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P.GRENF. II 23: A NEW EDITION

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P.GRENF. II 23: A NEW EDITION*

P.Grenf. II 23 (British Museum papyrus 656) has been known for a century;¹ an improved text has been available since 1912, when the document was incorporated into WILCKEN's *Chrestomathie* (no. 159). The text is short and straightforward, and its general drift is not in doubt: it is a typical Ptolemaic letter transmitting orders from a high authority to those actually charged with carrying those orders out, beginning with the nearest transmittal letter and ending with the original order. In our case, the instructions originate with a διοικητής Ptolemaios,² who orders the payment of cash and grain (totals of 34 talents and 100 artabas of wheat are mentioned) in connection with two ships on an official grain-hauling expedition.

The text itself poses few serious problems, with the exception of the proper restoration of a lost numeral in l. 14 and the resolution of a difficult abbreviation in ls. 6, 14 and 21. Nevertheless, a new examination of the papyrus seems warranted, not merely for the sake of the few corrections which can be made to the edition in *W.Chr.*, but because the document has been used in recent studies of the function of the Ptolemaic ναύκληρος³ in such a way as to misstate its actual meaning. Specifically, the claims that the text authorizes an expenditure of 68 talents; that the sums mentioned were paid to the vessels' owner; that the owner can be identified with a certain Pamphilos,⁴ who is repeatedly mentioned in the text; and that the payment was intended either as compensation for services rendered or for the use of the vessel, are simply inconsistent with the actual wording of the document. Rather, the text should be taken at face value: a payment of 34 talents, not 68, was authorized; this sum was paid in the first instance to no fewer than two persons, who probably did not include Pamphilos; Pamphilos was probably not the owner of these ships; and the exact nature of the payments cannot be certainly determined. It should be made clear at the outset that I have not seen the original papyrus, but am basing my remarks on the text given in *W.Chr.*, collated with a photo provided by the British Library. WILCKEN's text is in the main followed below, with some formatting and convention adjustments, with the papyrus' short Demotic docket added, and with minor reading corrections in ls. 14 and 21. The only substantive corrections are in l. 14, where I argue that the numeral to be restored is β rather than WILCKEN's δ; and in ls. 6, 14 and 21, where I adopt a suggestion made by Prof. Dr. Dieter HAGEDORN as to the reading of an abbreviation in these lines which, up until now, has resisted decipherment.

Recto

Tafel V

- 1 Ἐρμίας Δημητρίωι χαίρειν. Τοῦ παρ' Ἐρμόνακτος τῶν ὁμοτίμων
 2 τοῖς συ[γγ]ενέσι καὶ ὑποδιοικητοῦ χρηματισμοῦ ἀντίγραφον
 3 ὑπόκειται. Κατακολουθήσας οὖν τοῖς δι' αὐτοῦ σημαينوμένοις
 4 χρημάτισον ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν Παθῦρει τραπέζης, συνυπο-

* My sincere thanks to Prof. Roger BAGNALL of Columbia University for his comments and suggestions in the course of this article's preparation. The article was also read through to my advantage by Mr. Thomas DOUSA of the University of Chicago.

¹ In B.P. GRENFELL and A.S. HUNT, *New Classical Fragments and other Greek and Latin Papyri* (Oxford, 1897).

² *Pros. Ptol.* I 43. The final grain disbursement is dated to Year 9, Pachon 16; if GRENFELL and HUNT were correct in ascribing the text to Ptolemy IX Soter II (Ptolemy X by their count), then the date corresponds to June 1, 108 BCE.

³ J. VÉLISSAROPOULOS, *Les nauclères grecs (Hautes études du monde gréco-romain 9, Paris, 1980)*, p. 53, n. 234; p. 283, with n. 66; p. 291, n. 106; p. 354 (with WILCKEN's text duplicated, titled "Ordre de paiement du fret"); P. VERDULT, *P.Erasmiana II, Parts of the Archive of an Arsinoite Sitologos from the Middle of the Second Century BC (Studia Amstelodamensia ad Epigraphicam, Ius Antiquum et Papyrologicam Pertinentia XXXII, Amsterdam, 1991)*, pp. 149-50.

⁴ *Pros. Ptol.* I 99, classed among subordinates of the *dioiketai*. For Pamphilos as "owner", cf. VÉLISSAROPOULOS, *supra* n. 3, pp. 53, n. 234 and p. 283, with n. 66; also VERDULT, *supra* n. 3, p. 149.

- 5 γράφοντος Φίβιος τοῦ βασιλικοῦ γραμματέως, τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν δηλουμένων⁵
 6 πλοίων [ἐκ]άστου χ(αλκοῦ) (τάλαντα) τριάκοντα τέσσαρα (γίνονται) τὸ π(ᾶν)⁶ (τάλαντα)
 λδ καὶ σύμβολον καὶ
 7 ἀντισύμβολον ποιῆσαι ὡς καθήκει.
 8 Ἔρρωσο. (Ἔτους) θ Παχῶν ιϛ.
 9 Ἐρμῶναξ Ἐρμία χαίρειν. Τοῦ παρὰ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ συγγενοῦς καὶ
 10 διοικητοῦ χρηματισ[μ]οῦ ἀντίγραφον ὑπόκειται. Κατακολουθήσας οὖν
 11 τοῖς δι' αὐ[τ]οῦ σημαינוμένοις χρημάτισον ἐκ τοῦ Λατοπολίτου
 12 ἀκολούθως τοῖς συντε[ταγ]μένοις, συνυπογράφοντος καὶ Φίβιος τοῦ βασιλ' ἰ' κοῦ
 13 γραμματέ[ως] τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν Πα[μ]φίλου πλοίων β [ἐ]κ[ά]στῳ τ[οῦ] μη(νός) (τάλαντα) η Ἰ
 14 πυροῦ (ἀρτάβας) κε τὰ αἰροῦντα [β μ]η(νῶν) (τάλαντα) λδ, (πυροῦ) ἀνη(λωτικὰ)⁷ (ἀρτά-
 βας) ρ (γίνονται) τὸ π(ᾶν) (τάλαντα) λδ (πυροῦ) ἀνη(λωτικὰ)⁷ (ἀρτάβας) ρ καὶ
 15 σύμβολον καὶ ἀντισύβολ[ον] ποιῆσαι ὡς καθήκει.
 16 (Ἔτους) θ Φαρμούθι ε.
 17 Πτολεμαῖος Ἐρμῶνακ[τι] χαίρειν. Τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν συνπλεόντων
 18 Παμφίλωι τῷ παρ' ἡμ[ῶν] προκεχειρισμένωι ἐπὶ τὸν ἐπισπου-
 19 δασμὸν τοῦ πυροῦ πλοίων δύο χρημάτιζε κατὰ μῆνα, ἐφ' ὅσον ἂν
 20 χρόνον περὶ τὸ προκείμενον ἦ ἐκάσ[τ]ωι τοῦ μη(νός) (τάλαντα) η Ἰ, (πυροῦ ἀρτάβας) κε
 21 (γίνονται) τὸ π(ᾶν) χ(αλκοῦ)⁸ (τάλαντα) η Ἰ, (πυροῦ) κε.
 22 (Ἔτους) θ Χοιάχ κδ.
 (Second hand)
 23 Χρη(μάτισον) χαλκοῦ (τάλαντα) τριά[κ]οντα τέσσαρα (γίνονται) (τάλαντα) λδ. (Ἔτους) θ
 Παχῶν ιϛ.
 (Third hand)
 24 Φίβις. Χρη(μάτισον) χαλκοῦ (τάλαντα) τριάκοντα τέσσαρα (γίνονται) (τάλαντα) λδ.
 25 (Ἔτους) θ Παχῶν ιϛ.

Verso

26 Δημητρίωι


(Demotic) *p' ghrmtysmws*⁹

Translation

Recto

Hermias to Demetrios, greetings. A copy of the payment order from Hermonax, one of those equal in rank to the συγγενεῖς and ὑποδιοικητής, is appended. Complying with what is therein indicated, pay, from the bank in Pathyris, with Phibis the royal clerk cosigning, thirty-four talents (makes in all (?) 34 talents) to those upon each of the indicated boats, and produce a receipt and counter-receipt as is proper. Farewell. Year 9, Pachon 16.

⁵ Reading WILCKEN. GRENFELL and HUNT read ἀναγομένων.

⁶ My thanks to Prof. HAGEDORN for suggesting the resolution of the abbreviation . WILCKEN did not offer a reading; GRENFELL and HUNT suggested τοῦ μ(ηνός), a reading rightly rejected by WILCKEN as giving poor sense in context. As Prof. HAGEDORN points out, some expression for “all together” or “in all” is certainly to be expected here.

⁷ I owe the resolution of the abbreviation to Prof. BAGNALL. WILCKEN: ἀνη(ριθμημένου).

⁸ Inadvertently untranscribed in *W.Chr.*

⁹ The Demotic writing *ghrmtysmws* is simply an alphabetic transcription of χρηματισμός. For a short discussion of the Demotic docket, see W. SPIEGELBERG, “Demotische Miszellen,” *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 53 (1917), p. 123, no. 6.

Hermonax to Hermias, greetings. A copy of the payment order from Ptolemaios, the συγγενής and διοικητής, is appended. Complying with what is therein indicated, pay, from the Latopolite (nome), according to what has been ordered, with Phibis the royal clerk cosigning, to those upon the two boats of Pamphilos, to each 8 talents, 3,000 drachmas and 25 artabas of wheat per month, the total for [2] months making 34 talents, the expenditures of wheat, 100 artabas, which makes in all (?) 34 talents, the expenditures of wheat, 100 artabas; and produce a receipt and counter-receipt as is proper. Year 9, Pharmouthi 5.

Ptolemaios to Hermonax, greetings. To those upon the two boats sailing with Pamphilos, who has been appointed by us to expedite the grain, pay each month, for however long the said (operation) shall require, to each per month 8 copper talents, 3,000 drachmas and 25 artabas of wheat (makes in all (?) 8 talents, 3,000 drachmas, of wheat 25 artabas). Year 9, Choiach 24.

(Second hand)

Pay thirty-four copper talents (makes 34 talents). Year 9, Pachon 16.

(Third hand)

Phibis. Pay thirty-four copper talents (makes 34 talents). Year 9, Pachon 16.

Verso

To Demetrios

(Demotic) The payment order

Discussion

A number of problems present themselves in the interpretation of this text. How much was to be paid, to whom, and for what purpose? It is unfortunate that the third and final payment order (that is, the first order in the extant papyrus, Hermias' instructions to Demetrios) is worded ambiguously: as VÉLISSAROPOULOS appears to have concluded, χρημάτισον ... τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν δηλουμένων πλοίων [ἐκ] ἄστου χ(αλκοῦ) (τάλαντα) τριάκοντα τέσσαρα does sound as if the intended payment was 34 talents per ship, which would imply a total expenditure of 68 talents.¹⁰ This sum, however, appears nowhere in the text; and if Prof. HAGEDORN's suggested reading of the problematic abbreviation in this line is correct (see note 6 above), then, despite any ambiguity arising from Hermias' erroneous construction of "each" with πλοίων rather than with τοῖς, it cannot be doubted that the cash total authorized by our document is "in all 34 talents." A straightforward reading of Hermias' instructions from Hermonax the ὑποδιοικητής only strengthens this conclusion. Hermonax unambiguously directs Hermias to spend the total (τὰ αἰροῦντα) of 34 talents and 100 artabas, calculated on the basis of 8.5 talents cash and 25 artabas of grain per ship per month, over a lost number of months. Finally, the text's subscriptions specifically direct the disbursement of 34, not 68, talents.¹¹ In short, the only possible conclusion is that the payments of 34 talents and 100 artabas indeed comprise the total for the entire expedition, or at least the portion of it with which this document is concerned. The acceptance of 34 talents as the total payment intended by our text leads to a further conclusion: WILCKEN's restoration of "δ" for the number of months covered by the payments is incorrect. Rather, given the known rate of payment (8.5 talents cash and 25 artabas of wheat per ship per month), the number of ships (two), and the totals given, the number of months involved must be two, not four.¹²

¹⁰ *Supra* n. 3, p. 284: "... Pamphilos percevra la somme globale de trente-quatre talents de cuivre par navire, qui correspond au fret dû pour ces quatre mois."

¹¹ Hermias' letter does not order Demetrios to disburse the 100 artabas of grain, and grain is not mentioned in our document's subscriptions. Presumably the final order to release the grain was drafted separately and directed to a granary official.

¹² It may not be irrelevant to note that fewer than four months elapsed between issuance of the initial order from Ptolemaios' office, in which a rate of payment is authorized but no time period is specified and no final total given, and the order from the office of the ὑποδιοικητής Hermonax, which specifies the number of months for which payment was due and the precise totals to be expended: from Choiach 24 to Pharmouthi 5, or three months, 11 days.

The more difficult problem is, to whom were the payments to be made, and for what purpose(s)? VÉLISSAROPOULOS understood the cash and grain to be intended as a payment to Pamphilos, in her view the owner of the vessels, for work performed for the state (i.e., as a payment for services rendered under an ἐργολαβία-agreement).¹³ Unsatisfied with this conclusion, VERDULT proposed instead that the cash and grain were to go to Pamphilos as a simple vessel rental payment.¹⁴ Neither of these interpretations finds support in the text. Ptolemaios the διοικητής' words are clear: the payment is not intended for any single individual, but rather "to those upon the two ships sailing with Pamphilos." Some variation of this formula — always with a dative plural — appears in each version of the order. This clearly means that the payment was intended to be made to multiple recipients.

My initial inclination had been to understand the phrase "those upon the two ships" as a reference to "those aboard the two ships," i.e., the ships' companies in their entirety. However, it seems far more likely, as GRENFELL and HUNT appear to have concluded, that Ptolemaios used the preposition ἐπί in its technical sense of a person "in command" of a boat.¹⁵ Thus, "each of those on the two boats" would likely have referred to only one person on each vessel, probably the respective κυβερνήται.¹⁶ Ptolemaios' intention was, then, to authorize payment "to each of the captains of the two boats." Each of these men would have received the full monthly payment due for the vessel in his charge, sums which would have been immediately re-expended for whatever costs the payments were intended to cover.

What those expenses were is the question we would like most to be able to answer, but on which the text is unfortunately silent. It can at least be said that the monthly total of 51,000 drachmas per ship was no princely sum; if these payments were meant to cover taxes, owners' shares, wages for captain and crew and operational expenses, they may actually be on the low side. The price of wheat at this time may have been something like 1,300 drachmas per artaba,¹⁷ so the 51,000 drachmas shared out monthly aboard each ship might have purchased about 39 artabas (approx. 983 kg.). With the additional monthly in-kind disbursement of 25 artabas of wheat, the value of these payments may have been the equivalent of a modest 64 artabas (approx. 1.6 metric tons) of wheat per month per ship. In the early Ptolemaic period, monthly wages alone for a freighter crew might come to 32.5 drachmas, nominally the price of a like number of artabas of wheat.¹⁸ If a ship was owned by an investor, his share of the profits might be equal to (if not double!) the crew's share;¹⁹ taxes²⁰ and operational expenses²¹ also potentially consumed significant portions of the gross.

¹³ *Supra* n. 3, p. 283.

¹⁴ See *supra* n. 3, p. 150.

¹⁵ In their introduction (p. 41), they remark without elaboration that the payment was to "those in charge of the two boats accompanying Pamphilos ..."

¹⁶ See the observations of H. HAUBEN, "An Annotated List of Ptolemaic Naukleroi with a Discussion of BGU X 1933," *ZPE* 8 (1971), p. 261, n. 11. It is probably less likely that ναύκληροι are meant, although a note in Wilhelm SPIEGELBERG's handwriting in his own copy of *W.Chr.*, now in the collection of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute research archives, raises this possibility; SPIEGELBERG attributed the suggestion to "Preis.," evidently Friedrich PREISIGKE. It was, of course, possible that a Nile freighter might have more than one κυβερνήτης (Egyptian *nf*) aboard; for discussion, see S. VINSON, *The Nile Boatman at Work, 1200 BCE – 400 CE*, forthcoming in *Münchener Ägyptologische Untersuchungun*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁷ The rough average of late-2nd century and 1st century BCE prices quoted in T. REEKMANS "The Ptolemaic Copper Inflation," (*Studia Hellenistica* 7, 1951, Leuven), pp. 111-12 and in K. MARESCH, *Bronze und Silber (Papyrologica Coloniensia* 25, 1996, Opladen), p. 182.

¹⁸ See P.Cairo Zenon IV 59649, ls. 4-7: 10 drachmas per month for the captain, 7.5 drachmas per month for each of three ναῦται; the text itself assumes the price of wheat to be one drachma per artaba. Note, however, that actual prices quoted from the early Ptolemaic period suggest that the price of wheat was often higher, between 1.5 and three drachmas per artaba; see the summary of prices provided in MARESCH, *supra* n. 17, p. 181.

¹⁹ See P.Mich. I 60, ls. 4-6, in which the captain says the crew object to sailing on the basis a one-third share (ἐπὶ τρίτῳ μέρει, presumably meaning one-third of the profits to the crew, two-thirds for the owner) and wish to operate on a

If any weight is to be given to negative evidence, however, it may be observed that there is no mention in P.Grenf. II 23 of a ναῦλον, i.e., a freight fee as such, and likewise no indication that the payment — as would have been usual for ναῦλον payments on a bulk cargo like grain — was calculated on the basis of freight volume. These omissions would be understandable if the vessels had not been chartered for this particular voyage, but were rather leased on a long-term basis or owned outright by the office of the διοικητής itself. Under those circumstances, the only immediate expenses connected with these shipments would be those for the crew, operational costs and *per diem* for official passengers.

Finally, whatever the status of these ships *vis-à-vis* the office of the διοικητής may have been, there is little likelihood that Pamphilos was their owner. Ptolemaios' original order gives every impression that Pamphilos was to be present on one of the vessels — at least, the text says specifically that the two ships were “sailing with Pamphilos.” If Pamphilos was a wealthy investor who owned freighters but was not a boat captain himself, it seems almost inconceivable that he would have somehow taken part in the actual work of shipping grain. One might wish to see Pamphilos as an owner-operator,²² but the fact that he stands apart from the group which actually receives payments seems to me to be a powerful argument against such an interpretation. The fact that Pamphilos was responsible in some way for the cargo of grain might suggest that he was a ναύκληρος;²³ but if so, it is curious that this word never appears and that he has no visible part in arranging payment for the captains.

It should be remembered, however, that Pamphilos had been personally assigned by the διοικητής to “expedite” the grain shipment. As Prof. BAGNALL was kind enough to point out in discussion of this

half-share system (ἐφ' ἡμισέαι). In P.Cairo Zenon IV 59753, the owner and (probably) the κυβερνήτης do in fact split both income and expenses (exclusive of wages) on a 50-50 basis. An analogous system of a 50-50 split of revenues and expenses is seen in early medieval Egypt, in Coptic ostrakon OMH 82 (E. STEFANSKI and M. LICHTHEIM, *Coptic Ostraca from Medinet Habu, The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications LXXI*, Chicago, 1952; for this ostrakon see the improved readings in W. TILL, “Zu den *Coptic Ostraca from Medinet Habu*,” *Orientalia* 24, 1955, pp. 151-52). This text is a short shipping contract for a trip from the Thebaid to Antinoe. It appears as though the arrangement actually makes the captain and charterer into temporary partners; after the captain has collected his freight fee (18 gold karats, or 3/4 solidus) from the charterer, additional revenues from passengers and any operational expenses incurred en route are to be shared between the two parties on a 50-50 basis.

²⁰ See P.Petrie III 107, *passim* (50 percent tax against vessel income implied) and P.Cairo Zenon IV 59649 vs., l. 35 (33 percent tax implied).

²¹ Cf. P.Cairo Zenon IV 59753. The text gives the freight fee earned and expenses paid out on three runs: Aphroditopolis or Memphis to Herakleopolis (ls. 3-13), in which the ship grossed 39 drachmas on a freight of 900 artabas, and paid out 13 drachmas in expenses; Herakleopolis to Busiris (ls. 14-22), in which the ship earned 31 drachmas, three obols on a freight of 940 artabas, and paid out expenses of 13 drachmas, three obols; and Busiris to Aphroditopolis (ls. 22-47), in which the ship earned 28 drachmas and paid out expenses of 6 drachmas, 5 1/4 obols. Thus, for these voyages, operational expenses exclusive of wages consumed approximately 25 to 33 percent of the gross. For a list of routine expenses a captain might incur while underway, see P.Cairo Zenon IV 59753, ls. 25ff.; other underway expenses might include wages for stevedores (e.g., P.Oxy. III 522, ls. 7-8), or hauliers in case of breakdown (P.Magd. 37+11 = W.Chr. 442).

²² For owner-operation in the Graeco-Roman period, see, e.g., P.Col., III 47, ls. 2-3 (Zenon archive), in which the unnamed writer reports that wood has been loaded into “my boat” (τὸ ἐμὸν πλοῖον); it sounds as though the writer is actually its operator, although this is not absolutely certain. Owner-operation appears certain in P.Flor. I 75, ls. 8-12 (380 CE), in which a ναύκληροκυβερνήτης of a private boat acknowledges receipt of grain loaded εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν πλοῖον. See also P.Grenf. I 49 (W.Chr. 248), from the early third century CE. In this text, evidently a declaration of property-ownership for tax purposes, a father describes himself as the κυβερνήτης (sic) of a Ἑλληνικόν-vessel of 250 artabas' capacity belonging to his minor son (τῷ ἀφῆλικί μου υἱῷ). The Roman-period contract P.Iand. 616+245 (in P. J. SUPESTEIJN and K. WOPP, “Documents on Transportation by Ship,” *ZPE* 20, 1976, pp. 157ff.) also suggests owner-operation: in this charter agreement, the two lessors are also said to own the boat, and the language of the contract implies that they were expected to operate the vessel personally. For possible or probable owner-operation in Egyptian-language documentation, see Demotic ostraca BM 20045 (no. 105 in U. KAPLONY-HECKEL, *Die demotischen Tempelsteine, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* 6, Wiesbaden, 1963) and Louvre 10305 (KAPLONY-HECKEL 104).

²³ Cf. the remarks of H. HAUBEN, “Nouvelles remarques sur les nauclères d'Égypte à l'époque des Lagides,” *ZPE* 28 (1978), pp. 105-106.

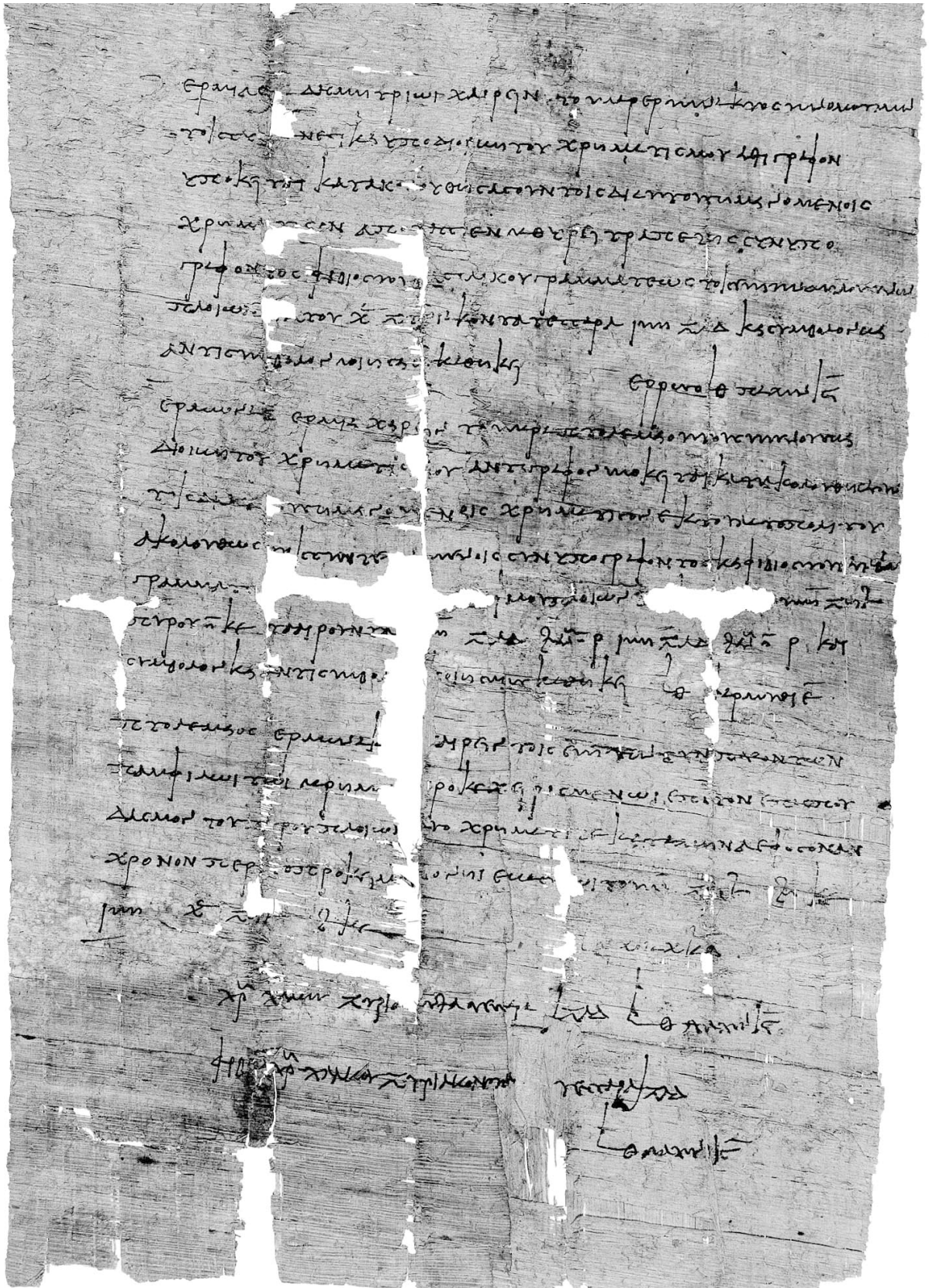
text, this points to someone acting in an official capacity, not to a ship-owner or captain. Perhaps a plausible guess would be that Pamphilos was acting as personal representative of the διοικητής, whose authority he was to bring to bear on some local problem: to break through bottlenecks or to straighten out bureaucratic tangles of one sort or another.

Thus, P.Grenf. II 23 has little to say about ναύκληροι, έργολαβία-agreements, vessel ownership or late Ptolemaic rates for hauling freight or leasing vessels. On the other hand, the text may throw a bit of light on one method by which captains and crews might be compensated, and on one type of relationship which might exist between a captain and a bureaucrat whose mission he was supporting. The cash and *in-natura* payments appear to have been approved at the governmental level and (probably) handed over directly to the κυβερνήται of the two ships (i.e., not to Pamphilos, nominally in charge of the mission), presumably to allocate according to their own arrangements with their crews, their suppliers, and, if applicable, the owners of the ships. In this respect, the relationships reflected in our papyrus are not unlike those traceable in the Ramesside P.Turin 1894+2006+1895 (the “Turin Taxation Papyrus”), likewise the record of a bureaucrat (the 20th-Dynasty necropolis scribe *Dḥwty-ms*) in charge of a two-vessel fleet on a mission to haul grain.²⁴

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²⁴ See S. VINSON, “In Defense of an Ancient Reputation,” *Göttinger Miszellen* 146 (1995), pp. 93ff.



P. Grenf. II, 23 (British Museum Papyrus 656); S. Vinson, pp. 197–202
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