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**Loading receipt for grain, issued by an ἐπιμελητὴς σίτου
Ἀλεξανδρείας**

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**2878. LOADING RECEIPT FOR GRAIN,
ISSUED BY AN ἐπιμελητῆς σίτου Ἀλεξανδρείας***

P. 18048

9.5 × 6.7 cm

Second half of fourth century

Acquired in 1962 (Sammlung Ibscher)

Plate III

Hermopolis

This papyrus is almost complete. At the top, left and bottom the margins are preserved, at the right side a narrow strip of papyrus is missing. On the recto 12 lines of Greek are written along the fibres. The verso is empty. The handwriting, an experienced but slightly irregular early Byzantine cursive hand,² as well as the contents (see below), point to a date in the second half of the fourth century.

The text is a loading receipt³ for grain, issued by an *epimeletes* of Hermopolis who was, for the 11th indiction, entrusted with the task of collecting and transporting tax grain to Alexandria. The name of the *epimeletes* is not included in the heading. No addressee is mentioned either, but the receipt was probably issued to the taxpayer, who paid on account of the previously unattested *onoma* of Achilles, son of Dioscorides, and who may have been Achilles himself. It is stated that 7 ½ artabas of grain have been loaded onto a ship.

The whole document was written in one hand and shows writing errors. It was issued through (διά) and officially agreed to by an *epimeletes* named Ammonius. The first sentence of the main text starts with καὶ ἐνεβαλόμεν (l. ἐνεβαλόμην): possibly before καί a verb like παρέλαβον or μεμέτρημαι was left out by mistake.

We have here only the second instance in our papyrological evidence where tax grain is explicitly said to be transported on a ship belonging to the holy catholic church, although the use of such boats of course fits into the general picture of the organization of the transportation of tax grain (see below, note to l. 3–4). Its skipper was Besarion, who was a deacon (of this same church, probably). If our Besarion would be identical with the skipper of the same name in P.Ryl. IV 652 (see below, note to l. 5), the 11th indiction of our text may be 367 or 352.

* I wish to thank the editor and the anonymous peer reviewers for their useful remarks. This edition was finished in 2010 and only slightly updated in 2021.

² The handwriting is loosely comparable with e.g. P.Charite 7, Tafel IV (347), with P.Landlisten (to be dated around 375 according to van Minnen, Hermopolis, 6 and 10), and with BGU IV 1044 (IV, cf. Schubart, PGB, Tab. 41).

³ For a list of loading receipts see Meyer-Termeer, Die Haftung der Schiffer, 90–103 with additions in P.Wash.Univ. II 82, introduction p. 99 and in P. Köln X 416, introduction, p. 159–160.

- 1 ἐπιμελιταῖς σίτου Ἀλεξανδρ(είας)
 2 κανόνος ια / / ἰνδικτίονος Ἐρμοῦ π[όλ(εως).]
 3 < ? > καὶ ἐνεβαλόμεν εἰς πλοῖ(ον) τῆς
 4 ἀγίας καθολικῆς ἐκκλησία[ς]
 5 οὗ κυβερνήτης Βησαρίων{ι} διάκ[ων]
 6 ὑπὲρ ὀνό(ματος) Ἀχιλλεῖς Διοσκορίδου σί[του]
 7 καθαροῦ σὺν ναύλοις καὶ ἑκατο[σταῖς]
 8 σὺν εἰκοσταῖς ἀρτάβας ἑπτὰ ἥ[μισυ],
 9 γί(νονται) σί(του) καθαρ(οῦ) (ἀρτάβαι) ζ (ἥμισυ) μόνας.
 10 δι' ἑμοῦ Ἀμμωνί(ου) ἐπιμελιτα[ίς],
 11 συμφωνεῖ σίτου σὺν εἰκοστᾶ[ίς],
 12 (γίνονται) (ἀρτάβαι) ζ (ἥμισυ) // μόνας.

1 l. ἐπιμελητής σιτῶ Pap. Ἀλεξανδρ/ Pap. 2 ἰα// Pap. ερμῶ Pap. 3 l. ἐνεβαλό-
 μην πλοῦ Pap. 6 ὄνο Pap. l. Ἀχιλλέως διοσκοριδῶ Pap. 7 καθαρῶ Pap.
 9 γ< σ< καθαρ = ζ ζ< Pap. l. μόνας 10 εμῶ ἀμμων< Pap. l. ἐπιμελητής for ἐπιμελη-
 τοῦ 11 συμφωνε< σιτῶ Pap. 12 = Pap ζ ζ< Pap.

1 ἐπιμελιταῖς (l. ἐπιμελητής) σίτου: in view of the singular form of the verb in line 3 (see note), ἐπιμελιταῖς is most likely a spelling mistake for the nominative singular ἐπιμελητής. Cf. ἐπιμελιτα[ίς] in l. 10, with note. For the interchange η χ αι see Gignac, Grammar I, 247–248. The absence of a preceding personal name is remarkable, but the name is mentioned at the end of the receipt; cf. PUG II 69, 1.

ἐπιμελιταῖς could also have been a writing error for the plural ἐπιμεληταί (extra *sigma* under the influence of the following *sigma* of σίτου), which would however not fit the singular form of the verb in line 3. The ending looks like the dative case, for which cf. the faulty datives in line 5 and perhaps 6, see note below. It is less likely that we really have a dative case and that the receipt was not issued by, but addressed to the *epimeletai*. When these officials receive receipts, they always concern full shiploads. Smaller loads as in this papyrus only occur in receipts, issued by the *epimeletai* to the taxpayer(s). [PUG II 69 is probably no exception: this fragmentary text (unknown provenance, dating from after the middle of IV, cf. BL X 279) was assumed to be directed to an *epimeletes sitou Alexandrias* about the loading of 25 artabas of wheat, but at the end the text contains the word for receipt: ἀποχή; so this text is rather also a receipt issued by this *epimeletes*: line 1 ἐπιμελιτου should then be read as ἐπιμελητής and line 9 σ. [may be supplemented with συ[μφωνεῖ – the upsilong is clearly visible on the image PUG II Tav. XII].]

The ἐπιμεληταὶ σίτου Ἀλεξανδρ(είας) were officials based in the capital city of the nome, belonging to the bouletic class, who were responsible for the collection of tax grain in their nome and for its transport to Alexandria. For the administration of tax grain transports and the officials involved, see Meyer-Termeer, Die Haftung der Schiffer, 5–7; Sijpesteijn, Tax-Grain; Hoogendijk, Brief des *praefectus annonae*

Alexandria; P.Mich. XX, Introduction; Adams, Nile River Transport, 176–189. For the *epimeletai* in general see Oertel, Liturgie, 214–221; Lewis, Compulsory Public Services, 25–26; Mitthof, *Annona militaris*, I 83–90 with references to earlier literature; P.Mich. XX, Introduction, § 3.

Attestations for ἐπιμεληταὶ σίτου in Hermopolis in chronological order:

- P.Charite 21 (337–347; with BL VIII 82): an ἐπιμελητής σίτου ἀπὸ Ἑρμοῦ πόλεως δι' ἑμοῦ Ἀπολονίδου to the tax payer Aurelia Charite, receipt for 40 artabas of wheat;

- SB XIV 11548 (343, or 344 with BL IX 274; cf. BL X 209): to an ἐπιμελητής σίτου γενήματος ἰζ ἧτοι β νέας ἰνδικ(τίωνος), declaration on oath to act as surety for a skipper to deliver 900 artabas of wheat to Alexandria;

- SB XIV 12217 (first half IV): two ἐπιμεληταὶ σίτου ἀπὸ Ἑρμοῦ πόλεως καταφερομένου ἐπὶ τὴν λαμπροτάτην Ἀλεξανδρείαν to the tax payers, receipt for 50 artabas of grain;

- P.Flor. I 75 = Wilcken, Chrest. 433 (380): a ναυκληροκυβερνήτης to two ἐπιμεληταὶ σίτου Ἀλεξανδρείας κανόνος) τῆς ἐνεστώσης ἐνάτης ἰνδικτίωνος, receipt on oath for 1463 artabas of wheat for transport to Alexandria;

- P.Münch. III 99 = Wilcken, Chrest. 434 (390): four ναυκληροκυβερνήται and one κυβερνήτης to one ἐπιμελητής σίτου Ἀλεξανδρείας κανόνος τετάρτης ἰνδικτίωνος; declaration on oath to act as surety for a sixth skipper to deliver wheat to Alexandria;

- P.Stras. VII 654 (425–450): a κυβερνήτης to two ἐπιμεληταὶ σίτου . . ἰνδικτίωνος, undertaking on oath to deliver 1449 ½ artabas of wheat to Alexandria.

As far as can be deduced from this limited number of attestations, it appears that a longer formula, including the words Ἀλεξανδρείας and κανόνος x ἰνδικτίωνος, was used in Hermopolis in the second half of the fourth century. So our text, also with this longer formula, may well stem from the second half of this century, rather than the first half.

2 The first letter of this line, the *kappa* of κανόνος, has a remarkably long first stroke, starting upwards with a flourish going even higher than the first line, before going down.

3 καὶ ἐνεβαλόμεν, l. ἐνεβαλόμην: the verb is always used in the middle form ἐμβάλλομαι, cf. Meyer-Termeer, *Die Haftung der Schiffer*, 77. This means that we have to assume another (common) spelling mistake here. The verb is often found in combination with another verb in expressions like παρέλαβον καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην, παρείληφα καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην, μεμέτρημαι καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην, ὑπεδεχόμην καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην, ἔσχον καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην, ἀπέχω καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην, of which at least the first three combinations are attested for Hermopolite texts: παρέλαβον καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην: P.Charite 21 (ca. 337–347), SB XVI 12340 (315), SB XVI 12636 (early IV); παρείληφα καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην: P.Charite 13 (325); μεμέτρημαι καὶ ἐνεβαλόμην: CPR XVII A 7 (317). Possibly one of these verbs was left out by mistake, unless this receipt was issued in addition to an earlier text, and “I also loaded” was indeed meant.

3–4 πλοῖ(ον) τῆς ἀγίας καθολικῆς ἐκκλησία[ς]: the only parallel for a ship belonging to a church and used for transportation of tax grain can be found in P.Münch. III 99 = Wilcken, Chrest. 434 (Hermopolis, 390; see also above, note to l. 1).

There, one of the skippers acting as sureties and originating from Alexandria, . . . ου Δωροθέου μητρός Δωροθέας, describes himself as κυβερνήτης πλοίου καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς αὐτῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας. If the ship in our text belonged to the same church as in P.Münch. III 99, which is not excluded (perhaps it was even still the same ship), we would here also be dealing with a ship belonging to an Alexandrian church. Hermopolis itself, however, had its own holy catholic church at the time which can also be meant here; cf. *e.g.* P.Lips. I 43, 1–2 (IV AD, Hermopolis), see further Timm, Ägypten, TAVO Beiheft 41/1, 1984, 205 and J. Gascou in P.Sorb. II 69, p. 71 and 72–73. A ship belonging to a bishop is attested in receipts for deliveries of grain: P.Col. VII 160, 3–4 and *passim* (Karanis, 354) and 161, 2–3, 23–24 (Karanis, 351); another, used for the transportation of money, is mentioned in the fourth-century letter P. Oxy. XXXIV 2729, 7–8; the ship of a bishop's son in the account of freights P.Harr. I 94 (later IV). For boats belonging to churches and monasteries and their use for state services cf. in general Wipszycka, Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises, 63; Meyer-Termier, Die Haftung der Schiffer, 10–11; Gascou, Monasteries, 1644–1645; Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity, 36 with n. 150, and p. 291; Wipszycka, Moines et communautés monastiques, 519–520 (on the construction of boats for monasteries) and 522, n. 77; cf. also Rémondon, Le monastère alexandrin de la Méta-noia; Gascou, Les monastères pachômiens, esp. 178–184; Hollerich, The Alexandrian Bishops and the Grain Trade (with Bagnall, *op.cit.*, p. 291, n. 173). For the use of καθολική with ἐκκλησία (“église principale”), see Wipszycka, Καθολική and cf. Wipszycka, The Institutional Church.

5 Βησαρίων{ι} διάκ[ων]: the final *iota* of Βησαρίωνι (at least this is clearly what it looks like), was perhaps written erroneously with a dative Βησαρίωνι in mind. The writer may have been confusing two different ways to describe the skipper of a boat: with κυβερνήτη followed by dative, or with οὗ κυβερνήτης followed by nominative (cf. for the former *e.g.* PUG II 69, 5). A skipper of the name Besarion, involved with the transportation of tax grain to Alexandria, is attested in P.Ryl. IV 652 = SB XXIV 16262, 5 (before 374, cf. P.Turner 45, note to l. 2; Hermopolite nome). For this text, a letter of the *praefectus annonae Alexandriae* on the arrival and registration of tax grain from the Hermopolite nome in Alexandria, see Hoogendijk, *Brief des praefectus annonae Alexandriae* (reprint of P. Ryl. IV 652 on p. 175–177; for Besarion being a skipper see 172, note to l. a 3–4). Moreover, in SB XXIV 16262 this Besarion is involved with tax grain for an 11th indiction, as in our text. Perhaps they are identical (which would mean that the same ship is meant in SB XXIV 16262 as well). Possible dates for an 11th indiction before 374, but not too early in the fourth century (because of the handwriting of both texts and of the formula used for the *epimeletai* in this text – for which see above, note to l. 1) are 367 or 352.

διάκ[ων]: a deacon functioning as skipper is not earlier attested, but should not surprise us in the case of a ship belonging to a church. Deacons do occur in many other worldly occupations, see Wipszycka, Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises, esp. chapter VI: Les occupations laïques du clergé (p. 154–173).

Sailors of a church, ναυταὶ ἐκκλησίας, are mentioned in P.Hamb. IV 267, 14 (Oxy-rhynchites?, 336–348).

6 ὑπὲρ ὀνό(ματος) Ἀχιλλεῖς Διοσκορίδου: Ἀχιλλεῖς must be a writing error for a name in the genitive. This genitive may have been Ἀχιλλεῖτος, but other than the feminine name Ἀχιλλεῖς, the masculine name Ἀχιλλεύς is much more common in the papyri. Thus, Ἀχιλλεῖς is probably a writing error for Ἀχιλλέως (perhaps a contamination of the dative Ἀχιλλεῖ with the genitive Ἀχιλλέως or the nominative Ἀχιλλεύς).

Onomata were used as account names for plots of taxable land. Originally, they referred to the owners of the land, but in the course of time the *onomata* started to be fossilized names for taxing purposes, with different actual taxpayers; see J. Gascou in P.Sorb. II 69, p. 20–28 and van Minnen, Hermopolis, 7–8. Since in our text the name is not followed by the name of an heir or intermediary, we may assume that the landowner Ἀχιλλεύς was still alive. The *onoma* of Ἀχιλλεύς Διοσκορίδου does not figure in the known Hermopolite land lists. [We do have an *onoma* Ἀχιλλεῖς (in varying spellings) in P.Landlisten I 293 and II 502 and 820, identical with the one in P. Sorb. II 69 45 C 1 (cf. P. Sorb. II 69, p. 22), but she has a different father: Ἀχιλλεύς. Would this father Achilleus be meant in the present text, and the spelling mistake the result from mixing up father and daughter?] Διοσκο(υ)ρίδης is a very common name in the Hermopolite area.

7–8 σύν ναύλοις καὶ ἑκατο[σταῖς] | σύν εἰκοσταῖς: instead of the second σύν one would expect another καὶ as in all parallel texts. Σύν ναύλοις καὶ ἑκατοσταῖς καὶ εἰκοσταῖς is attested in *e.g.* the following Hermopolite texts: SB XXII 15317 and 15319 (442–447) and P.Vindob.Sijp. 14 (VI). But cf. PUG II 69 (see above, note to line 1), l. 6–7: σ[ὺν ναύλοις καὶ] σύν εἰκοστῆς (l. εἰκοσταῖς). Perhaps σύν was mistakenly written again because the εἰκοσταῖ were the main surcharge of the three (and the only one repeated in l. 11). There is not enough space in the lacuna to add a καὶ before σύν.

Ναῦλον or ναῦλα was the term used for the payment, in money or in kind, made to the owner of the ship to remunerate the expenses of transportation. The amount was paid by the taxpayer as a surcharge on the tax. Cf. Adams. Nile River Transport, 201. The ἑκατοστή or ἑκατοσταῖ is a tax in kind of $\frac{1}{100}$ or 1% of the main tax amount, also paid as a surcharge by the taxpayer but meant for the tax collectors in Alexandria. The same goes for the εἰκοστή or εἰκοσταῖ, a surcharge of $\frac{1}{20}$ or 5% of the main tax amount as compensation for grain lost during transportation. On these surcharges see Johnson - West, Byzantine Egypt, 240–249, Meyer-Termeer, Die Haftung der Schiffer, 12–13, 15 and 17–19 and cf. J. Gascou in P. Sorb. II 69, p. 29 on βευκίσμιον. See also Vandorpe, Customs Duties.

ἀρτάβας ἑπτὰ ἥ[μισυ]: 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ artabas formed only a small part of the load of an average Nile ship. For the loading capacity of Nile ships see Poll, Ladefähigkeit und Größe der Nilschiffe (loading capacities between 50 and 18,000 artabas) and BGU XIX 2776, “Schiffsfrachtliste” from fourth century Hermopolis, with loads between 1000 and 2589 artabas of grain per ship.

10 δι' ἑμοῦ Ἀμμωνί(ου): διὰ at the start of the sentence is remarkable: one would either expect N.N. δι' ἑμοῦ Ἀμμωνί(ου) or Ammonius in the nominative; but we see δι' ἑμοῦ N.N. συμφωνεῖ *e.g.* in the receipts SB XXII 15268, 6 (V/VI) and SPP VIII 1215, 7 (Hermopolites, V).

ἐπιμελιτ[ις]: probably a spelling variant of ἐπιμελητής (cf. note to l. 1), which then may be nominative instead of genitive case. The reading ἐπιμελιτο[ῦ] is not palaeographically possible. Reading ἐπιμελιτῶ[ν], “one of the *epimeletai*”, is not fully excluded, although the other *omega*'s in the text do not have their second upward stroke longer than the first; but in that case the article τῶν would be needed in front of ἐπιμελιτῶ[ν].

11 συμφωνεῖ is followed by two oblique strokes, which are clearly not abbreviation signs as in lines 3, 9 and 10 of this text, since the word συμφωνεῖ is written in full. If the strokes are not a faulty abbreviation sign (the word συμφωνεῖ is abbreviated very often in other papyri), then they might perhaps just mark off the end of this important and grammatically more or less free-standing statement.

Translation

The *epimeletes* of the Alexandrian grain for the canon of the 11th indiction, of Hermopolis. < I received? > and I loaded onto the ship of the holy catholic church, of which the skipper is Besarion the deacon, in the name of Achilleus son of Dioscorides, of pure wheat including freight tax and the one percent tax (and) including the five percent tax: seven and a half artabas, makes pure wheat art. 7 ½, exactly.

Through me, Ammonius, *epimeletes*, I agree; wheat including the five percent tax, makes art. 7 ½, exactly.