

## A Wine Merchant and an Absentee Landlord in a Small Archive from the Geneva Collection

The first edition of P.Gen. I was produced by Jules Nicole at a time when papyrology was still in its infancy, and a full revision has long since become necessary<sup>1</sup>. This project, which started in 1996, has been recently completed; the following is a by-product of the revision<sup>2</sup>. We shall concentrate here on a small archive which Nicole had presumably identified in part, but did not fully exploit in his own publication. The central figure of this archive is Tesenouphis, a wine merchant living in the village of Philadelphia at the beginning of the third century A.D.

The archive consists of at least five documents, all of which come from Nicole's private collection<sup>3</sup>:

- P.Gen. I 72 is a short note sent by Valerius Cearnis alias Philoxenos to the wine merchant Tesenouphis. He has sent a slave in advance, and instructs Tesenouphis to prepare the money corresponding to the price of some wine bought by Tesenouphis from Philoxenos' estate.
- P.Gen. I 77 is a receipt for payment of the said wine, established for Tesenouphis by Philoxenos' agent. The document is dated July 4<sup>th</sup> 211<sup>4</sup>.
- P.Gen. I 71 is a list of daily sales of vinegar. The hand can be dated to the third century A.D. We have tentatively ascribed this document to the archive because it deals with the wine business in the period under consideration, and because it belongs to the same lot of papyri purchased by Nicole for his private collection.
- P.Gen. I 73 is a contract established between Tesenouphis, acting here as the head of a local association (*collegium*), and the leader of a flute band consisting of himself and three other musicians. The band undertakes to play at Philadelphia for a period of seven days, probably in the context of a traditional celebration dating back to pharaonic times. The name of Tesenouphis' father, Nikon, had been misread by Nicole; the correction helped us to identify the next document in the archive.
- P.Gen. II 114 is a receipt issued by the *sitologoi* to Tesenouphis in June 211 at Philadelphia, for payment in kind of a rent on public land. The editor of this papyrus did not recognize the connection with the other documents of the archive. Beside the date and location of the document however, the mention of Tesenouphis' father, Nikon, permits a conclusive identification.

The interest of gathering archive material lies chiefly in the fact that it enables us to make connections between the documents, and consequently to give an additional dimension to the texts under consideration. In the following part, we will see how each document, taken in conjunction with the rest of the archive, enhances our comprehension of Tesenouphis' position. In the first two documents (P.Gen. I 72 and 77), we see Tesenouphis buying wine from the estate of Valerius Cearnis alias Philoxenos. The name of the landlord suggests a Roman citizen. We can actually be more specific, thanks to the recent publication of P.Yale III 137, a register listing all owners of private land at Philadelphia in the year 216/7. In this register, Gaius Valerius Cearnis alias Philoxenos (he has the *tria nomina*) is said to belong to the category of ἄρχοντες Ἀλεξανδρείας (Alexandrian magistrates), alongside people such as Aurelius Apion, the well-known nomarch of the Arsinoite<sup>5</sup>. In other words, Philoxenos certainly belongs to the upper crust of society

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<sup>1</sup> J. Nicole, *Les papyrus de Genève I*, Genève 1896–1906.

<sup>2</sup> A project financed by the "Fonds National Suisse de la Recherche Scientifique", n° 1214-049166.96 and 1213-055446.98, directed by P. Schubert, with the assistance of I. Jornt. See now P. Schubert, I. Jornt, *Les papyrus de Genève I* (2<sup>ème</sup> éd.), Genève 2002.

<sup>3</sup> The papyrus collection kept at the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire (BPU) in Geneva consists of two main groups: a) Nicole's private collection, which he purchased with the help of his friend Edouard Naville in the 1880s and 1890s and bequeathed to the BPU in 1917; b) the collection bought by Nicole on behalf of the BPU in the 1890s.

<sup>4</sup> For a very close parallel to this document, see P.Fay. 63 (Euhemeria, A.D. 240).

<sup>5</sup> On Aurelius Apion, see G. Messeri, R. Pintaudi, *Apion, nomarca dell'Arsinoites*, ZPE 120 (1998) 131–144.

in the Roman province. He presumably resides in Alexandria, but is the absentee landlord of an estate at Philadelphia. The estate is managed by an agent, established in the village. Such a situation is of course reminiscent of the Appianus estate, known to us mainly through the huge Heroninos archive, dated a few decades after the small Geneva archive<sup>6</sup>. Appianus is a councilor of Alexandria, and manages his estate in the Arsinoite nome through several agents. A comparison between both archives suggests that Philoxenos, like Appianus, is staying in the nome capital (Ptolemais Euergetis) at the time when he writes P.Gen. I 72<sup>7</sup>. It is worth mentioning that Diodora, Appianus' daughter, is married to a man called Antonius Philoxenos, himself an imperial procurator and a wealthy landowner in the Arsinoite nome. The Greek part of his name, Philoxenos, could point to a family connection with our Gaius Valerius Cularis alias Philoxenos. The interest of the Geneva archive lies therefore also in the fact that it may allow us a glimpse into an estate of a nature similar to the Appianus estate, but several decades before the latter estate was fully constituted.

Let us now revert to the practical aspects of the note sent by Philoxenos to Tesenouphis. Philoxenos seems to visit his estate only once a year, and does not spend much time on the spot; the purpose of his visit is evidently to collect the income from his vineyard, the production of which has been sold to the local wine merchant. To ensure that he will not waste any time waiting for his money, he sends an advance notice, carried by a slave. The tone of his message is at best straightforward, without the slightest hint of courtesy: it starts with a mention of himself as sender of the note, but keeps the name of the addressee for the very end; the imperative is rendered even more insistent by the use of the adverb εὐθέως (“quickly”); Philoxenos does not send the customary greetings to Tesenouphis at the end of the note. Numerous parallels in the Heroninos archive show that this was the customary practice in such situations<sup>8</sup>. When it is time for the payment, Philoxenos does not have to bother about the technicalities, since he has an agent working for him in the village; the money is simply forwarded to an account in Philoxenos' name.

While dealing with a man like Philoxenos, Tesenouphis the wine merchant is clearly the underdog. In two documents of the archive, however, he seems to hold a more secure position. In the contract for the flute performance at Philadelphia, he appears as an equal to the other party: the leader of the band is a πρωταύλης („first flute-player”), and he is termed a προστάτης (“president”) of an association (κολλήγιον / *collegium*)<sup>9</sup>. It seems clear that, at least among his fellow-villagers, Tesenouphis is a man of some importance. This impression is confirmed by the tax receipt issued by the sitologoi, where we see that Tesenouphis has rented a plot of public land, for which he pays 130 artabas of wheat in three installments within five days. At an approximate taxation rate of 4–5 artabas to an aroura, we can estimate the plot to have measured ca. 30 arouras<sup>10</sup>. A family could live modestly off a plot of five arouras<sup>11</sup>. We should thus expect Tesenouphis, whose main activity seems to have been in the wine business, to have sublet to other villagers — at a profit — the plot which he rented from the state. The register of 216/7 (P.Yale III 137) shows that, at least five years later, Tesenouphis does not own any private land at Philadelphia. It is improbable that he would have sold any private land that he owned precisely within this five-year period. We can therefore assume that Tesenouphis is not a landowner, but draws his income mostly from management on a small scale (selling wine, subletting land rented from the state). His managerial skills have also led him to preside over a local association; he thus oversees the organization of a traditional celebration for the village, lasting seven days.

<sup>6</sup> See D. Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-Century A.D. Egypt: The Heroninos Archive and the Appianus Estate*, Cambridge 1991. I take the opportunity to thank Dominic Rathbone for some very useful suggestions following the delivery of this paper.

<sup>7</sup> See Rathbone 85.

<sup>8</sup> See Rathbone 67. Many close parallels are to be found throughout P.Flor. II. In most cases, the sender is Alypius, one of the most important landowners in the archive. This particular form of address, with the name of the addressee at the end of the document (instead of at the beginning), may have facilitated the work of a scribe who prepared the document in advance, following a formulary; this idea was suggested to me by Roger Bagnall.

<sup>9</sup> On the juridical aspects of *collegia*, see J.-J. Aubert, *La gestion des collegia: aspects juridiques, économiques et sociaux*, Cahiers Glotz 10 (1999) 49–69. On the associations in charge of inviting musicians, see W. L. Westermann, *Entertainment in the Villages of Graeco-Roman Egypt*, JEA 18 (1932) 16–27; testimonia are to be found in M. Vandoni, *Feste pubbliche e private nei documenti greci*, Milano 1964.

<sup>10</sup> For the taxation rate on public land in the Herakleides division, see R. S. Bagnall, *P.Oxy. 4527 and the Antonine Plague in Egypt: Death or Flight?*, JRA 13 (2000) 288–292, esp. 289. The approximate taxation rate is estimated for the second century, but should not have changed substantially at the beginning of the third century.

<sup>11</sup> See A. K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs*, London 1986, 100 and 238.

His contacts with men of importance, like the Alexandrian Philoxenos, have no doubt contributed to his appointment as head of the association.

In conclusion, Tesenouphis would probably be called in our recent terminology a “service provider”: from the documents in this small archive, we see him buying the wine from a prominent absentee landlord, and presumably selling it to his fellow villagers; he rents a fair plot of public land, more than he would need to feed his family, again presumably to sublet the land to the villagers; as head of an association, he organizes a local celebration.