

Re-editing SPP III Texts: Challenges, Problems, Results – Five Case Studies

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the new edition of the documents that make up the last part of the third volume of the series *Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunden*, also known as SPP texts (SPP III nos 573-701). It focuses on characteristic instances of re-transcribing in five receipts for the payment in money, preserved on parchment and dated to the early Arab period of Egypt that are included in this corpus. The proposed readings provide us with information on the text type, the prosopography, the dating and provenance of these texts.

Keywords

re-editing, receipts, early Arab period of Egypt

Introduction

The present paper deals with the project of the new edition of 119 documents belonging to the large corpus of documentary texts from late antique Egypt.¹ The texts in question were contained in the last part of the third volume of the series *Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunden*, also known as SPP texts (SPP III nos 573-701). This volume, as well as the eighth volume of this series are known as *Griechische Papyruskunden kleineren Formats*, and contain in total 1.346 small-sized texts published by Carl Wessely in the early twentieth century (Leipzig 1904; 1908, respectively). The vast majority of these texts are housed at the Collection of the Papyri of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, while a much smaller number belongs to the collections of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, and of Louvre Museum in Paris.

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¹ The present study makes part of the forthcoming re-edition of the SPP III (nos 583-701) by Aikaterini Koroli.

Despite its undeniable value, Carl Wessely's *editio princeps* is far from meeting our demands nowadays, given that it contains only a partial transcription of the text with short, insufficient introductory notes. The erroneous datings, the serious omissions and mistakes in the offered transcriptions, the lack of title, of detailed introductory notes, of apparatus criticus, of translation and of commentary constitute the striking deficiencies of this edition in comparison to the information provided by modern papyrological editions. Working in a pioneering era of papyrology, Carl Wessely did not have at his disposal the scientific tools used nowadays, such as digital instruments and databases. As a result, he could not always cope efficiently with the difficulties arising from the large number of the SPP texts, and their illegibility. The latter derives partly from the condition of the writing material, which is often damaged, partly from the features of the cursive script and the density of symbols and abbreviations contained in them.

The aforementioned handicaps of the *editio princeps*, in combination with the importance of the SPP texts as authentic sources of information about the taxation system, the financial and business activities, and the social life of the period extending from the sixth to the eighth century necessitate a new edition.² This aim has been partly fulfilled with the new edition of a substantial part of the SPP III volume by Sven Tost (SPP III² = *Griechische Papyrusurkunden kleineren Format Neuedition. Quittungen, Lieferungskäufe, und Darlehen*. Vienna 2007. [Pap.Vind. 2]. Nos 1-118), Fritz Mitthof (SPP III² = *Griechische Papyrusurkunden kleineren Formats Neuedition. Schuldscheine und Quittungen*. Vienna 2007. [Pap.Vind. 3]. Nos 119-238), and Claudia Kreuzsaler (SPP III² = *Griechische Papyrusurkunden kleineren Formats Neuedition. Quittungen für die Getreidesteuer*. Vienna 2007. [Pap.Vind. 6]. Nos 449-582). The completion of a systematic, thorough re-edition of the SPP documents remains a desideratum. The re-edition of the last part of the SPP III volume is thus a step in this direction. In what follows, various aspects of the process of the re-editing of this material, along with indicative results are presented through five case studies. The main focus is on characteristic instances of new transcriptions and their implications for the definition of the text type, the dating and provenance of the documents, and the prosopographical information they contain.

Description of the corpus to be republished

The documents to be republished are preserved on square or rectangular scraps of papyri or on small, unevenly shaped pieces of parchment. They are written in the Greek Vernacular of the Late Antiquity. They usually originate from the Arsinoite nome of Egypt. Wessely dated them to a period

² All dates mentioned in the present paper are A.D.

extending from the fifth to the eighth century. However, the features of the cursive script, in combination with the prosopographical or other information they contain, if available at all, either point to a later period than that proposed in the *editio princeps* or allow a further specification of the dating initially proposed. In general, the documents that make up the selected corpus should not be dated earlier than to the sixth century. Most of them are actually dated from the early Arab period of Egypt, i.e. not earlier than the mid-seventh century. The vast majority falls into the category of receipts for money payments, in particular tax receipts. Hence, they are highly formulaic texts, in the sense that they contain recurrent structural patterns and repeated formulae, as they purport to provide the reader(s) with specific practical information. The tax recorded is mostly *diagraphon*, the poll-tax levied on the male non-Muslim population during the early Arab period.³

A considerable part of the documents to be re-published remains partly or totally undefined due to either the mutilated state of the writing material and/or their content. Consequently, the specification of the text type is one of the most important issues in the framework of the re-edition. In particular, there are three categories of such documents in the selected corpus:

a. Documents that can be easily classified as tax receipts, although the tax is not mentioned, even if they are preserved in their entirety; such documents contain terms such as *merismos*, «quota/assessment», or *canon*, «installment», but not the terms denoting the type of tax.⁴

b. Money receipts in which the reason for payment is not mentioned at all. This category includes fragmentary documents, in which the fiscal terminology may be lost due to the damage of the writing material, as well as documents preserved in their entirety, in which the reason for payment was omitted.

c. Fragmentary documents containing terms that clearly point to taxation, but due to the condition of the writing material, their purpose cannot be defined; they may be, for instance, fragments of receipts or of *entagia*, or even parts of longer texts, such as collections of tax receipts or lists of tax payments.

d. Documents so badly preserved that their content provides us with no indication at all about the text type.

³ On *diagraphon*, see indicatively Poll 1999; Gonis 2000; 2003; Poget Kern 2003; Gasco 2008, 104-105; Sijpesteijn 2013, 70 (with n. 151); 72-73 (with n. 172, 173 and 178). On poll-tax as well as the fiscal terms *merismos*, *dapane* and *demosia* in early Islamic Egypt, see Simonsen 1988, 86-106.

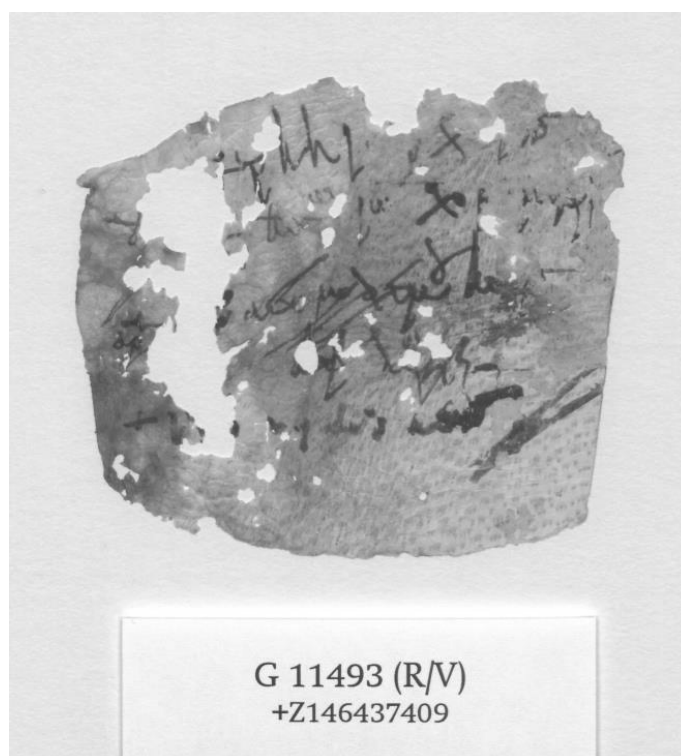
⁴ *Merismo*i were tax-lists that stated the indiction during which the taxes were paid, as well as the amount levied on each one of the taxpayers (see indicatively Simonsen 1988, 86); on *canon*, see indicatively Poll 1999, 242 and F. Morelli's remarks in CPR XXII 23, n. to l. 1, where parallels and bibliography are offered.

III. The selected examples

As already noted, the transcriptions offered by Carl Wessely contain serious deficiencies and mistakes. In most cases Wessely did not manage to decipher these texts in their entirety. Sometimes, words, lines or even the whole verso have not been transcribed at all. Very often the first editor just drew what he could see on the writing material, whereas the abbreviations and symbols were not correctly resolved or remained unresolved.

Re-deciphering often provides us with crucial information about the content and nature of the text, with useful prosopographical information – mostly information on the identity of the tax-payers and/or the issuers of the tax receipts – or information serving as a confirmation for the dating proposed on palaeographical grounds.

The focus in the present chapter is on five cases, in which the process of re-transcribing led to important conclusions. All five selected instances are receipts for the payment in money that are preserved on damaged parchments and come from the Arsinoite nome. They were all (re-)dated to the early Arab period of Egypt in the proposed re-edition.



Pl. 1. SPP III 630 (G 11493) (© Austrian National Library, Collection of Papyri).

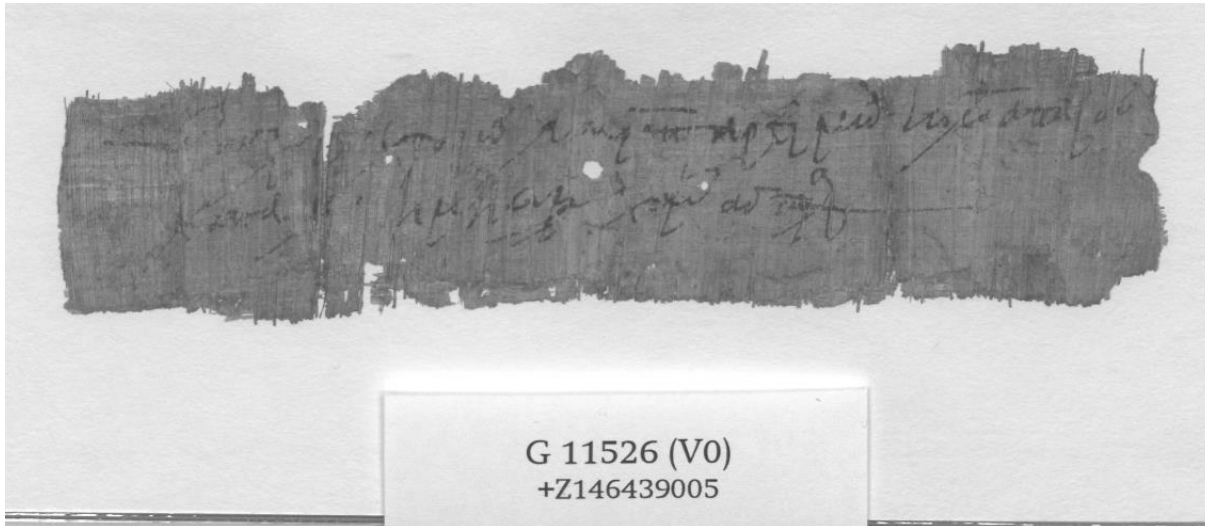
630 RQ 659 H. 6 Br. 5.5^{cm} Rand unten
 Pergam. 1.5^{cm} Haarscite. Cursive.
 S. VII–VIII.
 (Faijūm?) 1 [αυυ]ρ κ η [υδ]χ 5
 2 ω 'Iω δ(ιὰ) ρ μαγείρ(ου)
 3 ἀρ(-ίδμιον) ὕ α ἐν μμ(όνου) δ(ι) ἐμ^{οῦ} Κοσμί^α
 4 } φ λ φ ε ι -
 5 } νομ(-ισμάριον) α ἐν

Pl. 2. SPP III 630, editio princeps.

The transcription of SPP III 630 recto already offered in the editio princeps indicates that this small and damaged piece of parchment from the Arsinoiton Polis that was dated to the seventh-eighth century by Wessely contains the largest part of a receipt for the payment in money. However, Wessely did not manage to decipher two parts of this text, which are crucial for the definition of the text type, namely the last part of line 1, and line 4. The reading of the formulaic prepositional phrase (ὑπὲρ) δι[α]γρά(φου) in line 1 in the framework of the re-edition shows that the document in question should be added to the already long list of *diagraphon* receipts included in the last part of the SPP III volume. In what follows the symbol of ὑπὲρ, the reading διαγράφου is definitely more secure than that of the other two possible genitives that are expected after ὑπὲρ in the re-published corpus, i.e. δημοσίων and μερισμοῦ. *Iota* is a secure reading, judging on the shape of this letter in other words of the document in question. The tiny traces of ink around the break that follows the symbol for ὑπὲρ is what is left from *delta*. Most probably *alpha* is lost, as it is the case with other letters in the text. Finally, the three following traces might well be read as a narrow, badly shaped *gamma*, the upper part of a *rho* and a flat, elevated second *alpha*. This reading is in alignment with the new reading κεφ[α]λ(αιωτοῦ) in line 4, which reveals the function of the signatory. *Kefalaiotai* are included in the collectors of *diagraphon*, as it is obvious from other texts of the same era and type; SPP VIII 730. 1, 4-5 (Arsinoiton Polis, 7th century); SPP VIII 749. 2, 4 (Arsinoiton Polis, 7th century); SPP III 668. 1, 5-6 (Arsinoiton Polis, late 7th-8th century); SPP VIII 718. 1, 3 (Arsinoiton Polis, 7th-8th century).⁵

⁵ The term κεφαλαιωτής (lat. *capitularius*) denotes the tax-collector of the seventh and eighth centuries; cf. Federico Morelli's remarks in CPR XXII 60, n. to l. 41 (with n. 2). SPP III 668 was dated to the seventh century by Wessely and

What is more, it seems that the issuer of this receipt is the same as that of the aforementioned SPP VIII 730, SPP III 668 and SPP VIII 718, which indicates that all four receipts for the payment of *diagraphon* belong to the dossier of a certain Kosmas from the Arsinoiton Polis of the late seventh or eighth century. It is noteworthy that in SPP III 630. 4, 668. 6 and SPP VIII 718. 3 the genitive κεφαλαιωτου is abbreviated in the same manner. Finally, the mention of *diagraphon*, along with the new prosopographical data confirm the re-dating of the text in question to the late seventh or the eighth century based on the features of the hand-writing.

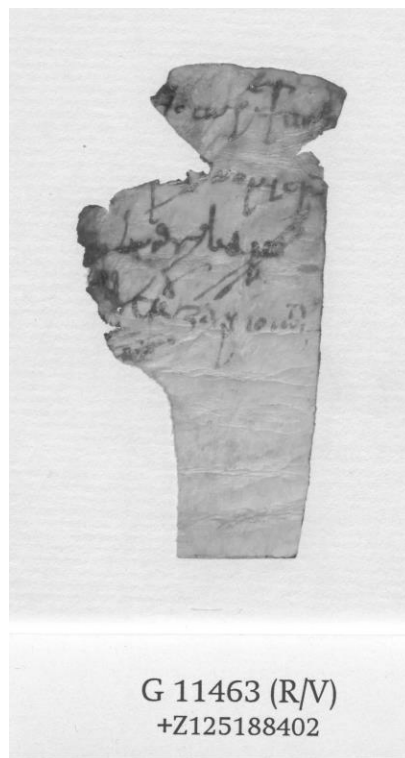


Pl. 3. SPP III 662 (G 11526) (© Austrian National Library, Collection of Papyri).

662 RQ 687 Höhe 3 Br. 13^{cm} Fasern 2 zur Schrift.
 Papyrus Cursive.
 s. VII.
 Arsin. 1 + μεχερο κα ε.] εν (δικτιωνος) χ (λ. υπερ)
 τω λουρ (α) παρεμβω λ (η) με Κολο (α) Απα (ου) λ (α)
 2 χ (λ. υπερ) Απα (ου) ημου (λ. με) μμ (ονο) δ (ε)
 εμ ου Αν (α) εα

Pl. 4. SPP III 662, editio princeps.

re-dated to the late seventh or eighth century in the framework of the forthcoming edition of the SPP III texts (see n. 1). This tax receipt was issued by Kosmas *kefalaiotes* together with a certain Kosmas deacon.



G 11463 (R/V)
+Z125188402

Pl. 5. SPP III 590 (G 11463) (© Austrian National Library, Collection of Papyri).

590 R Q 369 H. 6'4 Br. 3'3^{em} Fleischseite.
Pergam. Unterer Rand 3^{em} Cursive.
s. VII.
(Faijûm) 1 Γεώργιος πρ^ε(σβύτερος) σιπαρ
2 } νομίσματα (άτια)
3 [τρία κέραια είκοσι] εν ὄγκω κα μ^ό(να)
4] δ/ι' ἐμ^{οῦ} Ζαχαρίου ἡφοταρίου
5] νοῦ

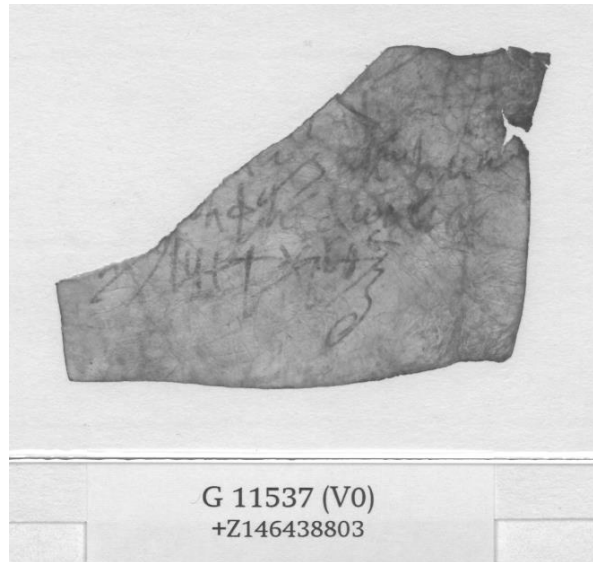
Pl. 6. SPP III 590, editio princeps.

Similar are the cases of SPP III 662 and 590. The first of the aforementioned documents, from the Arsinoiton Polis (see line 1), was dated by Wessely to the seventh century and re-dated to the late seventh or rather eighth century on palaeographical grounds. The new reading (ὕπερ) μερ(ισμοῦ) in

line 1, which replaced Wessely's drawing, constitutes an undeniable clue to the nature of this document, which is a tax receipt. Considering the parallels, what can be seen between the symbol of ὑπέρ and the *my* of μερ(ισμοῦ) is just the prolongation of the middle, diagonal stroke of the symbol in a scribe's attempt to fill the space to the first letter of the following word. SPP III 590 is a money receipt dated to the seventh century in the first edition that was re-dated to the early Arab period. The scrutiny of the piece among others sheds light on the mysterious word σιπαρ read by Wessely at the end of the first line. *Sigma* is probably followed by a long *iota* crossed at its top by the horizontal stroke of the *epsilon* of the preceding πρε(σβύτερος). Although the possibility of a double *pi* should not be ruled out, it is more likely that there is only one *pi* after *iota*. If the letter following *pi* is an *alpha*, one could read either the profession σιπ<π>ᾶς (cf. P.PalauRib. 48 [= SB X 10659]. 2; unknown provenance; 7th century) or the personal name Σιπ<π>ᾶς (used in genitive, as a patronymic); all of the parallels for this name were dated from the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century and come from Kysis; Oasis Magna: O.Douch. I 37. 1, 38. 1, 39. 2, 55. 1, 56. 2; O.Douch. III 228. 3, 352. 1. However, it is more likely that *pi* is followed by an *omicron* and an *upsilon* (ου). What it is seen afterwards is probably the upper part of a *rho* followed by a *gamma*. The most plausible reading is thus σιπ<π>ουργ[ός]. On this professional term, cf. BGU XVII 2712. 4 with BL XII 27 (Hermoupolis, 6th century); P.Ant. III 205. 20 (Antinoopolis, early 7th century); CPR IX 51. 33 (Hermopolite nome, mid-7th century); for the variation σιππουργός, cf. SPP VIII 790. 2 (Arsinoiton Polis?, 6th century); SB XVI 12717. 3, 30 (Herakleopolite nome; ca. 640-650); P.Ross.Georg. V 71. 6 (Arsinoite nome, 8th century). For the misspelling occurring in the document under study, i.e. one *pi* instead of two, cf. SPP XX 113. 6 with BL II. 2 164 (unknown provenance, 401; see BL VII 262, HGV); 139. 23 with BL I 421; VIII 469 (Arsinoiton Polis, 531; see BL VII 263); P.Grenf. II 86. 8 (Hermoupolis, 596; see BL VIII 143). It is not certain whether the word is abbreviated or not. Judging by the end of the lines 2 and 3, it seems that it is not followed by other words. For a tentative identification of this Georgios (registered as 1441 in *Pros. Ars.*), cf. SB XXII 15244 col. 2. 6 (unknown provenance; 7th century): Γε(ωργίου?) πρε(σβυτέρου) σιπ(πουργου). Parallels of presbyters bearing this name and coming from the Arsinoite nome of the same era are offered by SPP VIII 706. 5 (= *Pros. Ars.* 1441, Arsinoiton Polis, 7th century); SPP X 177. 6 with BL VIII 458 (= *Pros. Ars.* 1516 with n. 235; Arsinoite nome, 7th-8th century); SPP XX 252 verso. 16 with BL VIII 475 (= *Pros. Ars.* 1412 with n. 227; Arsinoite nome; see BL XIII, 7th-8th century, see BL XIII); SPP XX 264 recto. 3, verso.9 (= *Pros. Ars.* 1528 and 1531, respectively; Arsinoite nome, 7th-8th century); SPP III 616. 3 (= *Pros. Ars.* 1407, late 7th-8th century⁶); SPP VIII 837. 4 (= *Pros. Ars.* 1547, Psenyris, Arsinoite nome, 8th century). A worker in tow bearing the name Georgios is attested in SPP VIII 783 (= BGU II 682).1, dated to the same

⁶ This date is proposed in Koroli's forthcoming re-edition of SPP III 583-701 (see footnote 1). Wessely dated the text to the 6th-7th century.

period (7th-8th century, see BL I 439, BL V 12), the provenance of which remains unfortunately unknown. The proposed reading in the new edition therefore provides us with one more papyrological attestation of the fact that a member of the clergy might have an additional occupation, in either a secular profession (in agricultural life or in crafts) or in the administration of the monastery. In the papyrus documents, clerics and monks often appear to be involved in textile industry.⁷



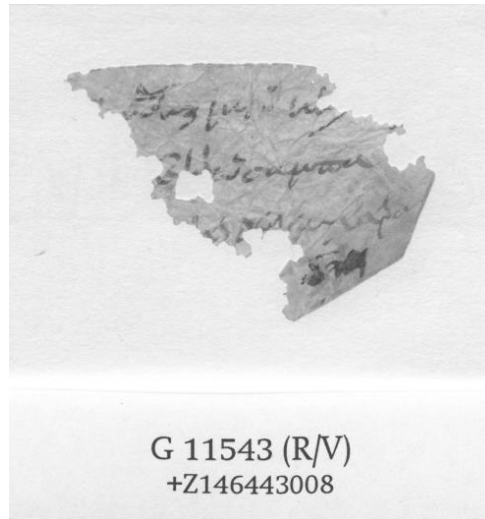
Pl. 7. SPP III 673 (G 11537) (© Austrian National Library, Collection of Papyri).

673 R Q 698 Höhe 4.6 Br. 7^{cm} Unterer Rand 1.4^{cm}
 Pergam. Cursive mit Tachygraphie.
 s. VII-VIII.
 Arsin. 1 [χ διαρε(αυῆς) λαύρ(ας)]
 2 [Παρεμβ]ωλ(ῆς) χ(λ. ὑπέρ) α κ^{α(νδρος)} Ηλία
 3 [Ἰω]σήφ κερ(άτια) δώδεκα
 4 γ[ί]νεται γ βε + δ(ι) ἐμ^{οῦ} Θ^ε

Pl. 8. SPP III 673, editio princeps.

⁷ On the secular occupations of the clerics and monks, see Wipszycka 1972, 154-173, esp. 164-165; Schmelz 2002, 203-254. On the profession of σ(τ)ιππουργός, see Wipszycka 1965, 18, 25-26.

In the case of SPP III 673, the new reading of line 2 (= line 1 in the first edition) allowed the confirmation of the text type. The reading of three letters that belong to the formulaic phrase [(ὕπερ) διαγ]ράφ(ου) at the end of this line replaced Wessely's tentative, though well grounded, restoration and provided us with a much more solid base for the classification of this text, which comes from the Arsinoiton Polis, as a receipt for the payment of *diagraphon* dated to the early Arab period.⁸



Pl. 9. SPP III 679 (G 11543) (© Austrian National Library, Collection of Papyri).

679 R Q 705 Höhe 3.2 Breite 5^{cm} Cursive.
 Pergam. 1 [†]^x π(αχων) κξ ιβ ἐν(δικτιῶνος) β κ(ανόνος)
 s. VII.
 Arsino. 2 Σαμπια
 3 κ[ε(ἀττία)] δέκα τέσσερα
 4 15 κξ

Pl. 10. SPP III 679, editio princeps.

⁸ The toponym Παρεμβολή might well denote either the quarter of the Arsinoiton Polis (in this case λαύρας is omitted) or the village Parembole of the Arsinoite nome; on this toponym, see Wessely 1904, 117 s.v.; *Dizionario IV*, 53-54 s.v. with *Supplemento I*, 219 s.v.; *Supplemento II*, 151 s.v.; *Supplemento III*, 119 s.v.; *Supplemento IV*, 104-105 s.v.; *Supplemento V*, 79 s.v.; Timm 1988, 1843 s.v.; Daris 2001, 191-192 s.v.; Gonis 2003, 150, n. to ll. 2-3, and Poget Kern 2003, 132, n. to l. 3; cf. also Sven Tost's remarks in SPP III² 114, n. to l. 3; and Fritz Mitthoff's remarks in SPP III² 181, n. to l. 2. For *Apolloniou Parembole* (Ἀπολλωνίου Παρεμβολή), as was the full name of the quarter of the Arsinoiton Polis before the sixth century, see Wessely 1902, 18 s.v.; Daris 1981, 144; *Dizionario I.2*, 152 s.v. with *Supplemento I*, 48 s.v.; *Supplemento II*, 23 s.v.; *Supplemento III*, 19 s.v.; *Supplemento IV*, 18 s.v.; Daris 2001, 181; Daris 2006, 146; cf. also Fritz Mitthoff's remarks in SPP III² 128, n. to l. 2; 181, n. to l. 2.

Finally, in documents such as SPP III 679, a tax receipt initially dated to the seventh century and re-dated to the late seventh to the eighth century in terms of palaeography, the new reading provided us with a further specification of the provenance. The new, uncertain reading of the *rho* at the end of line 1, in combination with the new reading of an abbreviated version of ἐκκλησίας in line 2, which replaced Wessely's drawing, led to the restoration λ[αύ]ρ[(ας) τ(ῆς)] | [μεγ(ά)λ(ης)] ἐκκλη(σίας) in lines 1-2. This phrase clearly indicates that the document comes from the Arsinoiton Polis.⁹

Conclusive remarks

Studied in detail, placed in their historical context and analyzed on the axis of continuity and change, the documents that make up the last part of the SPP III volume can feed the discussion concerning various issues, such as the payment of the poll-tax in the early Arab period of Egypt. Despite their small size and their often fragmentary condition, they provide information on practical details such as the dates, the sums of money paid, the currency, the tax-payers and the tax-collectors, which is reliable and irreplaceable given the rarity of the authentic written sources that are dated from this transitional period of the Egyptian history. The value of these documents becomes even more apparent when their content is correlated to the rest of the SPP texts, to the corpus of small-sized texts of the same kind, as well as to longer texts that belong to the same taxation system but to different levels of administration, such as tax reports. In sum, the extraction of as much information as possible from the papyrological corpus to be republished, can significantly enrich our knowledge of the economic history of late antique Egypt.

⁹ On this church and quarter, see Antonini 1940, 166; Wipszycka 1972, 59; 1994, 200; Schmelz 2002, 35; cf. also Sven Tost's remarks in SPP III² 116, n. to l. 2; 451, introduction and n. to l. 2, as well as Claudia Kreuzsaler's remarks in 509, introduction.

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List of abbreviations

Dizionario I.2 = Calderini, A. 1966, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano I.2*, Madrid.

Dizionario IV = Calderini, A. (a cura di S. Daris) 1973-1987, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano*, Milano.

Supplemento I = Calderini, A. (a cura di S. Daris) 1988, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano. Supplemento I (1935-1986)*, Milano.

Supplemento II = Calderini, A. (a cura di S. Daris) 1996, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano. Supplemento II (1987-1993)*, Bonn.

Supplemento III = Calderini, A. (a cura di S. Daris) 2003, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano. Supplemento III (1994-2001)*, Pisa.

Supplemento IV = Calderini, A. 2007, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano. Supplemento IV (2002-2005)*, Pisa / Roma.

Supplemento V = Calderini, A. 2010, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano. Supplemento V (2006-2009)*, Pisa / Roma.

Pros. Ars. = Diethart, J. M. 1980, *Prosopographia Arsinoitica I s. VI-VIII (Pros. Ars. I)*, MPER N. S. 12, Wien.