The Format, Layout and Provenance of Documents Pertaining to Liturgy

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Heidelberg: Propylaeum, 2022

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Introduction

§1   In a recent study devoted to "bandi liturgici", Marco Stroppa provided a welcome survey of the notices by which a strategos gave his approval to the nomination of individuals who took up a liturgy in Roman Egypt.[1] The aim of the present article is not to contradict the views offered by Stroppa, but to add a layer to his analysis of the available corpus: by taking into account the provenance of papyri, it will become possible to identify some specific aspects of the format and layout used to produce the documents pertaining to this procedure, as well as to other stages in the same procedure.

§2   The general working of the liturgical system in the Roman empire was neatly summarized by Roger Bagnall: "The Romans preferred to keep their permanent, professional administration small and to draw governors, however amateurish, from the ranks of the upper orders. Over the first two centuries of the empire, they developed practices in local administration in line with this overall approach. City and village governance was rotated among the better-endowed residents, while manual labor was distributed over as wide a spectrum of the male population as possible. One result was to keep stated tax rates low. Another was that because public offices brought work and financial risk, but little or no reward, they were unwelcome to most individuals."[2]

§3   The procedure followed by officials to nominate an individual to a liturgy occupied various hierarchical levels of the administration and included several steps.[3] While the Prefect of Egypt was responsible for the general working of the liturgical system in the province, and issued orders accordingly, the actual management of the process lay in the hands of the strategos in each nome. In making the appointments, he relied on nominations to liturgy submitted by local officials in the villages and towns, either a village scribe (κωμογραμματεύς) or village elders (πρεσβύτεροι) acting in the same capacity;[4] in the mid-third century, these local officials were replaced by a village chief (κωμάρχης).[5] Nominations had to be subsequently approved by the strategos, who had them posted publicly in the villages; the approval was labelled a πρόγραμμα, i.e. a "writing intended for public posting".[6] In a last stage, the appointed liturgists produced a written oath, confirming that they would undertake the task for which they had been selected.[7] The process was thus completed in three successive steps, i.e. nomination > approval > oath.[8]

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1   Stroppa 2017. The wording "approval of nomination" is borrowed from Lewis 1997: 84.

2   Bagnall 2001: 459 (review of Drecoll 1997). For a recent overview of the liturgical system in Roman Egypt, see Reiter 2013.

3   Lewis 1997: 83-84.

4   Tomsin 1952: 503-505 ; Lewis 1997: 66.

5   Thomas 1975: 113-115.

6   Stroppa 2004: 196-197; Stroppa 2017: 2.

7   A list of oaths of office was provided by Lewis 1997: 117.

8   Other documents pertaining to liturgy, such as petitions of individuals protesting against their nomination, are not taken into account here because they belong to another kind of procedure altogether.

The corpus of approvals of nomination to liturgy (προγράμματα)

§4 The corpus assembled by Stroppa consists of a series of items dating from 135 to 265 CE (1-17), and of an addition from 247 (18 = BGU 1 7), the inclusion of which in the corpus remains debatable.[9] It seems that most of the papyri are either copies of approvals that were kept among official records, or abstracts made from those records for the use of individuals. Thus, the preserved documents were actually not posted publicly, with one possible exception: the unusual format of 8 (= P.Leit. 11), written across the fibres, and perhaps originally squarish in shape, may suggest that this approval was posted publicly; but Stroppa refrains – wisely – from drawing a firm conclusion on the matter.[10]

§5 The following table conflates the data provided by Stroppa in two different lists, thus making it possible to view at once the nome of provenance of each item.[11] This will prove useful because, among the parameters to be considered, provenance does not seem to play a significant role in Stroppa's overview.

Table 1: list of approvals of nomination to liturgy

Stroppa's numbering	reference	date	nome of provenance	content
1	SB 16 12504 col. 1	135	Arsinoite	copy of an approval, abstract from the records of the archive for public matters (βιβλιοθήκη δημοσίων λόγων)
2	SB 16 12504 col. 2	136	Arsinoite	copy of an approval, abstract from the records of the archive for public matters
3a	P.Mil.Vogl. inv. 777	168	Arsinoite	copy of an approval, from the records of the strategos
3b	P.Leit. 5 = SB 8 10196	168	Arsinoite	petition to an epistrategos quoting in full the text of the approval found in 3a
4	BGU 1 18 = W.Chr. 398 = Sel. Pap. 2 342	169	Arsinoite	copy of an approval
5	SB 14 11613	173	Arsinoite	abstract from the approvals
6	PSI 17 1683	182	(unknown)	approval (presumably a copy)
7	P.Sijp. 21b	185	Cynopolite	abstract from the approvals
8	P.Leit. 11 = SB 8 10203	186	Arsinoite	abstract from the approvals of a strategos
9	SB 6 9331 V = P.Bacch. 25 V	204	Arsinoite	copy, abstract from the records of the archive for public matters
10	P.Oxy. 10 1254	260	Cynopolite	approval
11	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 1	265	Hermopolite	approval
12	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 2	265	Hermopolite	four approvals

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9 All dates, unless otherwise stated, are CE. For the sake of convenience, Stroppa's numbering, in bold characters, will be used here, together with the standard reference to each papyrus when appropriate. On 18, see Stroppa 2017: 117-118: the strategos publicly endorses a nomination, made by δεκάπρωτοι, of farmers who are to undertake the cultivation of a piece of land. The δεκάπρωτοι are not directly involved in nominations to liturgy, but only take part in the collection of taxes.

10 Stroppa 2017: 11-12.

11 Stroppa 2017: 3-7 and 9.

	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 3			
	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 4			
	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 5			
13	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 6	265	Hermopolite	approval
14	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 7 = W.Chr. 401	265	Hermopolite	approval
15	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 8	265	Hermopolite	approval, with letter to the keepers of the archive of property (βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων)
16	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 9 P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 10	265	Hermopolite	two approvals
17	P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 11	265	Hermopolite	approval
(18)	BGU 1 7	247	Arsinoite	order for taking up the cultivation of land

Layout: from nomination to liturgy to approval of nomination

§6 Before we can examine the specific format and layout of these documents according to their provenance, the relation between nomination to liturgy and approval of nomination must be made clear. This will be best illustrated through an example.
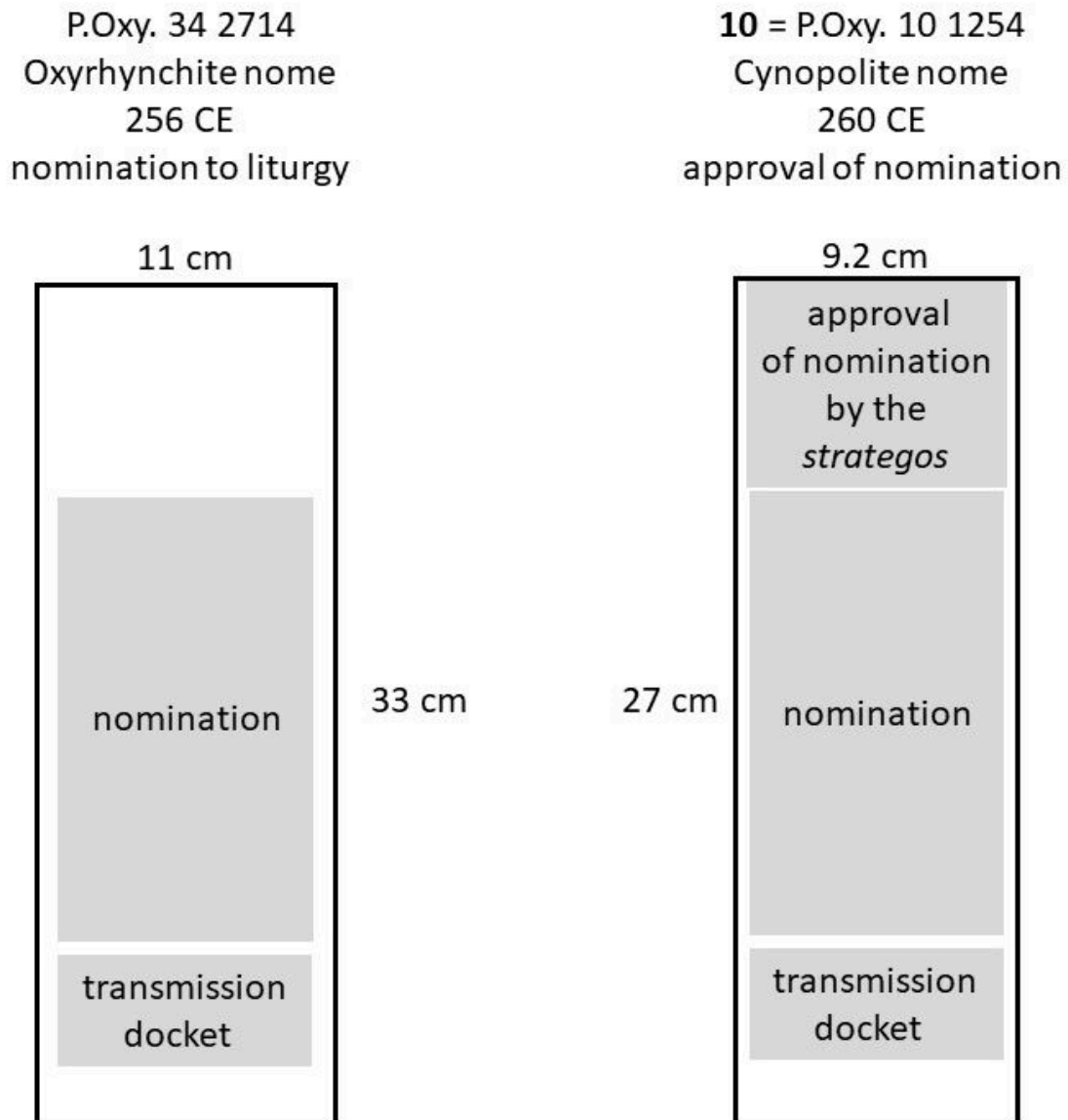
P.Oxy. 34 2714
Oxyrhynchite nome
256 CE
nomination to liturgy

10 = P.Oxy. 10 1254
Cynopolite nome
260 CE
approval of nomination

11 cm

9.2 cm

approval
of nomination
by the
strategos

nomination

33 cm

27 cm

nomination

transmission
docket

transmission
docket

Fig. 1: nomination to liturgy / approval of nomination.

§7   P.Oxy. 34 2714 (256, Oxyrhynchus) is a nomination to liturgy, written on a long and narrow, vertical sheet of papyrus. The scribe who prepared the document on behalf of two κωμάρχαι centred the text vertically, leaving ample margins at the top and bottom of the sheet. These two margins provide windows for additional data to be inserted; and indeed, in the bottom margin, a transmission docket was entered, without occupying the whole space available: the κωμάρχαι state that they have submitted the nomination, and a literate scribe writes on their behalf because they cannot write. The top margin, however, remained blank.

§8   Comparison with an approval of nomination, **10** = P.Oxy. 10 1254 (260, Cynopolite nome), provides an explanation for the process.[12] The scribe cut from a roll a sheet of papyrus of the same shape as that of P.Oxy. 34 2714, and arranged the text of a nomination likewise in the central part of the sheet, leaving ample top and bottom margins. A transmission docket was then added at the bottom, and the top margin was used by the strategos to give his approval. Therefore, the top and bottom margins in such

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12   A plate of **10** is available in Stroppa 2017: Tavola XI.

nominations to liturgy were intended for the next stage in the procedure, by which the nomination to liturgy would become an approval of nomination. In other words, nomination to liturgy and approval of nomination are, in this case, one and the same document, but at two subsequent stages of the procedure.

§9   This is not an isolated phenomenon. Other nominations to liturgy from the Oxyrhynchite nome display, in the same period, a similar format and layout with ample top and bottom margin, the latter containing the transmission docket: see e.g. PSI 12 1231 (274); P.Oxy. 46 3294 (272). This occurs also in another nomination to liturgy submitted to the strategos of the Heracleopolite nome, P.Oxy. 44 3178 (248).

§10   The same practice appears in the Hermopolite nome as well; it was already identified and described by Ulrich Wilcken.[13] Stroppa republishes the remains of a τόμος συγκολλήσιμος, i.e. a roll made of several approvals of nomination that were prepared in a similar fashion, **11-17** = P.Flor. 1 2 (265).[14] A scribe prepared the nomination in the central part of each sheet, leaving ample top and bottom margins; a transmission docket was added at the bottom; then the strategos added his approval at the top. In **12** and **16**, the approval runs horizontally across several nominations, which indicates that the strategos made this addition only after the sheets were pasted together. This does not imply, however, that these copies of the approvals were publicly posted: they were presumably kept in the strategos' records, and other copies – lost to us – were posted for all to read.

§11   Thus, it appears that, around the mid-third century CE, in several nomes of Egypt (Oxyrhynchite, Cynopolite, Heracleopolite, Hermopolite), scribes followed a similar procedure by which they wrote nominations to liturgy in the central part of a sheet, leaving space in the top and bottom margin for the next steps to take place, i.e. transmission docket (bottom margin) and approval of nomination (top margin). This emerging pattern will find confirmation in a more comprehensive list of evidence that will be discussed below.

Format: demotic style vs. pagina

§12   The format of the documents mentioned above is conspicuous: they were nearly all produced by cutting a long and narrow vertical strip (ca. 30 x 10 cm) from a tall papyrus roll. The height of columns in the roll from the Hermopolite nome (**11-17**) is shorter (25 cm), but the width of columns is narrower, thus keeping a general shape comparable to that of the other documents. This corresponds to the so-called "demotic style" format, to recall the terminology used by Antonia Sarri to describe the format of private letters in the Ptolemaic period.[15] She identifies two other formats: the transuersa charta format (which we may leave aside in the present context) and the pagina. The latter will become nearly universal for letter-writing in the Roman period, and will also be widely used for administrative purposes, especially in the Arsinoite nome. A distinction between demotic style and pagina format should be made here because, as we shall see, the pagina format is a specific feature of documents relating to liturgy in the Arsinoite nome, as opposed to other locations, where the demotic style format seems to have prevailed.

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[13]   Wilcken 1906: 530; Wilcken 1908: 424.

[14]   Images are provided by Stroppa 2017: Tavole XII – XXV.

[15]   Sarri 2018: 91-107.

demotic style format
P.Cair.Zen. 1 59025
258-256 BCE

pagina format
PSI 6 571
252-251 BCE

10 cm

16.8 cm

fibres →

31.5 cm

28.9 cm

ratio width/height: 0.32

ratio width/height: 0.58

examples drawn from Sarri 2018 : 95 and 101

Fig. 2: demotic format vs. pagina format.

§13   The main difference between the two formats lies in the proportions of the sheet, i.e. the ratio width/ height: in the demotic style format, it is ca. 0.3 (e.g. 10 by 31 cm); in the pagina format, it varies between 0.6 (e.g. 17 by 29 cm) and 0.5 (e.g. 11 by 21 cm).[16] Sarri also observes that, in the pagina format, rolls diminish in height through time.[17] In the Arsinoite nome, in the second and third centuries CE, a height of ca. 21 cm becomes very common; but the overall proportions of the sheet remain the same as in the Ptolemaic period.

The Arsinoite nome: a special case?

§14   We must now turn to material relating to liturgy in the Arsinoite nome, where both format and layout differ markedly from the descriptions made above. It should be noted, however, that a comparison of the Arsinoite material with documents from other areas of Egypt is hampered by a double discrepancy – of place and time – regarding the available data: in the second century CE, the evidence comes mainly from the Arsinoite nome (and most of it from the Petaus archive); in the third century, documents from the Arsinoite relating to liturgy become scarce and fragmentary, but other nomes are better represented.

§15   Moreover, some of the evidence from the Arsinoite nome relating to approvals of nomination consists of copies or abstracts from records, which have not retained the format and layout of the original documents (see esp. **1-5**, ranging from 135 till 173). The raw text could be inserted in the body of another document, as in **3a** (= P.Mil.Vogl. inv. 777) and **3b** (P.Leit. 5 = SB 8 10196 = Pap. Choix 11): the first is the copy of an approval of nomination, presumably an abstract from the strategos' records; and the second is a petition that quotes the approval in exactly the same words. Neither in **3a** nor in **3b** did the format or layout of the original approval matter to the scribe who prepared the documents.

§16   Moving back from approvals towards nominations to liturgy from the Arsinoite nome, we have some original documents preserved. Those were prepared in the pagina format. Sarri, writing about private letters, notes that, in this format – widely used in the Roman period, as stated above – the height of rolls rarely exceeded 28 cm.[18] As a matter of fact, the format of letters in the pagina format from the Arsinoite nome is remarkably consistent: among the 23 cases from the first three centuries CE listed by Sarri (excluding one with a horizontal format and one with two columns), the average dimensions are: height 22.7 cm; width 11.6 cm, with a ratio width/height of 0.5.[19] This corresponds to the format used

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16   The approximate ratios of 0.3 and 0.6 are illustrated in Fig. 2; for a ratio of ca. 0.5, see e.g. P.Mich. 3 202 = C.Pap.Gr. 1 App. B 3 (10.5 x 21.5 cm).

17   Sarri 2018: 97.

18   Sarri 2018: 107.

19   Sarri 2018: 341-345.

in the Arsinoite nome also for administrative documents such as declarations, petitions etc.; and this format prevails among nominations to liturgy, e.g. P.Gen. 1 2 37 = W.Chr. 400.

§17   This last document may also be used to illustrate the specific layout of documents pertaining to liturgy in the Arsinoite nome. The scribe preparing a nomination to liturgy starts at the top of the sheet (without leaving any significant margin), writes the nomination in one block of text, and adds the date at the bottom of the sheet, leaving a window between the main text and the date (P.Gen. 1 2 37). In the window, a transmission docket is added (e.g. P.Mich. 9 536, a relatively short sheet, nonetheless to be placed in the category of pagina format).
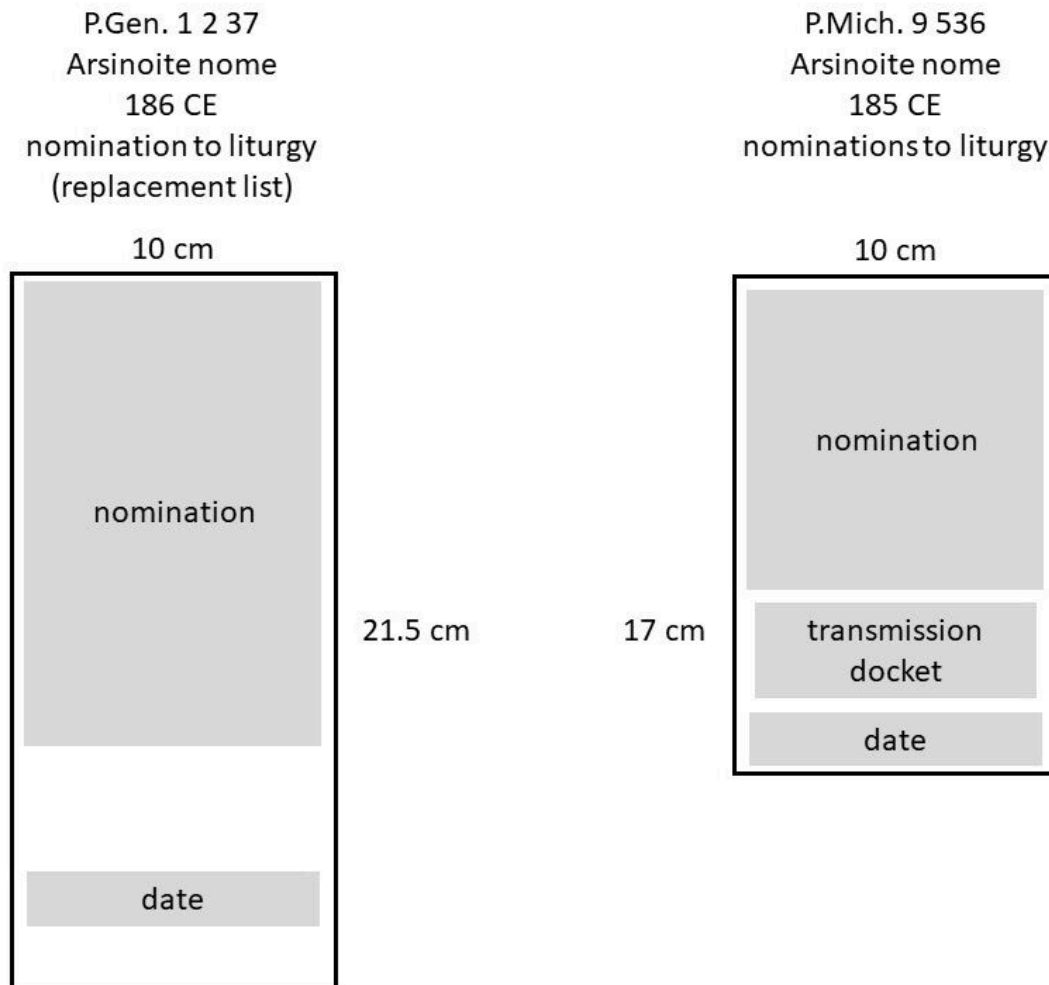
Fig. 3: nomination to liturgy without / with transmission docket.

§18   This layout used by scribes in the Arsinoite nome finds many parallels in other types of documents, such as census declarations or, at a later date, certificates of pagan sacrifice.[20] Coming back to documents pertaining to liturgy, it thus appears that the format and layout in use in the Arsinoite nome is similar to that of documents of other types originating from the same area; and it is in sharp contrast with documents pertaining to liturgy that were produced in other parts of Egypt. The sharpness of this contrast will become even more evident when the overall data is taken into consideration.

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20   Census declaration: e.g. BGU 1 53 (133). Certificate of pagan sacrifice: e.g. P.Ryl. 2 112a (250).

Data pertaining to nominations, approvals and oaths (2nd – 3rd c. CE)

Preliminary remarks about Table 2:

- The format (pagina or demotic style) was assessed according to the general shape of the sheet, not by an exact calculation of the width/height ratio.
- Fragmentary documents were omitted, unless enough was preserved to determine if they were prepared in the pagina or demotic style format.
- In the columns "pagina format" and "demotic style format", some documents are labelled as abstracts and copies. Strictly speaking, they are irrelevant for the present purpose, but they were kept in the table in order to provide a more balanced impression of the available data.
- In the columns "nomination" and "approval", **bold characters** indicate documents with a top space left free for the approval (or filled with the approval).

Table 2: nominations to liturgy, approvals of liturgy, and liturgical oaths (2nd – 3rd c. CE)

reference	date	pagina format	demotic style format	nomination	approval	oath
SB 14 12168	130		X			Oxy.
1-2 = SB 16 12504	135-136	(copies of two approvals)			Arsin.	
P.Oxy. 61 4113	138		X			Oxy.
SB 24 15904	139-142 (?)	X		Arsin.		
P.Lond. 3 1159 (p. 112)	144-147	X		Herm.		
P.Louvre 2 114	ca. 150-175		(draft rather than the official nomination document)	Arsin.		
P.Ryl. 2 88	156	X				Arsin.
P.Leit. 1 = SB VIII 10192	ca. 160		(draft rather than the official nomination document)	Oxy.		
P.Berl.Leihg. 2 45	ca. 164-165		(draft rather than the official nomination document)	Arsin.		
BGU 1 235 = W.Chr. 399	ca. 164-167	X		Arsin.		
3a = P.Mil.Vogl. inv. 777	168		(copy from abstract of approvals)		Arsin.	
3b = P.Leit. 5 = SB 8 10196 = Pap. Choix 11	168		(text of approval embedded in a petition)		Arsin.	
4 = BGU 1 18 = W.Chr. 398 = Sel. Pap. 2 342	169		(copy of an approval)		Arsin.	

BGU 1 91	170-171	X		Arsin.		
5 = SB 14 11613	173	(abstract from approvals)				
P.Berl.Leihg. 2 42a P.Berl.Leihg. 2 42b	ca. 176-179	X		Arsin.		
P.Oxy. 60 4063	183		X			Arabia
P.Oxy. 60 4064	183		X	Arabia		
P.Oxy. 60 4065	183		X	Arabia		
P.Oxy. 60 4066	183		X	Arabia		
P.Oxy. 60 4067	184		X	Arabia		
P.Petaus 75 P.Petaus 76 P.Petaus 77 P.Petaus 78	184	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 57	184	(atypical format)	Arsin.			
P.Petaus 53	184-185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 54	184-185	(a quick note that repeats the content of a formal declaration made in P.Petaus 53)				
P.Petaus 86	184-185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 46	185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 47	185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 49	185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 59	185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 60	185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 62	185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 84	185	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 55	185	X		Arsin.		
P.Mich. 9 536	185	X		Arsin.		
7 = P.Sijp. 21b	185		(abstract from approvals)		Cynop.	
P.Petaus 52	185-186	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 65	before 186	X				
P.Gen. 1 2 37	186	X		Arsin.		
P.Petaus 56	186-187	X		Arsin.		

P.Wisc. 2 85 = SB 8 10193 = P.Leit. 2	197 or 226		X	Oxy.		
BGU 7 1566	198-209		X		Cynop.	
P.Oxy. 47 3344	207		X			Oxy.
SB 18 13333 = P.Oxy. 9 1197	208		X			Arabia
SB 14 11932 = PSI 12 1244	208	X		Arsin.		
P.Lond. 3 1220 (p. 114)	208-209	X		Arsin.		
P.Oxy. 38 2876	212-214		X			Memph.
SB 22 15784	215-216	X		Arsin.		
P.Oxy. 43 3095 = SB 12 10941	217-218		X			Oxy.
P.Oxy. 17 2120	221	(atypical format)			Oxy.	
P.Oxy. 58 3924	223		X			Oxy.
P.Oxy. 43 3097	224-225		X			Oxy.
P.Oxy. 43 3098	232-233		X			Oxy.
P.Oxy. 43 3132	237		X			Oxy.
P.Oxy. 44 3178	248		X	Heracl.		
P.Oxy. 34 2714	256		X	Oxy.		
10 = P.Oxy. 10 1254	260		X		Cynop.	
P.Lips. 1 57 R	261		X			Herm.
11 = P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 1	265		X		Herm.	
12 = P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 2 P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 3 P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 4 P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 5	265		X		Herm.	
13 = P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 6	265		X		Herm.	
14 = P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 7 = W.Chr. 401	265		X		Herm.	
15 = P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 8	265		(letter to the keepers of the archive of property)		Herm.	
16 = P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 9 P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 10	265		X		Herm.	
17 = P.Flor. 1 2 Col. 11	265		X		Herm.	
P.Oxy. 31 2569	265		X			Oxy.

P.Oxy. 46 3294	271		X	**Oxy.**		
PSI 12 1231	274		X	**Oxy.**		
P.Oxy. 36 2764	277		X			Oxy.

§19   The data collected here covers a period of roughly a century and a half, and lists documents from several areas of Egypt: apart from the Arsinoite nome, we find the Hermopolite, Cynopolite, Oxyrhynchite, Heracleopolite, Memphite, and the nome of Arabia.

Fig. 4: nomes of provenance of the documents pertaining to liturgy (nominations, approvals, oaths).

§20   In spite of this diversity, and of the fact that not every aspect is represented in each area throughout the whole period considered here, several patterns emerge from the data. For these patterns to emerge, particular attention should be paid to the format (pagina vs. demotic style) in relation with the nome of provenance (esp. Arsinoite vs. other nomes).

§21   The pagina format appears only in the Arsinoite nome, except for two atypical cases.[21] The variety of other provenances suggests that it is the Arsinoite format that constitutes an exception, and that documents pertaining to liturgy were, on a standard basis, prepared in the demotic style format in other parts of Egypt.

§22   Documents from the nome of Arabia in 184-185, in the demotic style format, offer a striking contrast to those from the Petaus Archive (Arsinoite nome), dating from precisely the same period, in the pagina format. Also, two oaths from the Oxyrhynchite nome dating from the 130s (SB 14 12168 and P.Oxy. 61 4113) already display the characteristic shape of the sheet that is still attested more than a century later in the same nome.

§23   In a broader perspective, the dimensions of these two documents are also similar to some of the so-called private protocols from Oxyrhynchus, i.e. a form of contract that seems to follow the formulation in use in documents written by notarial offices, but display features that belong to privately drafted contracts.[22] For private protocols, this format is well attested throughout the second and third centuries CE.[23]

§24   In the columns of the table where nomination to liturgy and approval of liturgy are recorded (with the corresponding nome of provenance of the document), some cases have been highlighted in bold characters: these are documents where either the scribe left a space for the strategos to add his approval, or the space was actually filled with the strategos' approval. They form a clear cluster in the period from 248 till 274. In contrast, nominations from the nome of Arabia from the 180s do not leave any space for the approval at the top; neither does a nomination from the Oxyrhynchite nome dated 197 or 226 (P.Wisc. 2 85).

§25   BGU 7 1566 (198-209, Cynopolite nome) deserves a special mention. The papyrus was lost, presumably destroyed during World War II, and its dimensions are not given in the edition. The editor, however, recorded in 1926 the presence of a date at the top of the sheet: Ἀθὺρ ζ [. A comparison with 10 = P.Oxy. 10 1254 (260, also from the Cynopolite nome) suggests that the top of BGU 7 1566 was missing: it should have contained the approval by the strategos, which is still preserved in P.Oxy. 10 1254.1-13 and ends with a date (Χοίακ α). Therefore, the procedure by which the strategos added a note at the top of the nomination, effectively turning it into an approval, could already have been in force in the early third century. P.Wisc. 2 85, mentioned above, would then be dated to 197 (rather than 226), and the change of practice would have taken place shortly thereafter, as attested by BGU 7 1566. Incidentally, since the latter can be identified as a fragmentary approval of nomination, it could be added to Stroppa's list of "bandi liturgici". This chain of argument, however, rests on meagre evidence, and only some additional discoveries could either confirm or disprove what remains, at this stage, a working hypothesis.

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21   P.Lond. 3 1159 (144-147, Hermopolite nome; p. 112) consists of a register with four columns. The size of the list may have affected the choice of format. P.Leit. 1 = SB 8 10192 (ca. 160, Oxyrhynchite nome) is presumably a draft, and not an original declaration. Lewis 1963: 5: "As the text is undated and indicates neither sender nor addressee, it is presumably a draft rather than the official nomination document." This hypothesis finds confirmation in the parallel between P.Petaus 53 and 54, the first being a formal declaration, and the second, a note that repeats the same data.

22   Wolff 1975; Wolff 1978:122-127.

23   E.g. P.Oxy. 22 2351 (112); 3 499 = Sel. Pap. 1 42 (121); 3 502 (164); 8 1127 (183); 50 3591 (219); P.Mich. 11 610 (282).

§26 The evidence from the Arsinoite nome becomes elusive after the first quarter of the third century. One tantalizing clue is offered by SB 22 15784, a nomination to liturgy listed above (215-216, Philadelphia [Ars. nome]). In the editio princeps, Piet Sijpestein noted the following: "3 cm above line 1 minimal remains of two lines of writing (in the second line perhaps]ωτιω[). I do not know if and/or how these remains are connected with the text printed here."[24] The plate used to illustrate the text does not provide any clearer detail than what Sijpesteijn described; therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the top margin preserves the remains of an approval of nomination added by the strategos.[25] A confirmation of this last point would suggest that the practice was already in force in the Arsinoite in the early third century; but here again, the evidence is too flimsy to allow any firm conclusion.

Conclusion

§27 To Stroppa's fundamental contribution to the understanding of approvals to liturgy, several points can now be added:

- A consistent pattern emerges from the data available from several nomes (Arabia, Memphite, Heracleopolite, Oxyrhynchite, Cynopolite and Hermopolite), with the exception of the Arsinoite. For documents pertaining to liturgy, the demotic style format is in constant use, at least from 138 till 277.
- Before the early third century, on the one hand no original approval of nomination is preserved (the only approvals in this period are copies or abstracts); on the other hand, nominations to liturgy do not display a space at the top of the document. This may suggest that the process by which the strategos added his approval in a free space at the top of nominations had not yet taken place. We can only speculate about how this was done before the early third century.
- Starting in the early third century, a consistent cluster of evidence appears, both among nominations and approvals: the scribes who prepare a nomination to liturgy leave an ample margin at the top and at the bottom. The bottom margin is used for a transmission docket; then the strategos adds his approval in the top margin. This is attested in the Cynopolite, Heracleopolite, Oxyrhynchite and Hermopolite nomes – but not in the Arsinoite, where the evidence is lacking.
- Both in terms of format and layout, the Arsinoite nome stands out when documents pertaining to liturgy are compared with those from other parts of Egypt. The available evidence indicates that the pagina format was used consistently, following a practice common in this nome for documents related to administration. As for the layout, the available evidence in the third century is very fragmentary; we can therefore not determine if, for approval to liturgies, the scribes adopted the practice observed in other nomes, where a free space was left at the top for the strategos to insert his approval.

§28 The model proposed here relies on abundant, but nonetheless patchy evidence. We lack original nominations and approvals for the period from the 130s till the 180s (only copies or abstracts are preserved); and for the most part we are still ignorant of how the relevant documents from the Arsinoite nome looked in the third century. Some additional finds will enable us to confirm, refute, or refine the model.

§29 We can only guess at the reason for the difference of format between the Arsinoite nome and other areas in Egypt. When considering the format of private letters, Sarri observed that the transuersa charta format gradually receded in the whole of Egypt, in favour of the pagina format, with a turning point

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24 Sijpesteijn 1995: 219, n. 23.
25 In another case, SB VI 9543 = P.Heid. II 223 (224-224, Tebtynis [Ars. nome]), a nomination to liturgy too fragmentary to be listed above, part of the top margin is preserved; but it is not possible to ascertain if it could accommodate an approval by the strategos.

in the first century BCE.[26] The latter format was presumably deemed more elegant: Sarri notes that "most of the third and second century BCE letters that employ it were sent by relatively well educated individuals".[27] She also states that the demotic style format for letters was abandoned in the first century BCE.

§30 A survival of the demotic style format in documents pertaining to liturgy may reflect a conservative trend that endured into the Roman period in many places in Egypt. It seems to apply not only to documents pertaining to liturgy, but – in Oxyrhynchus – also to other specific types, such as private protocols. In the Arsinoite nome, the pagina format apparently became ubiquitous, not only for writing letters, but also for administrative purposes. It was used for declarations, and scribes quite naturally applied this format to matters relating to liturgy.

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26 Sarri 2018: 105.

27 Sarri 2018: 97-98.

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