A Monastery of the Virgin at Lycopolis

The papyrus edited in this article is part of a group described as 'Miscellaneous fragments, some 6th–7th centuries, from Assiut' (British Library Papyri 3064–3071). The papyri were 'incorporated from limbo, 8 March 1965', which means that they stem from an earlier acquisition that had remained uninventoried. ([1]) They are mostly very small, and include a few of the earlier Roman period and two in Coptic. ([2])

The original document was a legal agreement of some kind. Only its top right part has survived, and any endorsement would have been lost. There remain parts of the Christian invocation, date clause, reference to place, and the prescript: two or more persons address the board of a religious institution named after the 'Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary' at Lycopolis. As it was represented by a monk, we may surmise that it was a monastery. It was not attested previously, which makes it a welcome addition to what little we know of the religious landscape of late antique Lycopolis. ([3]) A curiosity is the omission of the name of the emperor, Heraclius, from the regnal formula. Since his epithets are given, the omission must be a mere error.

The text is written along the fibres. A sheet-join runs vertically *c*. 3.2 cm from the right edge. The back is blank as far as it is preserved.

P.Lond. inv. 3070a 6.3 cm (w) × 11.2 cm (h) 19 February 614

[† ἐν ὀνόματι τῆς ἁγία]ς καὶ ζῳοποιοῦ καὶ ὁμοουσίου
[Τριάδος Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱ]ο̣ῦ̣ καὶ Ἁγίου Πνεύμα(τος).
[βασιλείας τοῦ θειοτ]άτου κ[αὶ] γαληνοτάτου
[καὶ θεοστεφοῦς ἡμῶ]ν δεσπό̣(του) ἔτους τετάρτου,
[ὑπατείας τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἔ]τ̣ους τρίτου, Μεχειρ κε̄,
[(*vac.*) ἐν Λύκω]ν πόλει τῇ̣ λαμπρᾷ.†
[τῷ̣ δικαίῳ τῆς ἁγία]ς̣ δ̣ι̣ᾳ̣κονίας
[τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ ἀ]ειπαρθένου
[Μαρίας διὰ *c*.5] μ̣ονάζοντος
[καὶ οἰκονόμου τῆς αὐ]τῆς διακονίας
[*c*.15 Λυ]κοπολιτῶν
[*c*.15] Μ̣ηνᾶ καὶ
[*c*.15] .ε̣ί̣του ἀπὸ̣ .[
– – – – – – – – – – – – –

2 πνευμ$^{\alpha}$ **4** δεσπ^{ο}

([1]) The descriptions go back to T. C. Skeat; my thanks to Peter Tóth for answering my query. The photograph is reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

([2]) The only published British Library papyrus of this date with a Lycopolite link is *P.Lond*. V 1862 (6th/7th c.), acquired in 1907, after it was 'bought from Assuân by D. G. Hogarth' (*P.Lond*. V, p. 271). It refers to two monasteries ἐν τῷ] ὄρει κώμης Τάσρεως τοῦ Λυκοπολίτου νομοῦ (l. 3), a curious coincidence.

([3]) S. TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit* 1 (Wiesbaden 1983) 240, only knew three Lycopolite monasteries, including the two mentioned in the previous note. A. PAPACONSTANTINOU, *Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides* (Paris 2001) 295, mentions only three churches at Lycopolis.

† In the name of the holy, life-creating, and consubstantial Trinity, the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. In the fourth year of the reign of our most divine and most serene and God-crowned master, in the third year of the consulship of the same, Mecheir 25, in the splendid Lycopolis.†

To the jurisdiction of the holy ministration of the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, through …, monk and manager of the same ministration … of the Lycopolites … Menas and … from …

1–2 On this invocation formula (2E), see *CSBE*^{2} 100, 104, 291f. Under Heraclius, it is otherwise found in the Hermopolite and Apollonopolite nomes. The same holds for the regnal clause; cf. next note. (The remnants of ἁγία]ς and Υἱ]ο̣ῦ are on a detached fragment.)

3–5 The name of the emperor is not given, but everything points to Heraclius. The remains of the regnal formula come closest to his formulas 6 (Hermopolite and Apollonopolite) and 8 (Syene); see *CSBE*^{2} 269. For the conversion of the date, see *CSBE*^{2} 155.

5 [ὑπατείας τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἔ]τους. A reference to the emperor would normally have followed αὐτοῦ; cf. *P.Lond*. II 483.3 (Apoll. Hept.; 615 or 616) ὑπατείας τοῦ αὐτοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου ἡμῶν δεσπότου. For other such omissions, see *CPR* IX 31.4 (Herm.; 581) and *P.Köln* III 157.2 (Apoll. Hept.; 589). This is the first 'consularly dated' papyrus of 614 to be published; cf. *CSBE*^{2} 215.

6 **ἐν Λύκω]ν πόλει τῇ λαμπρᾷ**. The name of the city is restored from [Λυ]κοπολιτῶν at 11. This appellation of Lycopolis was known from *P.Princ*. II 82.2 (482), *SB* XXVI 16532.2 (535), and *ZPE* 160.223_2.7–8 (582).

7 **[τῷ δικαίῳ τῆς ἁγία]ς δ̣ι̣ᾳ̣κονίας**. This phrase was previously attested only in documents from Aphrodito; for discussion, see M. WOJTCZAK, ''Legal representation' of monastic communities in late antique papyri', *JJP* 49 (2019) 356–61. On the term διακονία, here a collective designation of the monks who dealt with the financial affairs of their community, see P. E. KAHLE, *P.Bal*. I, pp. 35–40; E. WIPSZYCKA, 'Diakonia', *The Coptic Encyclopedia* vol. 3 (New York/Toronto 1991) 895–7, and *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IV^e-VIII^e siècles)* (Warsaw 2009) 547–8; and, more broadly, D. CANER, 'Charitable Ministrations (*Diakoniai*), Monasticism, and the Social Aesthetic of Sixth-Century Byzantium', in M. FRENKEL – Y. LEV (eds), *Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions* (Berlin/New York 2009) 45–73, whose rendering of διακονία as 'ministration' I have adopted in the translation.

8–9 **[τῆς θεοτόκου καὶ ἀ]ειπαρθένου [Μαρίας**. This is the name of a church at Arsinoe in *P.Hoogendijk* 41.2–4 (583 or 598) τῇ ἁγίᾳ ἐκκλ(ησίᾳ) | τῆσδε τῆς πόλεως τῆς [ἁ]γίας Θεοτόκου καὶ ἀει|παρ[θένου] Μαρίας, and in *SPP* XX 243.14–16 (648) τῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας τῆς | [δεσ]ποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς θεοτόκου καὶ | ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας. The Arsinoite *P.Prag*. I 65.2–3 (7th c.) πρεσβυτέρου καὶ ἀρχιμαντρί|δρου (l. ἀρχιμανδρίτου) τῆς δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς θεοτόκου καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας probably refers to a monastery (so the edition), since there is an archimandrite, a term for the superior of a monastery; it is less decisive that there is no mention of a ἁγία ἐκκλησία, since the name of the patron saint or other religious figure would have sufficed to indicate a church. Θεοτόκος is part of the name of relatively few religious establishments dedicated to the Virgin Mary; see A. PAPACONSTANTINOU, 'Les sanctuaires de la Vierge dans l'Égypte byzantine et omeyyade. L'apport des textes documentaires', *JJP* 30 (2000) 81–94, at 93. ἀειπαρθένου refers to Mary usually in Arsinoite documents, mostly in invocation formulas.

9–10 **διὰ** *c*. 5 **] μονάζοντος | [καὶ οἰκονόμου**. Cf. *P.Cair.Masp*. I 67096.6–7 (Aphrodito; 573) διὰ Ἐνὼχ Ἰωάννου εὐλαβεστάτου | [μονά]ζοντος καὶ οἰκο[νό]μου τῆς αὐτῆς, preceded by τῷ δι[καίῳ] τῆς ἁγία[ς δια]κονίας τοῦ νεοκτίσ[τ]ου ὄρους τῶν ἁγίων καὶ |

[χ]ριστοφ̣[όρ]ῳν ἀπο[στόλ]ῳν (ll. 4–5). The lacuna in l. 10 will have taken away a short name.

11 [διακειμένης ἐν τῇ Λυ]κοπολιτῶν would suit the space, and may be paralleled by *P.Cair.Masp*. I 67096.9–10 διακειμένης ἐν | τ̣[ῷ] ὄρει ⸀κώμ(ης)⸁ Ἀφροδίτη[ς], though cf. *P.Flor*. III 285.4–5 (Aphrodito; 552) κεκτημένης ἐν ⸀τῷ⸁ ὄρει | [κώ]μης Ἀφρ[ο]δίτης.

13]̣.ε̣ί̣τ̣ου ἀπὸ ̣[: perhaps a professional designation followed by a person's origin. (ἀπό was recognized by Sophie Kovarik.)

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