

A Jewish Landowner in Provincia Arabia

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This paper presents a Greek papyrus which was acquired by The Shrine of the Book from the estate of the late Yigael Yadin. It is published here with the kind permission of the respective authorities. Its contents strongly suggest that it was discovered in clandestine activity preceding the Israel Exploration Society's archeological work in the caves of the Judean desert.¹ Indeed, it may have come from the very "Cave of the Letters" in Naḥal Ḥever where Expedition D, led by Yadin, made such rich finds.²

As a fitting memorial, the papyrological abbreviation *P. Yadin* will henceforth be used to designate the documents found in the "Cave of the Letters". The largest group of those papyri, the Babatha archive, is now in press. Babatha, a Jewish woman, lived with her family in the first third of the second century in the village of Ma(h)oza, at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. That area was within the Nabatean kingdom until CE 106, when it was occupied by a Roman army and annexed to the Roman empire as the province of Arabia.

In *P. Yadin* 16 Babatha registers her ownership of four date-producing orchards in the provincial census of CE 127. The papyrus published below is a similar declaration for the same census by ———os son of Simon, from the

1 On such finds cf. e.g. *Revue biblique* 60 (1953) 19–20 and 85–86, 61 (1954) 161–82.

2 A detailed bibliography of the well-known Naḥal Ḥever finds is hardly called for here. Yadin's initial reports appeared in *Israel Exploration Journal* 11 (1961) 36–52 and 12 (1962) 227–57. Other articles followed, culminating in his summary for the general public, *Bar Kokhba* (Jerusalem and London, 1971).

P. Yadin 18 was published in *Israel Exploration Journal* 37 (1987) 229–250. The Greek documents of the Babatha archive are to be published in 1989.

same village of Maoza. These census declarations were drawn up in the form of double documents; for a detailed discussion of that subject the reader is referred to § II of the General Introduction of the Babatha volume. Both documents were drawn up in Rabbat, the ancient Moabite capital, and bear on their back the signatures, in Nabatean, of five witnesses.³

P. Yadin 16 is one of the best preserved documents of the Babatha archive; the reverse is true of the papyrus published below. In its present state it consists of one large (*a*) and many small fragments. As these latter are badly broken and abraded, they will demand much more work and time; it therefore seems advisable to publish the large fragment now. Textual restorations are assured by identical language in *P. Yadin* 16. The handwriting, a clear, skilled cursive, exhibits the general stylistic traits found in contemporary Greek documents from Dura-Europos and Egypt. The orthography is also typical of the period; in particular, the interchange of *ει* and *ι* occurs throughout and is not separately noted in the apparatus criticus (on that phenomenon in general cf. e.g. F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* I, pp. 189–91).

Frag. *a* c. 18 x 17.5 cm. 4 or 11 December 127

Inner Text

1 ἐγγεγραμμένον καὶ ἀντιβεβλημένον ἀντίγραφον ἀπογραφῆς προκιμένης
μεθ' ἐτέρων] ἐν τῇ ἐνθάδε βασιλικῇ, [οἱ] τὸ ἀντίγραφον ὑποτέτακται.

Outer Text

ἐ[γγ]ε[γρ]α[μ]μένον καὶ ἀντιβεβλημένον ἀντίγραφον ἀπογραφῆς
προκιμένης
μεθ' ἐτέρων ἐν τῇ ἐνθάδε βασιλικῇ, οὗ τὸ ἀντίγραφον ὑποτέτακται.
ἐπὶ Αὐτοκρά-
5 τ[ο]ρος Καίσαρος θεοῦ Τραιανοῦ Παρθικοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ Νέρουα υἱωνοῦ
Τραιανοῦ
'Αδριανοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ἀρχιερέως μεγίστου δη[μαρχ]ικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ
δωδέ-
κατον ὑπάτου τὸ τρίτον, ἐ]π[ι] ὑπάτων] Μάρκου Γα<ου>ίου
Γαλλικανοῦ καὶ Τίτου Ἀ-
τειλίου Ῥούφου] Τ[ιτ]ι[ανο]ῦ πρὸ τριῶν ἐ[ι]δῶν Δεκεμβρίων, κατὰ δὲ
τὸν τῆς
νέας ἐ]παρχείας] Ἀραβίας ἀριθμὸν ἔτους δευτέρου εικοστοῦ μηνὸς
'Απελαί-

3 These witnesses will be listed with the other Nabatean witnesses in the volume dealing with the Nabatean and Aramaic texts of the Babatha archive.

- 10 ου ὀκτοκαιδεκά[τη ἐν] Ῥαββαθμωβοις πόλει, ἀποτιμήσεως Ῥαββίας
 ἀγομένης
 ὑ[πὸ Τ]ί[τ]ου Ῥ[α]ββ[ι]νίου Σεξτίου] Φλωρεγτεινο[υ] πρεσβευτοῦ Σεβαστοῦ
 ἀγτιστρα-
 τήγου,ος Σίμων[ος] Μαωζηνὸς τῆς Ζοαρηνῆς περιμέτρου Πέτρας,
 οἰκῶν [ἐ]ν ἰδίῳ ἐν αὐτῇ Μαωζα, ἀπογράφομαι ἑμαυτὸν ἐτῶν τριάκοντα
 ...[.].γιον [ἐ]γιαύσιον μέρος ἡμισυ χώρας ἐν ὁρίῳ Μαωζων τῆς προ-
 15 γεγραμμένης λεγομένης Αρενοαραθα μετοχῆς τῆς πρὸς Ἰωνάθην
 Σίμωνος
 ὃ μέρος ἡμισύ ἐστιν σπόρου κρειθῆς σάτου ἐ[ν]ὸς κάβων τριῶν τελοῦν
 φόρου μέ-
 λαν ἐν λεπτὰ τεσσαράκοντα πέντε, γείτ[ον]ες Μαγαῆς Μαναῆ καὶ
 θάλασσα, μέ-
 ρος ἡμισυ κήπου φοινικῶνος ἐν ὁρίῳ [Μ]αωζων τῆς ἀ[ν]τι[σ]τή
 λεγομένου Χαφ-
 φ[.].α μ[ε]τοχῆς τῆς πρὸς Ἰωνάθην Σίμ[ων]ος ἀ[δ]ελ[φ]όν μου ὃ
 μέρος ἡμισύ ἐσ-
 τι]ν σπόρου κ[ρ]ειθῆς

1. 1, 3 ἐκγ-

1. 10 ὀκτω-

Translation

Outer Text

Verified exact copy of a registration displayed amongst others in the basilica here, the copy of which follows. In the reign of Imperator Caesar divi Traiani Parthici filius divi Nervae nepos Traianus Hadrianus Augustus pontifex maximus tribuniciae potestatis XII consul III, in the consulship of Marcus Gavius Gallicanus and Titus Atilius Rufus Titianus three days before the ides of December, and according to the compute of the new province of Arabia year twenty-second month Apellaios the eighteenth, in the city of Rabbath-of-Moab, a census of Arabia being conducted by Titus Aninius Sextius Florentinus legatus Augusti pro praetore, I, ---os son of Simon, of Maoza in the Zoarene [district] of the Petra administrative region, domiciled in my own private property in the said Maoza, register myself, thirty years old, [as owner of?] a yearly half share of a field called Arenoaratha within the boundaries of the aforesaid Maoza, in partnership with Jonathan son of Simon, which half share is [the area] of sowing one saton three kaboi of barley, paying as tax one "black" and forty-five sixtieths, abutters [being] Manaēs son of Manaēs and the sea; a half share of a date orchard called

Khaff--- within the boundaries of the said Maoza, in partnership with my brother Jonathan son of Simon, which half share is [the area] of sowing... of barley... [The rest is very fragmentary and not yet deciphered.]

Notes

11. 1–4. εγ by assimilation for εκ was common in the Greek *koinē*: cf. Gignac, *op. cit.* p. 173.

The opening formula is the Greek rendering of Latin *descriptum et recognitum* (*Digest* 10.2.5; for examples in papyri cf. Preisigke, *Wörterbuch* III and Suppl. §1).

In the Roman empire government orders and other official documents were routinely posted for a period of time in centrally-located public buildings so that interested parties could take note or make copies. For recent treatments of aspects of the subject see R. Katzoff, *Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Congress of Papyrology (American Studies in Papyrology* 23, 1981) 559–73; W. Williams, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 40 (1980) 283–94.

προκιμένης: In the papyri from Roman Egypt the technical term for this process of posting in public is προτίθημι.

ἐτ/έρων: False syllabication is common in the papyri; cf. Gignac, *op. cit.* I, p. 327.

βασιλική renders Latin *basilica*, a usage found in the papyri from Egypt only in later centuries in the sense of church.

ll. 4–7. This is the imperial titulature of Hadrian in its fullest form, hitherto found only in inscriptions and in *P. Yadin* 16. Its appearance in these two papyri is doubtless attributable to the fact that these were documents prepared in a government center of the province of Arabia for filing in official archives.

ll. 8–10. There is a discrepancy between the Roman and the provincial dates. A similar discrepancy, but only of a single day, occurs in *P. Yadin* 14 and 15. Here the discrepancy is greater, *pro III id. Dec.* corresponding to 11 December, Apellaios 18th to 4 December. ν[ω]ν, which would reduce the discrepancy to one day (=3 December), cannot be read here in place of ε[ι]δων because most of the epsilon and the right-hand corner of the delta are visible. It may seem that the 11 December date is confirmed by *trib. pot. XII* (lines 6–7), which began on the tenth of that month. That argument cannot be decisive, however, because *P. Yadin* 16, drawn up on 2 December, also has (incorrectly) *trib. pot. XII*. All that does emerge clearly is that more than twenty years after Rome's annexation of the province of Arabia local scribes

were still having trouble equating the months and days of the old (Macedonian) and new (Roman) calendars.

Rabbat, east of the Dead Sea, was one of the four principal administrative centers of the province: cf. G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* p. 88. The name of the city takes several forms in ancient Greek sources, that used here being a neuter plural.

ἀποτίμησις was the standard Greek term for Latin *census* (cf. *Corp. Gloss. Lat.* and *LSJ*, s.v.), but Roman Egypt, as we learn from the papyri, used ἀπογραφή instead.

l. 13. The omission of the definite article after ἐν is not a slip of the pen, but is (cf. also ἐν ὀρίοις line 18) revealed by frequent occurrences in the papyri to be characteristic of the Greek written by the scribes of that time and place. The phenomenon may be due to Aramaic or Latin influence, or to a combination of the two.

ἐμαυτὸν ἐτῶν τριάκοντα, which has no parallel in *P. Yadin* 16, is probably no more than a stylistic variation in the declaration formula. Otherwise, if the phrase is taken to constitute the declarant's registration for a census of persons, it becomes necessary to assume that such a personal declaration was not required of Babatha because she was a woman. With these two documents as the sole evidence, that assumption must be regarded as at best speculative.

l. 14. After the last three words of line 13 we expect to find ἔχοντα, κεκτημένον, *aut sim.*, but the traces before ἐ]γιαύσιον have thus far defied all my attempts at decipherment. There is discernible at the beginning of the line the top of a possible ε ορυ, then two dots of ink followed by a lacuna of one or two letters; the first letter after the lacuna shows the shape and following ligature of η, but it does not have the characteristic high first stroke of eta; then come two strokes of probably λ or possibly α, followed by a broken letter that can only be ν, then the top of ι followed by a clear ο and a broken letter which can only be ν. The following lacuna can be restored as [ε] or as [.ε].

How, if at all, this ἐνιαύσιον μέρος ἡμισυ differs from the next μέρος ἡμισυ (lines 17–18) is not apparent.

ll. 14–15. The Babatha documents reveal that in Greek the name Μαῶζα was treated indifferently as a feminine singular (so lines 13, 18) or a neuter plural — so much so that here the scribe follows the neuter plural form with a feminine singular modifier, τῆς προγεγραμμένης (sc. κώμης).

l. 16. σπόρου κτλ.: The Greek is a literal translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic locution which occurs for the first time in *1 Kings* 18:32, and is found thereafter in Aramaic papyri and throughout Rabbinic literature. For further details see e.g. G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B. C.* (rev. ed. Oxford, 1957), p. 68, or (in Hebrew) *Encyclopedia Talmudit* III, p. 273.

Saton is the Greek rendering of *se'ah*, the Hebrew measure. Its capacity has been a matter of some discussion, the prevailing view being that it was equivalent to about thirteen liters.

Kabos, Hebrew *kab*, was one-sixth of a *se'ah*, so that one *saton* three *kaboi* equalled one and a half *sata*.

The area accomodating the sowing of one *saton/se'ah* has been calculated to be in the range of 780–1,000 square meters, or between a fifth and a fourth of an acre: see e.g. J.T. Milik, *Biblica* 38 (1957) 260.

ll. 16–17. The coinage referred to here remains to be identified. In the Babatha papyri “blacks” appear to be distinct from Roman denarii, yet they must have had some official standing to be acceptable in tax payments such as this. It is noteworthy that both here and in the Babatha documents, fractions of “blacks” are expressed not as $1/2$ and $3/4$, but as $30/60$ and $45/60$, which points to “blacks” as survivors, in continuing use, of a pre-Roman (here = Nabatean?) coinage based on the ancient Babylonian sexagesimal system. Given that the Israelite mina consisted (originally at least) of sixty shekels, and given that in the Babatha documents the scribes varied both the gender and the vocalization of the Greek word for “blacks”, it is perhaps possible to imagine that the consonantal group *mln* represents a local variant or corruption of the word for mina.

The abutters (boundaries) named here are probably those on the east and west, which were stated first in the traditional Semitic practice.

Two of Babatha’s properties also ran down to the shore of the Dead Sea.

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