

A New Order for Delivery of Oil from the Archive of Theon

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The image thanks to the courtesy of the National Library of the Czech Republic.

§1 The papyrus belongs to the collection of the National Library of Prague acquired as a donation from Carl Wessely to Theodor Hopfner, who ceded them further to the Public and University Library, now the National Library of the Czech Republic, in 1934.

§2 The document constitutes a part of the archive of Theon,¹ an estate manager, first identified among Berlin papyri by Ulrich Wilcken (↗ [BGU 3 960](#)–↗ [968](#)), later connected with three further texts in the Bonn collection by John Shelton (↗ [Shelton 1977](#): 169–172 = ↗ [SB 14 12124](#)–↗ [12126](#)). In 1994, Fritz Mitthof and Amphilochios Papathomas published twenty documents belonging to the archive consisting of the re-editions of papyri from Berlin, Bonn and Alexandria as well as new pieces from Berlin, Heidelberg and Prague (↗ [Mitthof and Papathomas 1994](#) = ↗ [SB 22 15739](#)–↗ [15756](#)). New texts identified in Prague were published in ↗ [P. Prag. 3 225](#)–↗ [235](#) and in ↗ [Mitthof and Papathomas 2014](#): 205–211, no. 1 & 2. According to the data provided in Trismegistos the number of documents amounts to 40 (↗ [TM Arch. 208](#)).

§3 The text was written *transversa charta* (as is usual in the archive) on the full width of the roll (ca. 30 cm) and height of ca. 7.5 cm, which means that c. one-third of the text is lost. The format thus matches the archive documents of type A, as distinguished in ↗ [Mitthof and Papathomas 1994](#): 54. Crosstrokes are much less clear than the letters and were drawn along the letters with rather straight than curvy lines with a different lighter ink (as in ↗ [SB 20 15740](#), ↗ [SB 20 15754](#)) only in ll. 1 and 2.² Crossing out is a sign that the delivery of oil was completed and the order was returned to its issuer, Theon.

§4 Like the majority of papyri in this archive, it is an order for delivery of oil addressed to Sambas the oil-maker, which have the following pattern: main body + date + signature + subscription of the scribe + ‘Kürzel’/ tachygraphic signs (see below), as in ↗ [P. Prag. 3 228](#). The text is written by two hands, with a subscription in Theon’s hand between the body text and the signature of the main scribe: usually it is placed after the signature, but the pattern found here is typical for contemporary contracts or orders and receipts.

§5 Although fragmentary, only the identity of the person to whom the oil was to be delivered and the exact date of the order are lost.

P. Prag. inv. Gr. III 385

21 (w) × 5.1 (h)

Arsinoite Nome
c. 12 April, 6th c.

¹ TM Arch 208, also known as the archive of Sambas the oil-maker, but Theon addressed orders to other people as well (e.g. SPP 20 195; 8 990, 995, 1060 and 1299 = CPJ 3. 506): cf. ↗ [Mitthof and Papathomas 2014](#): 203.

² Similarly, only the central part of the text was crossed out in ↗ [SB 22 15747](#), ↗ [SB 22 15749](#)

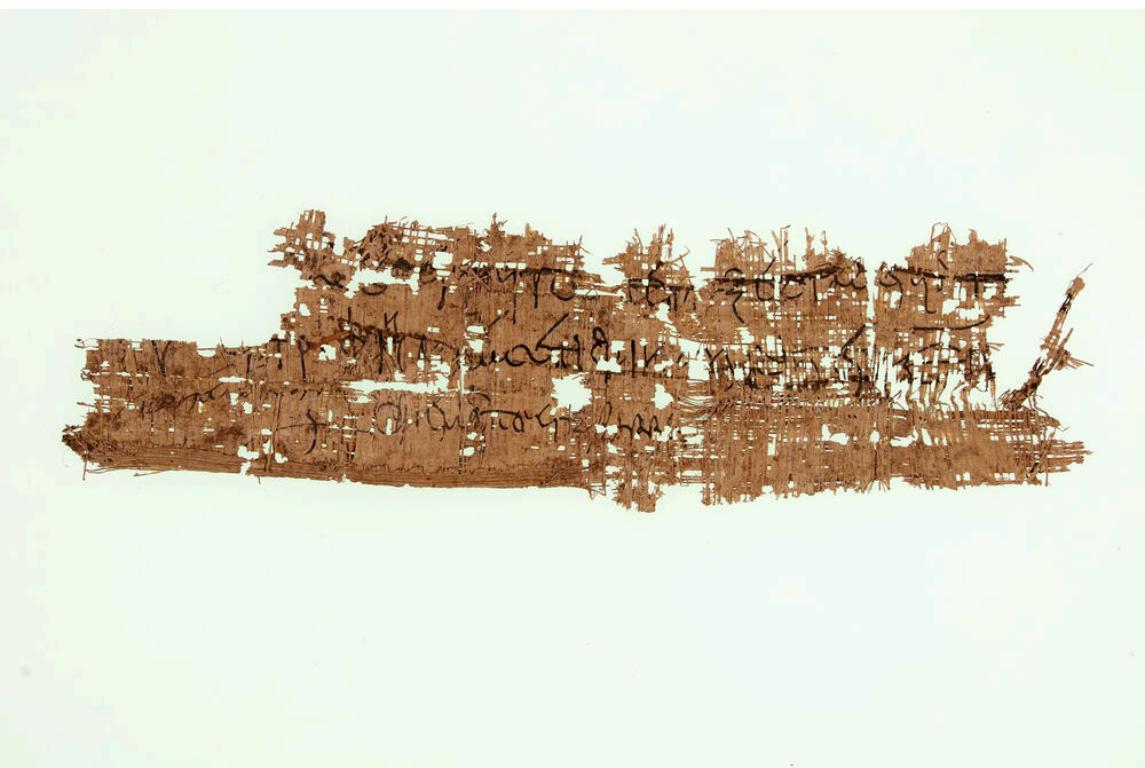


Fig. 1: P.Prag.inv. G.III 385 recto.

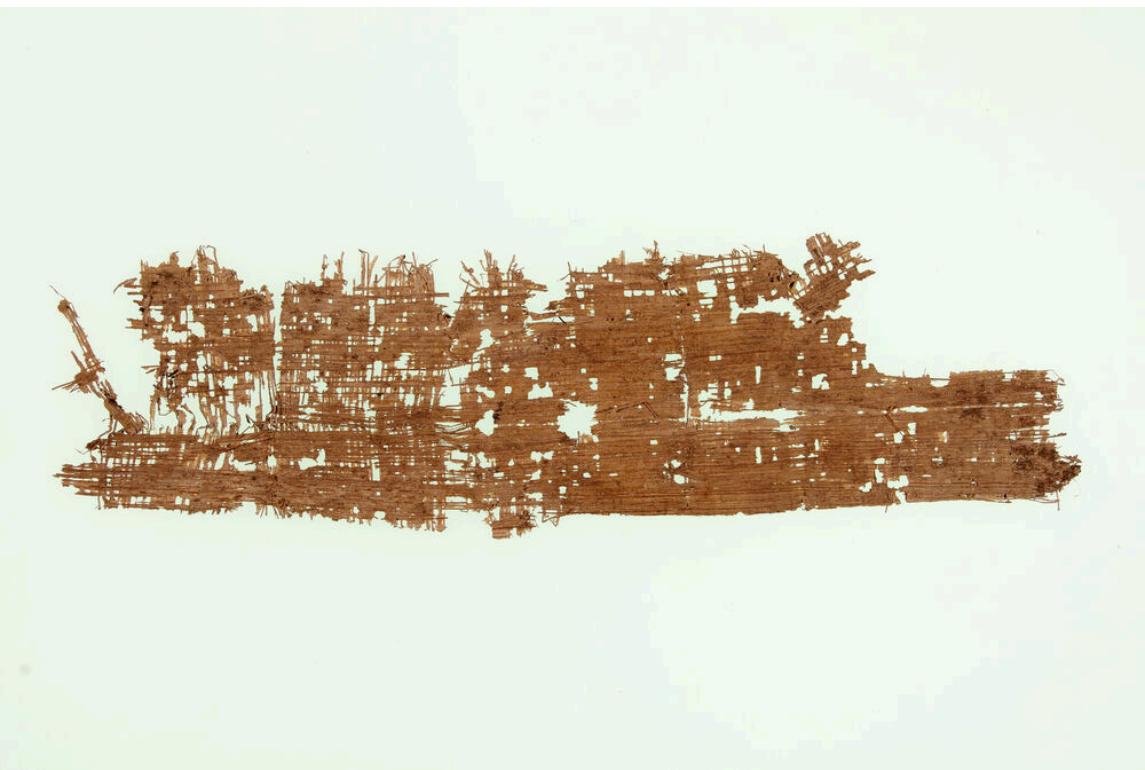


Fig. 2: P.Prag.inv. G.III 385 verso.

[† Θέων Σα]μβᾶ ἐλαιουργῷ · πέντε ξέστας ἐλαίου π[αράσχου -ca.10-]
ν[π]ὲρ τροφ(ῆς) μη(νὸς) α // ἔως Ἐπιφ // ιη / ἀ[ρ]χ(ῆ) ιν(δικτίονος), ἐλ(αίου)
ξ(έστας) ε μ[όνους. month day ιγ ιν(δικτίονος). (m2) ἐσημει(ωσάμην)
ἐλαίου]

[ξέστας] πέντε μόνον.

(m1) † δι' ἐμοῦ Ποῦσι † *illegible text or tachygraphy*

2 *I. Ἐπειφ*

† Theon to Sambas, oil-maker: supply NN with five xestai of oil for their maintenance for one month // until Epeiph // 18th, at the beginning of the 14th indiction year, 5 xestai of oil exactly. [month, day,] 13th indiction. (hand 2) I have approved five xestai of oil exactly. (hand 1) † (Written) by me, Pousi. † (illegible text)

§6 1. After accounting for the supplement π[αράσχου], no more than 15 letters are missing, containing the identity of the oil's recipient. Artisans, workers and military personnel were among those who received oil from Sambas (↗ **Mitthof and Papathomas 1994**: 63–64; ↗ **Morelli 1996**: 13–20).

§7 2. ν[π]ὲρ τροφ(ῆς): τροφή refers to maintenance of workers or other employees of the estate administered by Theon. Oil could be also issued as a part of the wages and salaries of the workforce (νπὲρ ὁψωνίου and νπὲρ σαλαρίου: e.g. ↗ **P.Prag. 3 228**).

§8 // ἔως Ἐπιφ ιη: Since in other documents τροφή was paid in advance or shortly after the period of provision started (e.g. ↗ **P.Prag. 3 225**, delivered on Pharmouthi 25 for two months starting on Pharmouthi 18), this order was probably issued about a month before Epeiph 18, i.e. in Pauni.

§9 ἀ[ρ]χ(ῆ): In the Fayum, the indiction cycle started on the 1st of July, thus 7th of Epeiph opened the indiction year (↗ **Bagnall and Worp 2004**: 110–115); cf. ↗ **P.Prag. 3 226.4** in which the 3rd of Epeiph is indicated as τέλει γ ιν(δικτίονος).

§10 4. The illegible text following the scribal signature δι' ἐμοῦ Ποῦσι might have come from the scribe Pousi and constitute his signature, 'Kürzel', since it is absent in documents written by other scribes, but its meaning remains unclear (↗ **Mitthof and Papathomas 1994**: 58).

Bibliography

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↗ **Mitthof, F. and Papathomas, A. (2014)** "Öl für Kataphraktarier und Maurer: Zwei neue Lieferanweisungen Theons an Sambas," AnalPap 26: 203–214.

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