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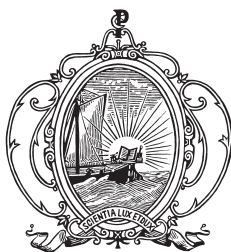
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# OBSERVING THE SCRIBE AT WORK

Scribal Practice in the Ancient World

edited by

RODNEY AST, MALCOLM CHOAT, JENNIFER CROMWELL,  
JULIA LOUGOVAYA and RACHEL YUEN-COLLINGRIDGE



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## THE PROBLEMS OF ANONYMOUS SCRIBES AT WADI SARGA

Jennifer CROMWELL

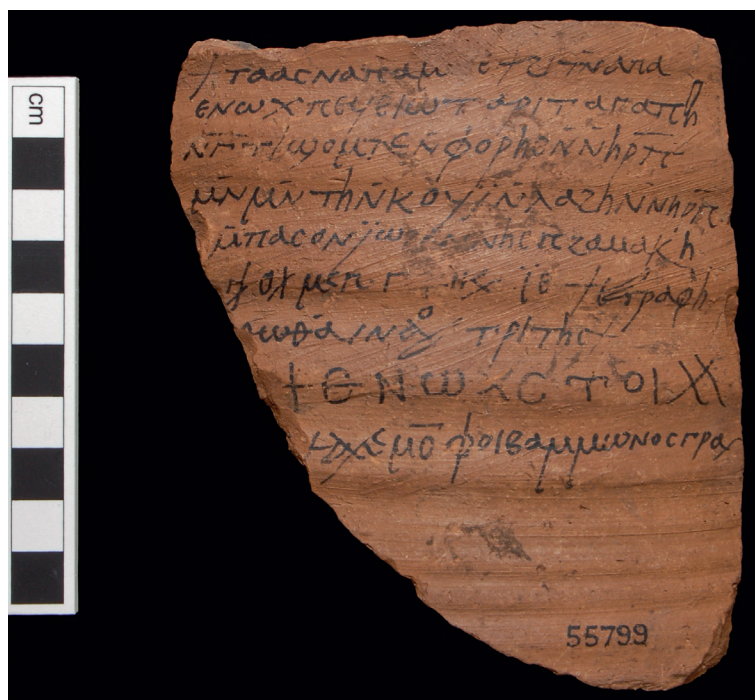
Despite being published for almost a century, the textual corpus from the monastic complex at Wadi Sarga (ca. 6th to 8th centuries CE) has received scant attention and no detailed analysis.<sup>1</sup> Yet, it offers an excellent opportunity for the study of scribal activity at a specific time and place. The 385 published texts, as well as the unpublished material, have secure provenance – they were found during excavation work at Wadi Sarga, a valley within the western desert of Egypt approximately 25 km south of Asyut.<sup>2</sup> Now part of the British Museum's collection, images of all the textual material are available on the Museum's online catalogue, enabling detailed philological and palaeographic analyses of the corpus.<sup>3</sup>

Predominantly written on ostraca (potsherds) in Coptic (the last phase of the indigenous Egyptian language) or a mix of Coptic and Greek, the texts preserve the internal communications within the monastery and those sent to the monastery. These principally concern the economic affairs of the organisation itself and include letters and orders issued by its senior figure (the superior – *proestos* – or Father). While some superiors could and did sign their name in their own hand, the body of the texts was written by scribes, some of whom also added their

<sup>1</sup> The published texts, known by the papyrological sigla *O.Sarga* were published in W.E. CRUM and H.I. BELL, *Wadi Sarga. Coptic and Greek Texts from the Excavations Undertaken by the Byzantine Research Account*, Copenhagen, 1922. Note that *O.Sarga* refers to texts from the site written on ostraca; texts on papyrus are *P.Sarga*, while *I.Sarga* refers to inscriptions and graffiti. Cromwell briefly mentions the unpublished textual material in the Museum's collection in J. CROMWELL, *A Coptic Epistolary Exercise from Wadi Sarga*, in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 99 (2013), p. 272–275; O'Connell includes a comprehensive annotated bibliography of studies that mention the site, cf. E.R. O'CONNELL, *Wadi Sarga at the British Museum: Sources for Study (with Annotated Bibliography)*, in P. BUZI, A. CAMPLANI and F. CONTARDI (eds), *Coptic Society, Literature and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times. Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Rome, September 17th–22nd, 2012*, Leuven, 2016, p. 1547–1566. As an example of how Wadi Sarga is yet to be incorporated fully into studies on Egyptian monasticism, only a handful of pages are dedicated to it in E. WIPSZYCKA, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IV<sup>e</sup>–VIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Warsaw, 2009, p. 90, 155–157, 330, 361, 457, 546, 549–550.

<sup>2</sup> R.J.A. TALBERT, *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, Princeton, 2000, Map 77, grid E3; see also the entry in the only gazetteer of ancient places, Pleiades, at <https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/756676>.

<sup>3</sup> On the photographing of the corpus, see J. CROMWELL, *The Textual Corpus from Wadi Sarga: A New Study*, in *British Museum Newsletter Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 1 (2014), p. 17. As only a limited number of images can be published here, table 3 provides a concordance of publication and inventory numbers, to facilitate consultation of the texts in the British Museum's catalogue (<http://www.britishmuseum.org/research.aspx>).

Fig. 1. (*O.Sarga* 171)

own signatures. On one hand, we therefore have dossiers of known individuals. Of note is the scribe Phoibammon (Fig. 1), who wrote several payment orders issued by the Father of the monastery, Enoch, and to whom can be attributed several other documents, some of which are broken, others of which are unsigned. Table 1 presents the evidence for known scribes at the monastery, based on texts with surviving signatures.

On the other hand, however, there is a much larger number of texts that bear no signatures, including accounts, invoices, receipts, and letters. Who wrote these documents – and where they wrote them – has a vital impact on our understanding of how the monastery operated. Unfortunately, the precise findspot of each text is of little help in providing answers to this issue. While the original excavators wrote the number of the specific spot on many of the ostraca, analysis of these figures in conjunction with the site's plan shows that the majority of items were found in dumps.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, while their original archival context

<sup>4</sup> Approximately one-third of the texts in the British Museum bear findspot numbers. Of these, the majority come from site 80, a dump at the eastern entrance of the wadi (111 texts + 29 possible texts). Three other dumps, within the wadi, have also produced large numbers of texts: sites 40 (56 + 5 possible texts), 43 (36 + 1 possible texts) and 70 (58 + 8 possible texts). Note, that 'possible' here means that the reading of the number written during the excavations a century ago is uncertain.

is now lost, the fact remains that this material was found at Wadi Sarga. The texts were therefore either written at the monastery, and remained there, or were sent to the monastery. Either way, their connection to the monastery is without doubt.

One topic dominates the written record: the administration of wine, including deliveries to the monastery and its redistribution as payment to other individuals and communities.<sup>5</sup> As a result, wine is mentioned in almost all text types, but receipts recording wine delivery are by far the most common, comprising almost one-third of the published material.<sup>6</sup> The majority of these are short, pithy texts that conform to a standard pattern, containing only the most essential information: the date, the name of the vineyard (the source of the wine), the quantity of wine delivered, and the name of the camel-driver who delivered it. While in some instances the name of the camel-driver is omitted and some receipts record deliveries from multiple vineyards, for the most part the texts are remarkably homogenous in form and style. In contrast to other categories of texts from the monastery, which bear the signature of the superior and the scribe who wrote the document, this information is not recorded in the majority of these receipts. The notable exception is Mena, discussed below, who wrote non-standard receipts.<sup>7</sup>

In the introduction to *O.Sarga* 213, the texts' editor, Walter Crum, posed a number of questions pertaining to these receipts:

Each of these dumps contains similar material, that is, all text types are represented in them – there is no coherency of text types within each dump. For these site numbers, see the plan published in CRUM and BELL, *Wadi Sarga*, xx. Further information about Thompson's excavations, together with his excavation photographs, is available in E.R. O'CONNELL, *R. Campbell Thompson's 1913/14 Excavation of Wadi Sarga and Other Sites*, in *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 21 (2014), p. 121–192.

<sup>5</sup> The wine receipts mention a number of wine measures and their study implicitly involves several issues concerning the transportation by camel of goods to the monastery. The metrological data contained in the Wadi Sarga texts is complex, as indicated by H.I. Bell's discussion in *O.Sarga* p. 19–26. While an attempt has been made to calculate the volume of wine entering the monastery (as noted below), in this study I do not discuss capacities and the logistics of how much a camel can bear. One of the most pressing issues is whether the measures mentioned refer to actual vessels or are simply units. This point affects how we understand practical matters, such as how many amphorae could be loaded onto an individual camel – a total weight that was probably much lower than the actual load-bearing capacity of the animal. Further research on this topic, by myself and Gillian Pyke, will hopefully elucidate matters in the future.

<sup>6</sup> In general, receipts comprise the largest single text group in the Sarga corpus, according to the division of the material by Crum and Bell (170 receipts, the majority of which are for wine). However, many texts do not fall neatly into their categories. There is a distinct overlap between their 'invoices' and their 'receipts', and the label 'receipt' is not necessarily accurate in all instances (the function of individual texts is not always transparent). Through my preliminary analysis of the unpublished material from the site, I have identified a small number of additional wine receipts. Their number (and the amount of information that they preserve) is small enough that they will not significantly alter the following discussion.

<sup>7</sup> Receipts for other commodities were sometimes signed, e.g., the wheat receipts signed by Horos (*O.Sarga* 205–208).

- By whom and to whom were the receipts issued?
- What was their function?
- Did the camel-driver – the only named individual – issue the receipt, or was he the recipient?
- If the latter, where was the receipt issued, e.g., at the monastery or at the point of collection?
- Did the camel-drivers reside at the monastery?
- Were these receipts issued upon delivery or were they waybills issued at the point of collection and given to the monastery as a check on proper delivery?

Crum concluded that, due to their provenance and the limited number of hands that wrote these texts, these receipts were issued to the camel-drivers upon delivery and that the camel-drivers must have been resident at the monastery in order for the receipts to remain on site.

The only study of the logistics of wine organisation at Wadi Sarga, which considers the circulation of wine here and at monasteries at Bawit and Saqqara, treats all the receipts as coming from a single year.<sup>8</sup> As the majority of receipts were written in the month of Thoth (late August to late September), after the grape harvest, Bacot calculated that 25,665 litres of wine were delivered to Wadi Sarga in this single month of a single year. This in turn raises a question that Bacot does not address: if all of these receipts were written in a single year, why was this the case? Why would there be evidence for such detailed accounting for one year only?

Through analysis of the original receipts, focussing on a few case studies, I propose different approaches to tackling the following issues, as well as outline the difficulties faced in the process:

- Were the receipts actually written in a single year?
- Can the hands be identified with any other hands from the monastery?
- What function did the receipts serve?

No definitive conclusions are offered here, but I hope to show the advantages of close examination of all aspects of the written evidence, not only for the study of scribal activity (be they known or anonymous scribes), but the wider impact that this has on understanding the internal workings of such an organisation as this monastery.

## 1. Wadi Sarga productions

As stated above, while all of these texts were certainly found at the monastery, this does not mean that they were all written at the site. It is first necessary, therefore,

<sup>8</sup> S. BACOT, *La circulation du vin dans les monasteries d'Égypte à l'époque copte*, in N. GRIMAL and B. MENU (eds), *Le commerce en Égypte ancienne*, Cairo, 1998, p. 269–288, at p. 273.



to identify what letters were certainly written to the monastery from an external person or community.<sup>9</sup> The hands of these texts can then be removed from the Wadi Sarga scribal corpus. *O.Sarga* 94 is a letter written by the brethren of Pohe, with a request for camels to be sent to them.<sup>10</sup> The beginning of *O.Sarga* 111 only partially survives, but is written from the mount of Talau (ΤΑΛΑΥ), presumably the monastery of Tarouu (ΤΑΡΟΥΟΥ) at Aphrodito.<sup>11</sup> These two letters were certainly not written at Wadi Sarga. They are both relatively unusual, however, in that the location of the sender is written. For other letters, it is not always possible to determine what is internal correspondence and what was sent from external communities.<sup>12</sup> Each of these three ostraca, *O.Sarga* 93 (see n. 12), 94, and 111, are written in different hands, but they can all be described as majuscule styles with few ligatures. The principal differences lie in individual letter formation (and in this respect, 111 is particularly of note) and considerable work is required before it can be determined if such changes reflect local practices in different communities, or are entirely dependent on individual ductus (in which case the variety found within a community will potentially be as great as that found between communities).<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Palaeographic variation

One of the principal problems with working with short texts, such as those found at Wadi Sarga, is having sufficient palaeographic material to make comparisons. Such a limited dataset meets with extra problems when writers produced letters in multiple forms, making it difficult to identify characteristic features. Even in the short wine receipt, *O.Sarga* 224 (Fig. 2), which comprises only 27 letters (plus a couple of non-alphabetic signs), the letter **μ** has two different forms, each of which occurs twice: one form appears in the toponym **ΤΜΟΥΝCΙΜ** (written in one motion and with curved strokes), and the other is used in **ΜΕΓ** and **ΚΑΜΑΛ** (written with four separate strokes). This multiplicity of forms

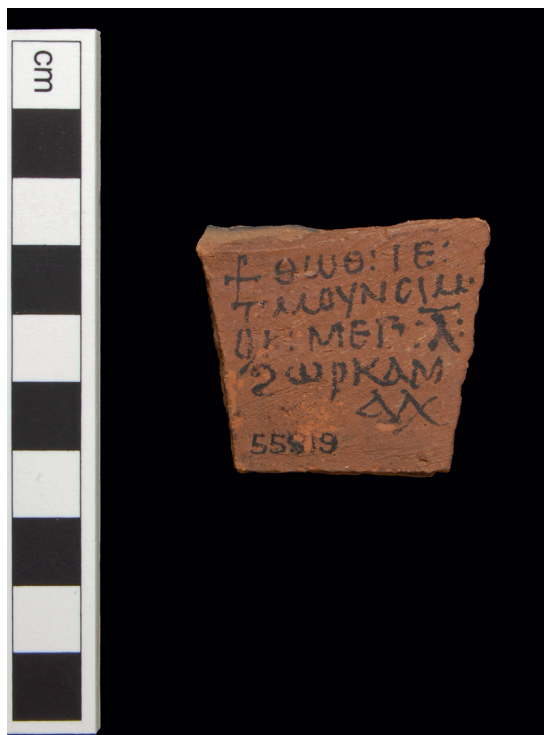
<sup>9</sup> The monastery's local networks, based on its ceramic remains, are treated in a recent study, J. FAIERS, *Wadi Sarga Revisited: A Preliminary Study of the Pottery Excavated in 1913/14*, in E.R. O'CONNELL (ed.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD: Perspectives from New Fieldwork*, Leuven, 2014, p. 177–189.

<sup>10</sup> For the location of Pohe (Buha), in the nome of Asyut, see S. TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit, eine Sammlung christlicher Stätten in Ägypten in arabischer Zeit, unter Ausschluss von Alexandria, Kairo, des Apa-Mena-Klosters (Der Abu Mina), der Sketis (Wadi n-Natrun) und der Sinai-Region*, 7 vols, Wiesbaden, 1984–2007, vol. II, p. 422–424.

<sup>11</sup> See TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, vol. VI, p. 2534–2535.

<sup>12</sup> *O.Sarga* 93 is another request for camels from the monastery and as such was probably written elsewhere, even though this information is not stated. In contrast, accounts, invoices, receipts and orders from the superior, all of which concern the internal organisation of the monastery, were most likely written in-house.

<sup>13</sup> In this respect, the unpublished writing exercises from Wadi Sarga may be important, in determining whether or not there was a distinctive local style; on these exercises, see CROMWELL, *A Coptic Epistolary Exercise*.

Fig. 2. (*O.Sarga* 224)

means that specific letterforms cannot necessarily be assigned to specific writers, unless there is further supporting palaeographic, linguistic, or contextual information.

As a comparison, of the three ostraca that are signed by Phoibammon (and so ignoring for now the texts that can be attributed to him, but are unsigned), *O.Sarga* 168 and 169 have only one form of  $\mathbf{M}$ . However, in *O.Sarga* 171 (Fig. 1) there are two forms of this letter. The first of these, and the only one that occurs in 168 and 169, is the same as that in  $\mathbf{\tau\mu\omicron\upsilon\eta\eta\epsilon\iota\mu}$  in *O.Sarga* 224 (i.e., a curved form of  $\mathbf{M}$ ). The other form, found, e.g., in  $\mathbf{M\bar{\eta}\tau\eta}$  in line 4,  $\mathbf{M\epsilon\tau}$ , in line 6, and in Phoibammon's own name on the final line,  $\mathbf{\Phi\omicron\iota\beta\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\omicron\nu}$ ,<sup>14</sup> has a long initial stroke, which ends in a tick at the bottom. With Phoibammon, this change in

<sup>14</sup> Phoibammon writes his notation in Greek, with a slightly modified script. This practice of using two scripts to write different sections of documents occurs in Coptic and Coptic-Greek documents found throughout Egypt, as discussed in J. CROMWELL, *Aristophanes son of Johannes: An 8th Century Bilingual Scribe?*, in A. PAPAConstantinou (ed.), *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt from the Ptolemies to the Abassids*, Aldershot, 2010, p. 221–232; and J. CROMWELL, *Coptic Texts in the Archive of Flavius Atias*, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 184 (2013), p. 284–288.

letterform reflects a more general development in his writing, with increased competency and confidence within his writing style.<sup>15</sup> This in turn raises another point: a single scribe may have several writing styles, some of which were used at a single time, in different sections of a text (e.g., the body of the text and the signature or when writing passages in different languages<sup>16</sup>), or consecutively across several texts, as their skill-level improved.<sup>17</sup> Without a large body of comparative material, it is not always an easy task to distinguish between the works of one individual and the works of several. The problem faced by the Wadi Sarga corpus is that, while a large body of material has survived, individual texts hold little information, and so the entire body of material has to be examined at the same time.

### 3. Orthographic variation

In conjunction with the level of palaeographic variation found within the work of a single person is the problem of orthographic variation. The same individual may have spelled the same word differently in separate texts. This is a distinct possibility, given that there is clear evidence of this from other sites. The scribe Job son of Alexander, who wrote the child donation document *P.KRU* 88 (from western Thebes; 8th century), exhibits a lack of consistency within this document: δωρίζειν occurs as ΔΩΡΙΖΕ (line 5), ΔΩΖΕ (line 10), and ΤΩΡΙΖΕ (line 4); τόπος occurs as ΤΩΠΟΣ (line 6) and ΔΩΠΟΣ (lines 9, 11, and 13); and ὅλως occurs as ΖΟΛΟΣ (line 13) and ΖΩΛΟΣ (line 17).<sup>18</sup>

With this in mind, one can turn to three Sarga wine receipts and ask whether the same person wrote them. *O.Sarga* 228 (Fig. 3) was written on Paope 15 (Greek Phaophi)<sup>19</sup> and *O.Sarga* 231 (Fig. 4) and 242 (Fig. 5) were written on the same day, Thoth 18, and all were for the same camel-driver, John. Their palaeography strongly suggests that they were written by the same person; note in particular the writing of the abbreviation stroke at the end of ΜΕΓ in 228 and 231, which looks like a short lightning-bolt. The only difference between them

<sup>15</sup> If these features do reflect Phoibammon's development as a scribe, tracking these changes will be a potential tool for relatively dating these texts.

<sup>16</sup> On this point, see also Ast in the current volume.

<sup>17</sup> The Theban writer, Isaac son of Constantine, who appears as a witness and amanuensis in multiple legal documents from western Thebes in the early 8th century, is a prime example of this. For the significant development in his writing ability, see J. CROMWELL, *Palaeography, Scribal Practice and Chronological Issues in Coptic Documentary Texts*, in *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 46 (2010), p. 1–16.

<sup>18</sup> For Job son of Alexander (and other case studies), see further J. CROMWELL, *Greek or Coptic? Scribal Decisions in Eighth-Century Egypt (Thebes)*, in J. CROMWELL and E. GROSSMAN (eds), *Scribal Repertoires in Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Early Islamic Period*, Oxford, 2018, p. 251–273 (especially p. 256–259).

<sup>19</sup> See Table 2 for the Gregorian calendar equivalents of all Egyptian dates mentioned in connection with specific ostraca.

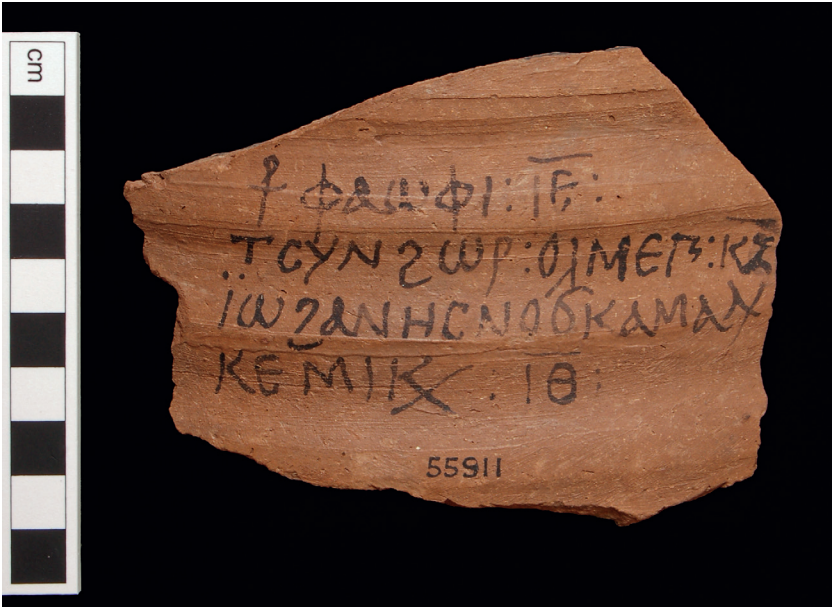


Fig. 3. (*O.Sarga* 228)

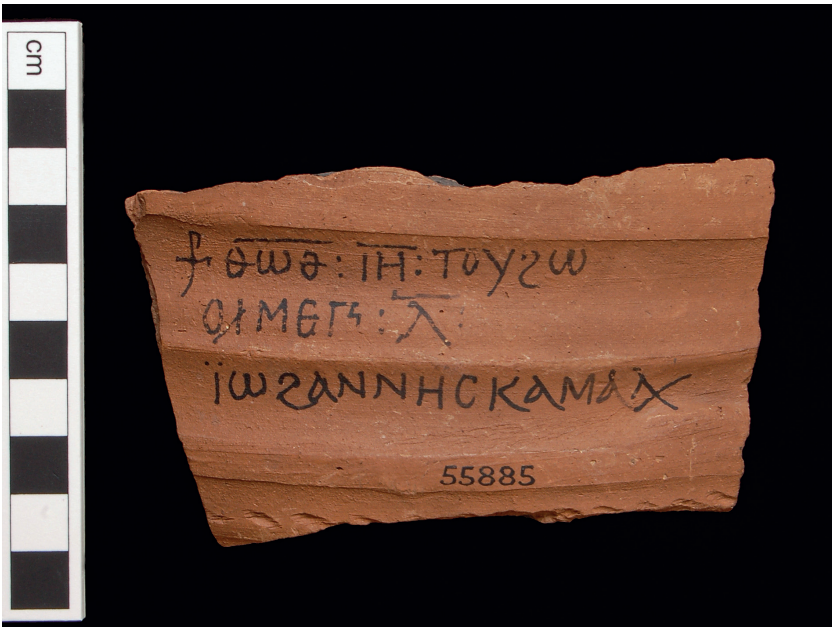
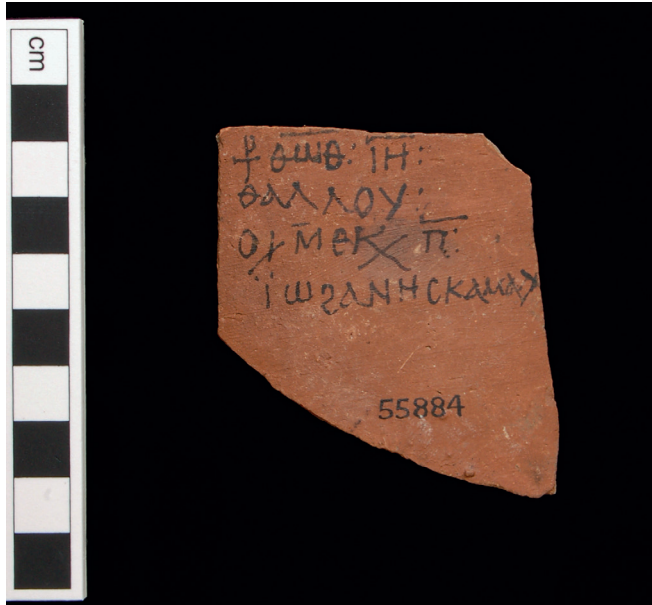


Fig. 4. (*O.Sarga* 231)

Fig. 5. (*O.Sarga* 242)

is the use of a second form of  $\mathfrak{M}$  in 242, but it has already been established above that the same individual could employ multiple forms of the same letter. However, there are two orthographic differences: 1)  $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{I}\mathfrak{K}_\gamma$  in 228 vs  $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{E}\mathfrak{K}_\gamma$  in 242 for  $\mu\acute{\iota}\kappa\rho\alpha$  (small measure);<sup>20</sup> and 2)  $\mathfrak{I}\mathfrak{W}\mathfrak{Z}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{C}$  in 231 vs  $\mathfrak{I}\mathfrak{W}\mathfrak{Z}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{C}$  in 228 and 242 for the personal name John. The level of palaeographic consistency across these texts suggests that this is a situation in which one person exhibits orthographic variation across multiple texts.

Another group of texts, *O.Sarga* 261, 283, 285, and 288, shows the same practice. These ostraca are written in the same hand, which is not that of the previous group. Apart from the first ostracon, written for Macarius, the receipts are issued to Collouthos, and all were written between Thoth 18 and 29 (261 and 285 were written on the same day). There are a number of striking features about these receipts. The initial staurogram ( $\mathfrak{P}$ ) has embellishments at each end of the vertical stroke, such that it resembles a *pi-rho* monogram ( $\mathfrak{P}$ ), rather than the standard *tau-rho* form. The letter *upsilon* is written as a ‘v’, rather than its standard Coptic form with a vertical stem ( $\mathfrak{Y}$ ). In addition, this writer uses an unusual variant of  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha$ :  $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{Y}\mathfrak{I}_\gamma$  (261, 283, 285), which does not occur outside

<sup>20</sup>  $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{E}\mathfrak{K}_\gamma$  is most likely for  $\mu\acute{\iota}\kappa\rho\alpha$  rather than  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha$  as the following numeral,  $\mathfrak{P}$  (80), is a little too high to be for large measures. The only other occurrence of  $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{E}\mathfrak{K}_\gamma$  for  $\mu\acute{\iota}\kappa\rho\alpha$  is in *O.Sarga* 338, which is written in a markedly different hand. Again, the large sum after  $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{E}\mathfrak{K}_\gamma$  ( $\mathfrak{P}\mathfrak{Z}\mathfrak{A}$  = 164) supports reading this as the abbreviation of  $\mu\acute{\iota}\kappa\rho\alpha$ .

this dossier; but he was not always consistent in his use, as in 288 he writes  $\text{M}\Upsilon\text{K}$ . Again, the same person shows a degree of orthographic variation within the texts that he wrote. Consequently, orthography cannot be used as a decisive criterion for attributing texts that do not exhibit the same spellings to different people.

A different form of orthographic variation is found in the writing of month names, in particular the month Paope, which occurs both as Coptic  $\text{ΠΑΟΠΕ}$  and Greek  $\text{ΦΑΩΦΙ}$  ( $\Phi\alpha\omega\phi\iota$ ). There are nine attestations of the Coptic version (*O.Sarga* 213, 214, 232, 239, 262, 263, 264, 310, 323) and seven of the Greek version (*O.Sarga* 221, 227, 228, 237, 277, 294, 324). Examination of the ostraca reveals no marked palaeographic differences between any of these receipts. How, then, to account for the two forms? One possibility is that each set of receipts was written by different individuals with the same style. Conversely, these could all be the work of a single writer who switched between each version freely. Alternatively, if this is not a case of free variation, the use of two different forms may reflect wider administrative practice wherein there was a global shift in the use of the Coptic version to the Greek version (or vice versa) at the monastery. Without any dating criteria beyond the month and day, this point is not possible to prove. Nevertheless, it may mean that the ostraca were not all written in the same year.

#### 4. Multiple deliveries on a single ostrakon

There are a number of instances in which multiple deliveries, made by the same camel-driver, from multiple vineyards are written on a single receipt. On the other hand, there are as many examples in which separate receipts bearing the same date were issued to the same camel-driver. The receipts issued to the camel-driver Macarius provide an illustrative case study.<sup>21</sup> Of his 18 receipts, there are three pairs that bear the same date:

- i) Thoth 21: *O.Sarga* 267 (two deliveries, from Touhō and Tjits) and 270 (from Tsunhōr).
- ii) Thoth 28: *O.Sarga* 272 and 273<sup>22</sup> (each records a single delivery from Plebiōu).
- iii) Paope 1: *O.Sarga* 262 (from Takouts) and 263 (three deliveries from two different vineyards: Takouts, Koulēu, and again Takouts; the three deliveries are separated by a horizontal dividing line).

<sup>21</sup> The dossiers concerning the camel-drivers Hor and Luke provide comparable situations to the dossier of Macarius.

<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the month's name is now lost on this receipt, which is broken on the left. However, as the majority of receipts were written in Thoth, this date can be reconstructed with a high degree of certainty.



Additionally, three double-receipts (i.e., receipts for two deliveries on a single ostrakon) were issued on Thoth 24 (from Thallou and Tsunhôr: *O.Sarga* 269), Thoth 27 (only Plebiôu survives, as the right side of the ostrakon is broken off: *O.Sarga* 271), and Paope 6 (from Takouts and Tôu: *O.Sarga* 264).<sup>23</sup>

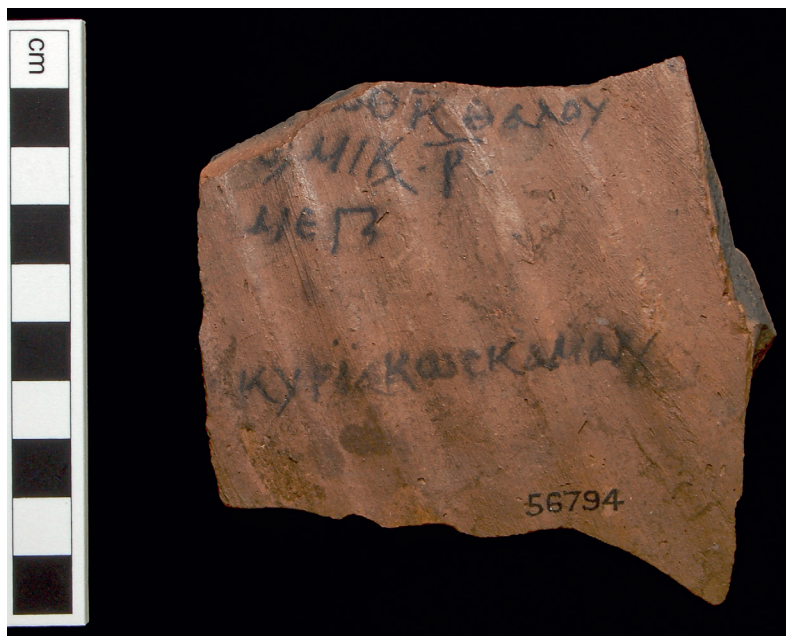
As has been the case in several of the examples presented above, all of these receipts appear to be written by the same person. How, then, do we account for the issuing of multiple receipts on the same day when ostraca exist that record multiple deliveries? There appear to be two possible answers. The first is that the camel-driver made multiple deliveries to the monastery on the same day and was issued a receipt each time. On those days, one load may have contained wine from different vineyards (hence the double- and triple-receipts), while the other load bore wine from a single site. This scenario envisages the camel-driver and his train making repeat trips across the desert from where the wine was collected to the monastery. Although this was not a significant distance to cover, it should be remembered that the time involved did not only entail the journey itself, but the loading and unloading of the amphorae upon the camels, and the counting of the goods, for example. While multiple journeys cannot be discounted (and on this point, see n. 27 below), I believe it is more likely that these receipts were not written on the same day, but record deliveries by the same camel-driver made over different years.

In turn, this raises the possibility that not all receipts bearing the same date, regardless of the camel-driver involved, were written in the same year. Several days witness a peak in deliveries: seven receipts date to Thoth 11, six to Thoth 21, and seven to Thoth 23. While multiple deliveries may have been made to the monastery on particularly busy days, it cannot be discounted that these were written over two or more years. That they are, for the most part, written in the same hand and so most likely by the same person, also does not discount them from being written over multiple years.

## 5. Different hands, same day

On Thoth 20, receipts were issued by at least two different scribes. *O.Sarga* 258 (camel-driver: Lucas) was written by the scribe to whom so many of these receipts can seemingly be attributed, characterised by his square letterforms and lightning-bolt diagonal stroke at the end of  $\mathbf{M}\epsilon\mathbf{r}$ . *O.Sarga* 325 (camel-driver: Cyriacus) upon first inspection appears to be written by another person. The letters are more angular, more closely written, with a right-slant, and

<sup>23</sup> One point that needs to be considered is how the size of the ostraca used for each receipt affected this practice, that is, how much space may have been available for writing multiple deliveries on a single sherd. Only a small amount of space is required for these short texts, and many receipts contain a considerable proportion of blank space, but this feature of the materiality of the ostraca needs to be considered further.

Fig. 6. (*O.Sarga* 325)

some forms are slightly different (especially the lower limb of κ). However, the lightning-bolt diagonal stroke is the same, as is the use of the supralinear stroke and diaeresis above *ī*. Rather than being written by two men with similar styles, this ostrakon was probably written by the same person; the differences found in this receipt are likely the result of the scribe writing over rather than along the potsherd's ridges (Fig. 6). A third receipt, *O.Sarga* 288 (camel-driver: Collouthos), which has already been mentioned above, was written in a different hand, with distinct features. If these receipts were written in the same year, then multiple scribes were involved in the process. Alternatively, if only one person was responsible for issuing these ostraca in a given year, they must have been produced in different years. Again, without further dating criteria, this cannot be confirmed, but the idea that these were written by different people over multiple years is certainly a possibility.

## 6. Wine accounts

A small number of wine accounts have also survived. These texts are characterised by their cramped writing and heavy use of abbreviations. The hand is not that typical of the receipts, but much of the same information is recorded: date, camel-driver, and amount of wine. There are two important differences:



the accounts do not include the name of the vineyard,<sup>24</sup> and they refer to different delivery convoys. In addition, the accounts only refer to large measures as φοραί and small measures as κνίδια; they use neither μέγала nor μικρά. These two terms are found in some receipts, but not those that conform to the set pattern found in the majority of them (see section 7 for such non-standard receipts).<sup>25</sup> No account is preserved in full, but the following observations regarding *O.Sarga* 123 are applicable to the other receipts. Parts of seventeen entries are preserved over two fragments, including the left and right margins for the first ten lines, but only line 10 is preserved in full. The first nine lines concern the same day, as indicated by the use of 'likewise'. The actual date does not survive, but as line 10 begins with a new date, Thoth 19, these entries were presumably for Thoth 18. After line 10, the beginnings of the remaining seven lines are lost and it cannot be determined if all these entries are for the same date. For the third convoy of the first day, all the details survive, albeit with the loss of a few letters.

Four different camel-drivers are listed: John, Andrew, Serenos, and Zacharias. Two of these, John and Serenos, occur in the wine receipts (but, these may not be the same people, especially in the case of John, which is a common name<sup>26</sup>). If these entries are for Thoth 18, we can compare the information to the three receipts issued to John on this date. In the account, John delivers 36 large and two small measures. This does not exactly match the information in the receipts, but *O.Sarga* 242 records a delivery of 38 large measures from Thallou. It may not be too much of a stretch to state that the two record the same delivery (i.e., 38 large is actually 36 large plus two small), and that the minor discrepancies result from one text being a corrected version of the other. As for Serenos, the account records a delivery of 43 large measures, but none of his receipts are for this quantity (*O.Sarga* 315 only preserves the month, Thoth, but is for 40 large measures), yet, it is not implausible that such a receipt was written but is now lost. It is a pity that so little has survived of the account, as the receipts also record deliveries by Macarius, Collouthos, Joseph, Enoch, and Pamoun on Thoth 18.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The exception is *O.Sarga* 124, but only the central section of this account survives, and no name is preserved in full.

<sup>25</sup> It is difficult to use this as a criterion for distinguishing between scribes. For example, Phoibammon used both *phoros* and *mega* in his texts to refer to the same goods; they are direct equivalents and the use of both within the same text was used as a check, to confirm the quantity involved.

<sup>26</sup> Among the wine receipts, *O.Sarga* 227 is for a Little John and *O.Sarga* 228 is for a Big John, and both are dated Paope 15. One can imagine such terms of distinction being used if two camel-drivers made deliveries on the same day. However, it is possible that somebody called Little John or Big John was always referred to as such, and the epithet was not a distinguishing mark employed only on particular occasions.

<sup>27</sup> *O.Sarga* 121 preserves more information, but it is difficult to understand, because the convoys are not written in order, but jump between first, second and third. However, if they are all for the same day, the repetition of the name Phoibammon suggests that camel-drivers could make multiple

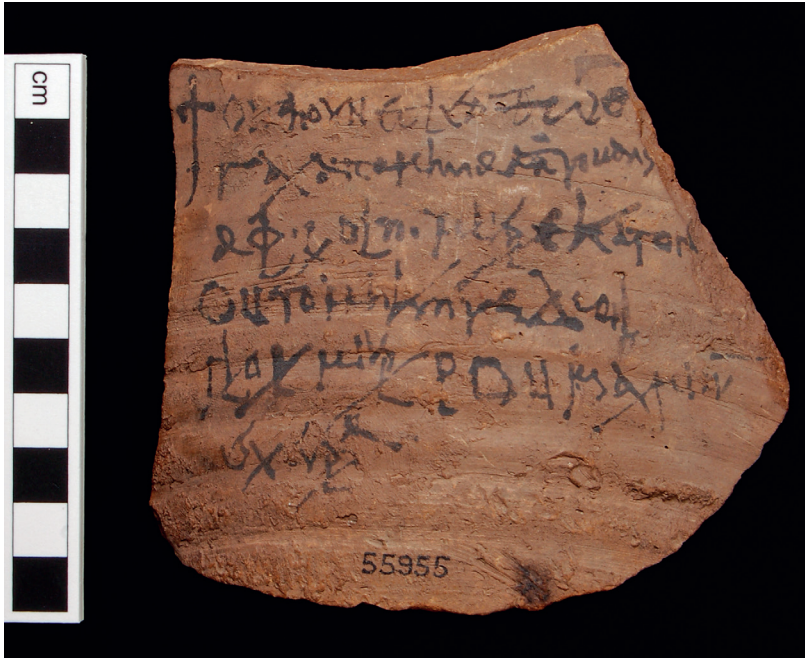
As already stated, different scribes appear to have written the accounts and the receipts. Is it possible to infer anything from this fact? Different scenarios could explain this situation. 1) One member of the monastery wrote the receipts upon the camel-driver's arrival, but they were not given to the camel-driver. Instead, they were kept in order for their information to be entered into an account by another individual. 2) The receipts were not issued at the monastery, but where the camel-drivers collected the wine. In this scenario, these texts are not receipts but are waybills; their information was later checked and entered into the monastic account. The scribes of the waybills may still be members of the monastery, who spent the time after the harvest at the collection point in order to check cargo. 3) The accounts and receipts are not contemporaneous and either mark a difference in recording practice at the monastery or the involvement of different scribes over the years who did not employ the same style.

A number of other documents provide interesting information regarding the quantity of various commodities that entered the monastery, including wine. *O.Sarga* 135 is a list/account (*logos*) of wine jars from Tiloj (Nilopolis) that arrived on the first ship: 51 large vessels.<sup>28</sup> This quantity of wine is the equivalent of the amount of wine recorded on some receipts, and so is the amount that a single camel-driver could deliver in a single day. Unfortunately, Tiloj does not occur in any other text from Wadi Sarga, and so there are no receipts against which this particular account can be checked. Another account (*logos*) records the amount of wine transported from Touhō, which is well attested among the wine receipts. It is, again, not possible to check this against any of the receipts that we have for this vineyard. The reason in this instance is the unusual measures that are used: ten 'hands' (σ1χ) and six *simpulum* (if this is how சஹ்பஹ is to be understood), which equals 769 of an unknown measure (ΝΑΪΝΕ ΣΑΨΒΕ ΝΨΕ ΨΦΕ ΨΑΤΕΟΥΕΙ). Even if these are small measures, this is a substantial volume of wine, which exceeds the amount recorded for any specific day from Touhō.<sup>29</sup> Neither of these accounts is written in a style that is found among the wine receipts. They may well have been written at the respective vineyards, rather than at the monastery (and so are waybills rather than accounts).

trips. *O.Sarga* 122 preserves parts of eighteen entries with only a limited number of camel-drivers – George, Phoibammon, Zacharias, John and Pamoun (only four entries do not preserve the name of the camel-driver).

<sup>28</sup> The number of vessels involved is, however, not certain. At the end of this short text are the letters ΤΚ, before which are traces of what may be an erased letter. The original editor, Walter Crum, read this passage differently: ΤΑΙΟΥ ΜΝ ΟΥΕΙ ΝΝΟΒ ΝΚΕΥΕ ΤΚ '51 (jars); large vessels 320', reading the final two letters as a numeral. However, the use of the connecting morpheme ν- indicates that there is only one type of vessel involved. I do not believe we have to insert an omitted vessel type, but the final two letters are difficult to account for, as such a high number is without parallel in the corpus.

<sup>29</sup> Four receipts from Touhō bear the date Thoth 11, each of which was issued to a different camel-driver: *O.Sarga* 265 (Macarius), 290 (Joseph), 298 (Matthew) and 307 (Enoch). In total, these receipts record 193 large measures of wine. Without knowing what measure is intended in the account, it is not possible to compare these 193 large measures with the 769 noted therein.

Fig. 7. (*O.Sarga* 346)

## 7. Receipts written by Mena

A number of receipts do not conform to the pattern of those heretofore discussed. Eleven receipts for wine, dating to the beginning of Thoth, were written and signed by one Mena (see Table 1; Fig. 7). These are longer than the most common receipt-type and all concern wine from the estate of Nesieu. Not only does Mena not follow the same pattern as the other receipts, he includes different vessel / wine measure terminology. In addition to the large and small measures, he lists: ‘pots’ (σκεῦος), *metra* (μέτρα), and *orga* (ὄργα).<sup>30</sup> There is also a greater degree of internal variation in the level of information recorded across his receipts: the inclusion of a convoy number and the origin of the camel-driver is inconsistent.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> For these measures, see the discussion of Wadi Sarga metrological terms by Bell in CRUM and BELL, *Wadi Sarga*, p. 24 and 25.

<sup>31</sup> Similarly, *O.Sarga* 355–357 concern wine from the estate of the ‘vineyard’ (ἄμπελος), all of which may be attributed to the scribe Horos (see table 1), and the unsigned *O.Sarga* 358–359 concern the southern estate / estate of Notinos (νότινος). An estate called ὄργανον Ἀμπέλου νοτίου[...] occurs in *O.Sarga* 125, and so the ‘southern vineyard’ (Ἀμπελος may also occur in the account *O.Sarga* 124.3, but only [...]πελ, survives). These five receipts may therefore refer to the same vineyard, but were written by two people who use different designations. Again, it is important to note that these vineyards do not occur in other receipts. It should be stressed here that not all receipts are the same and we witness within them the work of different scribes and administrative practices.

Nesieu occurs only twice more in the Sarga corpus. The now much-effaced *O.Sarga* 99 is written from an Apa Enoch to a Brother Enoch, ‘the ste[ward] of Nesieu’ (ΠΟΙ[...] ΝΗΣΙΟΥ<sup>32</sup>). As this ostrakon was found at the monastery, this indicates that this text (categorised in the original publication as a letter) is a piece of internal correspondence and that the steward of Nesieu was resident at the monastery. If correct, this has further ramifications, suggesting that a separate administrative framework existed within the monastery for dealing with its estate at Nesieu. A papyrus account regarding the shipment of barley, *P.Mich.* XV 749, lists Nesieu among its estates.<sup>33</sup> The estate, thus, did not only include a vineyard, it also had associated agricultural land. Even though the evidence from this single papyrus is limited, cumulatively, the evidence points towards Nesieu being an important part of the monastery’s landholdings. Mena’s receipts may therefore be part of a separate administrative procedure. It is also possible that Mena was not, himself, resident at the monastery at the time of writing. He may have been at the estate, to ensure accurate recording of the wine being produced. Unfortunately, too little information exists with which to determine Mena’s role and his place of writing.

Despite the brevity of the wine receipts, enough information is present across the entire corpus to allow us to observe scribes at work and to raise important questions concerning administrative practice at the monastery. To summarise the above discussion, the following observations can be made. (1) The receipts that conform to the ‘standard’ pattern, including those bearing the same date, were written by more than one individual, none of whom wrote the wine accounts that survive from the monastery. (2) Some receipts record deliveries of wine from multiple vineyards by the same camel-driver; for some camel-drivers, there are multiple receipts that bear the same date and vineyard. This different recording practice may indicate that they were written in different years. (3) The largest group of receipts follows the same pattern and were written by a small number of men (perhaps only two or three individuals). These were therefore not written at the individual vineyards, but must have been written either at the point where the camel-driver collected the wine or the point of delivery, i.e. the monastery. Their function still, however, needs to be determined: are they waybills, given to the monastery to ensure that the correct amount arrived at the monastery; receipts for the camel-drivers for their deliveries; or notes of individual loads that were later entered into account registers? (4) There are a number of non-standard receipts, written by different individuals. If these were members of the monastery,

<sup>32</sup> The title may have been abbreviated as ΠΟΙΚ.

<sup>33</sup> For this papyrus’ attribution to the monastery of Apa Thomas, see N. GONIS, *Review of: Rupprecht, H.-A. and A.M.F.W. Verhoogt (eds.), Berichtigungsliste der griechischen Papyrusurkunden aus Ägypten. Elfter Band (Leiden)*, in *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 41 (2004), p. 183.

this provides evidence of different administrative practices. Alternatively, the ostraca may have been written at different estates. Further research on this corpus, paying close attention not only to what the texts say but how this information is written, will shed more light on these points and the questions raised at the beginning of this discussion. It is only in this way that we can start to understand the reality – and the changing reality – of how the monastery of Apa Thomas functioned.

Table 1. Known scribes at Wadi Sarga

Scribe	Evidence [ <i>O.Sarga</i> ]
Collouthos	193: $\kappa\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ $\epsilon\rho\alpha\psi_{/}$ ‘Written by Collouthos’ 211: $\kappa\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ $\epsilon\rho\lambda\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by Collouthos’ 212: $\kappa\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta_{/}$ $\epsilon\rho\alpha\psi_{/}$ ‘Written by Collouthos’
Elias	370: $\epsilon\rho\alpha\phi_{/}$ [date] $\Delta\iota$ $\epsilon\mu\omicron\upsilon$ $\eta\lambda\iota\alpha\varsigma$ ‘Written [date] by me, Elias’
Georgios	372: $\rho\epsilon\omega\rho\rho\epsilon$ $\rho\rho\alpha\psi\alpha$ ‘Written by George’
Horos	205: $\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ $\varsigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\eta$ ‘Horos signs’ 206: $\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ $\varsigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi_{/}$ ‘Horos signs’ 207: $\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ $\varsigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon$ ‘Horos signs’ 208: $\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ $\varsigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi$ . . ‘Horos signs’ 355: $\Delta_{/}$ $\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$ ‘By Horos’ 356 and 357: unsigned; ascribed on palaeographic bases
Mena	209: $\Delta_{/}$ $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\rho\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by Mena’ 345: $\Delta_{/}$ $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\lambda\lambda\alpha\chi_{/}$ $\epsilon\rho\lambda\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by the humblest Mena’ 346: $\Delta_{/}$ $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\lambda_{/}$ $\epsilon\rho\lambda\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by the humblest Mena’ 347: $\Delta_{/}$ $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\lambda$ $\epsilon\rho_{/}$ ‘Written by the humblest Mena’ 348: $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\rho\alpha$ : ‘Written by Mena’ 349: $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\rho\lambda\alpha$ : ‘Written by Mena’ 350: $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\rho\lambda\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by Mena’ 351: $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\rho\lambda\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by Mena’ 352: $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}$ $\epsilon\lambda_{/}$ $\mu\omicron\eta\alpha\varsigma_{/}$ $\epsilon\rho\lambda\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by the humblest monk Mena’ 353: $\Delta_{/}$ $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}\upsilon$ $\epsilon\rho\lambda\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by Mena’ 354: $\mu\iota\eta\bar{\omicron}\upsilon$ $\epsilon\lambda$ $\epsilon\rho\alpha\phi$ ‘Written by the humblest Mena’
Phibios	210: $\Delta_{/}$ $\epsilon\mu\omicron\upsilon\gamma_{/}$ $\phi\iota\beta\iota\omicron\upsilon\gamma$ $\epsilon\rho_{/}$ ‘Written by me, Phibious’
Phoibammon	168: $\Delta\epsilon\mu\bar{\omicron}$ $\phi\omicron\iota\beta\alpha\mu\mu\omega\eta$ $\epsilon\rho\bar{\rho}_{/}$ ‘Written by me, Phoibammon’ 169: $\Delta\iota_{/}$ $\epsilon\mu\bar{\omicron}$ $\phi\omicron\iota\beta\alpha\mu\mu\omega\eta$ $\epsilon\rho\alpha$ ‘Written by me, Phoibammon’ 171: $\Delta_{/}$ $\epsilon\mu\bar{\omicron}$ $\phi\omicron\iota\beta\alpha\mu\mu\omega\eta\eta\omicron\varsigma$ $\rho\rho\alpha_{/}$ ‘Written by me, Phoibammon’ 167, 170, 172, 173, 176, 182, 183, 187: unsigned; ascribed on palaeographic bases

Table 2: Concordance of dates in named *O.Sarga* texts<sup>34</sup>

Date	Gregorian Calendar	Text
Thoth 18	15th/16th September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 231, 242, 283
Thoth 19	16th/17th September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 123
Thoth 20	17th/18th September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 258, 288, 325
Thoth 21	18th/19th September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 267
Thoth 24	21st/22nd September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 269
Thoth 27	24th/25th September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 271
Thoth 28	25th/26th September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 272, 273
Thoth 29	26th/27th September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 261, 285
Paope 1	28th/29th September	<i>O.Sarga</i> 262, 263
Paope 6	3rd/4th October	<i>O.Sarga</i> 264
Paope 15	12th/13th October	<i>O.Sarga</i> 228

Table 3: Concordance of *O.Sarga* and British Museum inventory numbers<sup>35</sup>

Text	EA number	Text	EA number
<i>O.Sarga</i> 93	55736	<i>O.Sarga</i> 261	55889
<i>O.Sarga</i> 94	55752	<i>O.Sarga</i> 262	56793
<i>O.Sarga</i> 99	55822	<i>O.Sarga</i> 263	55921
<i>O.Sarga</i> 111	56737	<i>O.Sarga</i> 265	55975
<i>O.Sarga</i> 121	55851	<i>O.Sarga</i> 267	55788
<i>O.Sarga</i> 123	55857	<i>O.Sarga</i> 269	55742
<i>O.Sarga</i> 124	55848	<i>O.Sarga</i> 270	55894
<i>O.Sarga</i> 125	55853	<i>O.Sarga</i> 271	55971

<sup>34</sup> Two dates are possible for texts written between 29th August and 1st March, depending on whether or not the year in question was a leap year (which cannot be determined for any of the texts from Wadi Sarga, as none contain absolute dates).

<sup>35</sup> *P.Sarga* 176 is not in the British Museum. The papyri from Wadi Sarga are now in the British Library, where they are collected under the same inventory number: Or. 9035. *P.Sarga* 176 has the individual number Or. 9035 (58).

Text	EA number
<i>O.Sarga</i> 135	55739
<i>O.Sarga</i> 167	55775
<i>O.Sarga</i> 168	55778
<i>O.Sarga</i> 169	55796
<i>O.Sarga</i> 170	55817
<i>O.Sarga</i> 171	55799
<i>O.Sarga</i> 172	55774
<i>O.Sarga</i> 173	55825
<i>O.Sarga</i> 182	55792
<i>O.Sarga</i> 183	55824
<i>O.Sarga</i> 187	56739
<i>O.Sarga</i> 193	55855
<i>O.Sarga</i> 205	56802
<i>O.Sarga</i> 206	55844
<i>O.Sarga</i> 207	56798
<i>O.Sarga</i> 208	56791
<i>O.Sarga</i> 209	55909
<i>O.Sarga</i> 210	55862
<i>O.Sarga</i> 211	55896
<i>O.Sarga</i> 212	55900
<i>O.Sarga</i> 213	55903
<i>O.Sarga</i> 221	55977
<i>O.Sarga</i> 224	55919
<i>O.Sarga</i> 227	55772
<i>O.Sarga</i> 228	55911
<i>O.Sarga</i> 231	55885
<i>O.Sarga</i> 242	55884
<i>O.Sarga</i> 258	55922

Text	EA number
<i>O.Sarga</i> 272	55990
<i>O.Sarga</i> 283	55945
<i>O.Sarga</i> 285	55748
<i>O.Sarga</i> 288	55777
<i>O.Sarga</i> 290	55745
<i>O.Sarga</i> 298	55998
<i>O.Sarga</i> 307	55876
<i>O.Sarga</i> 310	55976
<i>O.Sarga</i> 315	55783
<i>O.Sarga</i> 323	55899
<i>O.Sarga</i> 325	56794
<i>O.Sarga</i> 338	55966
<i>O.Sarga</i> 345	55908
<i>O.Sarga</i> 346	55955
<i>O.Sarga</i> 347	55898
<i>O.Sarga</i> 348	55897
<i>O.Sarga</i> 349	55910
<i>O.Sarga</i> 350	56792
<i>O.Sarga</i> 351	55907
<i>O.Sarga</i> 352	55906
<i>O.Sarga</i> 353	55956
<i>O.Sarga</i> 354	55854
<i>O.Sarga</i> 355	55746
<i>O.Sarga</i> 356	56804
<i>O.Sarga</i> 357	56809
<i>O.Sarga</i> 358	55852
<i>O.Sarga</i> 359	55951
<i>O.Sarga</i> 370	55849



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