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THE STOLEN ANCHOR¹

Henrik Zilliacus

This Bodleian document catalogued as Ms.Gr.Class.c.42(P) belongs to the category of complaints made by monks. The state of preservation of the text is remarkably good and the writing is careful. But as the grammatical incorrectness is exceptionally striking it is not easy to find a clear and unambiguous sense. The writer's native language is evidently coptic and his knowledge of Greek accident and syntax is rather weak, to say the least.

About the acquisition of the text there are no statements in the catalogue. It originates in Early Byzantine times, but no dates or definite chronological facts are contained. The writing, a clear and careful upright cursive, could in the first place be assigned to the fourth century A.D., cf. the shape of the letters μ and φ and the lack of long ornamental strokes above and below the horizontal line. But the form of the letter ν would not exclude a somewhat later dating and the letter β is a high oval, open at the top and cramped in the middle. Sometimes it looks like an hour-glass. There is some support for the earlier date in the vocabulary. Of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\tau\rho\omega\nu$ (l. 2;23) no instance has been found in papyri after the fourth century. $\mu\omicron\nu\eta$ (l. 12) is supported by examples from the fourth century (whereas $\mu\omicron\nu\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\iota\omicron\nu$ does not appear before the fifth or sixth century). There is no proof that the technical expression $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\varphi\omega\nu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ is to be found in later papyrus texts. It is of course quite irrelevant that the only papyrus instance of $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\chi\omega\rho\eta\tau\acute{\eta}\varsigma$ (l. 8) belongs to the seventh century, and it is pure chance that the loan-word $\pi\rho\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\rho$ (l. 13 f.) has not before been found in fourth century documents of Egypt. Finally, the whole close of the letter and above all the *formula valetudinis* are typical of the fourth century, differing from sixth century style. The assignment of the text to the end of the fourth century seems to be quite firmly established.

¹ During my stay in Oxford in the year 1952 Mr. C. H. Roberts kindly drew my attention on this text and made many helpful remarks. For the permission to publish the document my thanks are due to the Keeper of the Department of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. Prof. L. Amundsen (Oslo) has been so kind as to read the photograph and discuss the text with me. I am most indebted to him for many illuminating suggestions.

The language cannot be characterized as vulgar, but it shows an obvious mixture of a careful and even technical choice of words together with a lack of knowledge of the elements of the language which indicates a writer unfamiliar with Greek, probably a man of Coptic language. Apart from the constant confusion in the quantity of vowels — note especially the *o* — sounds (cf. l. 4;5;7;8;9;10;12;17;23;25;27) — and some digressions from the historical orthography caused by itacism and related phenomena (l. 7;8;10;14;16;17;18;21;22;25;27;28), the text scarcely authorizes any conclusions relevant to the history of language. It is notable that the writer has no ear for declensions and for the syntactical function of the case-endings. Cf. e.g. l. 5 Ἄπα Ὀρος τῶν διακόνους; l. 8 f. πολλῶν μονάζων ἀναχωρητῶν καὶ πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνος καὶ ἀτενίστον ἀρίθμιον, further l. 7;11;17;19;27. Another remarkable characteristic is the incorrect augmentation of compound verbs: l. 11 ἐπροσφώνησεν; l. 24 ἐκατέχιν; l. 25 ἐδιαληθῆναι (note 'verschlepptes' augment), but l. 4:19 ἀφήρπαξεν. Cf. MAYSER, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit*, I, p. 341 ff. Ignorance and contamination are shown by expressions such as l. 15 παρακαλῶ σου and the rather peculiar use of the verb ἀξῶ in l. 25. Note also the anacolutha l. 8 ff. and 17 ff.

The complaint is written by a certain Timotheus acting on behalf of the corporation of monks or the monastery in Ankyron polis. His own status is not expressed more exactly, but l. 5 ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν suggests that he was himself a member of the corporation. The subject of the complaint is robberies made by some soldiers and the request is written to a certain Heron, addressed as πατρῶν. This may at first hand suggest the land-lord of a large estate in which the monastery was situated and who guaranteed the monks his protection. The badly mutilated word l. 2 after the name Heron could possibly (but not very likely) be reconstructed κεντυρ[ί]ονι, cf. the greetings l. 26 το τὸν κύριον τὸν τριβοῦνον. L. 23 f. may imply that Heron exercised a sort of supervision of the boat traffic in this part of the district of Heracleopolites.

Our document gives no clear idea of what the monastery in Ankyronites was like. Probably it was a coenobitical community, but we have to consider, too, the possibility of a colony of monks and hermits of less definite organization. There are rather few other relevant documents from the fourth century. The enumeration l. 8 f. shows, however, the occurrence of various categories of 'brothers': monks in the proper sense of the word, hermits and ecclesiastics. There are no statements about the abbot. Possibly the πρεσβύτερος Αἰαντίνος (l. 11 f.) was identical with the προεστῶς of the monastery, although the combination πρεσβύτερος-προεστῶς is not, so far as I see, found elsewhere in papyrus

texts (but cf. S B 5154 *διάκονος καὶ προστώξ*). For the monasteries in Byzantine Egypt and their organization see P. BARISON, *Ricerche sui monasteri dell'Egitto bizantino ed arabo secondo i documenti dei papiri greci*, *Aegyptus* 18, 1938, pp. 29—158.

The general tenor of the letter may be outlined as follows, but I explicitly wish to emphasize the possibility of divergent interpretation in some details (cf. the commentary following). The complaint concerns two robberies, possibly connected one with another. The first part of the letter (l. 4—17) tells about the soldier Paulus having stolen an anchor from the brothers. He obviously did it as reprisals for an unsettled debt of the deacon Horus (acting on behalf of the monastery?). It is understood that the debt of 24,000 myriads (of denars) did not correspond to the value of the anchor. In this connection the writer refers to an authoritative pronouncement of his superior, the presbyter Aiantinos, concerning the aforesaid debt and he stresses that the *procurator* did not take or lay claim to more than half the sum. I think the *procurator* is here to be understood simply as the financial representative of the party concerned so there is no need to search for him among the officials of various kinds known as *procuratores*. The indispensability of the anchor for the monastery is emphasized by mentioning the large number of brothers of various kinds living there: monks, anchorites, presbyters, deacons — to the rather enigmatic ἀτενίστον I will return in due course. Heron is urgently requested to send the soldier to Thelbo (in Heracleopolites) to settle the affair with Horus.

In the latter part of the letter (l. 17—25) Timotheus gives a report on another plundering. Soldiers — or possibly the same one — have robbed the wine-boat belonging to a certain Komon of not less than 200 big double-measures of wine, and he presents as witness a brother acting as fisherman to the monastery. In this connection he quotes a precedent: the same Heron had once before annulled the confiscation of Komon's boat when it was detained in Heracleopolis.

I stress once more that this interpretation may be subjected to criticism in some details, to which I will return later on.

Text

20 × 30 cm

Τῷ δεσπότῃ μ[ου κ]αὶ ὡς ἀλη[θῶς τιμί]ῳ
 πάτρωνι ἀ[δελφῶ] Ἡρ[ωνι] κεντ... []...ι

Τιμόθεος.

Παῦλος τὸν στ[ρ]ατιωτῶν ἀφήρπαξεν τὸ μονό-
 5 βολον τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν. Ἄπα Ὀρος τὸν
 διακόνους τοῖς Ἀνγυρωνίτης ὑπὲρ οὐδὲν χρ[ε]ωσ-
 τὶ αὐτὸν ἔ μὴ μόνον δισχιλίον τετρακοσίων
 μυριάδον· [κ]αὶ πολλῶν μονάζον ἀναχωριτῶν
 καὶ πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνος καὶ ἀτενίστον
 10 ἀρίθμιον, καὶ αὐτοῦ γὰρ διαφέρει τὸ μονόβολον·
 καὶ εἶπεν Ὀρ[ι]γένους ὅτι ἐπροσφώνησεν ἅπα Αἰ-
 αντῆνος τὸν πρεσβυτέρον μονῆς Ἀνγυρωνίτης τὰς
 δισχιλίας τ[ε]τρακοσίας μυριάδας· καὶ ὁ προυκωρά-
 τωρ αὐτοῦ οὐδὲν ἔλαβεν ἔ μὴ μόνον χιλίας δια-
 15 κοσίας μυριάδος. ἀξιῶ καὶ παρακαλῶ σου, δέσποτα, ποιή-
 σον αὐτὸν ἐκτῆνον τὸν Παῦλον ἐλθῆν εἰς Θεלבῶ καὶ δια-
 λήσασθαι μετ' αὐτοῦ, ἐπὶ γὰρ Κόμον ἢ τὸν πλοῖον αὐτοῦ
 οἴνου καὶ οἱ στρατιῶτη τὸν ὀδεύοντα οὐ μόνον
 20 δι[κ]οσίων διπλᾶ μεγάλα ἀφήρπαξεν, καὶ ἐφ' ὃ
 κέλευσον τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν Ὀνουων — ἐστὶ ἀλι-
 εὺς ἡμῶν — ἀξιῶ οὖν, δέσποτα, κέλευσον αὐτὸν ἐλθῆν·
 εἴσεται διὰ αὐτοῦ· ἐὰν θελήσης πάλιν ἐλθῆν ἐπὶ τοῦ κρίμα,
 ἐλθὲ ὅπ[ο]υ θέλης· κ[α]ὶ γὰρ σὺ γὰρ ὁ πάτρων τὸν πλοῖον
 αὐτοῦ, ὅτε γὰρ ἐκατέχιν αὐτῶ εἰς Ἡρακλέους, σὺ γὰρ
 25 ἐδιαληθῆναι αὐτῶ αὔξης. πολλὰ προσαγαρεύω, δέσποτα
 ἀδελφε, προσαγαρεύω τὸν κύριον τὸν τριβοῦνον
 καὶ τῶν Κωφίω καὶ πάντες ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ ἡμῶν. ἐρρωσθαί
 σε εὐχομαι ἡμᾶς πολλοῖς
 χρονίοις, διευτύχ(ει).

Verso

τῷ δεσπότῃ μου καὶ
 ὡς ἀληθῶς] τιμίῳ πάτρωνι ἀδελφῶ
 Ἡρων πρᾶ
 Τιμοθέου

T r a n s l a t i o n

To my master and truly esteemed patron and brother Heron

Timotheus.

Paulus, the soldier, stole the anchor of our brothers. Apa Horus, deacon of the monastery of Ankyronites, does not owe him any more than only two thousand four hundred myriads. And there are a large number of monks, anchorites, presbyters and deacons and *atenistoi*, and to this place does the anchor belong. And Origenes said that Apa Aiantinos, presbyter in the monastery of Ankyronites made a pronouncement regarding the two thousand four hundred myriads: for the procurator did not lay claim to (take) more than only thousand two hundred myriads. I request and implore you, my master, to make this man Paulus come to Thelbo and settle things with him. For as Komon or his wineboat — and the soldiers robbed him on his way of not less than two hundred big double-measures, and ask for this purpose our brother Onouon — he is our fisherman — I beg you, my master, ask him to come. He will make it clear. If you wish, come again to the trial, come whenever you wish. For you, the patron, saw that the boat was released when he retained it at Heracleopolis. Many greetings, my master and brother, many greetings to the lord the tribune and to Kophios (?) and to everybody in your house.

I pray for your lasting health. Farewell.

To my master and truly esteemed patron and brother Heron

from Timotheus.

2. κεντυρ[ί]ον[ι Amundsen. 4. l. τῶν στρατιωτῶν. τὸ. 5. l. τῶν 6. l. τῶν διακόνων τῆς Ἀγκυρωνίτου v.-νίτιδος sc., μονῆς. χρ[ε]ωστῆ l. χρ[ε]ωστῆ Amundsen. 7. l. αὐτῷ, ἢ μὴ. δισχιλίων. 8. l. μυριάδων. μοναζόντων ἀναχωρητῶν. 9. l. πρεσβυτέρων καὶ διακόνων καὶ ἀτενίστων. ἀγέμιστον l. ἀγεμίστου Amundsen. 10. l. διαφέρει τὸ. 11. l. Ὁρ[ι]γένους l. Ὁριγένης Amundsen. προσεφώνησεν. Αἰαντῖνος Amundsen. 12. l. τῶν πρεσβυτέρων. Ἀγκυρωνίτου v.-νίτιδος. 13. l. προκουράτωρ. 14. l. ἢ μὴ 15. l. μυριάδας. σε. 16. l. ἐκεῖνον. ἐλθεῖν. διαλήσασθαι. 17. l. ἐπεὶ. Κόμων. τὸ. 18. l. στρατιῶται v. ὁ στρατιώτης (idem ac Paulus?) 19. l. διπλῶν μεγάλων ἀφήρπαξαν? ἐφ' ὃ i. e. ἐπὶ τοῦτο Amundsen. 20. ἐστὶ Amundsen. 21. l. ἐλθεῖν. 22. εἴσεται Amundsen. ἐλθεῖν. τὸ. 23. l. τὸ v. τῶν πλοίων? 24. l. κατεῖχε? αὐτὸ. ἐν. 25. l. διαλυθῆναι αὐτὸ αὔξεις v. ἠῦξες? προσαγορεύω. 26. l. προσαγορεύω. 27. l. τὸν. πάντας. ὑμῶν. 28. l. ὑμᾶς. 29. l. χρόνοις.

Verso 4. l. παρὰ.

C o m m e n t a r y

1. The address *δεσπότης καὶ πατρῶν* indicates clearly that Heron, to whom the letter is addressed, was a secular superior. *ἀδελφός* is to be understood as 'brother in the faith'. It is most likely that Heron was the patron in the *pagarchia* in which the monastery was situated. He was the protector of the monks and we know that the patron in some respects was juridically responsible for the monastery, cf. STEINWENTER, *Die Rechtsstellung der Kirchen und Klöster nach den Papyri*, *Sav.Zeitschrift*, Kan.Abt. 19, 1930, pp. 1—50, p. 37 f. After the name of Heron there are, however, some traces of letters of a specific attribute or title. Prof. Amundsen kindly calls my attention to the possibility of reading *κεντυρίονι*. The first letters can without difficulty be reconstructed *κεντ*, but the ending looks more like *γι* or *τι* than *νι* so that the reconstruction remains uncertain. There are good reasons for concluding that Heron was the protecting land-lord and probably *πάγαρχος*, even if the dominating influence of this official belongs to a somewhat later time. Cf. also the closing greetings to the tribune, who was the military colleague of the pagarch.

3. The status of Timotheus himself is not specified, but from 1. 5 *ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν* we may conclude that he was a monk and probably officiated as the secretary of the congregation.

4. *μονόβολον*. The meaning of 'anchor' seems to be confirmed by P.Lond. 1264h,9 (III A.D.) and P.Lond.1714,32 (VI A.D.). It is, however, rather surprising that there should be so much trouble for the sake of an anchor. But we are scarcely entitled to take *μονόβολον* as a metonymy for 'boat' (or a punt made of one trunk) however tempting it may appear, since we do not possess any proofs of such a use.

6. *Ἀγγυρωνίτης*. The place may be identical with *Ἀγκυρῶν πόλις* in Ptolemaic times. In Post-Ptolemaic texts this name is replaced by *Ἀγκυρῶν* or *Ἀγκυρῶνος κώμη*. That this locality was situated in the Heracleopolites (e.g. PSI VIII 928, 12 f.) is confirmed in l. 24 of the present document. For other instances cf. the exhaustive list in CALDERINI, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano* I,1 p. 11 f. After the third century A.D. the name has not been found and we do not possess any previous information about any monastery or monks in this place. On the whole there seems to have been proportionately few monasteries in the Heracleopolites; cf. the list given by BARISSON *op.cit.*

6 ff. Apa Horos owes the soldier (*αὐτόν*) a sum not exceeding the sum of

24,000 myriads. The syntax is confused and the genitive δισχιλίον τετρακοσίων μυριάδων may be mistakenly used instead of the accusative or, possibly, erroneously attracted by ὑπὲρ οὐδὲν. Calculating for a deterioration in the rate of the *denarius* by 6,000,000 at the end of the fourth century during the culmination of the big inflation (cf. MICKWITZ, PW Suppl. VI, Inflation, more in detail the same author's Geld und Wirtschaft im röm.Reich d. IV Jahrh.n.Chr., pp. 99—115) we conclude that the amount of the debt scarcely corresponded to the value of an anchor; cf. l. 8 the word μόνον. The syntax of the sentence beginning l. 8 with [κ]αὶ πολλῶν μονάζων etc. is extremely defective, but the meaning seems to be that the anchor was indispensable for the monastery because there were a great number of brothers of various kinds dependent on the boat traffic across the Nile. The intention of the writer was apparently to start with an absolute genitive πολλῶν μονάζων (όντων) but after this anacoluthon he continued with a nominal sentence ἀριθμῖον (ἔστιν).

8. ἀναχωρητής occurs rarely in papyrus documents; the only proof given by PREISIGKE WB s.v. is P.Lond.77,76 (VII A.D.).

9. πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνος. In some monasteries there were a number of priests and deacons to perform the liturgy (cf. BARISON p. 53). The word ἀτενίστον is very enigmatic. Does it indicate a hitherto unknown category of monks or ascetics juxtaposed to anchorites, deacons etc.? In that case the term could possibly mean 'contemplators' (from ἀτενίζειν = gaze, observe earnestly). Prof. Amundsen suggests the possibility of reading ἀγένιστον, a miswriting for ἀγέμιστον: the meaning would then be: »there are a number of persons not embarked, i.e. waiting for transport». As a matter of fact γ and τ in our text look much the same. The τ, however, is generally provided with a little hook at the bottom not so characteristic of the γ (but cf. l. 12 Ἀνγυρωνίτης). The decision has to be left open.

10. αὐτοῦ in the meaning 'there' = αὐτόθι, τῆδε.

11 f. Apa Aiantinos is, as presbyter, a more authoritative person and Timotheus cites a public pronouncement (ἐπροσφώνησεν) regarding the aforesaid debt made by him. This seems to indicate that the monastery was the actual debtor whereas Apa Horus only acted as an intermediary agent or, rather, that the προεστώς was responsible for debts made by the monks (cf. STEINWENTER op.cit. p. 41). Or is Apa Horus after all the προεστώς? Not even the possibility of Timotheus being the abbot can be completely excluded.

13 f. The προκουράτωρ mentioned has evidently nothing to do with the various *procuratores* of the finance and military administration. He is simply to be regarded

as the private financial agent. In any case his position remains somewhat obscure. Is he the agent of the monks (αὐτοῦ = Ἀπα Αἰαντίνος?) who received only half the sum? Or does αὐτοῦ indicate the granter of the loan? I would guess the former. From P. Cairo Masp.67096 we know that there was a κουράτωρ and φροντιστής, a layman administering the properties of the monastery, cf. STEINWENTER op.cit. p. 27 f.; BARISON op.cit. p. 47. It is sufficiently clear that the debt in some way or other in practice had been reduced to 50 %.

15. ἀξιῶ καὶ παρακαλῶ σου. The wrong construction of the verbs depends on contamination with the expression δέομαί σου.

16. Θελβῶ is a place in the Heracleopolites (see PREISIGKE WB) apparently in the neighbourhood of Ἀγκυρῶν πόλις. διαλήσασθαι μετ' αὐτοῦ in a meaning somewhat different from πρὸς τινα: »to settle things with him».

17 ff. In the latter part of the letter a further aggression made by soldiers is spoken of — the form ἀφήραξεν could possibly indicate that in this case, too, Paulus was the culprit. The writer starts with an anacoluthon — the temporal sentence ἐπὶ etc. — but changes the construction into a καὶ sentence: »and the soldiers robbed etc.» That Paulus was guilty seems to be supported by the opening γάρ.

19. διπλᾶ μεγάλα. The capacity of this somewhat indefinite measure is known in practice to have varied from 8 to 4,5 ξέσται. Cf. e.g. P.Oxy.1870,12;1893,14; 1920,5 n. — καὶ ἐφ' ὃ = καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτο.

18. οὐ μόνον is to be understood as 'at least'.

20. The name Ὀνουων is unknown hitherto. The fisherman of the monks, himself a brother, may have been a witness of the occurrence and therefore Timotheus emphatically insists upon summoning him (to Thelbo?). For the various occupations of Egyptian monks see BARISON op.cit. p. 52.

22. The reconstruction ἐῖσεται suggested by Amundsen would give a satisfactory sense (but note the passive meaning implied). — The word κρίμα occurs rarely in papyrus documents and seems to indicate that the second of the aggressions was to be taken more seriously since there is no word of a διάλυσις.

23. ὅπου may be understood in a hypothetical or, possibly, temporal sense rather than in the usual local one. — The structure beginning with καὶ γὰρ οὐ could be interpreted in two different ways. τῶν πλοίων is either a plural genitive: »for you are the patron of the boats here», or, more probably, τὸν (sic) πλοῖον αὐτοῦ is the proleptic object of ἐκατέχιν in the following ὅτι sentence: »for as he (they?) retained his boat . . .» In any case a precedent is quoted when Heron saved the monks' boat.

25. ἐδιαληθῆναι. The verb is here used in the meaning 'liberate'. Somewhat bewildering is ἀύξης since ἀύξω is not elsewhere found in the sense of 'effect', 'carry'. Or is this incorrect form derived from εὐχομαι?

25 f. The closing phrases show quite evidently that there is no question of an official complaint handed in to military authorities, cf. l. 27 προσαγωρεύω πάντες ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ ἡμῶν.

27. Κωφίω. The name is hitherto unknown. Is it a distortion of Κωφός?

28. In the *formula valetudinis* we note the mixture of σὺ and ὑμεῖς in addressing a superior. For this phenomenon see ZILLIACUS, Selbstgefühl und Servilität, Soc.Sc.Fenn.,Comm.Hum.Litt. XVIII,3, 1953, e.g. p. 54 ff.