

17. Receipt for Brick and Lime from the πιστικοί of Babylon to a μειζότερος*

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[P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 25](#)
11 October 645 (?)

17,3 x 17,0 cm

Hermopolite nome
plate XX

P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 25 is a dark brown papyrus of average quality. Beside some minor holes, the whole papyrus is preserved. The writing in black ink runs against the fibers, *transversa charta*. There is a *kollesis* on the top and on the bottom of the papyrus.

The recto contains a receipt consisting of 19 lines, the verso has a short, much abraded summary of the receipt (at least partially) in Greek. The main body of the text is written in a fairly versatile cursive hand with some abbreviations. The first signature – that of Abraham – is written in the same hand as the main body of the receipt. Accordingly, Abraham is likely to have been the scribe of the document. Among the signatures we find two other practiced hands. The cursive Coptic hands point to the 7th century,¹ and the short Greek dating clause in l. 14 suggests a date earlier in the century. Beside some minor, well-known Middle-Egyptian deviations like τῆτνε for τῆτῆν (l. 11)² the text is written in normative Sahidic Coptic. The linguistic peculiarities of the document indicate a Hermopolite provenance.

The document contains a receipt for bricks and lime which were given from the estate of a certain Apa Ioannes to the πιστικοί – administrative agents – of the district of Shmoun in Babylon, among them two village headmen (ἀπηγε). They acknowledge that they received 2000 bricks and 20 artabs of lime through George, the μειζότερος from the estate of Apa Ioannes of Memphis who is residing in the village Touho Nesouo. Other evidence indicates that George was resident in Babylon (see below). The presence of ‘πιστικοί of Babylon in the district of Shmoun’ suggests that the document concerns administrative business (see n. on l. 5). Furthermore, the prominent role of Babylon points to the post-conquest period, since there would have been no point in village headmen being administrative agents of a Byzantine military camp – which was Babylon before the Islamic conquest. However, after the Islamic conquest the Arabs founded their new capital, at the site of Babylon. Therefore, the three πιστικοί are very likely to have been the agents of the Arabs in the region of Hermopolis.

The bricks and lime involved in the receipt suggest some kind of building activity. These materials could have been needed for any kind of building of course, but one cannot but wonder if these bricks and lime were requisitioned for building the new Arab capital – although the amount of bricks is rather small, see n. on l. 7–8. Several facts could point into this direction. First of all the πιστικοί issuing the receipt are the agents of Babylon. Secondly, the Greek script of the papyrus suggests a dating in the first half of the seventh century.

* I thank Alain Delattre for his help in reading and understanding this text.

1 Cf. e.g. P.Vindob. K 4718 (Hermopolite, mid 7th c.) published by Hans Förster, Philotheos, der Verwalter Schenute und die Schiffe. Ein Wiener Text aus dem Schenute-Archiv. Edition von P.Vindob. K 4718, Tyche 24 (2009) 35–48, see esp. ‘Tafel 6.’

2 See P.Bal. I, p. 163ff.

Furthermore, requisitions for the building of the new Arab capital are well attested in the Hermopolite archive of Senuthios, an important official of the nome in the early years after the Islamic conquest.³ The documents of the archive often concern the requisition of bricks and lime.⁴ These texts could give a close parallel to our situation, especially if we take into account that two of the villages where the ἀπηγε come from are mentioned in the documents of the Senuthios archive: γασε (Ἄκις) and ἠωνε (Θῦνις).⁵ Since there is at least one unpublished Greek document likely belonging to the archive in Heidelberg, it would be not surprising to find another text from this context in the same collection.⁶

If this interpretation holds, one could narrow down the dating of the text. If we take into account the temporal limits of the Senuthios archive,⁷ the 14th Phaophi of the fourth indiction could refer to the 11th October of 645 or less likely of 660.

One further point of interest is George, the μειζότερος. One published and at least two other unpublished documents of the Heidelberg collection mention him. The published text is a deed of surety addressed to George, the μειζότερος living in Babylon and it is likely to postdate P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 25 only by ca. two months. The surety is Hermine, son of Ανουρ, πιστικός, whom we also know from the present papyrus.⁸ Another document is published in the present volume (no. 10) by Richard Burchfield. One further letter is addressed to George by an inhabitant of γασε and belongs to the well-known type with the introductory phrase ‘It is your servant who ventures to write to his master...’.⁹ George might have been the μειζότερος of an official who managed not only the privat business, but also the official agenda of his master – as it is usual in this period.¹⁰ The fact that he lives in Babylon may suggest that he is the representative (ἀποκρισιάριος) of his master (the pagarch of

3 See Federico Morelli’s CPR XXX.

4 See e.g. CPR XXX 1 (Hermopolite, ca. 643–644).

5 Ἄκις: see Federico Morelli, CPR XXX, p. 106–107; Θῦνις: CPR XXX 19.11–12 (Hermopolite, ca. 643–644); CPR XXX 32.7 (Hermopolite, ca. 643–644).

6 P.Heid. Inv. G 35 contains a list of donkeys and donkey-drivers and is likely to be connected with the ‘Umfeld’ of the Senuthios archive, since it is written in the same hand as SPP X 32; SPP X 34 and SPP X 244. Cf. Federico Morelli in CPR XXX, p. 97. ‘Significativa è qui in particolare una serie di conti e di liste della collezione viennese. Di queste, alcune appartengono sicuramente all’archivio. Per altre la appartenenza all’archivio non è certa. Tutte sono state in ogni caso redatte in uno stesso ambiente e in un ristretto arco di tempo. (...) Tutte queste liste sono in realtà strettamente collegate, e probabilmente scritte da una stessa o da poche mani. Della stessa mano sono sicuramente SPP X 32, 34 e 244. SPP X 32 elenca consegne o requisizioni di animali da soma, gaidaria, che sono già l’oggetto di diversi testi dell’archivio, come P.Amh. II 153, CPR XXV 29, o [CPR XXX] 20.’ An edition of P.Heid. Inv. G 35 is in preparation.

7 On the dating of the archive see Federico Morelli, CPR XXX, p. 22–27.

8 P.MoscowCopt. 3. The text was dated in the ed. pr. to the 8th century. However, the parallel of our document makes a dating in the seventh century inevitable. L. 18 of the text gives a dating to the 13th of Tybi of the 4th indiction. According to the arguments set out above, P.MoscowCopt. 3 could be dated most likely to 8 January 646.

9 P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 34 + 85: An edition of this text is in preparation. Alain Delattre, La formule épistolaire copte «c’est votre serviteur qui ose écrire à son Seigneur», APF 51 (2005) 105–111. Two further texts could refer to our George: CPR IV 189 c.2 (provenance unknown, 8th c.) and SB III 7036 (provenance unknown, 6–7th century).

10 Cf. e.g. P.Cair.Masp. I 67049 (Aphrodites Kome, after 550–551 [?]).

Hermupolis?) there.¹¹ The texts of George seem to stem from a little dossier which could form a Coptic satellite archive of the Senuthios archive.

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† ἀνοκ ἀβραζαμ πωεν̄ ἡμῆνα παπε
 πρωμ̄ ἡ[ω] *traces* [μῆ] ἰωζαηης πωεν̄ [π]αγλε
 πρωμ̄ ραζε̄ ἡῆ ζερμ̄[ι]νε πωεν̄ ἡανοῦπ
 5 πρωμ̄ ἠωνε νεπιστικος̄ ἡβαβελων̄
 ἡπτοω̄ ἡωμοῦν̄ τπολις̄ *vac.* ενσρᾱι ἡπκγρις̄
 γεωργε̄ ἡμίζοτερος̄ χε̄ εις̄ χουγωτ̄ ἡωε̄
 ἡτωβε̄ ἡν̄ χουγωτ̄ ἡερτοῦ ἡγωνιᾱ
 εἡα ἡπα ἰωζαηης̄ πρωμ̄ ἡῆβε̄ εῖ[ο]γ̄[η]ζ̄
 10 ζῆ τογζω̄ νεσογο. ἡγεῑ εῖτοοτῃ̄ εῖπληροῦ
 προς̄ τετνεκελεγς̄. εῖτβε̄ πετνεωρχ̄
 οῦν̄ ἡνσῆν̄ ἡενταγιν̄ ἡτετῆμητ̄-
 χοεις̄ ενζυπογραφ(ει)̄ εροῦ ἡτενσῑχ̄.
 † ἐγράφ(η)̄ Φαῶφῑ ἰδ̄ ἰνδ̄(ικτίων)ο(ς)̄ δ̄. † ἀνοκ
 15 ἀβραζαμ πωεν̄ ἡμῆνα παπε̄ ἡω . . .
 τιστοι(χει)̄ ἐπενταγιν̄. † (ῃ. 2) ἀνοκ ἰωζαηης̄
 πωεν̄ παγλε̄ πρωμ̄ ραζε̄ τιστοιχ(ει)̄ ἐπενταγιν̄.
 (ῃ. 3) ἀνοκ ζερμ̄ινε πωεν̄ ἡνοῦπ παπε̄ πρωμ̄ ἠωνε̄
 τιστηχι. †

Verso

20 [. . . θ() . θ . [ca. 3] . [.] . [ca. 9]
 [. . . γί(νονται) ἀρτ(άβαι) κ.

5 πιστικός 6 κύριος 7 ἡμίζοτερος: ζ corr. from μ, μειζότερος 8 κονία 10 πληροῦν 11 κέλευσις 12, 16, 17 ἐντάγιον 13 ὑπογράφειν 14 εῖγραφ̄, ἰνδ̄^ο *pap.* 16, 17, 19 στοιχεῖν 16, 17 στοῦ *pap.* 21 γαρ̄^κ *pap.*

“† I, Abraham, son of Mena, headman (ἀπε), from Sh... and John, son of Paul, of the village Haqe and Hermine, son of Anoup, of the village Thone, the wardens (πιστικός) of Babylon in the district of Hermupolis; we write to the lord George, the major-domo (μειζότερος): here

11 See H.I. Bell in the introduction to P.Lond. IV, p. XXV.

are 2000 bricks and 20 artabas of lime belonging to Apa John of Memphis, living in Touho Nesouo. These have come to us in total on your order. We have made this receipt for your security and we have signed it with our own hands. (Greek) † It was written on the 14th Phaophi of the 4th indiction. (Coptic) † I, Abraham, son of Mena, headman (ⲁⲛⲉ) of Sh... give my consent to this receipt. † (m. 2) I, John, son of Paul, of Haqe, give my consent to this receipt. (m. 3) I, Hermine, son of Anoup, of Thone give my consent. †”

“(Greek) ... total 20 artabs”

2 ⲁⲛⲉ: The title ⲁⲛⲉ has several meanings in different contexts. It can denote *inter alia* an abbot, a head of a guild or a village headman. Although in Djeme papyri ⲁⲛⲛⲉ are most likely lower ranking village officials mainly concerned with the collection of taxes (the leading village headman being the ⲁⲛⲉ), in the Hermopolite nome the term clearly means village headman and is an equivalent of the Greek πρωτοκομήτης, cf. P.Lond. Copt. 1079 (Hermopolite nome, 642–644/658–663/664); P.Mon.Apollo 25.19 (Senesla [Hermopolite nome], 8th c.). There can hardly be any doubt that the term refers to village headmen in our document. See Georg Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger im spätantiken Ägypten nach den Aussagen der griechischen und koptischen Papyri und Ostraka* (Archiv für Papyrusforschung Beiheft 13), Leipzig 2002, 304–305.

3 ⲛ[ⲱ] *traces*: The same village name occurs at the end of l. 15. There are only two toponyms in the Hermopolite region beginning with a ⲱ: ⲱⲙⲗⲟⲩ and ⲱⲣⲉⲗ, see Drew-Bear, *Le nome Hermopolite*, 336. The traces in l. 15 could be tentatively read as ⲛⲱⲣⲉⲗ.

4 ⲗⲁⲟⲉ: On ⲗⲁⲟⲉ (Ἄκις), modern Tahnasha, see Drew-Bear, *Le nome Hermopolite*, 55–56.

ⲗⲉⲣⲙ[ⲓ]ⲛⲉ: On his person see the introduction.

5 ⲑⲱⲛⲉ: On ⲑⲱⲛⲉ (Θῶνις) see Drew-Bear, *Le nome Hermopolite*, 118–121.

5–6 ⲛⲉⲓⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲛⲃⲁⲃⲉⲗⲱⲛ ⲛⲓⲡⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲱⲙⲟⲩⲛ: Πιστικός literally means trustworthy man. In papyri, the term had denoted a kind of agent since the Byzantine period. In the early Islamic period, however, πιστικοί seem to be mostly connected with the Arab authorities and tax-collection. They could have been a sort of guarantors for the tax payments of their villages. This practice is well attested in 7–8th century papyri. See Amphilochios Papatomas, CPR XXV 30.4 n. In our document, the πιστικοί are likely to be administrative agents in charge of organizing requisitions for Fustāt.

ⲗⲉⲱⲣⲉ: On his person see the introduction.

7 ⲛⲙⲓⲟⲧⲉⲣⲟⲥ: The different meanings of the Greek term μειζότερος were summarized by Bernhard Palme, *Die domus gloriosa des Flavius Strategius Paneuphemos*, Chiron 27 (1997) 95–125, 111/n. 35: ‘Mindestens drei unterschiedliche Organe trugen die Bezeichnung μειζότερος: 1) Oberhaupt eines Dorfes oder πρόεδρος der Dorfgranden (πρωτοκομήται)... 2) Anführer von bucellarii... 3) «Manager» eines Großgrundbesitzes... In den älteren, aber dennoch häufig zitierten Abhandlungen von Rouillard, *L’administration civile de l’Égypte byzantine*, Paris 1928², p. 69f. sind die drei Funktionen noch nicht auseinandergelassen, überdies wird μειζότερος mit μείζων (Dorfvorsteher) gleichgesetzt, was in manchen Fällen zutreffen mag, aber nicht verallgemeinert werden darf.’ Furthermore, Rodney Ast has recently argued in P.Jena II, p. 113–115 that μειζότερος can also refer to a senior παιδάριον

(‘household servant’). The term, however, almost exclusively refers to a majordomo, see Lajos Berkes, *Dorfverwaltung und Dorfgemeinschaft in Ägypten von Diokletian zu den Abassiden*, Wiesbaden 2017, 57–63.

7–8 $\chi\omicron\gamma\omega\tau$ $\nu\omega\epsilon$ $\nu\tau\omega\beta\epsilon$: A rather small amount. 2000 bricks were used for the building of a wall of unknown size in the 3rd c. BC and for the renovation of a bakery in the 6th century: P.Petrie III 46 (3).3–4 (Arsinoite nome, 3rd c. BC): $\pi\lambda\acute{\iota}\nu\theta\omicron\upsilon$ $\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\chi\rho\eta\sigma\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\sigma\eta\varsigma$ $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ $\omicron\iota\kappa\omicron\delta\omicron\mu\eta\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\alpha\varsigma$ $\tau\omicron\acute{\iota}\chi\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ B; P.Oxy. XVIII 2197.IV/79 (Oxyrhynchus, 6th c.): $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\chi\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ $\tau\eta(\varsigma)$ $\delta\iota\omicron\rho\theta(\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma)$ $\tau\omicron(\ddot{\upsilon})$ $\acute{\alpha}\rho\tau\omicron\kappa[\omicron]\pi\acute{\iota}\omicron(\upsilon)$ $\beta\acute{\iota}\kappa\tau\omicron\rho\omicron\varsigma$ $\tau\omicron(\ddot{\upsilon})$ $\acute{\alpha}\rho\tau\omicron\kappa(\acute{\omicron}\rho\omicron\upsilon)$ $\acute{\omicron}\pi\tau(\omicron\pi\lambda\acute{\iota}\nu\theta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma)$ β . On bricks in papyri see Hermann Harrauer, *Abrechnung über Ziegel für ein Gästehaus in Peempibykis*, in: P. Scherrer, H. Taeuber, and H. Thür (eds.), *Steine und Wege. Festschrift für Dieter Knibbe zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wien 1999, 355–358 and H.-J. Drexhage, *Einige Bemerkungen zur Ziegelproduktion und den Ziegelproduzenten im römischen Ägypten (1.–3. Jh. n. Chr.)*, in: R. Günther and S. Rebenich (eds.), *E fontibus haurire. Beiträge zur römischen Geschichte und zu ihren Hilfswissenschaften [Heinrich Chantraine zum 65. Geburtstag]* (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums, Reihe I, Studie 8), Paderborn-München-Wien-Zürich 1994, 263–272.

9–10 $\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha$ $\acute{\iota}\omega\rho\alpha\lambda\eta\kappa\eta\varsigma$ $\pi\rho\omega\mu$ $\mu\eta\beta\epsilon$ $\epsilon\upsilon[\omicron]\gamma\acute{\iota}[\eta]\xi$ $\xi\eta$ $\tau\omicron\gamma\omega$ $\nu\epsilon\sigma\omicron\gamma\omicron$: ‘City-to-village movements’ seem to have been less usual in Late Antique Egypt, see J.G. Keenan, “Die Binnenwanderung” in Byzantine Egypt, *GRBS* 42 (2001) 57–82, esp. 79–80. On $\tau\omicron\gamma\omega$ $\nu\epsilon\sigma\omicron\gamma\omicron$ see Drew-Bear, *Le nome Hermopolite*, 307–308.

$\epsilon\tilde{\tau}\omicron\omicron\tau\mu$: This stands presumably for $\epsilon\tau\omicron\omicron\tau\eta$.

15 $\nu\omega$. . . : Read $\nu\omega\tilde{\tau}\epsilon\tilde{\xi}$? See n. on l. 3.

20–21 A summary of the receipt on the recto is to be expected as the readable part of l. 21 suggests. Such summaries usually include the names of the parties (sometimes with further specifications like the patronymic), the amount of the transaction and occasionally also the date. See e.g. CPR IV 90.11 (Hermopolite, 596/late 6th c.), the summary of an acknowledgement of a loan. The 20 artabs mentioned obviously refer to the amount of the received lime mentioned in the main body of the document.

20] . . . $\theta()$: Read] $\sigma\grave{\upsilon}\gamma$ $\theta(\epsilon\tilde{\omega})$?

Handwritten Greek text on a fragment of papyrus, showing several lines of script. The text is partially obscured by white damage or repair marks.

Nr. 17 Recto

Fragment of handwritten Greek text, likely the verso side of the papyrus fragment, showing significant damage and white repair marks.

Nr. 17 Verso (Ausschnitt)