

Martina Savio, 'Problems' at School: Mathematical Testimonies from the Fayum in the Roman Period.

Trends in Classics 15 (2023) pp. 393-415, fig.

The common association between the teaching of numbers and basic arithmetical operations, on the one hand, and the earliest levels of linguistic-literary education, on the other, is a datum on which interpreters of Greek papyrological sources are now essentially agreed. A more controversial and less often considered question is whether, in these same 'scholastic courses', this basic knowledge also encompassed geometrical and metrological calculations in the form of 'problems' (which are typical of the papyrological mathematical tradition). Only a few witnesses to the latter type of texts in Greek have characteristics that would most likely associate them with instructional contexts. The four oldest of these date between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD and are of proven or hypothetical Fayumic provenance. Although they are few in number, these witnesses attest to certain practices in the teaching of mathematics, at least in this historical-geographical context, which are worthy of note.

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