

FIVE PRIVATE LETTERS FROM ROMAN EGYPT

(PLATES 34 - 35)

The following papyri are part of the collection housed in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, and are published here with the kind permission of its officials. They are private letters dating from the first three centuries *A.D.* and illustrate various aspects of the language¹ and the life² of the Greeks and Greco-Egyptians who wrote them. Four of them were purchased at different times from a private dealer in Cairo; while P^Yale inv. 64 was presented to Yale University by the Egypt Exploration Fund (now Society). This is also the only one whose provenance is known — it was discovered in Oxyrhynchus. As for the other four, Oxyrhynchus or the Fayum basin are very likely, though not certain, places of discovery, as we may infer from the names of officials and villages mentioned in the other pieces of the same purchases.

1. LETTER TO APION

P^Yale inv. 1350 recto

6×11 cm.

I *A.D.*

Fragment of a letter addressed to Apion by a friend of his reiterat-

1. In addition to the general grammars of S.G. Kapsomenakis, E. Mayser, J.H. Moulton - W.F. Howard, and L.R. Palmer, next to which B.G. Mandilaras, *The Verb in the Greek Non-literary Papyri*, Athens 1973, may now take a deserving place of honour, see also: F.X.J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter. A Study in Greek Epistolography*, Washington 1923; H. Koskenniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr.*, Helsinki 1956; B. Olsson, *Papyrusbriefe aus der frühesten Römerzeit*, Uppsala 1925; A. Salenius, *Zur Sprache der griechischen Papyrusbriefe. I, Die Quellen*, Helsingfors 1927; and H. Zilliacus, *Zur Sprache griechischer Familienbriefe des III Jahrhunderts n. Chr.*, Helsinki 1943.

2. See in general: G. Daum, *Griechische Papyrusbriefe aus einem Jahrtausend antiker Kultur*, Paderborn 1959; A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, 4th edn., Tübingen 1923; (English tr. L.R.M. Strachan, *Light from the Ancient East*, London 1927); J. Lindsay, *Daily Life in Roman Egypt*, London 1963; H.G. Meecham, *Light from Ancient Letters*, London 1923; W. Schubart, *Ein Jahrtausend am Nil*, 2nd edn., Berlin 1923; W. Schubart - H. Koertenbeutel - R. Ibscher, *Die Papyri als Zeugen antiker Kultur*, Berlin 1949; and J.G. Winter, *Life and Letters in the Papyri*, Ann Arbor 1933.

ing instructions issued in a previous communication. The papyrus is of a very light tan colour, flexible, and of good quality. The writer has an experienced, fluent, but also very careful hand that would not have disgraced a Homer or any other literary text; and it is natural to assume that we are faced with the work of a professional scribe or of an educated person who had developed his calligraphy. The script is along the fibers.

On the back, and also along the fibers, an ἀναδοθεὶς] εἰς φυλακείαν . . . πόλεως¹ has written a declaration of which there remains fully preserved an oath to the genius of Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ Τίτος Αἴλιος Ἀδριανὸς Ἀντωνῖνος Σεβαστὸς (A.D. 138-161).

[.] Ἀπίωνι τῶι
 [φιλάτῳ] χαίρειν. καὶ ἐν τῇι
 [προτέραι ἐ]πιστολῇ ἔγραφόν
 [σοι] νωι ἀδελφῶ
 5 [. ἔτ]ι καὶ νῦν σοι
 [.] εἶθε εὐχό-
 [μενοι] πᾶσι καὶ σε
 [.] πίζω τοὺς

« . . . to Apion his dearest, greetings.

In my previous letter too I wrote you . . . my brother . . . and once more I now . . . wishing . . . to all . . . »

2-3. Cf. PHib. 44,1 (253 B.C.), ἐγράψομέν σοι πρότερον; POxy. 2190, 11-12 (I A.D.), <ὡς> καὶ πρότερόν σοι ἔγρα[ψα]; PAtten. 67, 12-13 (III-IV A.D.), ἔγραψά σοι καὶ ἐν τῇ ἄλλῃ ἐπιστολῇ. Note the employment of the imperfect at the end of line 3.

2. LETTER FROM SARAPION TO DIOGENES

PFale inv. 554 verso
 (see *Plate 3A*)

10.5 × 17.5 cm.

II A.D.

Sarapion writes to Diogenes to inform him that he (Sarapion) has become member of an association; that he has discussed the problem

1. Cf. PHarris 64, as reedited by J.R. Rea, *Chronique d'Égypte* 47, 1971, 149 ff. Φύλαξ πόλεως is missing in N. Lewis, *Inventory of Compulsory Services in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt*, New Haven - Toronto 1968, s.v. φυλακία, φύλαξ.

of Tetradyne with his fellow-members(?); and that he has received as an answer only a neutral «Do as you please». The case now rests with Diogenes, and Sarapion awaits for further instructions. The letter is written on the back of a sheet cut from a larger document with accounts. These are rather mutilated, and are to be dated to the first half of the second century *A.D.* The sheet was folded vertically five times.

Σαραπίων Διογένει τῷ ἀδελφ[ῶι]
 χαίρειν.
 Ἐκ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς συνόδου εἰμή,
 Διογένης, καὶ θεωνίων οὐκ ἔστιν
 5 ἐνθάδε οἷς <οὐκ> ἐλάλησα περὶ τῆς
 Τετραδύμις καὶ φασὶ ὁ βούλει σύ,
 πόησον. ὥστε εἰ ἐνδέχεται σε
 τῇ τρίτῃ ἀνελθεῖν μήπως καὶ
 ἕτεροι ἐξ αὐτῶν παρατύχωσι, εὖ ἂν
 10 ἔχοι· εἰ δὲ μή, δῆλωσον ὁ θέλεις.
 ἔρρωσο, ἀδελφε.
 Ἐπειφ λ

«Sarapion to Diogenes his brother, greetings.

I am now a member of the association, Diogenes, and there are no . . . here to whom I have not spoken about Tetradyne, and they say 'Do whatever you wish'. So, if there is a possibility that you may come up on the day after tomorrow, on the chance that more of them may be here too, it would be well; if not, let me know what you want me to do.

I wish you well, brother.

Epeiph 30»

3. οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς συνόδου are the members of a *σύνδοξ*. The phrase, so far unattested, is formed after the well known οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ γυμνασίου, τοῦ Μουσείου, τῆς κώμης, τῆς μητροπόλεως, τοῦ νομοῦ. Cf. also οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς βουλῆς = οἱ βουλευταὶ in Plutarch, *Caesar* 10. *Σύνδοξ* is any association of men with kindred pursuits or common interests or aims, e.g., a collegium of priests, a guild of craftsmen or merchants, a private club (for examples see Preisigke, *Wörterbuch* II, and Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Lexicon*, s.v.); and any of these would suit the present context.

3. εἰμή: read εἰμί.

4. Θεωνίων: this has defeated me thus far. Perhaps μ instead of ω but I do not see how this improves matters.

6. Τετραδύμις: read Τετραδύμης.

8. ἀνελθεῖν: ἀνά in compounds often denotes movement from village to metropolis, while κατὰ from metropolis to village; cf. PTebt. 412, 3-4 (II A.D.), καλῶς ποιήσις (sic) ἀνελθε εἰς τὴν μητρόπολιν τοῦ νέου ἔτους, ἐπὶ καὶ ἔγω ἀνέρχομαι εἰς τὴν πόλιν, and H.C. Youtie, *Harvard Theological Review* 41, 1948, 15 n. 36.

11. On the relative frequency of ἔρρωσο / ἔρρωσθε as opposed to ἔρρωσθαί σε εὔχομαι (cf. below, PΥale inv. 660, 14-15) see now B.G. Mandilaras, *The Verb in the Greek Non-literary Papyri*, Athens 1973, diagram on p. 305.

12. Epeiph 30 is 24 July.

3. LETTERS TO A SISTER AND A BROTHER

PΥale inv. 64

11×23 cm.

II A.D.

(=POxy. 645 descr.)

Oxyrhynchus

Two fragmentary letters written on the same sheet of papyrus¹, the first of which is addressed to the writer's sister and the second, a much longer one, to his brother with references to diverse farming operations, the writer's dealings with his tenants and farmhands, etc. The script is fast and forceful, not unlike that of BGU 417². The back is blank.

[..... τ]ῆι ἀδελφῆι χαίρειν.

[πρὸ πάντων εὔχ]ομαι σε ὑγι[α]ίνειν. ὅσα διὰ Ἑρακλᾶτος

[Ἐπαφρύτου ἐκομί]σθη οὕτως κεῖται ἐσφραγισμένα ἕως

[τῆς ἐπανόδου σου. κό]μισαι διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἐπαφρῦτος τουσκου

5 [..... κ]αὶ τὸ πάλλιον σ[ου]. ἄσπασαι τὸν ἀδελφὸν

[Ἄνθεστον καὶ τὰ ἀβ]άσκαντα παιδία [Σα]ραπιάδα κα[ὶ Κ]λέωνα.

[πολλὰ ἀσπάζονται σ]ε οἱ ἐν οἴκῳ πάντες.

[] ἔρρωσο.

space of ca. 1.5 cm.

1. For this practice cf. PSelect 121 (II A.D.), addressed to the writer's mother and brother.

2. Illustrated in W. Schubart, *Papyri Graecae Berolinenses*, Bonn 1911, plate 27.

ing for your return. Receive by the same Epaphrys . . . and your cloak. Salute my brother Anthestus and your children, Sarapias and Cleon, whom the evil eye may never touch. My entire household sends you many salutations. Keep well.

. . . to Anthestus his brother, greetings.

As you enjoined me in person, I visited with Epaphrys the lands and found the 14 ar. being watered by . . . and Epimachus with a swing beam, first with water from the royal dyke running through a conduit cutting across the dyke, and finally by means of a waterwheel. And as of the twentieth of . . . they had been watered, so I was unable to ask Lamachis for the fourteen drachmae he owes me and for whatever else he owes from the rent. He asked for . . . he says he owes only two . . . he did not come down. I will go to him again (to receive) the price of the acacia timber. And he says 'I told . . . to have it sold'. I found him capable of having with him the reins and the other trappings of the donkeys. The filly he bought is very much like ours, or rather a bit sturdier. . . . is in very good condition. Once more I asked him for the thirty artabae of wheat (until now we have not received them, as Diogenes has been ill from a rheum in the eyes and I agreed to wait for his recovery before collecting them). Lamachis also said that he . . . the rent of the . . . and the rent of the palm-trees . . . he said he did not owe any money for the price of . . . that he had as surety the . . . of this brothers, and that he will pay back on . . . of what account . . . that he has given . . . Diogenes . . . Epimachus . . .»

2. For the formulae (greetings, requests, complaints, salutations, etc.) encountered in the private letters of the Roman period see the exhaustive study of F.X.J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter. A Study in Greek Epistolography*, Washington 1923, and B. Olsson, *Papyrusbriefe aus der frühesten Römerzeit*, Uppsala 1925, pp. 9 ff.

4. τουσκου: Τούσκου seems unlikely, though possible. Perhaps τοῦσ κου | [χούμους, «jars», (cf. Stud. Pal. XX, 67, 16)?

11. κηλώνειον (= κήλων) is a swing beam for drawing water. See M. Schnebel, *Die Landwirtschaft im hellenistischen Ägypten*, Munich 1925, p. 172.

11. ποτιζόμενα and πεποτισμένα, line 15: cf. PPetrie II, 32 (2b), 3-4 (ca. 240 B.C.), εὔρομεν τὰς βοῦς Σοκνήμιός τινος βουκόλου . . . κατανέμοντα, and PSoc. 1080, 5-6 (III A.D.), ἔστιν δὲ ἡ οἰκία [πρ]ὸς τῷ Ἰσίῳ ἐχόμενα οἰκίας Κλαυδ[ι]ανοῦ. On the «striking solecisms which have arisen, for

the most part, from a decreasing awareness of the participle as an inflected form agreeing with its subject» see Mandilaras, paras. 876 ff.; see also S.G. Kapsomenakis, *Voruntersuchungen zu einer Grammatik der Papyri der nachchristlichen Zeit*, Munich 1938, pp. 40 f. n. 2.

12. ὕδατων in the original.

13. ὕδραγωγός is a conduit or an irrigation canal with or without machinery; see PTeht. 50 passim (112-111 *B. C.*).

13. δε: read διά.

23. For the price of wood in Roman Egypt see PGrenf. II, 98; POxy. 909; 934; 1112; 1188; BGU 731; SB 7365; PLond. III, 1177; POslo 45; PFlor. 262; CPHermop. 127 V; PTeht. 636. See also my forthcoming article «On Idios Logos and Fallen Trees» in *Archiv für Papyrusforschung*.

23. φασιν is clearly an error for φησιν in view of αὐτὸν and εἶπον.

24. ἵνα in the original.

24. ἄξιον . . . εὔρον ἔχειν: with this personal construction cf. PLond. inv. 2102, 25-26 (II *A.D.*), δυνατὸς εἶ αὐτῆ ἄρέσει (= ἀρέσαι), and POxy. 120,21 (IV *A.D.*), οὐκ ὕός (= οἶός) τέ ἐστιν προσαιδρεύειν.

25. ὑπ in the original.

29. Διογένειν: read Διογένην. The writer was apparently influenced by the infinitive he was about to write.

29. διὰ τὸ . . . ἡσθενηκένοι: on this use of διὰ with the articular infinitive in the accusative see E. Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit*, II:2, Berlin 1934, p. 330, and Mandilaras, para. 849.

29-30. Compare the lamentable condition of the writer of PSoc. 299,3-9 (III *A.D.*, possibly a Christian document), κατεσχέθην νόσω ἐπὶ πολὺ ὡς μὴ δύνασθαι μηδὲ σαλεύεσθαι: ὡς δ' ἐκουφίσθη μοι ἡ νόσος, ἐπύθετό μοι ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ τραχώματα ἔσχον καὶ δεινὰ πέπονθα ἔτι τε καὶ ἕτερα μ[έρ]η τοῦ σώματος ὡς καὶ ἐπὶ τομῆν ἤκειν μ[ε] ὀλίγου· ἀλλὰ Θεῶ χάρις.

32. For the renting of palm-trees and groves see N. Hohlwein, «Palmiers et palmeraies dans l'Égypte romaine», *Études de Papyrologie* 5, 1939, 1 ff.

4. LETTER TO HERAKLEIDES

PFale inv. 1240
(see *Plate 35*)

10×13 cm.

II *A.D.*

A very affectionate letter from a loving son to his absent father. After the usual opening formulae, the writer states that he, his sister,

and his brother miss their father and wish him back; while the writer's brother reminds him of a few articles (including some clothes) that their father had promised to send them. The bottom is missing, but not much text may be lost as we have already reached the customary salutations. The frequent use of the first person plural is indicative of the fact that the writer is composing the letter as if all three children are addressing their father; while the very choice of the words employed throughout the text points to the strong ties of affection binding this family together.

[.....] Ἡρακλείδῃ [τῷ πατρὶ]
 [] χαίρειν. []
 [πρὸ πάντων μὲν] εὐχόμεθά σε ὑγιαίνειν καὶ τὸ π[ροσκού-]
 [νημά σου ποιού]μεν καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν πα[ρὰ τοῖς]
 5 [ἐνθάδε θεοῖς εὐ]χόμενοί σοι τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ [ἄριστα]
 [ἐν βίῳ. θαυμάζομε]ν πῶς οὐδεμίαν ἡμεῖν, φ[ίλιτατε],
 [ἔπεμψας ἐ]πιστολὴν. καθὼς ἐνετείλ[αμεθά σοι]
 [κα]τ' ὅσιν περὶ τούτου καὶ νῦν δὲ παρακ[αλοῦμέν]
 [σε ἵνα ταχέως], καθὼς ἐτάξω, παραγενέσθαι ἡμῖν.]
 10 [.....]ν σοῦ παρεγενομένου [.....]
 [.....]ν. γείνωσκε δὲ ὅτι καθ' ἐκά[στην]
 [ἡμέραν ἐπιζή]τοῦμέν σε, καὶ Ζωῆς ἢ ἀδελφ[ῆ καὶ]
 [..... ὁ ἀδε]λφός, ὃς ἐνετείλατο αὐτῷ π[έμψαι σε]
 [....., κ]ύριέ μου πάτερ, ἧς σιδη[ρᾶ]
 15 [..... ἄλλὰ μὴ ἀμε]λήσης. παρακαλεῖ δέ σε, πάτερ,
 [ὁ ἀδελφός ἵνα πέμψῃ]ς αὐτῷ ἱμά[τια], ἧ πορφυρᾶ
 [ἧ καὶ περ]ὶ τούτου, π[άτερ, ἵκε]τεύομε[ν]
 [μὴ ἀμελήσης]. ἄσπασαι τὸν τιμ[ιώτατον ἀδ]ελφὸν
 [.....]ῆσιν, Θεωνὸν τ[ὴν τιμιώ]τάτην,
 20 [.....]ωνα τὸν πατέρα [.....]ν καὶ
 [.....]σι Ἀρχιδᾶς καὶ Ἡρο. [.....]νου
 [καὶ Ἀφρ]οδεισία καὶ [.] ἔ]νεκα
 [τοῦ] ὑπάρχοντ[ος] συπτο. [

«... to Herakleides his father, greetings.

Before all we pray for your health, and we make supplication for

you daily to the gods of this place wishing you the nicest and best things in life. We are surprised, dear father, that you have not sent us any letters. As we enjoined you in person about this matter, now too we beg you to be with us quickly, as you promised to. ... when you are with us ... Know that we miss you daily, and so does our sister Zoïs and our brother ..., who enjoined you, my lord and father, to send him a ..., the ... of which ought to be of iron. Please do not neglect it. My brother also begs you, father, to send him some clothes, either purple or ... And about this, father, we entreat you not to forget. Salute ... your most honoured brother, Theonis the most honoured, ... (her) father. ... Archidas and ... and Aphrodisia and ... salute you. ... because of ... existing ...».

3. ὑγιαίνειν in the original.

3-5. See now the exhaustive study of G. Geraci, «Ricerche sul Proskynema», in *Aegyptus* 51, 1971, 3-211.

6. ἡμεῖν: read ἡμῖν.

7-8. Expressions such as κατ' ὄψιν / κατὰ πρόσωπον ἐνετειλάμην and the like illustrate the use of the narrative aorist; see now Mandilaras, para. 332:1, with examples.

8-9. With this plea cf. PLond. 42 (= PSelect 97), 12-14 (168 B.C.), ἐπι δὲ τῷι μὴ παραγίνεσθαί σε, [π]ά[ντ]ων τῶν ἐκεῖ ἀνειλημμένων παραγεγο[νό]των, ἀηδίζομαι.

11. γείνωσκε: read γίνωσκε.

11-12. With this idea cf. PGiess. 17,7-13 (II A.D.), παρακαλῶ σε, κύριε, εἰάν σοι δόξη, καὶ πέμψαι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς, εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἀποθνήσκομεν ὅτι οὐ βλέπομέν σε καθ' ἡμέραν. ὄφελον εἰ ἐδυνάμεθα πέτασθαι καὶ ἐλθεῖν καὶ προσκυνῆσαί σε· ἀγωνιοῦμεν γὰρ μὲ (=μὴ) [βλ]έπουσαί σε, and POxy. 528,6-9 (II A.D.), γινώσκειν σε θέλω ἀφ' ὧς ἐκξῆλθες ἀπ' ἐμοῦ πένθος ἡγούμην νυκτὸς κλέων (= κλαίων) ἡμέρας δὲ πενθῶ(ν).

12. ζῶϊς in the original.

16. ἱμα[in the original.

5. LETTER FROM EUTERPE TO DIDYMAS

Pyale inv. 660

9×13 cm.

III A.D.

A letter from Euterpe to Didymas, whom she calls her brother, written in a small, fast hand. The content is not particularly significant, as it consists of formulae and of the small matters which occupy the minds of the majority of letter writers. The papyrus is of a very

dark brown colour and has been slightly carbonized. There are seven horizontal creases, the fifth and sixth of which (corresponding to lines 10 and 11) have developed into breaks. The address is written on the back, across the fibers, between creases 3 and 4, and after the sheet had been turned up side down.

Εὐτέρπη Διδυ μᾶι τῶ
 ἀδελφῶ χαίρειν. τὸ προσ-
 κύνημά σου ποιῶ παρὰ τοῖς ἐνθ[ά]-
 δε θεοῖς εὐχομένη σου τὰ κάλλισ-
 5 τα ἐμ βίῳ. ἀμεριμνότερόν
 σε θέλω εἶναι εἰδότα ὅτι, ἂν ἔλ-
 θης, γνώση πῶς διῆγέ σου τὸ ταμῆ-
 ον φιλοπόνως. ἄσπασαι πολλ[άκις]
 Διονύσιον καὶ τοὺς παρ' ὑμῶν
 10 [πάντας, καὶ]
 Ἄγαθὸν Δαίμονα. ἀσπάζεται
 σε Ἀφροδείτη. ἀγόρασόν μοι σα-
 κίον καλὸν τῆς τειμῆς.
 ἐρῶσθαί σε εὐ-
 15 χομαι πανοικεῖ.

Verso: Ἄποδος Διδυ×μᾶ τῶ ἀδελφῶ.

«Euterpe to Didymas her brother, greetings.

I make supplication for you before the gods of this place wishing you the nicest things in life. I want you to be quite free from care knowing that, upon your return, you will see how industriously your accounts (?) had been managed. Many salutations to Dionysius and to all those with you, ... and Agathos Daimon. Aphrodite salutes you. Buy me a nice sack at the current price.

I pray for the health of you
 and of all your household.»

Address on the back: «Deliver to my brother Didymas.»

1. Join Διδυμᾶι. The writer is striving after a grouping of letters pleasing to the eye, irrespective of the logical word division.

5. ἐμ = ἐν.

5-6. Cf. PLips. 105,20 (I *A.D.*), ἵνα ἀμεριμνότερον ἐχῆς; PSelect 121,9-10 (II *A.D.*), ἵνα καὶ γὰρ ἀμεριμνότερα διαγάγω; PRyl. 235,9-10 (II *A.D.*), ἵνα καὶ ἡμεῖς περὶ σοῦ ἀμερίμνωσ διαγάωμεν; and POxy. 1296,5-6 (III *A.D.*), ἀμερίμνη οὖν, πάτερ.

7-8. ταμῖ|ον (= ταμεῖον = ταμιεῖον) is a very uncertain reading. The third letter may be a τ; after the fourth, of which only specks remain, the edge of the papyrus, broken.

8. φιλοπόνως: although φιλοπονῶ is common enough, the adverb occurs here for the first time in a papyrus text; while the adjective has yet to be encountered.

12-13. Cf. SB 7572,5-6 (II *A.D.*), πέμψεν (sic) μοι τὰ λοδίκια τῆς τιμῆς, and PFlor. 142,5-6 (*A.D.* 264), συνωνήσασθαι τῆς ἀξίας τιμῆς. Here perhaps «current» rather than «right» price is meant.

Athens

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