

Das Fayyûm in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit

Fallstudien zu multikulturellem Leben in der Antike

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erscheint es durchaus als gerechtfertigt, sich dieser Region Ägyptens mit besonderer Aufmerksamkeit zu widmen.

Wie die Vorträge der vorangegangenen Fayyûmtagungen, die in Deutschland stattgefunden haben,⁴ werden hiermit auch die Referate dieses Kolloquium bei Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, vorgelegt. Einige der Referentinnen und Referenten haben sich allerdings entschlossen, ihren Vortrag nicht in diesem Band zu publizieren, da es sich um Vorberichte größerer Untersuchungen handelt, die demnächst erscheinen werden. Ein Ziel dieser Einleitung war es deshalb in der Zusammenfassung, einen Gesamteindruck der Tagung zu geben. Absichtlich habe ich die Zusammenfassung thematisch und nicht alphabetisch nach den Nachnamen der Vortragenden gegliedert, wie auch in Bronnbach selbst die Referate inhaltlich gruppiert waren.

Gemeinsam mit meiner Mitherausgeberin Carolin Arlt danke ich der Verlegerin Frau Dr. Barbara Krauß, sich bereit erklärt zu haben, den Band zu veröffentlichen, der von ihrem Haus in der gewohnten Professionalität betreut und produziert wurde. Carolin Arlt danke ich persönlich für die angenehme Zusammenarbeit bei der Organisation des Symposiums, die größtenteils von ihr in ihrer ruhigen, aber sehr effizienten Arbeitsweise gestemmt wurde. Wir beide wiederum sind Ulrike Weinmann für die redaktionelle Betreuung des Bandes dankbar.

The Name Ostraka from Soknopaiou Nesos Office Lottery or Ostracism in the Fayyûm?¹

Carolin Arlt

Introduction

During the surveys in 2001 and 2002 and the excavation seasons in 2003–2010 in Soknopaiou Nesos the team of the University of Lecce found 354 Demotic ostraka.² Of these 266 were so-called name ostraka. A further 19 ostraka may be name ostraka but their preservation does not allow for a definite decision. Name ostraka can usually be easily identified. They give the name of a person followed by the name of the father and sometimes the grandfather. The names are always male. Very rarely is there a title, which is the only other information provided. The size of these ostraka is rather small ranging from about 3–8 cm in width and 3–7 cm in height. All can be assigned to the Roman period.

Four name ostraka were used twice. This means that the second text was written either on top of the old one or perpendicular to it. There is also one bilingual name ostrakon giving the same information in Greek and Demotic and furthermore there are three or maybe four Greek ones. Already in 2006 Lippert and Schentuleit published 87 name ostraka and two little papyri of the same type.³ Added together, we have 359 name ostraka, 355 of which are in Demotic, plus maybe 20 more.

Most name ostraka mention only one person but there are cases where two persons appear together. In some instances one cannot be sure whether the text refers to one or two individuals. This is for example the problem when there are four names written on an ostrakon and it is difficult to decide whether four generations or two persons with father's names are given. The difficulty stems from the fact that in Soknopaiou Nesos the word *sʒ* for "son" is usually not written. Two ostraka have the name of a person with father's name followed by the phrase "and NN, his son".

Of the 15 titles mentioned in the name ostraka all are of priestly origin. The most common are *w^{cb}* "priest" and *hm-ntr* "prophet". It is therefore apparent that we are dealing with a priestly milieu here. It seems safe to assume that all persons found in the ostraka were members of the priesthood from Soknopaiou Nesos. This hypothesis is further supported by the fact that most name ostraka were found within the temple proper.⁴

4 LIPPERT, SCHENTULEIT, *Tebtynis und Soknopaiou Nesos*. LIPPERT, SCHENTULEIT, *Graeco-Roman Fayyum*.

1 I would like to thank Andrew Monson for his comments and for correcting my English. The ostraka from Soknopaiou Nesos will be published in the volume following CAPASSO, DAVOLI, *Soknopaiou Nesos Project I (2003–2009)*. Unless otherwise indicated papyrological editions are cited according to OATES ET AL., *Checklist of Editions*.

2 Twenty of these ostraka have been published by Pernigotti. PERNIGOTTI, in: *REAC* 10, 51–72. However, this edition should be used cautiously as it contains some mistakes. See STADLER, in: *Soknopaiou Nesos Project I (2003–2009)*, 249–268.

3 LIPPERT, SCHENTULEIT, *Ostraka*, 71–102.

4 I will discuss the archaeological context in more detail in the course of this article. See also plan 1

Purpose of the name ostraka

The question I am trying to answer in this article is what these ostraka were used for. There are in my opinion two possibilities. Either they were used as lots in order to assign offices that people probably were not very keen on holding, or they were ballots employed in the election for offices. The somewhat lurid title of the article suggesting that ostracism took place in Soknopaïou Nesos represents an idea that can in all likelihood be excluded. In order to at least come closer to an answer several issues will be examined in more detail. Two main points seem to be essential. The first is the identification of the persons mentioned in the ostraka. Can we find the same individual more than once and if so, how many times? If we have the same person represented twenty times then this would clearly point to an election. The second is the question whether we can find some persons in other documents as well. This may not only help dating the ostraka more precisely but it may indicate whether some individuals held offices. According to the importance of the office this might bring us closer to answering the question of whether it was acquired through a lottery or an election. I will also shortly consider the paleography of the ostraka. If they were all written by different hands then this may point to an election. Another topic that needs to be discussed is what we know about the assignment of offices in Roman Soknopaïou Nesos and the rest of Egypt in general.

Lippert and Schentuleit argue that the name ostraka were used in an office lottery within the temple administration. Their main line of reasoning is based on the observation that most persons appear only once. Moreover, there was a practice termed “to cast a lot” (*hwy qll*) known in Soknopaïou Nesos. This is mentioned in some of the so-called agreements, though due to preservation the context remains unclear and it is not obvious what the lots were cast for. Another possibility for them would be an election through an oracle.⁵ Stadler thinks that it would be curious if offices were given away by pure chance and not based on the qualification of the person. Still, he does not want to exclude this option.⁶

The name ostraka from Soknopaïou Nesos seem to be unique. Though not as many as in Soknopaïou Nesos, numerous name ostraka of the same type have been found in Narmouthis.⁷ There are ostraka with names in Greek or Demotic from other places in Egypt.⁸ They are, however, usually interpreted as jar labels or labels that were put on sacks of grain or similar to indicate ownership since these labels sometimes give a date or mention a quantity. I think that in the case of Soknopaïou Nesos this use of the ostraka can be excluded because we never get any further information such as a date or a measure. The whole context seems to be different.

Identification of persons

The identification of the persons mentioned in the name ostraka is made difficult by the fact that many individuals had the same name. There were about six very common names that

indicating the locations where some of the ostraka were found.

5 LIPPERT, SCHENTULEIT, *Ostraka*, 4 and 102 with fn. 101.

6 STADLER, in: *Soknopaïou Nesos Project I (2003–2009)*, 255.

7 BRESCIANI et al., *Narmouthis 2006*, with about 100 name ostraka in Greek.

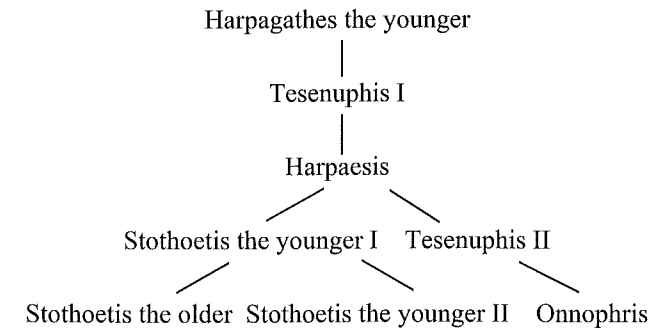
8 For instance, some were found in Tebtunis and in Karanis, cf. REITER, in: *Tebtunis und Soknopaïou Nesos*, 132; and others in Qasr Ibrim, cf. RAY, *Demotic Papyri and Ostraca from Qasr Ibrim*, 39–60.

appear on almost every ostrakon. Sometimes the person is further identified by the addition of “the older” or “the younger” to his name. One therefore has to concentrate on the less frequent names in order to match individuals. Doing that I was able to find at least twelve instances where the same person appears more than once. There are several more cases where we could be dealing with the same individuals but one cannot be sure because the names in question are very common.

In the twelve just mentioned examples one can be sure about the identification for several reasons. The first is that the personal name on the ostrakon is very rare in Soknopaïou Nesos and the second is that they mention the same title, since titles were generally given only occasionally, as was stated in the introduction. It is also possible to identify a whole family (of Harpaesis), which will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraph.

Summarizing, the results are the following: In the name ostraka, four persons appear twice, three persons three times and one family three times though each person only once.⁹ The family that was just referred to is attested in at least 22 ostraka, with three persons appearing each six times and one person twice.

Table 1: Genealogy of the family of Harpaesis



Stothoetis the younger I and II as well as Stothoetis the older are each mentioned at least six times, Tesenuphis II twice, and Harpaesis and Onnophris each once. Harpaesis is a rare name in Soknopaïou Nesos and he appears as grandfather in most name ostraka of his grandsons. The fact that three generations are given in most ostraka referring to this family makes the identification easier than in other cases. Stothoetis the younger I bears the title *w^cb* “priest” twice. There are otherwise no further titles mentioned.¹⁰

It can be concluded that several individuals appear more than once in the name ostraka. Despite the fact that there are probably quite a few persons besides these, who just cannot be identified because they and their fathers bear one of the six most popular names it is rather unlikely that the ostraka were used in an election. One would expect to find the same person more than just six times among the 355 Demotic name ostraka discovered so far.

9 See the forthcoming publication *Soknopaïou Nesos Project II* for a list of these persons.

10 A table giving the find numbers of the ostraka, in which this family are mentioned, can be found at the end of this article.

However, since we do not know what the procedure of such an election would have been and for which offices people were elected, a definite conclusion cannot be drawn so far. It is therefore important to check whether the people mentioned in the ostraka also appear in other documents. The same restrictions apply as in the attempt to match the individuals. The person's name or father's name must be infrequent in Soknopaiou Nesos. In the documentary papyri the grandfather's name is given even more rarely than in the name ostraka.

Identification of persons in other documents

It was still possible to identify four persons from the name ostraka in other texts and another three individuals from the just discussed family of Harpaesis. The following table gives an overview of these four persons in chronological order followed by another table that compiles the attestations within the family of Harpaesis.

Table 2: Persons attested in other sources

Name	Father's name	Date	Title	Attestation ¹¹
Herieus	Peteharpsenesis	30/31 CE	tax collector of the weavers (<i>shn n3 mdqn.w</i>)	P. Dime II 25, O. 624, 1241, 1817
Stochoetis	Satabus	42 CE	priest on duty of the second phyle (<i>p3 wcb nty lr hny p3 s3 2.nw</i>)	P. Dime II 45, O. 3362
Pakysis	Pabus the younger	161/162 CE	scribe of the priests (<i>sh n3 wcb.w</i>)	P. Dime II 16A, O. 3373
Apynchis	Panemieus	unclear	(witness)	P. Wien 6008 ¹² etc., O. 2750

Table 3: The family of Harpaesis attested in other sources

Name	Father's name	Date	Title	Attestation
Stochoetis the younger I	Harpaesis	89–91 CE	representative of the offering (<i>p3 rd p3 fy</i>)	P. Dime II 48 + 49

11 The numbers preceded with O. are the find numbers of the ostraka given by the excavators.
12 = P. Wien D 6008+6009+6045+6046+6073+6074 v. I would like to thank S. Lippert for this information.

Stochoetis the older	Stochoetis the younger I	99/100 CE	lesonis from the End-of-Isis (<i>mr-shn n Ph-3s.t</i>)	P. Dime II 7
Stochoetis the younger II	Stochoetis the younger I	146 CE	scribe of the priests (<i>sh n3 wcb.w</i>)	P. Dime II 35A

The “representative of the offering” was responsible for taking wheat for the offerings out of the magazine and receiving wheat payments for the magazine. It was an office that was assigned on a yearly basis and after Galba usually more than one person held this office.¹³ Except for the title “priest on duty of the second phyle”, which never appears with a regnal year, all other offices seem to have been appointed every year. Each phyle had such a “priest on duty”. He was among other things responsible for issuing the receipts of wheat for temple offerings.¹⁴ The “scribe of the priests” could occupy the office for several years in a row. Though the fact that the regnal year is given after every mention of the title suggests that it had actually to be renewed every year.¹⁵ This may have been a pure formality.

Apart from confirming the dating of these name ostraka to the first and second centuries CE, we now know that the people found in these ostraka did in fact hold yearly offices that could have been assigned by a lottery. However, examining these offices in more detail it is reasonable to consider whether they did not carry too much responsibility and require too much ability for being assigned merely by lot. For most of the offices given in the above tables one must have been able to read and write. Therefore, only a small number of the temple personnel could have come into consideration for these kinds of jobs.

As was explained above, an election can in my opinion be excluded though it might seem more suitable for filling these seemingly quite important offices. One would expect more ostraka with the name of the same person written on them. The diversity of individuals is too great, even if one considers that they are spread over the course of two centuries. The circumstances of where and how they were found also need to be taken into account. This is another matter that will be laid out more specifically below.

Paleography

A further question that should be addressed is the paleography of the ostraka or more explicitly the problem of whether some are written in the same hand. This is a difficult task as the texts are so short and one cannot compare the same word or words in most of the ostraka. Poor preservation is another issue to complicate the undertaking. It is therefore necessary to concentrate on the ostraka with the name of individuals appearing more than once. In one case we have a Herieus son of Teses attested in three different ostraka.¹⁶ Both names are much too common in Soknopaiou Nesos in order for this person to be identified on a secure basis. However, in all three texts the title of the person is given as well. He was the

13 LIPPERT, SCHENTULEIT, *Ostraka*, 21.

14 LIPPERT, SCHENTULEIT, *Ostraka*, 20.

15 LIPPERT, SCHENTULEIT, *Ostraka*, 18f.

16 O. 306, 400, and 3282.

“prophet of Osiris” (*ḥm-ntr Wsir*). Given that a scribe usually writes titles and gods’ names in a quite similar way, it can be excluded that these three ostraka were written by the same person. This also seems to be the case in the other instances though one cannot always be sure. A possible conclusion could be that the individuals mentioned in the ostraka tended not to write their names themselves and that this would suggest an election rather than a lottery. For the reasons discussed above, however, an election is rather unlikely.

Moreover, it is hard to imagine that even within the priesthood everybody was able to write. Their potential inability to write is difficult to reconcile with the idea that each person wrote down a name for election. It anyway seems that the ostraka with names of the same individuals are not in the same hand. One could perhaps imagine a procedure like the one assumed for classical Athens, where scribes wrote down names for people who were illiterate.¹⁷ On the other hand, whether illiterate people could hold offices in temples for which this procedure was conceivably used is another question.

Find circumstances

Grouping the name ostraka according to their find number leads to an interesting discovery. Since each item that is found gets a consecutive find number, two finds with a successive number often were found close together. This does not always have to be the case, so it is important to check the strata in which they were found. In many cases, two to three ostraka with subsequent find numbers start with the same name, sometimes even the father’s name is the same. The rather frequent occurrence of this phenomenon makes it doubtful that this could be a pure coincidence.

Plate 1 illustrates where the ostraka in question were found. They all come from around the temple court C 1.¹⁸ Also most of the other ostraka were uncovered around this court.¹⁹ Due to previous excavations and illegal digging the find spots are rarely undisturbed. All ostraka found in 2010 for instance come from the dump of clandestine excavations at the end of the 19th century and the strata are reversed.²⁰ One could therefore assume that the ostraka were stored and sorted in some way according to the names. Such a process would only make sense if they were either kept as evidence in case one needed to check them again or if it was planned to reuse them. The impression is that they were not just thrown away but deemed important enough to be stored.

The fact that most of the name ostraka were found around the temple court likely confirms the assumption that they were used by the temple personnel and that they were somehow employed in executing the business of the Soknopaios temple in the Roman period. What has not been considered here but may be worth investigating is whether the ostraka may instead have been part of an oracular procedure.

17 SIEWERT, *Ostrakismos-Testemonien*, 77–80, 290.

18 See plate 1 for a plan of the temple with court C 1.

19 See the plate (Abb. 1) for a complete overview in STADLER, in: *Soknopaiou Nesos Project I (2003–2009)*, 255.

20 US 700–719 on pl. 1.

Assignment of priestly offices in the Roman period

Looking at what we know about the assignment of offices in other places in Roman Egypt may help to get closer to the purpose of the name ostraka in Soknopaiou Nesos. As was mentioned above, many temple officials in Soknopaiou Nesos were appointed for one year. This is indicated by the reference to a regnal year after the name of the official. How they were assigned we cannot tell.

From a return made to the strategos, we know that the priests in Tebtunis paid for their priestly title.²¹ The incomplete text once gave the names of 50 priests, who were exempt from the poll-tax. Now only the beginning of the list is preserved. Three classes of priests are mentioned, starting with the highest rank of stolistes, followed by one feather-bearer and then the ordinary priests. All had to pay 52 drachmae for their priestly office and the stolistes and the feather-bearer an extra amount of 100 or 50 drachmae respectively on top of that. Another text from Tebtunis informs us about the procedure for obtaining the post of prophet at the Soknebtunis temple.²² The office was sold to the person with the highest bid; in this case it also included the post of lesonis. From a further papyrus it becomes clear that this important office was to stay in the family of the person who had previously made the highest bid.²³ The son of the winner of the first bid applied to purchase the post again, though for a much higher sum. In return, the office of prophet in Tebtunis was supposed to become hereditary and the heirs to the post would only have to pay an entrance fee.

There are further instances in which priests claim that priestly offices were inherited and could not be sold. In a complaint by priests from Neiloupolis, they assert that their posts of prophet and lesonis used to be hereditary and that it could not be sold after the death of the incumbent. Two copies are added that were supposed to prove that these offices were heritable in Soknopaiou Nesos.²⁴ In another document, a petition to the strategos, the priests from Soknopaiou Nesos declare again that the office of prophet of the Isis sanctuary in Pelousion was hereditary.²⁵ This priestly office had allegedly been taken away from the rightful owner and heir to another person by the village scribe of Pelousion.

These few texts give an impression of how priestly offices were assigned in the Roman period. Most examples come from the Fayyûm. There is, however, also a letter from Panopolis (Akhmim), in which two priests from a not further specified temple are said to have paid the price for the office of stolistes.²⁶ The strategos of the Panopolite nome was asked to prepare an auction for the offices. If nobody made a higher bid then the two priests should have the offices but the price for the offices should not be lower than what had been paid previously.²⁷ In Akoris, a certain Marsisouchos son of Pakebkis from Tebtunis bought at an auction the office of prophet, of palm-bearer and of interpreter.²⁸

21 P. Tebt. II 298 (108 CE).

22 P. Tebt. II 295 (126–138 CE).

23 P. Tebt. II 294 (147 CE).

24 P. Vind.Bosw. 1 (after 87 CE).

25 SPP XXII 184 (139 CE) = SB XVI 12685, reedited by SIJPESTEIJN, in: *ZPE* 44, 119–135.

26 P. Achm. 8 (197 CE).

27 P. Achm. 8, ll. 4–20.

28 SB V 8749 = P. Lund. III 9 (123 CE). See WEGNER, in: *SEP* 8, 113–118, for further information on the dealings and offices of this person.

Summarizing, it can be stated that we have evidence of priestly offices that were either sold—in public auctions—or that were hereditary in the Roman period. Also in the Gnomon of the Idios Logos it is stated explicitly that the office of stolistes is to be sold, whereas the office of prophet was either hereditary or could be sold.²⁹ Nowhere is there any evidence for an election or a lottery.

Assignment of liturgies in the Roman period

Liturgies are compulsory duties and offices of the Roman period most men had to execute. There were some liturgies that required physical labor and others for which there was a wealth qualification because the person in office was liable with his own fortune. By the late Roman period (2nd and 3rd cen.) almost every office in Egypt was liturgic.³⁰

For the assignment of liturgies two procedures are known. The first one, which applied to most liturgies, apparently was a routine procedure. The strategos had to consent to a list with names, which had been submitted to him by the respective official of the town or village. The available places were the same as the number of candidates.³¹ Though there was something called the “special procedure” or the “kleros” by Lewis. For certain liturgies the list sent to the strategos “contained more names, usually in the ratio of 1:2 (...), than the number of posts to be filled. The strategos transmitted the list of nominees to the epistrategos, and in the normal course of events it was the latter’s function to select the actual appointee by the casting of lots.”³²

The only elected office was the office of phylarch. The phylarch in this case is not the head of a priestly phyle as we know it from the Egyptian tradition but the head of the quarters of Greek cities in Roman Egypt. Usually the current phylarch would name his successor. However, for the year when the respective phyle was supposed to staff the liturgic services, the phylarch was voted for directly by the whole tribe. This was a kind of reassurance that there would be no preferential treatment in the nominations.³³ So here we have the only evidence for an election of an office in Roman Egypt. This, however, was quite late as the respective text dates to the middle of the third century³⁴ and comes from a completely different context than the rather traditional Egyptian temple sphere.

Summary and conclusion

The name ostraka from Soknopaiou Nesos are all Roman and can be dated to the first and second centuries CE. They belong to the temple sphere. Several persons are attested more than once but when this is the case their names are written in different hands. Some persons mentioned in the ostraka appear in other documents as well where they held yearly offices such as scribe of the priests, tax collector, or lesonis that have to do with the temple administration but that are not necessarily priestly offices. The ostraka may have been sorted and stored, perhaps for being reused in the following year. These results leave more questions

29 BGU V 1210, §§ 77, 78 and 80, see also Jur.Pap. 93, pp. 336–339.

30 LEWIS, *Life in Egypt Under Roman Rule*, 177–184.

31 LEWIS, *The Compulsory Public Services of Roman Egypt*, 83f.

32 LEWIS, *The Compulsory Public Services of Roman Egypt*, 85.

33 LEWIS, *The Compulsory Public Services of Roman Egypt*, 86.

34 P. Oxy. 1187 (254 CE).

than answers. It still remains unclear why there are a few Greek and bilingual ostraka or why some persons appear more than once, especially the family of Harpasis. Why are such common titles as *w^b* “priest” given when they do not really help identifying a person?

In my opinion, the use of the name ostraka in an election can be excluded for three reasons. First, as was discussed in more detail above, not everybody was able to read and write. Second, since only a few persons stand in an election, one would expect the same persons much more often attested in the ostraka than is the case. Third and most importantly, an election would not have been secret. As was probably the case with the phylarch, one voted for a person by giving a sign in public. A confidential vote likely was an unknown procedure. If one had too many people as voters, as in Athens, only then it is more feasible to write down the name and count the votes afterwards.

Thus what is left to be discussed is the possibility of a lottery. This could rather be envisioned, if for example more than one person wanted to have the same office or if no one wanted to have it. Interestingly, to this day, the pope of the Coptic-Orthodox church is chosen by lot from the three finalist candidates in order to leave room for God’s will.³⁵ The fact that we have persons mentioned several times in the ostraka, especially this one probably quite prestigious family, where at least some were able to read and write, points to an office or maybe several more important offices that were assigned on a yearly basis and that more than one person sought to hold or more than one person was able to hold in terms of wealth and/or ability but did not want to. That the ostraka might have been stored for future reference or to keep them indicates a certain importance. One could think for instance of the presbyteroi. These “elders” likely became accountable of the financial duties of the temple as well as administrators of the temple estate, thereby replacing the Ptolemaic lesonis. This position may have become liturgical already at the beginning of the Roman period because it was staffed annually by then. Several priests were needed and only the richer ones came into consideration.³⁶ However, the name ostraka may have been used for something totally different. For now one has to conclude that the purpose of these name ostraka remains rather unclear.

35 IBRAHIM, IBRAHIM, in: *Kemet* 21, 49–52.

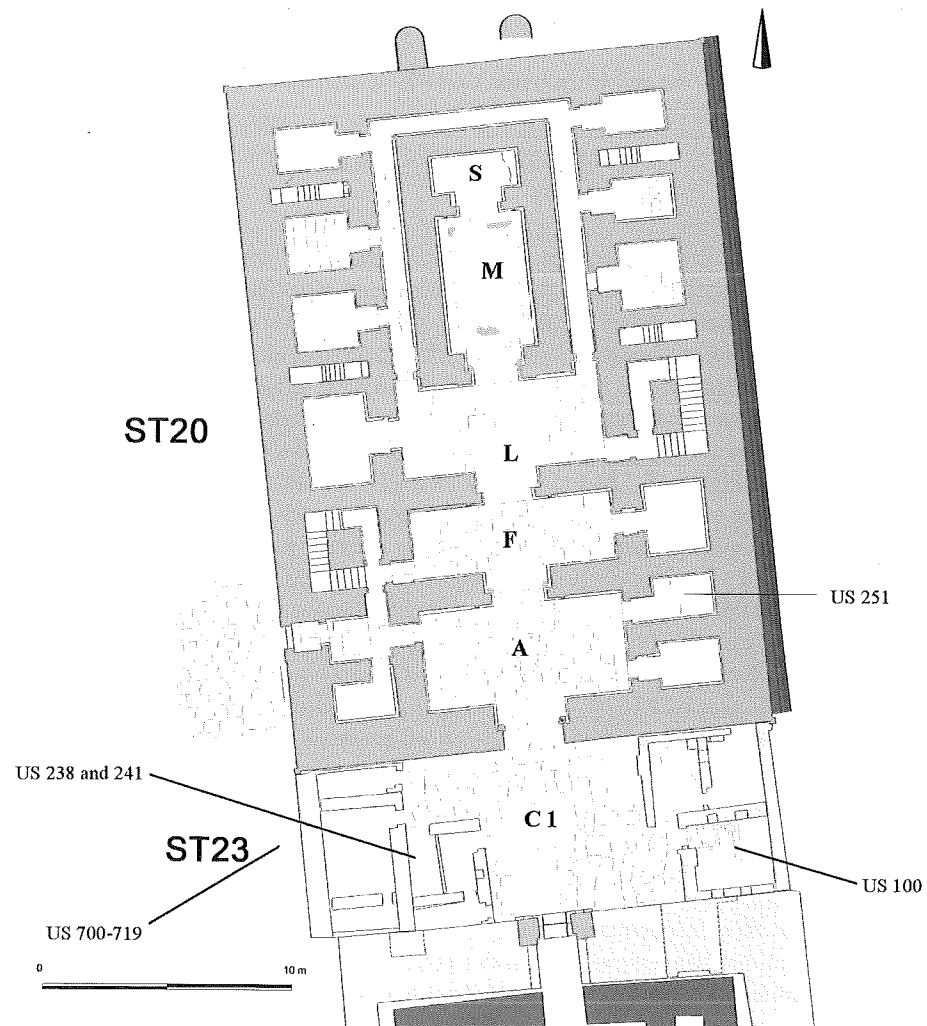
36 MONSON, *From the Ptolemies to the Romans*, 225–226.

Table 4: The family of Harpaesis³⁷

Name	Father's name	Attested in O.
Harpaesis	Tesenuphis I	718, 916, 1018, 2747, 1091, 3180, 3190, 3240, 3254, 3269, 3287, 3300, 3315, 3316, 3318, 3372a, 3331, 3398, 3486, 3527
Harpagathes the younger		2747
Onnophris	Tesenuphis II	718
Stochoetis the older	Stochoetis the younger I	1018, 3180, 3254, 3300, 3331, 3372a
Stochoetis the younger I	Harpaesis	916, 1018, 3180, 3190 ³⁸ , 3247, 3254, 3269, 3287, 3300, 3315, 3316, 3318, 3331, 3372a, 3398, 3423, 3486, 3527
Stochoetis the younger II	Stochoetis the younger I	916, 3247, 3269, 3423, 3486, 3527
Tesenuphis I	Harpagathes the younger	2747, 3240, 3300, 3318
Tesenuphis II	Harpaesis	718, 1091, 3240

37 The ostrakon is shown in italics when the text names this person first. This family or further members are present or may appear in the following ostraka as well: 3288, 3345, 3374, 3442, DDD I 87, 88 and 145. The numbers represent the find numbers from the excavation.

38 The identification is not secure.

Plate 1 (Courtesy Paola Davoli)³⁹

39 *US = unità stratigrafica. This plan shows only the places where ostraka with subsequent find numbers and starting with the same name were found.