

DEBORAH HOBSON

A SITOLOGOS RECEIPT FROM SOKNOPAIΟΥ NESOS

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 99 (1993) 73–74

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

A SITOLOGOS RECEIPT FROM SOKNOPAIU NESOS

P. Lond. III 1586a
11.0 x 6.2 cm

Tafel XIIIa

Soknopaiou Nesos
August 19, 194 AD

This text is one of a large group of miscellaneous papyri in the British Museum (inventory numbers 1545 - 1753) which were purchased on December 8, 1906 from the Reverend C. Murch.¹ The papyrus has margins of 1.8 cm on top, 0.8 cm on the bottom, 1.2 cm on the left, and 1.9 cm on the right. A vertical break 2.2 cm from the left margin, and vertical creases at 4.1 cm, 6.3 cm, 7.9 cm, and 9.7 cm from the left edge, suggest that the document was at some point folded from right to left. The hand is a typical cursive of the late second century, using the abbreviations found commonly in receipts of this period.

The document is a receipt issued by the sitologoi of Nilopolis to a farmer from Soknopaiou Nesos for payment of the δημόσια² of Soknopaiou Nesos. There are five other extant examples of Soknopaiou Nesos inhabitants receiving sitologos receipts from Nilopolis (*P.Lond.* II 346a, b, and c, all AD 194; *BGU XIII* 2302, AD 198; *P.Lond.* II 351, AD 218). Of these, three date from the same year as P.Lond. III 1586a, and another is dated four years later but involves a farmer with the same name as the one in the present text (*BGU XIII* 2302).

One might suppose that these receipts reflect nothing more than an absence of local sitologoi in Soknopaiou Nesos, were it not for the fact that we have one sitologos receipt issued by the sitologoi of Soknopaiou Nesos in the same year as these four which have been issued by the Nilopolis official (see *SPP XXII* 121, AD 194). Therefore we must assume that this group of sitologos receipts collectively attest to the fact that Soknopaiou Nesos farmers cultivated plots of public land in the area around Nilopolis, at the northeast end of the Lake Moeris, rather than that they were delivering their Soknopaiou Nesos wheat to the nearest official.³ These texts then constitute part of a larger picture in which we see that the absence of decent agricultural land available to farmers around Soknopaiou Nesos itself caused villagers to forge working relationships with other villages in the northeast part of the Fayum.⁴ Whether in these cases it was voluntary or enforced cultivation is not clear; the fact that public farmers were cultivating land in Nilopolis which was for the δημόσια of their own village might suggest that Soknopaiou Nesos as an entity rented an amount of land from Nilopolis, and individuals cultivated small plots of it,

¹ My thanks to T.S. Pattie of the British Museum for giving me access to the accession list of papyri in the collection, and for giving me permission to publish this text.

² The most useful discussions of this kind of payment remain those of Grenfell and Hunt in the introductions to *P.Fay.* 81 and *P.Tebt.* II 365. Their conclusion, that the payments abbreviated ὑπὲρ δημ(οσίων) or, as in our document, simply δημ(οσίων), assume a neuter plural form (τὰ δημόσια) and refer to rental of γῆ δημοσία, exactly fits the assumptions made here about the nature of land cultivation in the area around Soknopaiou Nesos.

³ On the location of Nilopolis, see D. Bonneau, "Niloupolis du Fayoum", *Actes du XV^e Congrès International de Papyrologie* (Brussels 1979) 271-273.

⁴ I have discussed this situation at length in "Agricultural Land and Economic Life at Soknopaiou Nesos", *BASP* 21 (1984) 89-110. For the agricultural relationship between Soknopaiou Nesos and Nilopolis, see esp. 102-4. On Soknopaiou Nesos landholdings in other villages in the neighbourhood, see also my articles, "The Village of Apias in the Arsinoite Nome", *Aegyptus* 62 (1982) 80-123, and "The Village of Heraklia in the Arsinoite Nome", *BASP* 22 (1986) 101-16.

but their rental went therefore to the account of their own village rather than that of the lessor village.⁵

- 1 Ἔτου[ς] β Λουκίου Σεπτιμίου Σεουήρου
- 2 Περτίνακος Σεβαστοῦ Μεσορή κς.
- 3 Σαραπ[ί]ων καὶ οἱ (μέτοχοι) σιτολ(όγοι) κώ(μης) Νεί(λου) πόλεως (με)μετρή(μεθα)
- 4 ἀπὸ γενη(μάτων) τοῦ α(ὑτοῦ) (ἔτους) εἰς Ἄπύχ(ιν) Ἄπύχ(εως)
- 5 Σοκνο(παίου) Νή(σου) δη(μοσίων) πυροῦ (ἀρτάβας) ἕξ, (γίνονται) (πυροῦ ἀρτάβαι) ς.

Notes:

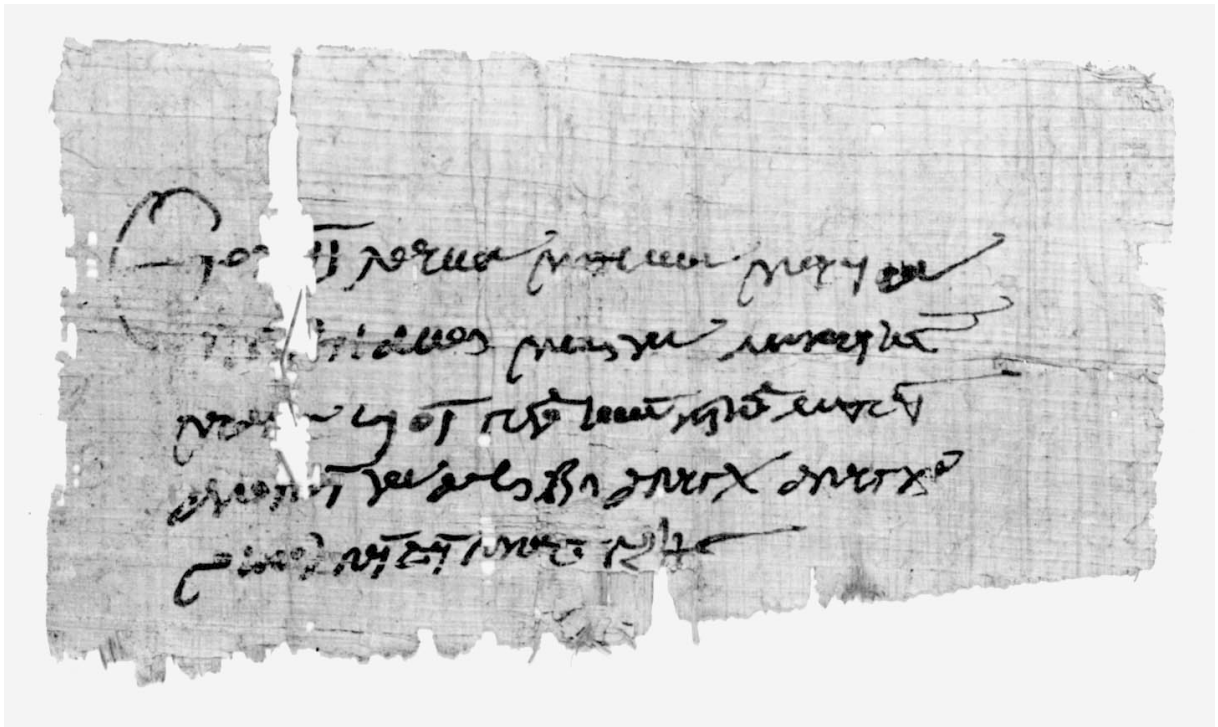
- 1-2 This is the latest of the four Nilopolis sitologos receipts for Soknopaiou Nesos δημόσια; the other three were all issued in Pauni (*P.Lond.* II 346a, Pauni 5 = May 30; *P.Lond.* II 346b, Pauni 9 = June 3; *P.Lond.* II 346c, Pauni 15 = June 9).
- 3 Sarapion is also the sitologos issuing the other Nilopolis receipts in the same year. In *P.Lond.* II 346b he is called Sarapion son of Tauris.
(με)μετρή(μεθα): The same mistake was made by the same scribe in *P.Lond.* II 346a; cf. *P.Lond II*, Facs. 75.
- 4 The name Apunchis is not uncommon at Soknopaiou Nesos, so it is risky to leap to conclusions identifying this man with others of the same name. However, it is noteworthy that there are 26 occurrences of Apunchis son of Apunchis among the 1000 Greek papyri from the village, and of these 22 are found in documents relating to the cultivation of public shore land (ἀγίαλός) around Soknopaiou Nesos in the early third century. there is also a πράκτωρ σιτικῶν by this name attested in AD 187-88 (*P.Lond.* III 924, p. 134).
The payment of six artabs of wheat implies a small holding, consistent with cultivation of public land.⁶ Among the three parallel documents from AD 194, all of the others are payments of three artabs, but since two of these are made by one individual, Anchophis son of Pabous, that man's total for the year (assuming this is a yearly total rather than installments), amounts to the same as that of Apunchis in our document. The wheat payment made by Apunchis son of Apunchis and Pakusis son of A[punchis?] in AD 198 (*BGU XIII* 2302 appears to be 15 artabs, though the reading is tentative.

Translation:

Year 2 of (Emperor) Lucius Septimius Severus Pertinax Pius, Mesore 26. We, Sarapion and his associates, sitologoi of the village of Nilopolis, have had measured to us from the produce of the same year, to (the account of) Apunchis son of Apunchis, for the state dues of Soknopaiou Nesos, six artabs of wheat, total 6 artabs of wheat.

⁵ G. Poethke, in his groundbreaking work, *Epimerismos: Betrachtungen zur Zwangspacht in Ägypten während der Prinzipatszeit* (Brussels 1969) does not include these sitologos receipts among his list of documents providing evidence of *epimerismos*; yet if an individual farmer were renting a plot of public land in another village, one would think that the rental would not be reckoned to his home village unless it had corporate responsibility for cultivation of the land, as usually occurs with *epimerismos*.

⁶ Rental of ἀγίαλός at Soknopaiou Nesos ranges from 2.5 artabs per aroura in AD 215 (*CPR* I 33) to 4.37 in AD 214-15 (*SPP* XXII 88) and 4.3 in AD 219 (*SPP* XX 174). One would expect the land around Nilopolis to be somewhat better quality, and therefore the rent would be higher.



Sitologenquittung (P.Lond. III 1586a)