

	Severus
Place	Oxyrhynchites
Date	AD 260 or AD 282
Language	Greek
Material	Papyrus
Number of texts	9
Type	Official archive of an estate employee: 9 instructions to issue wheat and wine
Collections	Oxford, Ashmolean
Find/Acquisition	[find/acquisition]

Bibliography

- S.A. STEPHENS, *Nine Orders to Pay from Oxyrhynchus*, ZPE 31 (1978), pp.145-160.
- H-J. DREXHAGE, *Preise, Mieten/ Pachten, Kosten und Löhne im römischen Ägypten bis zum Regierungsantritt Diokletians* (Vorarbeiten zu einer Wirtschaftsgeschichte des römischen Ägypten 1), Sankt Katharinen, 1991, p.342 and 248.
- D.W. RATHBONE, *Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-Century A.D. Egypt: the Heroninos Archive and the Appianus Estate*, Cambridge, 1991, pp.464-465.
- D.P. KEENAN, *Management and Investment on Estates in Roman Egypt During the Early Empire* (Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 40), Bonn, 1992, pp.97-98.

Description

The archive of Severus consists of 9 documents in the Ashmolean Museum, found together at Oxyrhynchus: **3513-3521**¹. The archive has been published and studied first by S.A. Stephens in 1978.

The documents are of two types: 6 are orders for payments of wine and wheat covering monthly wages and other monthly expenses connected with an estate, the chief product of which is wine; 3 further orders concern the delivery and sale of wine. They are instructions addressed by Nemesianus, apparently the chief manager of an estate, to his subordinate Severus, who is a disbursement agent. All documents were written by two different scribes and were subscribed by another hand, probably that of Nemesianus. The sign X found at the upper left corner of all the documents, may indicate that each instruction had been carried out by Severus². The latter kept all instructions together and that is how they were found.

8 texts are dated to Pachon 30 (May 25) of a year 7. **3520**, written by the same hand and on the same sheet as **3521**, is of an earlier date: 21 Pachon (May 16) of year 7. What date is year 7 referring to? On the basis of paleographical and typological similarities with the Heroninos material, the documents must be dated to the second half of the third century. All orders are written on the back of previously used papyrus. The reused material covers a period of at least 100 years, ranging from 138-161 to 260³. Year 7 may refer to the regnal year of the Valeriani (AD 259-260) or Probus (AD 281-282). With respect to the prices, the 7th year of the Valeriani is the most plausible⁴.

The 9 documents order the transaction of 515 single ceramia and 27 double ceramia of wine and 56 artabas of wheat. According to Stephens, these orders represent only a very incomplete part of the monthly business⁵ of what Keenan sees as a very large estate⁶. The list of recipients of wheat and wine gives an idea of how the estate was organized⁷. It was centrally directed by Nemesianus. Apart from him and Severus, who acted as a kind of middle man responsible for disposition and sale of crops and other products of the estate, some other estate employees appear. Sarapiades functioned as bookkeeper and took orders directly from Nemesianus. Subsections of the estate were directed by *phrontistai* and *pronoetai*, three of which are attested in the archive (Ammonius, Silvanus and Apion). They

ran vineyards and had vinedressers and irrigators (cf. **3515-3516**) immediately under their direction. Two villages named, Sespha and Souis, indicate that at least some divisions were located in the Lower Toparchy of the Oxyrhynchite nome. The estate had a central staff of permanent workers for whose payment Nemesianus and Severus were responsible (cf. **3518**). Settlement guards, donkey drivers and teamsters were employed at large and the potter (cf. **3519**) and boatman (cf. **3517**) were probably contracted for specific work.

Appendices

¹ The numbers in bold refer to the texts in *P.Oxy.* XLIX. All 9 texts have been published first by STEPHENS 1978.

² STEPHENS 1978, pp.146-147.

³ The front of **3516** has part of an oath sworn to Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161) and the front of **3513** contains the date AD 260, which is a terminus post quem for the archive.

⁴ STEPHENS 1978, pp.147-148; DREXHAGE 1991, p.342 and 248; RATHBONE 1991, pp.464-465.

⁵ STEPHENS 1978, p.148.

⁶ KEENAN 1990, p.97.

⁷ STEPHENS 1978, pp.148-149 (with scheme of the organisation).