



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

The Greek Text on the P.Dem. Insinger: A Note on the Date Worp, K.A.

Citation

Worp, K. A. (1982). The Greek Text on the P.Dem. Insinger: A Note on the Date. *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen Uit Het Rijksmuseum Voor Oudheden Te Leiden*, 63, 39-41. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/9222>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/9222>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

THE GREEK TEXT ON THE P. DEM. INSINGER: A NOTE ON THE DATE

K.A. Worp

The Rijksmuseum van Oudheden at Leiden has among its riches a long Demotic papyrus, bought at the end of the last century through the good offices of a Dutchman, Mr. J. H. Insinger, after whom it is now named as *P. Dem. Insinger*.

The date of the papyrus is given by some modern scholars in a rather succinct way.

Spiegelberg 1910, 6, states: "(Die Datierung des P. Dem. Insinger) ist durch die griechischen Zeilenreste der Rückseite gegeben, welche in die ersten Jahrzehnte der römischen Kaiserzeit gehören."

Boeser 1922, ii, says: "Der Schriftcharacter des Papyrus und die griechischen Zeilenreste der Rückseite zeigen, dass unser Papyrus der ersten Hälfte des ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts angehört."

Boeser 1933, 1, informs us: "The script and 6 lines of Greek show that it (the P. Dem. Insinger) dates from the Roman imperial time."

More information is provided by *Lexa* 1926, 2, who states: "A la fin ils (the first editors of the text) notent la transcription du texte grec du revers de notre papyrus exécuté par M. Wilcken:

παρα
 στορον ι[.....
 σεβαστ[ου
 αναμε
 υποφ
 υστ

et sa conclusion concernant l'âge du texte du papyrus d'Insinger que l'écriture de cette inscription grecque est au point de vue paléographique conforme à l'écriture grecque usuelle en Egypte dans les premières dizaines du premier siècle après J.-C., et ils ajoutent que le texte démotique peut, au point de vue paléographique, très bien appartenir à la même époque."

Thus, this series of statements would give the impression that there is a Greek text written directly on the back of the Demotic papyrus roll. Those who have not seen *Lexa*'s edition might well wonder about the contents and size of the Greek text, as this has never entered the *Sammelbuch der griechischen Urkunden aus Ägypten*.

Consultation of the *editio princeps* of the papyrus edited by *W. Pleyte* et *P.A.A. Boeser* proved revealing. *Pleyte and Boeser* 1899, 10, state: "Op de keerzijde van het handschrift staat een opschrift in loopend Grieksch van 6 regels. Het is echter maar een gedeelte, en schijnt een overblijfsel te zijn van eene strook, die om het opgerolde handschrift was geplakt:

παρα .[....
 στορον ι[...
 σεβαστ[ου ...
 αναμε[.....
 υποφ.[.....
 υστ[.....

Het schrift is volgens Dr. Wilcken, Prof. te Breslau, die zich bijzonder met de Grieksch-Egyptische teksten bezighoudt, en wien ik¹ eene photographie toezond, uit het eerste tiental jaren van de eerste eeuw na Christus. Hiermede is het karakter van het Demotisch niet in strijd."

The diligent reader will have remarked already that Wilcken's dating of the Greek writing to the period of A.D. 1-10 ("het eerste tiental jaren") becomes with *Spiegelberg* 1910: "die ersten Jahrzehnten der römischen Kaiserzeit", with *Boeser* 1922: "die erste Hälfte des ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts", with *Lexa* 1926: "Les premières dizaines du premier siècle après J.-C." and finally with *Boeser* 1933 "the Roman imperial time".

But there is more: Pleyte and Boeser assume that the Greek text was written on a strip of papyrus which was pasted around the papyrus when rolled up. A check with the original persuades me that this is not the correct solution, though it is evident that the first editors are right in stating that the Greek text is not written directly on the back of the papyrus roll.

Inspection of the original² shows that the Greek text written "at the back" of the Demotic text, opposite col. x, was written indeed on a separate strip of papyrus which is pasted upon the surface of the Demotic roll in such a way that, whereas on the back of the papyrus roll the fibres run vertically, the fibres of the strip containing Greek writing

run horizontally, i.e. at an angle of 90° to the fibre structure of the large Demotic roll. The Greek writing runs parallel with the fibres of this strip of papyrus. It seems impossible, therefore, that this strip is indeed part of a larger strip intended to keep the long Demotic text rolled up, because of its place opposite col. x. of the Demotic text. Parts of such a strip would be expected at the very end of the roll, if they were ever there; col. x is, however, somewhere in the middle of the roll.

A more likely explanation would be that we are dealing with a strip of papyrus which was pasted some time to the back of the Demotic text in order to re-inforce it. Whether this re-inforcement was added to the roll already in ancient, or only in modern times, cannot be ascertained anymore. As there are no holes in col. x of the Demotic text, there seems more reason to think of a modern re-inforcement.

Anyway, now that we have established that the Greek strip does not physically belong to the long Demotic roll, we lose one dating criterion for dating this Demotic text to the very early beginning of the first century A.D. Only experts in Demotic palaeography may be able to ascertain to which period the writing of the P. Dem. Insinger belongs. As to the date of the Greek text,³ this may be put in the period between 30 B.C. - ca. 50. A.D. The mentioning of a form of *αεβαστος* in line 3 clearly points towards a date in the Roman period, but it seems unsafe to date the text to a very limited period of time as Wilcken apparently did. Or do we have to assume that Wilcken's expertise was misrepresented by the first editors of this important document?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Spiegelberg* 1910 = W. Spiegelberg, *Der Sagenkreis des Königs Petubastis*, Leipzig 1910 (= *Demotische Studien* von W. Spiegelberg, 3)
Boeser 1922 = P.A.A. Boeser, *Transkription und Übersetzung des Papyrus Insinger*, *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden*, Nieuwe Reeks, 3 (1922), i ff.
Lexa 1926 = F. Lexa, *Papyrus Insinger. Les enseignements moraux d'un scribe Egyptien du premier siècle après J.-C.*, II (Paris 1926), § IV: *Etude historique et grammaticale*.
Pleyte and Boeser 1899 = W. Pleyte en P.A.A. Boeser, *Aegyptische Monumenten van het Nederlandsche Museum van Oudheden te Leiden*. Aflevering 34: *Suten-xeft. Het Koninklijk boek*. (Demotische Papyrus Insinger). Leiden 1899.
Holwerda 1905 = *Aegyptische Monumenten van het Nederlandsch Museum van Oudheden te Leiden*, supplement op aflevering 34: *Suten-xeft, Het Koninklijke boek*. Leiden 1905.

1. Presumably the singular refers to W. Pleyte, director of the Museum van Oudheden from 1891-1903.

2. I should like to thank Drs. M.J. Raven for making the original papyrus available to me and for his encouragement to write this contribution.

3. A plate is given in *Holwerda* 1905, pl. 1. The dimensions of the strip bearing the Greek text are 9.5 x 3.0 cm. I transcribe it as follows:

1 Πάρα Μ[-, 2 στορου ν[-, 3 αεβαστ [-, 4 αναμε[-, 5 υπο Φαιδ[-, 6 υστ[-. Evidently we are dealing with some document connected with the sowing of land. In line 4 perhaps some form of *αναμετρειν/αναμετρησις*. In line 3 some form of *αεβαστος* (forming part of a dating formula by regnal years?) should be restored.

Line 1 really was the first line of the text (blank upper border of 2.7 cm), line 6 probably not the end (no border presented); there is a 1 cm wide border to the left of the text.

