

Private letter About Olives

By

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The Papyrus is mutilated at the upper side and has margins on the other sides. The handwriting is of medium size and semi-uncial to which a close parallel is Schubart, pal. 34 (Time of Hadrian). Due to the mutilation of the Papyrus neither the name of the addressor nor that of the addressee are known. The addressor wrote his letter while being in Babylon of the Heliopolite nome (L. 14 n.). Since the Papyrus was found with a collection from Theadelphia, the addressee was almost living there.

The letter is a kind of instructions to a subordinate, giving him directions to collect sweet-olive in order to be preserved in salt and greek-olive to be bruised. It is worth noticing that the addressor asks for unlimited amount of olives. The fact that he has boys working under him in Babylon and asks for other boys may indicate that he has an oil-press there. It is clear that he has also an olive-grove in Theadelphia (LL. 15-16).

The nature of the document does not reveal whether the business of the addressor was a private investment or has something to do with official character. He mentions that he needs sweet-olive for the current year (LL. 11-2), but there is no reference to administrative instructions or orders. It is highly probable that his needs are in accordance with the needs of the market, i.e., his customers (cf. P. Ryl. 128; P. Fay. 91; Johnson, Roman Egypt, p. 328). There is no clear trace of the Ptolemaic monopoly, which was almost vanished (cf. P. Ryl. 231; P. Brit. Mus. 893, both

A.D. 40). Private individuals, as it seems, were allowed to invest their money in oil-trade (cf. p. Oxy. 2783. 8n.)

The addressor of our document asks for collecting olives from Theadelphia to be sent to him in Babylon, so there were no restrictions on transporting olive crops from one nome to the other (of p. Hib. 49), nor a mention of payments to the administration in case of this transportation. He also does not mention custom dues which were paid in case of oil (cf. p. Fouad XXXIV. A.D. 42, and introduction).

One may deduct from the eagerness of the addressor to collect any amount of olives from Theadelphia to be sent to him in Babylon, where he might have had an oil-factory, that Theadelphia was rich of olive-groves or had a flourished market of olives. We do not know whether he was the owner of both the olive-grove and the oil-press or was a lessee of them (cf. p. Oxy. 3639, introd.; P. philedelphia 12; Johnson, Roman Egypt, P. 366sq.; Yale classical Studies XXVIII, 1985, P. 95sq.; ZPE, 50, 1983, P. 81sq.). But it is highly probable that he undertook to supply Babylon or Theadelphia or both with oil. the quality of olives he asks for may show that he had something to do with the duty of providing fine-oil, which was a form of liturgy both in Oxyrhynchus and Arsinoe (cf. P. Oxy. 1445; P. Hib. 49; Jonson; Roman Egypt, P. 328, 359).

The ἐλαιουργοί were exempted from liturgy (cf. P. Philadelphia 1.31. A.D. 103-24; Taubenschlag, haw, P. 668 Sq.). This was due to interest of the Roman administration in the oil, which

was requisitioned for the army temples and certain cities such as Alexandria. The Ptolemaic monopoly of oil seems to have took a different development in the Roman period (Taubenschlag, op.cit.). For various reasons, the Roman administration continued to supervise the prices of oil (cf. p. Oxy. 3628) both in local market as well as of oil for export and import (cf. παραγωγή ἐλαίας Preisigke, WB. absch. 11),

Since oil was a complete monopoly in the Ptolemaic period the ὁ ἐξειληφώς τὴν διάθεσιν καὶ τὸ τέλος τοῦ ἐλαίου (Wilcken, Archiv F. Pap. V, 222, Taubenschlag, P. 668) was instituted. But the Roman Administration cared only for the revenues from the olives and oil and left its industry to private individuals who had to get the license from the administration and to pay their dues. Therefore, the Roman administration instituted the epiteretai to supervise the concessions both of olive-groves and of oil-factories and to collect the dues (cf. P. Amh. 92. A.D 192), they were ἐπιτηρηταὶ ἐλαϊκῆς καὶ ἄλλων προσόδων (P. Tebt. 539. A.D. 151).

In P. Cair Mus. S.R. 3049/37. A.D. 144 (ZPE; 50, 1983, P. 82 ed. by S. Omar) 11.25: τοῦ φόρου δραχμῶν πενήκοντα ἔξ ταῖς διὰ τοῦ ἀναφορίου σου προθεσμίαις ἀκολουθήσθε ἀναφοριον
In this proposal for a rent of ελαιων παραδεισο was a kind of report or a bid made to the strategus (cf. Johnson, Roman Egypt, P. 326). So. there was some form of official

control on this sort of contracts. In another proposal for a rent of ἐλαιωνπαράδεισος (PSI inv. Cap. 371: A.D.141 YOS, XXXIII, 1985, P. 95 sqq ed. by Manfredi), the lessee is to pay the φόρος in money (L.9) and the ἐξαιρέτων in kind (L.10 sq.). Such ἐκφορία (L.16 sq.) which denote payments in kind, the lessee will pay μέτρῳ θησαυροῦ τῆς κώμης (cf. p. Philadelphia 12.15 sqq. A.D. 150-173). The lessee adds that he will pay the ἐξαιρέτων which are considered as extra payment (see YCS,XXVIII? P. 97), both according to the measure of the granary of the village and ἀνυπολόγων καὶ ἀκινδύων (P. Philadelphia 12.19).

On one hand, we can not exclude the probability of some kind of monopoly on olives and oil in the Roman epoch, especially where the φόρος is mentioned. We notice that in the contracts of rent of olive-groves the φόρος is always mentioned. On the other hand, it is interesting to find that wherever the ἀναφορίου is mentioned in the contracts of rent of Olive-groves: ταῖς διὰ τοῦ ἀναφορίου σου προθεσνιαῖς ἀκολουθῶς (P.Cair. Mus. S.R.3049/37; ZPE,50,1985; P. 82), no other stipulations are mentioned. Wherever there is no mention of ἀναφορίου either the measure of the granary of the village or the ἀνυπόλογος καὶ ἀκίνδυνος, or both are mentioned (PSI. inv. Cap. 371, YCS,XXVIII, P. 95 sqq.; P. Philadelphia 12; Taubenschlag, haw, P. 357 sqq.) This may be an evidence of official control in a way or another on the crops of the olive-groves for the sake of oil. It should be noticed also that the ἀναφορίου was mentioned

in the case of φόρος in money (ZPE, 50, P. 82); while the measure of the village granary and the stipulation ἀνυπόλογο καὶ ἀκίνδυνος are mentioned in the case of the ἐκφόριον (YCS, XXVIII; P. Philadelphia 12). This ἐκφόριον was considered as ἑξαίρετων i.e. extra payment. What was the nature of this extra payment is uncertain. One may ask whether this extra payment is kind or the rent in money was to cover the requirements of the government.

The monopoly was developed in some kind of liturgy in various places when there was a need for that. In a lease of oil press from Socnopaeou Nesos (SPP.XXII. 177), the lessee pays the diploma of the priests on condition that he is exempt from the sales tax. Only he had his agent have the right to sell oil in the village where mill is located. It is expected that the lessee of an oil mill, who presented a petition to the strategus of the Arsinoite nome, was also a rental retail (W.Chr. 176. A.D.64). Marcus Antistius Capitolinus applied to the nomarch of Arsinoite nome to be conceded the right to retail all the oil in one factory at the village of Heraclea in the division of Themistes. Capitolinus is to pay to the account of the tax on sales on behalf of the whole year and the government charges on other accounts falling upon him. Capitolinus admits that the right resting with the nomarch to make fresh lease with other persons whenever the nomarch chooses (P.Amh. 92=W. Chr. 311.A.D. 162-3) . P. Amh. 92 shows, in fact, the practical attitude of the Roman administration towards the exploitation of the materials which were under the Ptolemaic monopoly: Private individuals were able to get the licence to press oil and sell it but they had to pay to the government and to work under control. In

certain circumstances the government resorted to liturgy, a practice which was gradually increased since the second century A.D. In a declaration by Aurelius Theodorus, seller of fine oil, he undertakes by oath to the strategus of Oxyrhynchus that he will provide daily in factory which he possesses in the market place fine oil for sale and service of the city (P. Oxy. 1455. A.D. 275). Farmers of the monopoly, at any rate, are met at work in Oxyrhynchus in the 3rd - 4th century A.D. (P. XV Congr. 20 Bruxelles, 1979, n.1.1., ed. by A.H.S.El-Mosallamy). This is attested by the fact that Nepheros received the quota of olive oil of the present month:

Νεφε[ρός] απέσχε τὸν ἐλαίον τοῦ ἐνε[στ]ῶ [τός] μηνός

.....]
]σοι ελ[.....
]γλυκ[ελ.....

5 τούτους τρ ±¹³ Letters νομ...

τ]αῦτα ἀγοράσαι • ἀποστέλις ἐκὶ Πρ[ό-]

μον ὡς γαὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν • καλῶς

ποιήσης μ[ελ]ησέτω σὺ περὶ ποιη-

των ἔργων σου • καλῶς ποιήσης

10 ἥτι ἂν εὐρῆς γλυκελέαν ταριχε-
 ῖσον μοι αὐτήν ἐπὶ χρήσο ἔφ' ἔ-

τους γλυκελέαν • καλῶς ποιήσης

ἂν δυνῆς μοι σκέψε παιδὶν εἶνα

ἔλθῃ ἐνγύς μου εἰς βαβελῶνα

15 ἐπὶ ἀποστέλλω ἀποφρὸν ἐνγυ'ς'
 ὑμῶν χάρις τῆς ἐλέας • μὴ οὖν

ἀμελήσης ζητῆσαι ὡς ἕνα

εὐρῆς μοι καὶ ἀποστελῶν Πρόμον

ἔ]χοντα αὐτὸν μοί· ἐπισκοποῦμαι
 20 τ]ὰ παιδιά μου· ἀποστέλις μοι μέτρο-
 ητον [νε]ας ἑλληνικῆς ἐλάας εἶνα θλάσω
 ·]μο[...]υσαν· ἄθυρ α γίνω αὐτό·

6·ἀποστέλεις 7·γέ 8·ποιήσει 10·γλυκελαίαν
 11·ἐπεὶ , χρήζω 12·παιδίον , ἵνα 14·ἐγγύς
 15·ἐπεὶ 16·ἐλαίας 22·γενου

"..... to buy them. Send Promus there at least for their sake.
 Please, do care by yourself for all your work. You do also good
 if you fetch sweet olive and preserve it in salt for me since I need
 sweet olive in the current year. Please, if you can fetch for me a
 boy in order to come into Babylon since I send Apophrus beside you
 for the sake of the olive-grove. Do not neglect to search in order
 to find even one for me and to send Promus accompanying him to me.
 I am supervising my boys. Send me a measure of new greek olive
 in order to bruise it1st of Hathyr, let this be done".

1-3. is a separate piece by the same hand.

10. ητι : the letters are clear. ητε : "surely may be intended. Otherwise, η τι "which ever". At any rate, no grammatical parallel is available, but cf. F.T. Gignac, XII Intern. Congr. Pap. P. 142.

ταριχε σου : This is , as far as I am aware, the second example of the Papyri about pickling olives (cf. R.Ryl. 231.

5.1st cent. A.D.) : καὶ τὴν ἑλᾶν(αιάν) μοι ταριχεύσας (and P. Brit. Mus. 893. A.D. 40): ἐπεὶ τρυγῶ Although P.Ryl. 231 does not show trace of monopoly, we know that the right of pickling meat and selling it in Theadelphia required an application to the epiteretai. The concession is to last one year (see G.M. Browne, XII Intern. Congr. of Pap., P. 64 sqq.). In PSI. 692 the grant of the right to sell and pickle was from the ἀσχολοῦ[μενος τὴν παντο]πωλικὴν καὶ ταριχιρὰν [καὶ ἄλλας ὄνας (cf. XII Intern. Congr. Pap., P. 66). The addressor of our document was selling and pickling olives and , besides, had an agent who might be a sublessee. Consequently, he is expected to have official permission. 10-11 . γλυκελέαν : It is not certain whether this meant a standard or kind of olive. This word is infrequent in the Papyri (P.Oxf. 18.2; P Ryl. 231.5) SB. 5747.8. cf. H.I. Bell, Jews and Christians in Egypt, no 15). Standard of olive could be perceived from ἑλαιῶν ἐκλεκτῆς μελαίνης (P. Philadelphia 12); τὰς ἑλαίας τὰς καλὰς (P.Hib.49.12); ἐλαίου λευκοῦ (Zen. Caire 59013. 12).

13. παιδίον : either παιδίον or proper name Παιδίς which is not attested in the Papyri, cf. Παιδιών (SB.6543).

14. Βαβυλῶν τοῦ Ἡλιοπολίτου νομοῦ (P. Hamb. 2.3): may the origin of the document.

15. Ἀποφρύς : this proper name is not attested in the Papyri.

18. Πρόμος : cf. SB. 1016.8.1st cent. A.D. But also Προμου (O. Tait. 1762. Roman epoch).

20-21. μετρητον [ἐν] α ἑλληνικῆς ἐλέας : There is some peculiarity about the measure. In an application to lease an olive yard the sent amounts to 15 metretae: φόρου ἐλαίου μετρή(των) δεκαπέντε (P. ryl. ii. 97.A.D. 139 P.XV. Congr. 20:8). But in a lease of vine and Palm grove, the lessee pays καὶ ἐλαιῶν ἐκλεκτῆς μελαίνης ἀρτάβας ἡμισυ μέτρῳ τῷ αὐτῷ (P. Philadelphia 12.15-17). Another Person pays for the custom house ἐλέας ἀρτάβας τρεῖς (Pap. de Gen. 112. 4.2nd 3rd cent A.D.). One expects that μέτρητον is used to measure oil and ἀρτάβην is used for olive. In SB. 5747.8: (κεράμιον) γλεκελεῶν where both γλεκελαίον and γλυκελαία are suggested. About the usage of ἐλαιας ἀρτάβας cf. Pap. de Gen. 112. 4n. 2nd 3rd cent. A.D.)

21. ἑλληνικὴ ἐλέα(αία) There is a Variaty of the kinds of olive in Egypt. It seems that Egypt imported olives from various countries. So ἐλαιῶν ἑλληνικῶν πεταλιάς Zen. Cairo 59544. 2.3rd cent. B.C. ἡ γὰρ ἐλαία ἡ ἄφρικανή

P. Bad. 42.12. 2nd cent. A.D.). But there are ἐλαίου Αἴγ(υπτίου)
 (P. Tebt. 887.4. 2nd cent. B.C.); ἐλαίου ὅς [υρυγχων.....
 (P. Tebt. 932.4. 2nd cent. B.C.) and ἐλέας Μενδησίας
 (P. Ross. 11.8. 145. 2nd cent. A.D. ; see Johnson, Roman Egypt
 P. 352 f.).

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