

**ROGER S. BAGNALL**

**THE NUMBER AND TERM OF THE DEKAPROTOI**



**Estratto dalla Rivista «AEGYPTUS» - Anno LVIII (1978), fasc. I-II**

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**Direzione e Amministrazione: Largo A. Gemelli, 1 - 20123 Milano**

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## The Number and Term of the Dekaprottoi

R. Thead.

Those who have discussed the office of the dekaprottoi in Roman Egypt have offered divergent views on the number of the dekaprottoi in office at a given time and the length of time they served. F. Oertel (1) remarked that a one-year term was not demonstrable for Egyptian dekaprottoi, citing ~~roman~~ 26 and 27; he took the normal number in office to be two per toparchy, leading to a college of four for the paired toparchies of the Arsinoite Nome. Eric Turner (2), in his detailed study of the dekaprottoi, cited Oertel's remarks, but expressed uncertainty whether evidence for tenure of office longer than one year indicated a longer term or rather reappointment. On the other hand, he also noted Grenfell and Hunt's suggestion (3) of a five-year term and quoted some evidence which might support it. As to the number of dekaprottoi, Turner took Oertel's statement as an expression of the normal situation, but he quoted instances of more than four which, in his view, indicated the occurrence of some abnormal circumstances. Recently, Naphtali Lewis puts the term at one year, expresses uncertainty about the possibility of a renewal, and sets the number at « usually two colleagues in office » (4).

No evidence has come to light which gives an official and precise formulation of the number and term of the dekaprottoi. But some progress can nonetheless be made from evidence from the villages of Theadelphia and Karanis. The documents from Theadelphia are all published; those from Karanis are partly published, partly to

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(1) F. OERTEL, *Die Liturgie*, Leipzig, 1917, p. 212. P.Fay. 85 is an example of the group of 4; others are cited below.

(2) *JEA* 22 (1936) pp. 7-19 on p. 8.

(3) *Ad P.Oxy.* XII 1410.

(4) *Inventory of Compulsory Services*<sup>2</sup> (1975 sheets), Toronto, 1968, s.v. δεκαπρωτεία.

appear in the seventh volume of the *Columbia Papyri*, now in preparation (1).

We begin with Theadelphia. Four tax receipts have been published which were issued by the same dekaprotoi. Their names and titles appear as follows in the editors' texts:

1) P.Thead. 26 (Thoth 16 = 13 September, 297) (2):

Αὐρήλιοι [Ἡ]ρωνῖνος καὶ Ἀθανάσιος κ[α]ὶ Φιλάδελφος καὶ Σερηνίων ἀμφοτέρω ἐξηγ(ητεύσαντες) Ἀλεξανδρίας δεκάπρωτοι ς' καὶ ἡ' τοπαρχείας Θεμίστου μερίδος.

2) BGU XI 2027 (date missing; year 2 of Domitius Domitianus, 297/8):

Αὐρήλιοι Ἡρωνεῖνος [καὶ Ἀθανάσιος ὁ (?) κ]αὶ Φιλάδελφος καὶ Σερηνί[ων . . .]. δεκάπρωτοι ς καὶ ἡ τοπαρχείας [τῆς Θε]μίστου μερίδος.

3) P.Thead. 27 (Phaophi 29 = 26 October, 298):

Α[ὐρ]ήλιος Ἡρωνεῖνος καὶ Φιλάδελφος [ὁ κ]αὶ Ἀθανάσιος ἀμφοτέρω ἐξηγ(ητεύσαντες) Ἀλεξ(ανδρείας) καὶ Σερηνίων κοσμη(ητεύσας) δεκά(πρωτοι) ς' ἡ' το[παρ(χίτας)] Θεμίστου μερίδος.

4) P.Stras. Inv. gr. 1196 a, published in *Rech. Pap.* 3 (1964) pp. 74-76, no. 16 (SB VIII 9915) (Pachon 10 = 5 May, 300):

Αὐρήλιοι Ἡρωνῖνος καὶ Ἀθανάσιος καὶ Φιλ[άδελ]φ[ο]ς ἀμφ(ότεροι) ἐξηγ(ητεύσαντες) Ἀλεξ(ανδρείας) δεκ(άπρωτοι) ς ἡ' τοπ(αρχείας) Θεμ(ίστου) μερίδος.

Before proceeding, we should enumerate the signatures found on these documents. In 1), Heroninos, Philadelphos, and Serenion; in 2), Heroninus, Philadelphos and Serenion; in 3) Philadelphos, Serenion

(1) This material was in the main transcribed by N. Lewis several decades ago; I am indebted to him for turning it over to me for publication and to J. F. Gilliam, Curator of the collection, for permission to publish it.

(2) I take year 2 of Domitius Domitianus to be 297/8; see the arguments of J. D. Thomas, *ZPE* 22 (1976) 253-79.

and Heroninus; in 4) Heroninus and Athanasios, Philadelphos and Serenion. Virtually all signatures are actually those of agents (only Philadelphos is himself twice present).

The editors of these texts have introduced dubious restorations into them. Jouguet argued that since only Heroninos, Philadelphos and Serenion signed no. 1, and since Athanasios and Philadelphos seem to be the same in no. 3, in no. 1 one should correct the text to ἸΑθανάσιος (ὁ) καὶ Φιλάδελφος. This reasoning is unsound; not all members of the college need act or sign together (1), and the argument about no. 3 rests entirely on Jouguet's own restoration. J. Schwartz, however, adapted the argument about the signatures to his text, which he « corrected » to Ἰερωνῖνος (ὁ) καὶ ἸΑθανάσιος, thus imposing this « correction » in no. 1 and about no. 3 writing, « au P.Thead. 27, 1.7 ὁ καὶ ἸΑθανάσιος a été transcrit deux mots plus loin qu'il ne fallait ». (BL V 148 picked up this « correction »). It is not clear if Schwartz blames the scribe or Jouguet for this « error », but in either event there is absolutely no justification for gratuitous assumption of this error or for inserting [ὁ] or (ὁ) into these texts. H. Maehler also restored [ὁ], basing himself on Jouguet's arguments (and not aware of Schwartz' text). Maehler, however, sensibly expressed doubt about this restoration. A double name has thus been imposed in two forms by restoration twice, by « correction » three times, without having ever actually appeared in a text in the form to which it is corrected; need it be said that such restorations are idle? The added article must be removed from each of these places.

On the basis of these four texts, then, properly understood, we can see that the same four dekaprotoi, responsible for the same toparchies, are attested in 297/8, 298/9, and 299/300. They collect for 296/7 and 297/8 (the payment in 300 is for two years earlier). If the term of office is defined by crops for which there is responsibility, we have these men in office for at least two years; if, as I think more likely, by years in which collection is made, in three years. Given the presence of the same four men each time, there is a high probability that this represents three years of continuous service.

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(1) See TURNER (supra, p. 160 n. 2). Cfr. P.Cair. Isid. 38, where only 3 of 5 dekaprotoi sign (as MAEHLER points out, BGU XI 2027.4 n).

We turn now to Karanis, in the fourth and fifth toparchy pair of the Herakleides Division. The following documentation is available:

1) P.Cair. Isid. 34.18 contains the signature of one Philadelphos (no title) to a receipt of Mesore 28 (21 August) 294 for adaeratio of grain taxes of 292/3.

2) P.Cair. Isid. 38 is a receipt for grain taxes of 296/7, given on Hathyr 11 (7 November), 297. The dekaprotoi are the following:

Αὐρήλιοι Σ[εουη]ρίνος βουλ(ευτής) Ἀλεξ(ανδρείας) καὶ  
 Σαρμάτης γυ(μνασιαρχήσας) καὶ Ἀνδρείας [καὶ Φιλά]δελφ(ος)  
 καὶ Σαβεῖνος γυ(μνασιαρχήσας) δεκάπρωτοι δ ε' τ[οπαρχίας  
 Ἡρα]κλείδου μερίδος.

3) Severinus and Andreias commonly occur on ostraka from Karanis dated to the years 297/8 (uncertain, see O.Mich. III 1066), 298/9, 299/300 and 300/1, collecting for crops of 296/7, 297/8, and 298/9. Cfr. H. C. YOUTIE, *Scriptiunculae* II (Amsterdam, 1973) pp. 823-24 and 828 for a list of these places. Andreias signs P.Mert. II 88 xvi, of 1 December 300, for 296/7.

4) Philotas and Horion appear in Karanis ostraka as dekaprotoi during 299/300 and 300/1, collecting for 298/9 and 299/300: O.Mich. I 478, 481-486; II 917, 919; III 1073, 1074. They also appear in P.Col. VII 137.22-23, of Pharmouthi 22 (17 April) 301, collecting taxes for 298/9, and in P.Mert. II 88 x, xi, xii (Horion only), xiii, xv (Philotas) and xviii, dated to various days between 3 August 297 and 1 December 300, collecting for 296/7, 298/9, and 299/300.

5) P.Col. 137.30-31 gives us the names of dekaprotoi collecting on Pachon 11 (6 May) 301 for the crops of 300/1. They are as follows:

Αὐρ(ήλιοι) Σεουηρίνος καὶ Ἀνδρείας ἐξηγ(ητεύσας) βουλ(ευτής)  
 καὶ κλη(ρονόμοι) Σαρμάτου καὶ Σα[βεῖ]ν[ο]ς γυμνασ(ιαρχήσας)  
 δεκά(πρωτοι) κτλ.

(6) P.Mert. II 88 x, xiii and xviii are issued by Αὐρήλιοι Ὠρίων βουλ(ευτής) καὶ κληρονόμοι Σαρμάτου δι(ὰ) Φιλωτᾶ ἀμφό(τεροι) δεκάπ(ρωτοι) δ ε τοπαρχ(χίας) These receipts are dated 3 August

299, 23 July 300 and 7 August 299, and they cover years 298/9 and 299/300.

7) P.Col. 137.73-74 is a receipt of Mesore 17 (10 August) 301, for the crop of 300/1, given by Αὐρήλ(τοι) Ὀρίων καὶ Σαρμάτης δεκά(πρωτοι) κτλ. Since Sarmates' heirs are named already in August, 299, before, either this is a replacement (his son, it would seem) or the scribe here has made an error, which he would have compounded by signing below for Sarmates as if he were alive.

From this evidence, three tables are constructed, the one showing years of actual functioning reckoned by the traditional Thoth-Mesore year, the second on the assumption of a term of office for the dekaprotoi running from June to June (1), the third of years for the crop of which the collections are made. In the first of these, Philadelphos (if he is the same) is attested in two years separated by three; Severinus and Andreias appear in four consecutive years; Sarmates appears in three of four years; Sabinos appear in two years separated by two, Philotas and Horion in three consecutive years. If one considers the term to have begun in June, the only changes are that Sarmates and Horion appear also in 301/2, while Horion and Philotas disappear from 298/9. Minor modifications occur if one considers the crop for which the collections were made: Severinus and Andreias have their span cut by a year; Sarmates appears for four of five years; Sabinos has a year added to the years between. Horion serves an extra year. We do not know whether the dekaprotoi were responsible for the crops of a year or the receipts during a year. The fact that dekaprotoi habitually collect for the crops of years during which we have no receipts showing them actually attested in office suggests that it is likely that the year itself is meant. Perhaps PSI VII 807, where the «dekaprotoi of the third year» are mentioned, also points in this direction, but it could as well, like fourth-century phrases of this sort (sitologoi of the xth indiction) refer to responsibility.

We may not legitimately conclude that small gaps in an individual's chart mean that he was not in office. The evidence shows

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(1) As Thomas suggested in his Oxford congress paper, see *BASP* 11 (1974) p. 68, n. 47; see now *BASP* 15 (1978).

## 1. Years in which collecting, Thoth/Mesore

293/4	294/5	295/6	296/7	297/8	298/9	299/300	300/1	301/2
Philadelphos	—	—	—	Philadelphos Severinus Andreias Sarmates Sabinos	Severinus Andreias Sarmates Horion Philotas	Severinus Andreias Sarmates Horion Philotas	Severinus Andreias Sarmates Sabinos Horion Philotas	

## 2. Years in which collecting, June/June

Philadelphos	—	—	—	Philadelphos Severinus Andreias Sarmates Sabinos	Severinus Andreias Sarmates Sabinos	Severinus Andreias Sarmates Sabinos Horion Philotas	Severinus Andreias Sarmates Sabinos Horion Philotas	Sarmates Horion
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## 3. Years for which collected

292/3	293/4	294/5	295/6	296/7	297/8	298/9	299/300	300/1
Philadelphos	—	—	—	Philadelphos Severinus Andreias Sarmates Sabinos	Severinus Andreias Sarmates Sabinos	Severinus Andreias Sarmates Philotas Horion	Sarmates Sarmates Philotas Horion	Sarmates Sabinos Horion

unmistakeably that not all of the dekaprotoi needed to act together, and it may be only chance that a given dekaprotos is unattested in a given year. It is, at any rate, evident that one man might hold the position of dekaprotos for longer than a single year. Lewis would evidently take this to indicate renomination, since he considers the phrase « dekaprotoi of the third year » in PSI 807 to indicate annual tenure. But that phrase seems to me to prove only that these dekaprotoi were in office in that year and that the writer of the document did not know the extent of their term; if at the time of this document (A.D. 280) different dekaprotoi came into office at different times, in fact, the board as a whole would be the same in consecutive years only rarely, and « dekaprotoi of the third year » would uniquely describe the group involved; it would be the only way of doing so without naming them.

Renomination to the post of dekaprotos of those who had already held the post since A.D. 285-6 was forbidden by an edict of the catholicus in the mid 290's (1), and unless we suppose that a few years later his order was routinely and repeatedly violated in both Karanis and Theadelphia, we are driven to the conclusion that the term of office was then longer than one year. A term which will accommodate all of the evidence cited above must be one of at least five years, the term which Grenfell and Hunt suggested. It is not, however, certain that this term was operative before 287, since all of the evidence quoted above comes from the time of Diocletian, but the evidence of the 260's from Tebtunis does suggest a longer term than one year (2).

A term of five years reminds one of Diocletian's propensity for five-year cycles, especially the epigraphai. Did the terms of boards of dekaprotoi coincide in this period with epigraphai? The evidence of table 2 would point to this conclusion except for one point, the appearance of a Philadelphos spanning two epigraphai (i.e. those of 292-7 and 297-302). One must, however, recall that the identifica-

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(1) P.Oxy. XII 1410; see J. D. THOMAS, *BASP* 11 (1974) p. 66 on the date.

(2) Turner cites this evidence from P.Teb. II 368 and 581. In these texts an Agathos Daimon is dekaprotos of the 2nd toparchy of Polemon in 264/5 and 268/9 respectively. I do not think that we must assume that he is the same as his homonym who is one of five dekaprotoi in Chr. W. 279 (BGU II 579) in 263/4; he is in a different division.

tion of the man of P.Cair. Isid. 34 and his later homonym is not quite certain; a Philadelphos appears in the Theadelphia texts, too, and an Athanasios appears both in P.Cair. Isid. 34 and in the Theadelphia texts. It is best to suspend final judgment on this point for now, but it seems to me likely that under normal circumstances a term of office was intended to equal one epigraphe.

As to the composition of the board, it is true that four are commonly found for paired toparchies, as Oertel and Turner remarked. But we see five and six in 297/8 and 300/1, respectively, in the Karanis documents, and Turner cites P.Flor. I 26 (A.D. 273), where four men list themselves and say *καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ* (for two toparchies) (1). More evidence is needed for a final conclusion, but it is likely that the size of the boards was not absolutely fixed. Since not all dekaprotoi need act together, certainty will remain elusive unless different types of documents are found (2).

ROGER S. BAGNALL

*Columbia University, November, 1976*

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(1) Turner regards this as due to «special circumstances» which he does not explain and which I cannot deduce. Turner's other examples of special circumstances are P.Lips. 83, where three dekaprotoi and the heirs of a fourth appear, but this does not violate the rule; and Chr. W. 279 (cfr. supra, p. 166, n. 2), where two men serve in place of one (assuming Wilcken is right against N. Hohlwein in taking *εἰς χώραν ἐνός* with dekaprotos and not former gymnasiarch).

(2) I want to thank David Thomas for his helpful criticism of a draft of this paper. See *BASP* 15 (1978) for our joint discussion of certain point considered here.

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