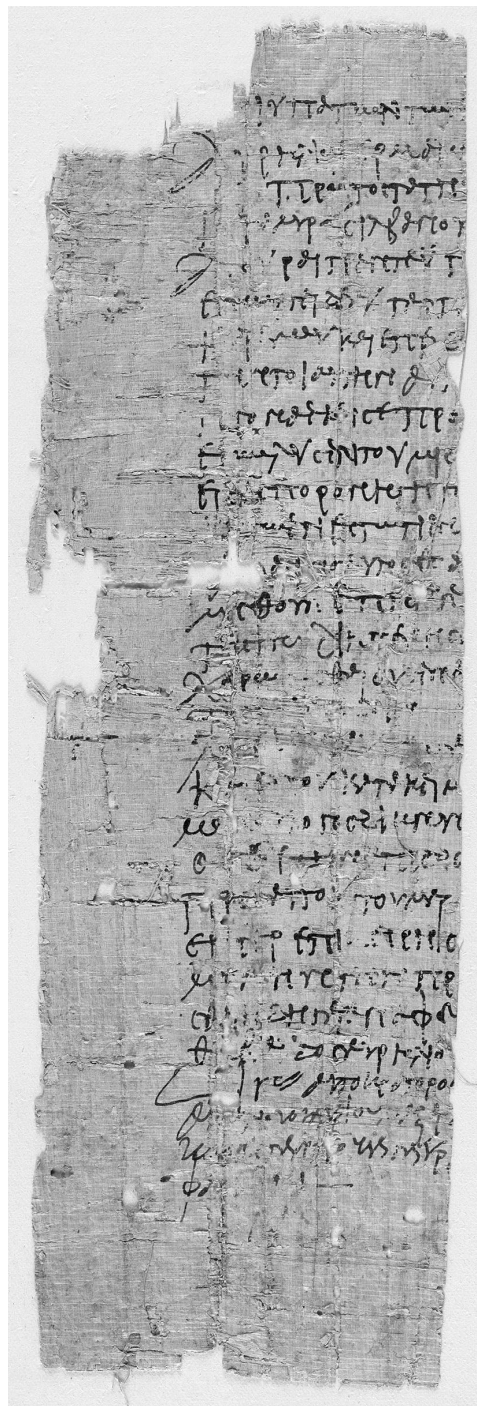
P.Lond. inv. 958

7.6 cm (w) × 25.1 cm (h)

28 September 296

ἐ[π]ὶ ὑπάτων τῶν [κυρίων ἡμῶν Αὐτοκράτορος Διοκλητιανοῦ Σεβαστοῦ τὸ ς καὶ Κωνταντίου τοῦ  
 ἐπιφανεστάτου Καίσαρος τὸ β.]  
 Αὐρηλίῳ Ἑρμαίῳ [   
 πρωτοστάτῃ . [   
 παρὰ Αὐρ(ηλίου) Σιλβανοῦ [   
 5 ἄρουραι πέντε ὑπ[άρχουσι(?)   
 ἐγεώργει δὲ αὐτὰς π[   
 παρ' ἐμοῦ καὶ ἐπει . [   
 τὴν τοιαύτην α . [   
 γέγονα ἐκεῖσε προ[   
 10 ἐκώλυεν τοῦ μισθ[   
 εἰς ἄσπορον ἢ γῆ γι[   
 καὶ τῶ ἐνεσῶτι ἐν[   
 . . . αν . ὁ αὐτὸς θρα[   
 μισθοῦν ἐπηγγέ[λλετο   
 15 τῆς γῆς δι' ἣν εἰρησθ[   
 χειρώσασθαι οὐδενά[   
 το . . . δετο . . [   
 λ . . . . . α[   
 κάτω τοῦ κατακειμ[ένου   
 20 μόγου λόγος δικνυ . [   
 ο . . . . τὴν ἐπίδοσ[ιν   
 πρὸς αὐτοῦ τοῦ μερ[   
 εἵπερ ἐπιχειρησ[   
 25 μένην γῆν πρ[   
 σθαι, ἤδη γὰρ ἀναφέ[ρ-   
 Θηβαΐδος Αὐρηλίου [   
 (ἔτους) ιγ'' Αὐτοκράτορος [Καίσαρος Γαίου Αὐρηλίου   
 Οὐαλερίου Διοκλητιανοῦ καὶ (ἔτους) ιβ'' Αὐτο-   
 κράτορος Καίσαρος Μάρκου]   
 Αὐρηλίου Οὐαλερίου Μαξιμ[ιανοῦ Γερμανικῶν μεγί-   
 στων Καρματικῶν μεγίστων καὶ (ἔτους) ε'' Φλα-   
 ούτιου Οὐαλερίου]   
 Κωνταντίου καὶ Γαλερί[ου Οὐαλερίου Μαξιμιανοῦ   
 τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων Καϊσάρων Εὐσεβῶν Εὐτυχῶν   
 Σεβαστῶν.]   
 30 Φαωφι α.

1 ὑπατων    4 αυρ'    5 υπ[    14 επηγ'γε[    20 l. δεικνυ-  
 26 θηβαΐδος    27 L



Under the consuls our lords Emperor Diocletianus Augustus for the 6th time and Constantius, *nobilissimus* Caesar, for the 2nd time.

<sup>2</sup> To Aurelius Hermaios ... <sup>3</sup> *protostates* ... <sup>4</sup> from Aurelius Silvanos ... <sup>5</sup> There are (?) five aruras ... <sup>6</sup> he was farming them ... <sup>7</sup> from me and ... <sup>8</sup> such a ... <sup>9</sup> I went there ... <sup>10</sup> prevented from leasing (?) ... <sup>11</sup> the land ... into (remaining?) unsown ... <sup>12</sup> and in the present ... <sup>13</sup> the same person ... <sup>14</sup> he prom-

ised to lease ...<sup>15</sup> of the land on account of which let it be said (?) ...<sup>16</sup> to subdue no one ...<sup>19</sup> under the deposited ...<sup>20</sup> reason (?) ... show ...<sup>21</sup> the submission ...<sup>22</sup> to this part (?) ...<sup>23</sup> if indeed ... attempt ...<sup>24</sup> land ...<sup>25</sup> because ... already (I?) submit ...<sup>26</sup> of the Thebaid, Aurelius ...

<sup>27</sup> Year 13 of Emperor Caesar Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, and year 12 of Emperor Caesar Marcus<sup>28</sup> Aurelius Valerius Maximianus, Gernanici Maximi, Sarmatici Maximi, and year 5 of Flavius Valerius<sup>29</sup> Constantius and Galerius Valerius Maximianus, *nobilissimi* Caesares, Pii Felices Augusti,<sup>30</sup> Phaophi 1.

1 For the consular formula as restored, see *CSBE*<sup>2</sup> 173. Ἀὐτοκράτορος could have been omitted.

2 Ἑρμαίῳ [. The name (TM Nam 4454) is common at Hermopolis. The lost part of the line will have contained the titles of Aur. Hermaios, as observed by Schwartz (see above, introd.); cf. P.Oxy. XLIV 3184(a).4–6 (296) or SB VI 9502.3–5 (Oxy.; 296).

3 πρωτοστάτη. On this office, attested between 296 and 298, see J. E. G. Whitehorne, *ZPE* 62 (1986) 159–72. There are only four other references: one from the Fayum, and three from Oxyrhynchus.

5 ἄρουραι πέντε ὑπ[άρχουσι(?). Cf. P.Flor. III 319.3–4 (Oxy.; 133–7) ὑπάρχουσί μοι καὶ ἀδελφιδῶ μου Διονυσίῳ | [ἄρ]ουραι τέσσαρες, from the beginning of a petition.

7–8 The reading of the letters before the break is obscured by a folded-over part.

10 ἐκώλυεν τοῦ μιλ[θ]-. A construction with the articular infinitive would be uncommon at this time.

11 εἰς ἄσπορον ἢ γῆ γι[. γ is partly hidden under a fold; τρ or π are not possible readings. εἰς ἄσπορον is a common expression in the Ptolemaic and early Roman period; its last previous attestation is in P.Stras. IV 193.18–19 (128).

12 τῶ ἐνεστῶτι ἐν[. Not ἔτ[ει.

13 θρα[. θρα[κύτερος Skeat, perhaps on the model of P.Beatty Panop. 2.105–6 (300).

14 μιλθοῦν. Part of a compound such as μετα[μιλθοῦν.

15 εἰρησθ[. In view of its position in the sentence, it would be εἰρησθ[ω rather than εἰρησθ[αι. εἰρησθω has occurred only in one papyrus, P.Amh. II 152.3 (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> c.).

16 χειρώσασθαι. Cf. P.Abinn. 15.16 (c. 346) and SB VI 9136.5 (4<sup>th</sup> c.). After that, οὐδένα [ or οὐδὲν α[.

19 κάτω τοῦ κατακειμένου. The participle is usually found with documents deposited in archives, but what precedes it here suggests a different context.

21 τὴν ἐπίδοσ[iv. This would be a reference to the submission of a petition (βιβλιδίων, βιβλίων, λιβέλλων).

22 τοῦ μερ[. μέρ[ους or μερ[ιμοῦ.

25 ἤδη γὰρ ἀναφέ[ρ-. Cf. CPR XXIII 28.9 (Herm.; c. 332) ἤδη γὰρ περὶ αὐτοῦ [ἀναφέρω ἐπὶ] ἀνήνεγκα τῶ κυρίῳ | [μου διασημ]οτάτω καθολικῶ Φλα[ουί]ῳ Νεμεσιανῶ.

25–6 The remains of these lines were transcribed by J. D. Thomas, *ZPE* 22 (1976) 269 (cf. BL VII 87), who read Ἀὐρηλίου [ at the end of l. 26; υ is possible insofar as there is a high trace to the right of o which can hardly be part of ν or c, the only other options. Thomas added in a footnote (n. 75): ‘Very tentatively I suggest that this passage means “for I have already sent a petition on this to his excellency, the procurator of the Lower Thebaid, Aurelius Isidorus”; he is attested in this office in 298 by P.Beatty Panop. 1.’ The construction intended would be e.g. τῆ ἐμμελεία τοῦ (κυρίου μου) ἐπιτρόπου τῆς κατωτέρω] Θηβαΐδος Ἀὐρηλίου [Ισιδώρου, but the official need not be a procurator; Thomas mentioned the *praeses* as another possibility (see above, introd.). Skeat’s annotation (see above, n. 1) is somewhat confused, but he thought of a construction in which Aurelius X would have been called the διασημότητος ἡγούμενος τῆς Θηβαΐδος. This is plausible, since Aurelius Herodes was *praeses* of the Thebaid at that time; see P.Nekr. 22.1 n. (Not mentioned by Skeat, though cf. P.Beatty Panop., p. xviii.)

27–30 The text is after K. A. Worp, *ZPE* 61 (1985) 98, version 2 (cf. BL VIII 182).