

XII.—Two Customs House Receipts from Egypt

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A small group of customs house receipts, many with seals attached, were found in Egypt at Dime, the ancient Soknopaiou Nesos, and were edited by Boak in his report on the excavations of the University of Michigan at that site.¹ He paid particular attention to the seals, which had heretofore received little notice, although many receipts of the same type had been published.² Two other customs receipts from the Michigan collection of papyri that are of some interest with respect to the sealing are presented here.

PMICH. INV. 6152

This papyrus, which was rolled and folded to an oblong 3.3×1.5 cm., tightly tied by a dozen turns of papyrus thread secured by a small clay seal, was not opened at the time that it was found and was therefore not published. It has since been photographed in its original condition, and, on being unfolded, proved to be a small document, 6.3×3.7 cm. in size, containing a receipt for the three per cent tax, the $\rho' \kappa\alpha\iota \nu'$, a local impost collected at the village gate by the customs officials.³ It is of the same form as those published by Boak, except that it lacks a date, but the other documents were not tied and the seals were simply affixed to the margin of the papyrus. The seal on No. 6152 is very small and bears no stamp, governmental or personal. There are two heavy lines drawn in red ink vertically through the five lines of the text, and it is possible that these may constitute an official mark of validation, intended to take the place of the regular seal.⁴ It is interesting to note in this

¹ A. E. R. Boak, *Soknopaiou Nesos; the University of Michigan Excavations at Dime in 1931-32* (Ann Arbor 1935) pp. 23-33.

² Boak (above, note 1) lists the published documents in which the seals have been described in more or less detail.

³ For a discussion of this impost and a list of receipts see Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian* (*Princeton Studies in Papyrology*, ed. A. C. Johnson, 2, 1938) pp. 268-271 and note 67 on p. 466. Additional receipts are *PAberd.* 41 a-j, *PMerton* 20, and *PRein.* 2.95.

⁴ On the use of red ink in official documents see Wilcken, *Chrest.*, p. 450; Schubart, *Einführung in die Papyruskunde* (Berlin 1918), p. 44; A. E. R. Boak, "Select Papyri from Karanis," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, 29 (1929) 60.

connection that in some receipts the seal is replaced by a cross or series of crosses.⁵

TEXT

τελωνῖται διὰ πύλ(ης)
 Σοκροπαίου ρ καὶ ν
 Σώτας ἐξ(άγων) πυρὸν εἰς
 Αὔασιν κάμηλον
 ἕνα, πῶλον ἕνα.

1. τελωνῖται for τελωνεῖται; the perfect tense is regularly used, τετελώνηται.

2. Αὔασιν: more commonly written Ὀασιν, although this form occurs a few times. Either the Small Oasis or the Oasis of Ammon may be meant; the former is nearer to the Fayum, but Grenfell and Hunt (*PGrenf.* II, 50b, note) consider the latter to be more probable, since the route to the Small Oasis would more naturally start from the southwest than from villages in the northern part of the Fayum.

TRANSLATION

Paid through the customs house of Soknopaios, the three per cent tax; Sotas exporting wheat to the oasis, one camel, one colt.

PMICH. INV. 5763

A similar receipt from the customs house at Karanis was found during the excavations conducted there by the University in 1929. The text is of no particular interest, following the normal pattern of receipts for the tax levied for the support of the desert guard, which offered protection against brigands along the caravan routes.⁶ The papyrus, which measures 6.5 × 6 cm., is badly broken and defaced, but presents no special problem in decipherment. The seal, of gray clay, was attached at the lower left corner by being pressed while damp against the surface of the papyrus and forced through a small hole, the same method employed in the Dime receipts.

As is customary the date is given by regnal year alone without the name of the emperor. On the basis of the hand the document is certainly to be dated in the late second or early third century, and, since the year is the twentieth, two emperors must be con-

⁵ See, for example, *BGU* 762 and 882, and *PMerton* 20.

⁶ On the ἐρημοφυλακία, or ἰχνος ἐρημοφυλακίας, both of which terms are used for the same levy, see Wallace (above, note 3) pp. 272–3 and note 82 on pp. 467–8. To the list of receipts given in the note may be added *PAberd.* 37–39, 42 a–h.

sidered, Marcus Aurelius with Commodus, whose twentieth year fell in 179/80 A.D., or Caracalla, the twentieth year of whose reign, calculated from the first year of Septimius Severus, was 211/12 A.D. The latter date is confirmed by the evidence of the seal, which is of more than usual interest.

The seal is well preserved except at the lower left edge, and shows two heads both facing to the right, one on the left and one in the center of the seal. The one which occupies the center is bearded. The right side of the seal is raised and smooth. This seal may be compared with those on three of the receipts published by Boak, Nos. 6, 8, and 11, on which appear the busts of the three emperors, Severus, bearded, in the center of the seal facing right, with one of his two sons, Caracalla, behind him also facing right, and the other, Geta, in front of him facing left. The seal on No. 6 is damaged, but the other two, Nos. 8 and 11, are intact. It is clear that the intaglio stone or ring from which the seal on the Karanis document was made had been filled in such a way as to obliterate the right hand portrait. At the top of the seal is the inscription, in two lines, ἐρημο[φ] | υλακ[λα], the bracketed letters having also been covered along with the right hand bust. Below on the left are three letters from a word that has been almost entirely broken away. The last letter is certainly a ν; we may perhaps read [K]αρ[α]ν[ις]. To the right of these letters and below the bearded figure is another object, shaped somewhat like a boot; it is certainly not the unidentified object that appears on the two Dime seals, Nos. 8 and 11.

Pauni the twenty-first in the twentieth year of the Severi fell on June 15, 212 A.D. In February of the same year Geta had been murdered by order of Caracalla, and, in accordance with the *memoriae damnatio* pronounced in a decree of the senate, his statues were destroyed and his name removed from all inscriptions. This decree is reflected in the papyri, in which not infrequently the name of Geta has been crossed out with heavy strokes of the pen; this was done in documents written of course prior to his assassination, but preserved until after that date.⁷ This seal is, apparently, the only one found as yet that has been altered to carry out the senatorial decree. The alteration of the seal was probably only a temporary measure to permit its being used until a new one could be prepared without the representation of the offending emperor. From the

⁷ For a list of documents from which the name of Geta has been deleted see *PMich.* 6.397.6-8, note.

seal it is possible to confirm the date of the receipt as 212 A.D. and not 180 A.D.

TEXT

τε(τελώνηται) διὰ πύ(λης) [K]αρ(ανίδος) ἵχνους
 ἔρημοφυλακίας
 [Ἀ]πολλωνίδης ἐξάγων
 λαχανοσπέρμου ὄν(ους) δέκα-
 5 δύ[ο] ιβ.
 (ἔτους) κ'' Παῦνι μιᾷ
 καὶ εἰκάδι, κα.

TRANSLATION

Paid through the customs house of Karanis for the guard on the desert route; Apollonides, exporting twelve, 12, donkey loads of vegetable seed. 20th year, Pauni the twenty-first, 21.