A Ptolemaic Account

Fred W Jenkins, University of Dayton
A Ptolemaic Account

P. Mich. inv. 930  
9.8 x 7.3 cm.  
Early II B.C.  
Plate 2

This papyrus was acquired by the University of Michigan through M. Nahman in 1922. It is light brown in color and well-preserved, although traces of ink at the bottom edge indicate that at least one additional line of text has been lost. The hand is Ptolemaic and likely dates to the early second century B.C. Prices noted in the text are consistent with a date between 210 and 183 B.C., while the absence of iota adscripts suggests that it should be placed in the latter part of that period.

The text appears to be a private account, which notes a receipt and several expenditures. The expenditures include both purchases and payments (wages?) to individuals. A number of similar accounts from the Ptolemaic era survive; these include P.Tebt. I 116, 117; III 891, 893; and P.Hibeh I 121, as well as many examples among the Zenon papyri. Although its contents are rather mundane, this text does offer several items of interest. A previously unattested word, ἄναγγελος, appears in line 8. Additional instances of two uncommon names, Μελαινικ and Ἑλιξ, occur in lines 2 and 11 respectively, while a Persian (Ἀρτάκης) may lurk in line 3.

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1 I would like to thank the Special Collections Library, University of Michigan, for permission to publish this text. I am also grateful to Gregg Schwendner and Jim Keenan for suggesting improvements to earlier versions of this article.

For expenses 1,700
I have received from Melainis
110 drachmas / To Arsakes 500
For a chiton 210
For a keramion of wine 270
For a cup 140
To Dionysios 130 drachmas
For bringing up of hay 240 drachmas
For thread ... drachmas
To Demarios 80 drachmas
To Helix 50 drachmas

1 This line was probably added last, after the writer had totalled the expenditures; oblique slashes, which appear in the papyrus against lines 2-3, 7-8, and 10-11, are probably check-marks made in the process of adding these. The expenditures preserved in the text total 1,620 drachmas. The missing sum in line 9, plus one
or more lost at the end of the text, would easily make up the difference.

2 The name Μελανίς is not common in the papyri. Other instances include *P.Petrie* III 2.19 (237/6 B.C.) [=Prosopographia Ptolemaica 14403], where it belongs to a former slave and *SB* I 4004, an undated inscription.

3 'Αρκάκης is a Persian name. The name is also found in *P.Ryl.* IV 589.4, 23, 31, 39, 47, 86 (Philadelphia, 180 B.C.) and *P.Grenf.* I 12.31 (Thebaid, ca. 148 B.C.): Ἡρωδος 'Αρκάκου Πέρσης. On Persians in Ptolemaic Egypt, see F. Heichelheim, *Die auswärtige Bevölkerung im Ptolemäerreich* (Leipzig 1925) 76-79.

5 For the years 210-183 B.C., wine prices run between 220 and 300 drachmas per keramion; cf. Clarysse and Lanciers, *Ancient Society* 20 (1989) 117. The price given here falls comfortably within that range.

7 The payments here and in lines 10-11 may represent wages, although this is not certain. Clarysse and Lanciers (see above, note on line 5) give a range of 150 to 600 drachmas per month for a laborer's wage between 210 and 183 B.C. Assuming payment for a week's work is intended here, the sums given in these lines would fit within those limits.

8 The word ἀναγώγημα is a new one; for the phrase cf. *BGU* VI 1251.16 (III-II B.C.): χρόνου ἀναγώγημα.

9 στήμονος is probably in reference to thread intended for the warp of a cloth to be woven; cf. *P.Tebt.* I 116.23n. Our writer failed to record the amount of material and the sum paid for it.

10 For Ἐλλαξ Namensbuch cites only *P.Flor.* I 50.94 (A.D. 268): Ἐλλαξ. I have not been able to locate any other occurrence of the name. Our writer encountered some problems with the declension of the name; he appears to have written Ἐλλαξ and then changed it to Ἐλλαξ.
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(to Jenkins, “A Ptolemaic Account”)

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