

Place Date Language Material Number of texts Type Collections Find/Acquisition	<p><b>Decian libelli</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">ArchID 331. Version 2 (2013) Willy Clarysse</p>
	<p>Arsinoites (Fayum), meris of Themistos, Theadelphia AD 250 Greek Papyrus 37 certain; 1 uncertain <b>Official archive</b> Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum; Hamburg, Bibliothek; Manchester, John Rylands Library; Berlin, Neutestamentliches Seminar; Ann Arbor, Michigan University; Rome, Biblioteca del Vaticano Probably found in Theadelphia</p>
<p><b>Bibliography</b></p> <p><b>Description</b></p>	<p>J. FRANCE, <i>Theadelphia and Euhemeria</i>, unpubl. diss. Leuven, 1999, p. 152-153.</p> <p>Between July and October AD 249 Decius is proclaimed emperor and a few months later, towards the end of 249 or at the very beginning of 250 he issues his famous decree, ordering all inhabitants of the empire to bring an offering to the gods. The Decian persecution is known through the works of the contemporary bishop of Carthage Cyprian and through Eusebius, but also thanks to 46 <i>libelli</i> on papyrus. The small papyrus sheets were proof that a person had made the required offering. They contain variants upon the formula ‘I have made a food sacrifice and a libation and I have tasted from the sacrifice’. Hundreds of thousands of such notices all over the empire are forever lost.</p> <p>No less than 37 out of the 46 <i>libelli</i> come from Fayum village of Theadelphia and 20 of these were bought as a group by the Hamburg university (<i>SB</i> I 4435-4444, 4446-4454; <i>P. Hamb.</i> 1 16 a-b).<sup>1</sup> Five texts in the Manchester collection (<i>P. Ryl.</i> II 112 a-c; <i>SB</i> III 6827-6828), two in Michigan (<i>P. Mich.</i> III 157-158), one in the Vatican (<i>PSI</i> V 543), one in Berlin (<i>SB</i> I 5943; a duplicate of <i>SB</i> I 4440) and one in the private collection of Wessely (<i>SB</i> I 4445) are signed by the same persons in the same village and certainly belong to this group. Three items in Berlin (<i>P. Meyer</i> 15-17), though mentioning different villages (Euhemeria and Philagris), are signed by the same persons and were acquired on the antiquities market in the early twentieth century. They are also linked to the Hamburg papyri by their editor Meyer. Two <i>libelli</i> in Cairo and Leipzig (<i>SB</i> VI 9084; <i>P. Lips.</i> II 152) are linked by the person of Heron, and to the Hamburg pieces by the committee member Serenus; the Leipzig text is for a man from Euhemeria, the neighbouring village of Theadelphia, which also occurs in <i>P. Meyer</i> 15. <i>BGU</i> I 287 (= <i>Chrest. Wilck.</i> 124) is more doubtful: neither the village (Alexandrou Nesos) nor the committee members occur in any of the other texts.</p> <p>The <i>libelli</i> are originals, usually signed by the members of the committee. They were clearly written for the persons who had sacrificed in front of the committee. But the fact that they were found together shows that these papers were not given to the sacrificers and stayed in</p>

<sup>1</sup> The name of the village is not preserved in every text, but the texts are also linked by the names and signatures of the committee members and by the hands. One text, written for a woman from Theoxenis (*SB* I 4452) is written by the same hand as a text localised in Theadelphia.

the hands of the committee, which consisted of two members: Serenus and Hermas, the latter signing in the crude capitals of a semi-illiterate. These two are not only in charge of the Hamburg *libelli* but also of the others and one of them may have kept some *libelli*, e.g. those which the candidates did not come to collect.

Hermas may have been the person responsible, if he was identical with the village head or *komarches* of Theadelphia at this moment. The *komarches* Hermas is well attested in the Heroninos archive (ArchID 103), but the acquisition data of that archive do not coincide with those of the *libelli* group. It is not likely, therefore, that the *libelli* were part of the large archive of the estate manager Heroninos.

**Archive texts** *P. Hamb.* I 61 a-b; *P. Lips.* II 152; *P. Meyer* 15-17; *P. Mich.* III 157-158; *P. Ryl. Gr.* I 12; II 112 a-c; *PSI* V 453; *SB* I 4435-4454, 5943; III 6827-6828; VI 9084; *uncertain*: *BGU* I 287 (= *Chrest. Wilck.* 124).

**Text type** *Libelli* = outgoing documents.