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A Known Official in an Unknown Post in 339

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- §1 The text edited in this article is a copy of an official letter dated to 339.¹ It was written on the back of a piece cut from a composite roll of documents addressed to the *curator civitatis* of Arsinoe in 314/315.² Two of these documents were published in 1897 as [P.Grenf. 2 79](#); one other, which came immediately before them in the roll, was edited forty years later ([Wegener 1937](#): 211–217), and was republished as [SB 6 9192](#). [Wegener 1937](#): 212 offered the following description of the text on the other side: ‘On the verso is a letter in a handwriting of a later date than the recto, addressed by a person, one of whose names is Σερηναῖος, to the λο]γιστῆ καὶ ἐκδίκῳ καὶ ἐξάκτορι καὶ ἐπόπτῃ Ἀρσινοίτου. The occasion of the letter may have been the negligence of these magistrates (1. 4, σφαλέντας τοσοῦτον, ἀλλ’ εἰδὼς ὑμῶν τὰς [], which threatened to lead to a trial (ἵνα σὺν ὑμῖν ἀνέλθῳ at the end of the letter).’ The text is interesting enough to warrant a full edition.
- §2 There remain the beginning and the end of a letter, written in two columns.³ To judge from the extant height, up to half of the text of the first column is missing; the second column contains the conclusion of the letter and date, a consular clause in Latin. The sender is Septimius Serenaios Apollonios. His capacity is not stated, but he is known as a procurator of the Heptanomia at an unknown date and as an ex-procurator in 333. The Latin consular date and the note that the letter was carried to its destination by an *officialis* show him to be the holder of a senior government post who headed or operated within an *officium*. At that time, letters of high-ranking officials often did not indicate their function.⁴ Apollonios was certainly not a prefect, since Fl. Philagrius was in office when the letter was written (cf. [Agostini 2020](#): 221–231). He could have been a procurator, which would mean that he held more than one procuratorship or the same procuratorship at different points (he could in theory have officiated in the Heptanomia in 339), or he could have risen to the position of *rationalis*. See further [i 2 n.](#) (§10, below).
- §3 Apollonios was clearly unhappy with the civic officials of Arsinoe. The loss of what precedes it makes the closure of the letter ambiguous and raises other questions about Apollonios’ role. He seems to say that the Arsinoite officials should meet him at Kaine, so that he would ‘go up’ (ἀνέλθῳ) with them. The verb ἀνέρχομαι indicates movement from countryside to city or from north to south; did Apollonios ask them to meet him at the port and accompany him to the city of Arsinoe, or would they all together travel to some place in the south? The position of Kaine is another problem. It may be a port on the border of the Arsinoite nome with the Heracleopolite, or even the port of Arsinoe itself (see §26 below, [ii 1 n.](#)). If the destination was not Arsinoe, it would be the headquarters of Apollonios, but where would that be? The only major city south of Arsinoe in what was still the province of Aegyptus is Oxyrhynchus, and the only other city to which one could ‘go up’ from Heracleopolite Kaine is Heracleopolis. Potentially relevant is [P.Oxy. 50 3577](#), a letter of a *praeses* of Augustamnica to two *propoliteuomenoi* of Oxyrhynchus, issued at Heracleopolis in 342. The seat of the *praeses* was Pelusium, and he may have sent the letter in the course of a tour of inspection of the province. I wonder whether Heracleopolis housed a high government office, operative during the last years of the city as part of Aegyptus and then when it belonged to Augustamnica. Such an office could provide a basis for the later prominence of the city, the joint capital with Oxyrhynchus of the province of Arcadia. We still do not know which city was the basis of the procurator of the Heptanomia.

1 The text was briefly discussed in a paper presented at the 30th International Congress of Papyrology (‘Heptanomia in the Fourth Century’; Paris, 25 July 2022). I am grateful to Rodney Ast and Mike Sampson for helpful comments.

2 For the acquisition history of this papyrus, see [Sampson 2022](#): §11.

3 The position of the two fragments in the frame does not reflect the original arrangement but the sequence of the text on the other side of the roll; they should ideally have been placed side by side.

4 Cf. e.g. [P.Oxy. 43 3129](#) (335) and [P.Oxy. 55 3794](#) (340), letters of Fl. Philagrius, prefect of Egypt, the second with strong affinities to ours (see [1 n.](#) = §5, [3 n.](#) = §14), or [P.Oxy. 50 3577](#) (342), [P.Oxy. 50 3579](#) and [P.Münch. 3 69](#) (ca. 341–342), letters of Fl. Ausonius, *praeses* of Augustamnica.

§4 In 333, we find Apollonios in Oxyrhynchus (☞ [P.Oxy. 14 1716](#)). Described as a former procurator and acting through an agent, he receives the repayment of a loan of 300 talents from two Oxyrhynchites.⁵ His links to the city were apparently strong. As he was in government service six years later, this would not be a retired civil servant who settled in an area where he had held office. A long stay in the city on government business is also difficult to gauge; Oxyrhynchus is not known as a provincial government centre in the 330s. Did he originate from Oxyrhynchus? His names suggest that he was a scion of a family from the East that would have acquired Roman citizenship under Septimius Severus and was probably part of the elite of Roman Egypt. He would not have been the only Egyptian in such a post: to judge from his name, the procurator of the Heptanomia Valerius Sarapodorus (☞ [Delmaire 1988](#): 127, no. 36) was most probably another. Though the geographical remit of the procurator largely overlapped with that of the epistrategus of the Heptanomia, this was not the world of the epistrategi of Egypt under the Principate; most of them bear Roman names and were equestrians, and we only know of one or two epistrategi of Egyptian origin (☞ [Thomas 1982](#): 54–56). Some of the superiors of these procurators, the *rationales* – ius Sarapodorus (☞ [Delmaire 1988](#): 116, no. 8) and Aurelius Sarapion (☞ [Delmaire 1988](#): 117, no. 10), would likewise have been natives of Egypt. In view of their origins, these officials would have been firmly rooted in the local society and economy, pursuing their private affairs while serving the imperial government.⁶ We see similar patterns in the centuries that followed, with the governors of the provinces of Egypt drawn, at least in part, from the local property-owning elite, which formed the new aristocracy of service. The early fourth century offers a good taste of Egypt in late antiquity.

MS. Gr. Class. d. 143 (P) v
☞ digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk

fr. 1 27.4 (w) × 15.9 (h)
fr. 2 22.1 (w) × 13.3 (h) cm

Before 7 July 339

⁵ Something comparable may lie in the background of ☞ [P.Coll. Youtie 2 88](#), an early fourth-century letter about the repayment of a loan of 100 talents. The writers ‘make an oblique threat about calling a soldier to collect the sum’, and ask the addressee to convey a message to a third person with ‘another menacing reference to soldiers’: σπουδάζον πέμψαι τὰ ἀργύρια τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπεὶ ἐπίτροπος γέγον[ε]ν μὴ μ[ε]ταπεμ[φ]θῆς ὑπὸ στ[ρ]ατιωτῶν, ‘hasten to send the man’s money, now that he has become an epitropos, so that you may not be summoned by the soldiers’ (ll. 19–23). This ἐπίτροπος may be a procurator on government service.

⁶ Even at the lower levels of the administration, there were changes at this time that reduced the compulsory mobility of regional officials. As late as the earlier part of the third century, and probably also later, strategoi served away from their place of origin; in the fourth century, *curatores civitatis* and strategoi *exactores* were recruited from among the local councillors (☞ [Bagnall 1993](#): 60–62).

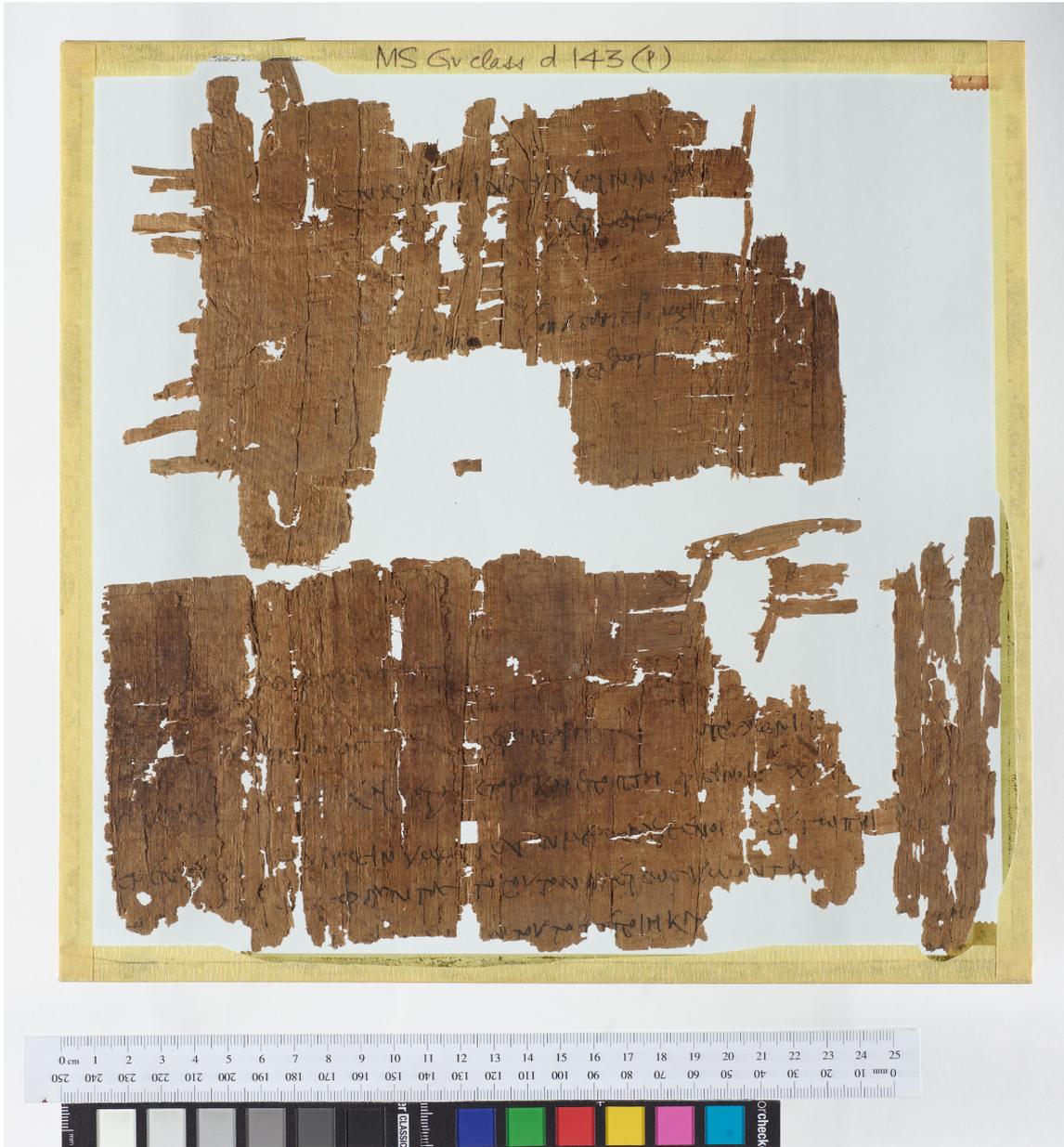


Fig. 1: The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS. Gr. class. d. 143 (P) verso. Creative Commons License Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 (CC BY-NC 4.0).

i

δ[ι](ἀ) ὄφ(φικαλίου) Ἐπειφ ιγ

[-ca.4- (?)] . . . Σεπτίμιος Σερηνάιος Ἀπολλώνιος

[λ]ογιστῆ καὶ [συν]δίκῳ καὶ ἐξάκτορι καὶ ἐπόπτη Ἀρσινοΐτου χαίρειν.

[ἴ]σμεν τὴν ἐπιχίρησιν ὑμῶν. ἐχρῆν με χαλεπένοντα οὕτω πρὸς

⁵ [.] . ορ[. . .] . . . ι . . . ς σφαλέντας τοσοῦτον, ἀλλ' εἰδὼς ὑμῶν τὰς [-ca.4-] .

[-ca.12-] . σαι . . . [.] γὰρ τοῦτο πεποιήκατε [-ca.4-] . [.] . . . ης

[-ca.?-] . . . [-ca.?-]

ii

ἐν Καινῇ, ἵνα σὺν ὑμῖν ἀνέλθω.

ἐρρῶσθαι ὑμᾶς εὐ[χομα]ι *vac.**vac.*

d(ominis) n(ostris) Constantio Aug(usto) ii et

[Const]ante Aug(usto) i cō(n)σ(ulibus)

4 *l. ἐπιχείρησιν l. χαλεπαίνοντα* 6 *or γ* 1 ἵνα papyrus 2 ὑμας papyrus *or εὐ[χομα]ι[-*
ca.?-] 3 *ddnn papyrus* 4 *ϕοσσ papyrus*

Through an *officialis*, Epeiph 13. ... Septimius Serenaios Apollonios to the *curator civitatis* and syndic and *exactor* and overseer of the Arsinoite (nome), greeting. We know your enterprise. It was necessary, as I was so angry ... (those?) who were so much wrong, but knowing your ... because (?) you have done this ...

... at Kaine, so that I go up with you. I wish you well.

In the consulship of our masters Constantius Augustus, for the 2nd time, and Constans Augustus, for the 1st time.

Col. i

- §5 1 δ[ι](ἀ) ὄφ(φικιαλίου). What remains of δ is vestigial if not illusory; only the abbreviation stroke, a high rising oblique, is clear. Another annotation that a letter was transported by an *officialis* is ☞ **P.Oxy. 55 3794.1** (340) δι(ἀ) Σαραπίωνος ὄφ(φικιαλίου) Μεσορ[η], addressed by the prefect of Egypt to the same kind of officials as the Bodleian papyrus one year later (see §14 below, **i 3 n.**). The editor noted (1 n.): ‘The annotation of the receipt of the prefect’s letter was probably made in the office of the *curator*.’ The certainly holds for our text too, copied on the back of documents addressed to the *curator*.
- §6 Epeiph 13 = July 7.
- §7 2 [*ca.4?*] .. Σεπτίμιος Σερηνάιος Ἀπολλώνιος. The traces at the beginning of the line ought to belong to Φλάουιος, but they are too minimal for a reading to be confirmed. At the end of the line, the papyrus breaks off after Ἀπολλώνιος, but there is not enough room to restore any title, and in any case this part of the papyrus would have been damaged at the time of its reuse (see §17 below, **i 3 n.**).
- §8 The name Σερηνάιος is attested only for this person; there is no entry in ☞ **Lexicon of Greek Personal Names**. ☞ **Solin–Salomies 1994**: 168 only list Seren(n)ius among Roman *gentilicia*. Perhaps its formation was influenced by the common Εἰρηναῖος.
- §9 Flavius Septimius Serenaios Apollonios is recorded in ☞ **PLRE I 85** (also ☞ **Delmaire 1988**: 128, no. 40) as ‘procurator Heptanomiaie before 333’ from two texts: ☞ **P.Oxy. 14 1716.4–5** (333) Φλάουιος Σεπτίμιος Σερήνι[ο]ς Ἀπολλώνιος διαση|μότατος ἀπὸ ἐπιτρόπων (the ☞ **IPAP photograph** shows that Σερηνᾶ[ι]ο[ς] can be read in place of Σερήνι[ο]ς), and in an undated papyrus that specifies his office. For the latter text, the reader is referred to ☞ **P.Beatty Panop.**, p. xvi, where Skeat noted: ‘I have also come across a note by Sir Harold Bell of an unpublished papyrus, a petition addressed [μί]φ Σερηνάιφ Ἀπολλωνίφ ἐπιτρόφφ Ἐπτανομίας, from an inhabitant of Takona in the ninth *pagus* of the Oxyrhynchite nome.’ Thanks to an investigation by the late Federica Micucci and to the assistance

of Brendan Haug, this papyrus turned out to be [P.Mich. inv. 1932](#) (currently under research); the relevant part reads]μίωι Σερηναίωι Ἀπολλωνίωι | [τῶι διασημ[ο]τρά[τ]ωι ἐπιτρόπωι Ἑπτανομίας .

- §10 Septimius Serenaeus Apollonios was tentatively identified with the *procurator (rei) privatae Aegypti* in [P.Prag. 1 10.1–2](#),] Ἀπολλωνίω διασημ[ο]τράτῳ ἐπιτρόπῳ | πριουάτης Αἰγύπτου , sender of a letter to the *exactor* of the Kabasite nome in the Delta. The date of the text was placed in 309–314/315 by [Cowey et al. 1989](#): 216 (= BL 9.221), considerably earlier than 333. A date after 314/315 was excluded for two reasons, but neither is cogent. The office (‘Amt’) of ἐπίτροπος πριουάτης Αἰγύπτου is said to be securely attested only between 298 and 325; but the *officium* (τάξις) of this procurator is recorded as late as 338 ([P.Vind.Sijp. 1 i 16–17, ii 15](#); cf. [Delmaire 1988](#): 134, no. 73). Another objection was that this office could not have existed between 314/315 and 325, since Lower Egypt was split into two provinces in this period (*Aegyptus Herculia* and *Aegyptus Iovia*); but there is no need to assume that this partition was reflected in the financial departments (cf. [Bagnall 1993](#): 67) so that there would be no such procurator *privatae Aegypti* at that time; the Heptanomia, a division of the Egyptian part of the *summa res*, headed by a procurator, continued its existence until the 360s regardless of the changing administrative landscape of Middle Egypt. Yet even if the date of the Prague papyrus were fairly close to 333, there would still be difficulties. [Mitthof 2000](#): 260 n. 8 has observed that the identification would be possible only if we assumed that Apollonios held several procuratorships. We may add that these would be held in two distinct financial departments (*res privata* and *summa res*), but these departments were not necessarily worlds apart, as they were occasionally headed by the same person, who was a *catholicus* as well as *magister rei privatae* (Delmaire 1988: 119–121, nos. 17 and 19; cf. [P.Oxy. 48 3416](#) introd., p. 123). It should also be noted that the lacuna at the start of [P.Prag. 1 10.1](#) could have taken away only one name.
- §11 Another potential but even more problematic candidate for the identification is [c. 4]ώνιος ἐπίτρ[οπο]ς in [P.Vind.Bosw. 14](#) = [SB 26 16763.2](#), who wrote to the Hermopolite *exactor* some time between 317 and 323 (the date range is not entirely certain). He was subordinate to the *rationalis*, and presumably a procurator of the Lower Thebaid. His name could but need not have been Apollonios; see [Mitthof 2000](#): 260–262, 264 (2 n.).
- §12 More promising is [P.Oxy. 66 4525.30](#),] Ἀπολλώνιος διαση(μότατος) εἶπ(εν) , a record of proceedings of the city council of Oxyrhynchus from around 331. The name, rank, date, and place make it conceivable that this *perfectissimus* Apollonios is the same as the procurator.
- §13 Septimius Serenaios Apollonios had been tentatively identified with the *dioiketes* Septimius Apollonios ([Lallemand 1964](#): 262), but it later emerged that this *dioiketes* (an office abolished under Diocletian) belongs to the 250s ([Hagedorn 1985](#): 205). These are probably namesakes rather than members of the same family.
- §14 3 For the address, cf. [P.Oxy. 55 3794.2–3](#) (340) λογιστῆ καὶ συνδίκῳ [καὶ ἐξάκτορι καὶ] | ἐπόπτη καὶ προπολιτευομένοις Ὁξυρυγχειῶν (sim. ll. 20–21). (Our papyrus is mentioned in [Lallemand 1964](#): 111 n. 3 among documents addressed to a plurality of municipal officials.)
- §15 [συν]δίκῳ. [Wegener 1937](#): 212 read ἐκδίκῳ. There are a few scattered specks of ink before δ which do not support any reading, but συν accounts for the space better than ἐκ; cf. [P.Oxy. 55 3794.2](#) (above). The Arsinoite syndic in 339 was –mion ([SB 16 12692.1](#)).
- §16 ἐπόπτη. This is the earliest reference to the office of ἐπόπτης εἰρήνης , taking the place of [P.Oxy. 55 3794.3](#) (340); see [P.Oxy. 50 3573.3–4](#) n., with [P.Oxy. 55 3794.2–3](#) n. Its only other Arsinoite attestation may be [P.Münch. 3 69.4](#) (ca. 341–342)] εἰρήνης.

- §17 *χαίρειν*. The papyrus is broken after *ει*, and the putative *ν* stands on the opposite edge. The break must have predated the reuse of the papyrus, and the copyist added *ν* where the surface of the papyrus allowed. Cf. *προσ-* in the next line.
- §18 4 [ἴ]σμεν. The Classical form of the first person plural of *οἶδα* is not attested in the papyri before the fourth century, whereas the *koine* *οἶδαμεν* is found from the first Ptolemaic century to the early years of Arab rule; cf. [Gignac 1980](#): 410.
- §19 *τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν ὑμῶν*. Cf. [P.Oxy. 46 3304.23–24](#) (301) *τὴν παράνομον αὐτοῦ ἐπιχείρη[σ]ιν*, ‘his unlawful enterprise’.
- §20 *χαλεπένογτα*. The verb has previously occurred only in one other papyrus, a second-century record of proceedings, [P.Phil. 2](#) i 4 *χαλαπήνας*. It is more common in literature.
- §21 *προσ-*. There is a gap between *πρ* and *οσ*, with only the underlying layer of fibres visible; the front of *ρ* is written on this layer, which shows that the defect was present when the papyrus was reused. The damage has also affected the end of *χαίρειν* at 3. I have articulated *προσ-* rather than *πρός* on the assumption that this is the beginning of an infinitive (compound) that goes with *ἐχρῆν*.
- §22 5 The letter before *ορ* is *π* or *τ*. I have considered *προσ|πορ[ί]ζε]σθαί*, but the sense is not satisfactory. Before *σφαλέντας*, *τοῖς* is not a good match for the traces (certainly not *ὑμῶς*).
- §23 *σφαλέντας*. *σφάλλω* is a fairly uncommon verb in the papyri, otherwise attested in [SB 12 10927.6](#) (?; late 1st c. BCE / early 1st c. CE), [P.Congr.XV 20.6](#) (Oxy.?, 3rd/4th c.), and [PSI 12 1265.10](#) (Oxy.; 426).
- §24 6 After]σαι, the top of an upright with a short oblique stroke further up, presumably *ι*; cf. *ἶνα* at [ii 1](#).
- §25 *γάρ*. The reading assumes that *γ* has a (mostly abraded) cap that descends into ligature with *α*. But Mike Sampson may be right in seeing the first trace as an upright standing on its own (*ι*), followed by *ν*; what confuses me is the extra ink at the upper right of what would be the second upright of the putative *ν*.

Col. ii

- §26 1 *ἐν Καινῇ*. P. Heilporn, [P.Narm. 2006](#), pp. 44–47, has suggested that most references to this port and customs gate in Arsinoite documents (collected under [TM Geo 950](#)) are to Heracleopolite Kaine ([TM Geo 953](#)). A note appended to [TM Geo 950](#) reads: ‘Clarysse rather thinks that Kaine is the harbour of 00d Krokodilopolis [= Arsinoe]’. Whatever the case, our text implies that there was a close relationship between Arsinoe and Kaine.
- §27 2 The final greeting was written very quickly.
- §28 3–4 On other attestations of this consular pair in the papyri, see [Bagnall–Worp 2004](#): 184. The day of the month may have been given in a note added in the left hand margin ([Iovine 2019](#)), but this part of the papyrus is missing (and the text is copy).

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