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A Byzantine Private Letter in London and Aberystwyth

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§1 In P.Lond. 3, Papyrus 868 of the British Museum (now in the British Library) was described as follows:

§2 Letter on private affairs, to the brother of the writer, whose name is not given. 7th cent. Perfect; written across the fibres, in a very straggling cursive hand.¹

§3 The descriptum also gives the date of acquisition by the British Museum as 1900; the papyrus was later transferred to the British Library. On inspection there, the light brown sheet proves indeed complete, but not without some surface damage and abrasion. The writing is transversa charta on the front, with a kollesis visible running horizontally c. 8 cm from top and a protocol join c. 0.5 cm from the bottom. The letter was part of a lot of papyri eventually assigned the shelfmarks 835-878, described in the Catalogue of Additions as, “Miscellaneous documents, mostly official and legal,”² ranging in date from the first to seventh centuries CE, which were presented by the executors of the will of the antiquarian William Joseph Myers, in whose collection they had lain until his death the previous year.³ The papyrus may have been acquired during the years in which Myers was stationed on military service in Egypt (1882-1887), or on later visits there as a private citizen. Myers is known to have had advice and assistance from Emile Brugsch and to have purchased directly from villagers in addition to antiquities dealers. More could perhaps someday be gleaned from the 36 volumes of the diaries of Myers, still unpublished, kept in the library of Eton College.

§4 The name of the brother of the writer probably was in fact given, but it lies beyond recovery in the damaged state of the text. Some progress towards contextualization can nevertheless be made. First there is the conjunction of the reading of a toponym Migtolis (6) and the presence of meizones (6), which point to an Arsinoite provenance,⁴ despite the position of 868 among a group of shelfmarks (863, 865-869) that might otherwise point to the Hermopolite. Papyri in the Myers lot that have secure internal indication of provenance (see Table 1) come nearly exclusively from the Hermopolite and Arsinoite, including for the latter at least two from the seventh century (P.Lond. 3 871 of 603, P.Lond. 3 872 of ca. 619-629, both from Arsinoe; the shelfmarks might have been assigned on chronological (that is, palaeographic) grounds, not circumstances of acquisition in Egypt.

§5 Table 1: Papyri from the Myers lot (P.Lond. 835-878) with definite internal indications of provenance. (Unless otherwise noted, the publication of reference is P.Lond. 3.)

Arsinoite	Non-Arsinoite
	P.Lond. 835: Hermopolite (c. 102-117)
	P.Lond. 839 (P.Sarap. 11): Hermopolis (128)
	P.Lond. 840 (P.Sarap. 40): Hermopolis (129)
P.Lond. 841a: Arsinoite (Soknopaiou Nesos) (139)	

1 P.Lond. 3 p. xli. All dates in the following are CE. There is an earlier transcript by H. I. Bell, the author of the descriptum, now in Aberystwyth, Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru, Harold Idris Bell papers (unprocessed), box 3, black notebook with the title page “Notes on papyri (chiefly Book I(a)”, pp. [16]-[17]. I thank Todd Hickey for the reference to this document and Beryl Evans for assistance with the papers during my visit (4 May 2021).

2 Catalogue of Additions to the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years MDCCCC-MDCCCXV (London 1907) 440.

3 R.T. Stearn, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

4 These officials are not securely attested in the Hermopolite (Berkes 2017: 67), a provenance to which the same toponym Migtolis (see the commentary on 6 below) and the internal localization of some other papyri in the lot might otherwise point.

P.Lond. 841b: Arsinoite (Soknopaiou Nesos) (160)	
P.Lond. 842: Arsinoite (Apias) (140)	
P.Lond. 844: Arsinoite (Soknopaiou Nesos) (174)	
P.Lond. 845b: Arsinoite (Soknopaiou Nesos) ⁵ (139)	
P.Lond. 845c: Arsinoite (Nilopolis) (c. 181-189)	
P.Lond. 846 (W.Chr. 325): Arsinoite (Soknopaiou Nesos) (140)	
P.Lond. 847: Arsinoite (Soknopaiou Nesos) (170)	
P.Lond. 848: Arsinoite (213) ⁶	
P.Lond. 849 (SB 20 15076): Arsinoite (Euhemeria) (206 or 235?)	
P.Lond. 850: Arsinoite (Soknopaiou Nesos) (162)	
P.Lond. 851: Arsinoite (216-219)	
	P.Lond. 852 (P.Sarap. 95): Hermopolis (c. 90-133)
	P.Lond. 853a (P.Sarap. 98): Hermopolis (c 90-133)
P.Lond. 853b (SB 20 14200): Arsinoite (Arsinoe) (202-203)	
	P.Lond. 854 (P.Sarap. 101): Hermopolis (c. 90-133)
P.Lond. 855a: Arsinoite (Apias) (c. 216)	
	P.Lond. 855b (P.Sarap. 86): Hermopolis (c. 90-133)
P.Lond. 860a (P.Turner 31, 32): Arsinoite (Soknopaiou Nesos) (c. 201-211)	
	P.Lond. 863a (P.Sarap. 28): Hermopolis (125)
	P.Lond. 863b (P.Sarap. 22a): Hermopolis (102-103)
	P.Lond. 865a+876a, 865b: Hermopolite (mid-7th c.) ⁷
	P.Lond. 866a (SB 20 14445): Hermopolite (6th/7th c.)
	P.Lond. 866b (P.Sijp. 24c): Hermopolite (7th c.)
	P.Lond. 867 (SB 16 12864): Hermopolis (506)
	P.Lond. 869 (SB 18 13620): Hermopolis (473)
	P.Lond. 870: Panopolis (4th c.)
P.Lond. 871: Arsinoite (Arsinoe) (603)	
P.Lond. 872: Arsinoite (Arsinoe) (ca. 619-629) ⁸	
	P.Lond. 874: ⁹ Hermopolis (554)
	P.Lond. 876b: Hermopolite (mid-7th c.)

⁵ The residence of the taxpayer; the receipt is issued by a tax-collector from Memphis.

⁶ Along with P.Lond. 851 and 855a, now assigned to the archive of the shepherd Akouis: J. Schwartz in the commentary to P.Alex.Giss. 5 (p. 14); Reiter 2004.

⁷ Information from Nick Gonis, who will publish the texts (along with P.Lond. 876b, listed below) as part of the Senuthius archive in a future volume of CPR.

⁸ A transcription in Bell's notebook (as cited in n. 1, here p. 8) establishes the residences of both parties to this lease as ἡ Ἀρσινοῖτων πόλις and gives a dating formula that places it in the Sasanian period; the text will be published by S. Kovarik in BASP 60 (2023).

⁹ See now Benaissa 2021: 188-191 no. 8.

P.Lond. 877 (SB 22 15495): Hermopolite (Sinarchebis) (6th c.)

- §6 The writer of the present letter addresses himself to a man whom he calls “brother.”¹⁰ Neither of their names can be gleaned from the damaged address on the back, but some family and associates are mentioned by name in the body. The chief matters of business, as far as can be gained from the letter’s clumsy Greek, are three: acknowledgment of a shipment of fish received with a previous letter; a call to further action, or at least to further correspondence, in relation to conflict with some local officials; congratulations on a safe return. The last shades into the customary closing greetings, probably in the context of an extended family, as a “household” (ὄσπίτιον) is mentioned (9); the sender greets a woman, Thalet, and asks that the addressee greet another, Maria, and “her little child.” If the brotherhood of the correspondents was of the flesh, one could speculate that Maria and Thalet might have been the wives of addressee and sender respectively, with Thalet perhaps remaining near the brothers’ family home during the sender’s travel in connection with the shipment of goods.
- §7 The headmen (meizones) of Migtolis are presented (5-7) as causing considerable “bother” (πολλὰ σιαίνουσοι (for σιαίνουσι)). The background is unknown, but it is tempting to think of a context, established by the contemporary Senouthios archive, of complaints about perceived abuses and irregularities in requisitions for the newly installed Muslim administration, in particular for the capital at Babylon-Fustāt.¹¹ Some such adversarial relationship with the heads of Migtolis might also explain why the addressee is said to have returned to, and was hence presumably absent or even displaced from, his χωρίον (8-9), which could in the Islamic period mean “village”¹² more specifically than “land” as it is rendered here.
- §8 The syntax of the new London papyrus is irregular but not without parallels of its time (e.g. P.Oxy. 16 1831: “very illiterate” according to the editorial introduction; P.Oxy. 16 1866: “very ungrammatical”). In fact the adverb μάτην (5), if correctly read, adds a rather literary effect, as might the locution ἐχάρη ἢ ψυχὴ μου (9: see the commentary to both places). Bilingual interference from Coptic in particular might explain the most characteristic feature, the so far unparalleled density of the conjunction ἐπειδὴ (see also the commentary to line 3), which could have rendered a string of verbs in the circumstantial conjugation somewhat more naturally in the sender’s mother tongue. Something similar has been proposed for an otherwise unusual epistolary formula in Greek, introducing the sender’s name in the nominative with ἐγὼ followed by the verb γράφω.¹³
- §9 The main hand can be assigned to the middle of the seventh century: some general parallels in considerably more skilled hands are P.Oxy. 1 153 (618); CPR 30 3, 4, and 5 (c. 643/644), 21-22 (second half of 7th c.) The address on the back is in a chancellery style, probably by the same writer.
- §10 The width of the sheet would accord with roughly half of the height of an original bookroll of 36 cm in height. Trema is used once (5), as is punctuation by colon (3, possibly also 2). The copyist has made several corrections; two of them involve the incomplete washing out of text before overwriting, which might otherwise suggest the presence of an earlier, unrelated text, if the remaining traces did not align closely with the lines of the finalized text. In three more cases the last word of a line is entirely (1) or partly (9, 11) above the line, probably an expedient for reasons of space rather than as corrections: the end of ἐδεξάμην, the second-last word in 1, is already especially compressed. Nearly double the usual space has been left above the last line on the front, probably simply to avoid a rough area on the surface.

¹⁰ On contemporary letters see in general Fournet 2009.

¹¹ F. Morelli, CPR 30 p. 10.

¹² Berkes 2017: 7.

¹³ Gonis 2005.

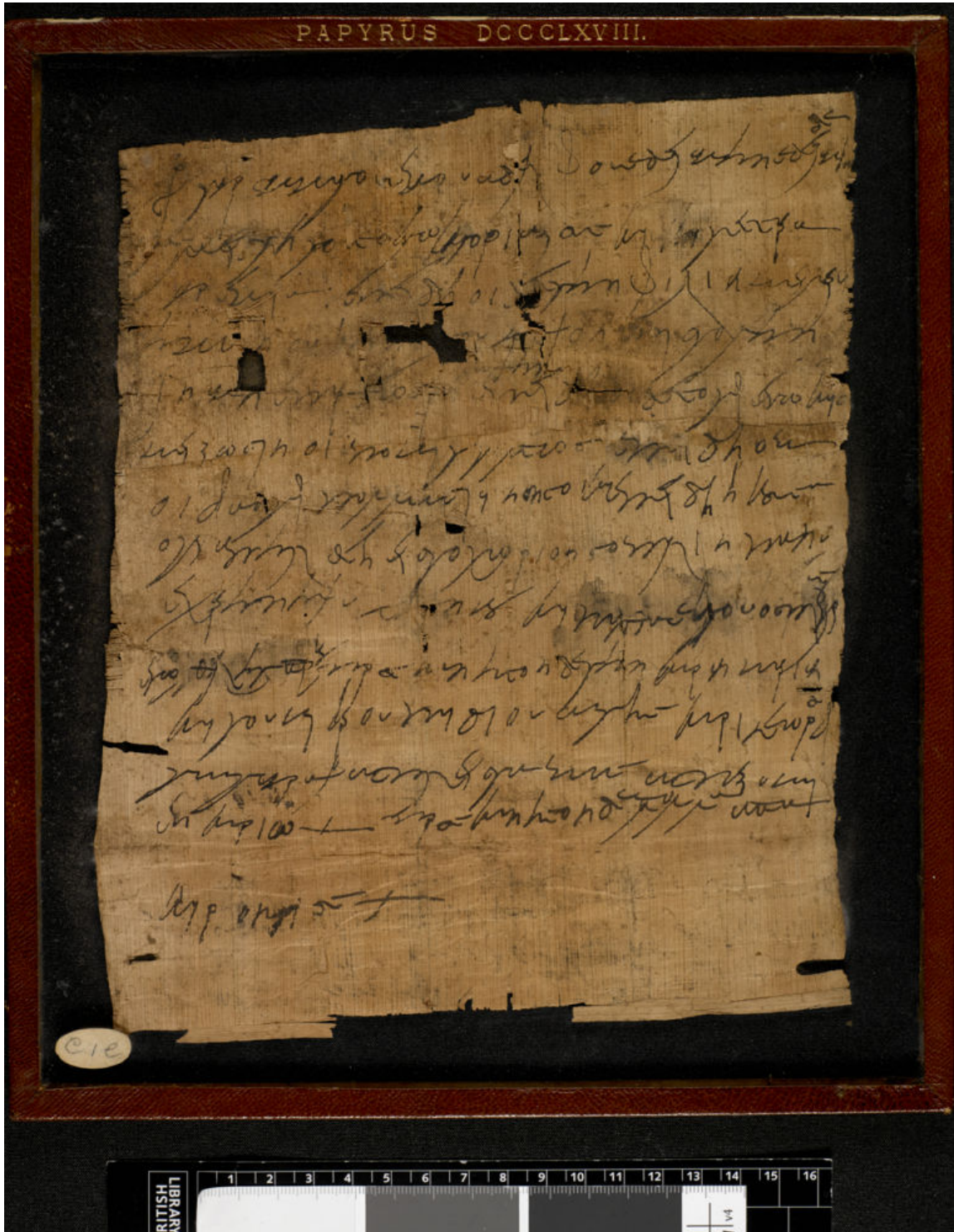


Fig. 1: P.Lond. inv. 868 recto © British Library Board



Fig. 2: P.Lond. inv. 868 verso © British Library Board

P.Lond. inv. 868

23.4 (h) x 18.8 (w)

mid-7th c. CE
Arsinoite?

Γ

† τὰ γράμμα τοῦ ἐμοῦ ἀδελφοῦ ἔδεξάμην· ἔδεξάμην ἰδὲ/
τὰ εἴτη· τοὺς ὀκτὼ κτοριάξους καὶ [[καὶ]] τέσσαρα
ἀγρέμια· ἐπειδὴ οἶδες τὴν φιλίαν μεταξὺ

- ἡμῶν, ουκα. [] ου· γράψον ἐπιστολήν
- 5 ἵνα μὴ ἐπαρθῶσιν \μᾶτην/· ἐπειδὴ οἶδες ὅτι ἐγὼ καὶ σύ,
 μείζωσιν οἱ ἀπὸ Μιγτολεως, ἐπειδὴ οὖν
 οἶδα ὅτι πολλὰ σιαίνονσοι· καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἤκουσα
 ὅτι ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ χωρίον σου πάλιν, πάνυ
 ἐχάρην ἢ ψυχὴν μου καὶ [[και... [...].. κ.. ξας]] πάντα ἐκ τοῦ ὄσπιτίου·
- 10 ἐγὼ [τ. λ..] Θαλητ προσκ(υνῶ)· προσκύνησον δὲ τὴν κύραν Μαρίαν
 καὶ τοῦ μικροῦ παιδίου αὐτῆς, κύρι Γεωργίου
 ταῦτα γράψας πλεῖστα ὑμᾶς ἀσπάζομαι
 ἐν κυρίῳ. † προσκύνησον δὲ πολλὰ ἅπα
 Καιρ[[]όντιος. †

v

- 15 † τῷ ἐμῷ ἀδελφῷ [sealing] σὺν θ(εῷ) -ca.10- †

1 *I. τὸ γράμμα (στὰ γράμματα)* 2 *I. εἶδη corr. ex... η I. κοριάζους* 3 *I. οἶδας* 5 *ἵνα papyrus I. οἶδας* 6 *I. μείζονες* 7 *I. σιαίνουσι* 8 *I. ἀπῆλθες* 9 *I. ἐχάρη I. ψυχὴ I. πάντες (οἰπάντων)* 11 *I. τὸ I. μικρὸν I. παιδίον I. κύριος I. Γεώργιος* 13 *corr. ex κυρίῳ* 14 *I. Γερόντιον*

I have received the letter of my brother, and I have received the articles, the eight koriaxos-fish and four (fresh) catches (of fish?). Since you know the friendship between us, you did not (?) ...: write a letter, so that they may not be roused in vain (?), since you know that, as for you and me, regarding the headmen (meizonas) from Migtolis—since I know that they are causing considerable bother. Since I heard that you (?) have gone back to your land again, my soul rejoiced greatly, and (so did those of) all from the house. I embrace Thalet. Embrace lady Maria and her little child. Lord Georgios, who has written this, gives you very many greetings in the Lord. Embrace warmly Apa Gerontios.

To my brother, with God, ...

- §11 1 τὰ γράμμα. The plural of this noun is far more common in self-referential use in letters, and the article is certainly written τὰ, so the writer probably intended τὰ γράμματα (such a mistake, probably by haplography, is found in **P.Kell. 1 24.16**, [μὴ εἰδότη]ον γράμμα), although a phonetic spelling τὰ for τὸ γράμμα cannot be entirely excluded (cf. **Gignac, Gram.:** 287-288 for the spelling, and for the singular number e.g. **P.Berl.Zill. 14.1-2**, ἐδεξάμ[ην] νῦν τὸ τίμιον γράμμα τῆς ὑμετέρας πατρικῆς καὶ ὁσίας δεσποτίας καὶ τῆς ἐ[ντί]μας καὶ γ[ν]ησίας [ἀ]δελφικῆς θεοφιλίας).
- §12 2 εἴτη (I. εἴδη). For the spelling cf. **Gignac, Gram.:** 82; for the term to denote wares in the course of shipment see e.g. **CPR 30 7.5**.
- §13 κτοριάζους (I. κοριάζους). The insertion of /t/ may be a purely graphic error under the influence of the preceding ὀκτώ, but κγο- is also a possible reading, in which one might consider the adventitious /g/ the result of a phonetic development better known through the omission of expected /g/ (**Gignac, Gram.:** 74). The word appears three times in the medical author Alexander of Tralles (1:501, 2:263 and 289 Puschmann; whence LSJ “a kind of fish”), for an as-yet unidentified species apparently native to the Nile, as it is found a few times in Byzantine texts as the object of shipment: **P.Naqulun 1 10.3** (with **Gonis 2008:** 228 no. 592), **P.Naqulun 2 27.8**, **P.Prag. 2 197**, **SPP 20 224.1**. The fish may also appear, under the by-form κόραζος, in an iatromagical prescription to cure disorders of the spleen: **P.Utrecht**

Copt. Ms. B3.8 (ed. [van den Broek 2017](#)), 7 (see the commentary ad loc. for two further attestations in documentary papyri).

- §14 3 ἀγρέμια. LSJ give a single instance of ἀγρέμιον from the Greek Anthology and book the term as a synonym of ἄγρα, which can in turn be applied to fish (s.v. II), here perhaps by metonymy, “(freshly-)caught (fish),” which would fit with the other item in the shipment (see the previous note). There is one other papyrological witness: the Byzantine account of provisions [SB 1 5301](#) (twice, and once more with the spelling ἀκρε-), for which see now DGE s.v., but there the rest of the items in the list are fowl, not fish.
- §15 ἐπειδή. The conjunction is used three more times in quick succession. A search of papyri.info reveals nothing closely comparable to this construction, which may constitute an idiolectal feature of the sender, possibly influenced by interference from Coptic (see further the introduction; for ἐπειδή in turn as common loanword in Coptic, [Förster, WB 275-276](#); it became part of a common formulaic transition between the preamble and the body of Coptic letters: [Biedenkopf-Ziehner 1983](#): 33-34, 215-216, but one that should only appear once per letter). The closest parallel is [SB 5 7655](#), five times but more generously spaced over at least 34 lines; cf. also [CPR 25 8](#) (twice in eight lines); [CPR 30 9](#) (three times in 15); [P.Eirene 2 24](#) verso, where ἐπειδή itself is copied as writing practice.
- §16 4 ουκα. [.]ου. A negated verb form seems most likely, expressing the action taken by the addressee in consequence of knowing the ‘friendship’ between the correspondents; οὐ κατέ[σ]χου might be considered (“you did not hold back” or “delay” from some unexpressed, praiseworthy action: cf. [P.Brem. 16.13-14](#), μὴ κατέχου), or οὐκ ἀπ[έ]σχου (cf. the imperative ἀπόσχου in a request for a cessation of ὄχλησις in [P.Poethke 36.4](#)), in both cases assuming an enlarged χ; the traces of the latter could also suit λ, which has not yet led to a plausible supplement.
- §17 5 ἐπαρθῶσιν ἄτην. The reading of the verb follows a suggestion of Lajos Berkes; the τ that Bell saw in place of θ (επαρτωσιν in his notebook as cited in n. 1) may be the original writing before a correction by the copyist (for the underlying phonetic conflation in that case cf. [Gignac, Gram.:](#) 91). The reading of the supralinear insertion is hindered by some fading of the ink, but a continuation of the purpose clause seems certain in light of the following ἐπειδή, and the only other viable possibility, the pronoun αὐτήν, is a poorer fit for the sense. No parallels for the expression ἐπαίρομαι μάτην have yet been found in the papyri, but there is something relevant in John Chrysostom, In epistulam ad Romanos, ed. PG 60:469: Christians cannot have their hopes proven false, ὡς εἰκῆ καὶ μάτην καὶ ἐπὶ σαθραῖς ἐπαρθέντας ἐλπίσιν; and in the words of Adam to Hades in Romanus the Melode 44.3.3, μὴ μάτην ἐπαίρου. The adverb lends a literary ring to a documentary context: compare the simile οἱ[ο]ν ἐπὶ γῆν ὕδωρ ἐκχύσει τις τολμηρώτατος μάτην in the petition [P.Cair.Masp. 1 67002.15-16](#). If the subject is taken proleptically to be the meizones (see the following note), the meaning may be more specifically that these hostile parties should not be allowed to be “falsely elated” by a sense of victory: that is, the latter should be forestalled by the addressee’s prompt action, cf. in general the wish of the petitioner in [P.Hamb. 3 230.23-25](#) to clear himself of false accusations, ὅπως δυνηθῶ (...) ἀνεύθυνον ἐμαυτὸν ἀποδειξάι πάντων τῶν μάτην κατ’ ἐμοῦ κατηγορημένων παρὰ τῶν συκοφαντεῖν με ἐθελόντων; and the reference in the letter [SB 5 7655.23-24](#) to an adversary’s “letter suiting his vain way of seeing and thinking” (ἐπιστολὴν πρέπουσα τῇ ὄψει αὐτοῦ καὶ τῇ φρονήσει τῇ ματαία).
- §18 ἐγὼ καὶ σύ. The pendant nominative seems inevitable: taking σύ[v] with the following noun (“I am among greater ones,” perhaps i.e. “outmatched,” but leaving an even more perilously pendant nominative in οἱ ἀπὸ κτλ. in 6), or the latter two together as a verbal συμείζωσιν or συμείζωσιν (but orphaning ἐγώ), gives nothing sensible. The sender will have perhaps originally intended to implicate himself in the trouble with the meizones (see the following note), but as the construction unfolded, he stressed the “bother” caused to his correspondent instead. A general parallel for the prolepsis is

the authentication-token given in **P.Euphr. 17.23-25**, ἐγὼ κ[α]ὶ σὺ καὶ Σαδαλλαθος, σημίον ἔχης [ὄ]τι ἐφάγαμεν λοκανικὰ ς.

- §19 **6** μείζωσιν οἱ ἀπό. The most sensible, if still not optimal division (cf. the previous note) requires this phrase to be taken with the following toponym (see the following note) as an unsyntactical whole (for μείζονες οἱ ἀπό); punctuation before οἱ, otherwise appealing in view of the common locution οἱ ἀπό for residents of a particular place, would create two nonsensical clauses, and a clausal division is signalled by the following ἐπειδή. At least the expression of multiple meizones in connection to a village is known: οἱ μείζονες Φερετνουεως in **P.Oxy. 16 1937.7**; for the meizon in general, chief official of a village with broad responsibilities for taxation and other matters, see **Berkes 2017**: esp. 75 and 82 for multiples in office in the same place.
- §20 Μιγτολεως. Read by Nick Gonis (Μιττο- by assimilation is also possible, and Bell’s transcript [see n. 1] gives . . . ττ . λεως,); probably the same as the Arsinoite Μικτολις (gen. κόμ(ης) Μικτολεως, **PSI 1 63.14**), ultimately derived from a Semitic word for “tower” (Aramaic magdal; cf. Hebrew migdal), as probably also Μεγτωλις (gen. Μεγτωλεως), a Hermopolite κόμη in **P.Athen.Xyla 4.5** (541 CE), corrected to Μεγγωλις (gen. Μεγγωλεως) by J. Gascou (BL 10.251), but Μιγγ- is less attractive here. The toponym was compared to Μαγδωλα by Mandilaras in **P.Athen.Xyla**, but Gascou preferred Μιγωλις.
- §21 **7** σιαίνουσοι (l. σιαίνουσι). The unusual spelling could be regarded as a result of interchange of ου with ο (**Gignac, Gram.:** 212) followed by insertion of medial nasal (**Gignac, Gram.:** 118), cf. ὑπαρχόνσα in **P.Ryl. 2 160c** col. 1.4; for /i/ represented by οι, **Gignac, Gram.:** 272. Also possible is a suggestion of Lajos Berkes: divide σιαίνον σοι, for which understand σιαίνων (σιαίνοντες) σε “are bothering you,” removing some of the phonological oddity but adding unusual syntax. The verb is used for vexation probably in connection to a burden imposed by the caliph (ὁ ἀμιρᾶς τῶν πιστῶν) in the letter **P.Apoll. 37.12**, διότι οὐκ ἐσιάνθη ποτὲ οὔτε ἐθλίβην εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος; for more general annoyance in **P.Oxy. 16 1837.2**, ἵνα μὴ ὁ ἀναγινόςκον σιανθῆ καὶ μὴ ἀναγνώσι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν; **P.Oxy. 16 1849.2**, ἐπειδὴ τὸ λάχανον ὄδε σαπρὸν ἐστὶ καὶ σιαίνομε; and for ill health in **CPR 5 25.5-6**, τὴν δὲ ὑγίειαν Θεοδοσίου γράψη μοι, ἐπειδὴ ἤκουσα ὡς σιαίνεται καὶ πάνυ ἐμερίμνησα.
- §22 καί. Read by Lajos Berkes.
- §23 **8** ἀπῆλθεν. In the absence of any other named person preceding (τοῦ ἐμοῦ ἀδελφοῦ in 1 should be the addressee, in view of the address in 15), and as σου is applied to the destination of this travel, the correction to ἀπῆλθεσ seems inevitable; one could think of ἀπῆλθαν (for ἀπῆλθον), but the return of the only conceivable subject of a third-person plural, the meizones once again, to the addressee’s χωρίον would be no cause for rejoicing (see the following note). There may be a conceptual error, such as conflation of the second person with the polite use of a third person (e.g. ἡ σὴ ἀδελφότης), or an interchange of quiescent final letters (**Gignac, Gram.:** 131-132; cf. the following note).
- §24 **8-9** πάνυ ἐχάρην ἢ ψυχὴν μου (l. ἐχάρη, ψυχί?). The false addition of two final nus (cf. the previous note) seems likelier than that ἐχάρη τὴν ψυχὴν or τῆ ψυχῆι was intended. The phrase, so far not yet precisely paralleled in papyrus letters (but the opposite emotional response is referenced in μὴ λυπίσθω δὲ ἢ [ψυ]χί σου, **P.Abinn. 19.10-11**), has a biblical ring. Although not actually found in the Greek versions of scripture, it seems to approximate the same in Just. Dial. 58.7, εἶδον γὰρ θεὸν πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον, καὶ ἐχάρη ἢ ψυχὴ μου. Cf. also χαρᾶ ἐχάρ[η]ν in the Byzantine letter **P.Lond. 2233** (ed. **Zellmann-Rohrer 2017**: 166-170 no. 5), 2 (with further parallels in the note at p. 168).
- §25 **9** The second half of the line has been washed or rubbed out and overwritten, with some traces still visible especially above and below the line; nothing connected can be made out from the original

writing, but there was perhaps an aorist participle in -ξας, the ξ written on the line, the ας above it in the same space-constrained style that motivated the writing of ὀσπίτιου.

- §26 πάντα ἐκ τοῦ ὀσπίτιου. The nexus is presumably a later development from formulae such as ἀσπάζομαι πάντες τὰ [ἐ]ν τῇ οἰκίᾳ in **P.Abinn. 6.23-24**, with a similar confusion of gender (perhaps under the influence of expressions with ὄνομα or πρόσωπον). In the familial context of this letter, the loanword ὀσπίτιον probably has the general sense of “house” (rather than specifically “poor-house”) as already in Greek of Late Antiquity (**Lampe 976b s.v. 3**; cf. 1249b s.v. σπίτι) and common in later Greek (LBG s.vv. ὀσπίτι(ν), σπίτι(ο)ν).
- §27 10 [τ λ...]. The following word has been written directly over the erasure, of which some traces especially below the line are still visible; did the writer simply misspell the personal name (see the following note), e.g. as Ταλητ, and prefer to start afresh?
- §28 Θαλητ. Bell’s reading (see n. 1) θε\α/λητ suggests a correction, which now seems to have been on a larger scale than the second letter (see the previous note); a small α at the top of λ is clear, but for the high and low traces between θ and the body of λ at midline ε is just one possibility. The name is not precisely paralleled but probably female and related to Coptic ΘΑΛΗΤ (T-ጸΑΛΗΤ) “the bird,” cf. ጸΑΛΗΤ in O.Vind.Copt. 335 and SB Kopt. 2 1046 (on other Coptic names from birds, see **Heuser 1929: 73-74**). In Greek script cf. the genitive Θαλητ(ος) in the metronym in **O.Ont.Mus. 2 197.4**, and Ταλης, genitive Ταλητος, in **P.Cair.Isid. 77.29** and 2 respectively.
- §29 προσκ(υνῶ) (προσκ/ παρ.). The abbreviation is so far unattested for this form of the verb, but προσκ/ is found for προσκ(υνῆσαι) in **CPR 25 35.12** and for προσκ(ύνει) and προσκ(υνεῖν) in **P.Oxy. 16 1837.15-16**. The subject of προσκ(υνῶ) is taken to be the sender of the letter rather than the adjacent personal name in the absence of another expressed object for the verb, but it could be allowed that the latter is an unexpressed σε (“I, Thalet, embrace (you)”).
- §30 11-14 As the reference to κύρι Γεωργίου cannot be matched to anything in the address on the back, it is taken here as the name of the amanuensis (for κύριος Γεώργιος). A vocative would otherwise be possible; formulaic greetings with ταῦτα γράφας ἀσπάζομαι are found elsewhere (e.g. **P.Oxy. 1 158.4-5**; **16 1855.16-17**; **1860.14-15**; **59 4006.7**; **P.Ross.Georg. 3 21.2-3**; **SB 5 7655.33-34**), but not so far preceded by personal names in either nominative or vocative; the closest parallel so far found tends to favor the interpretation advanced here: the closing greetings in the letter **P.Herm. 13.13-16**, in which the copyist Nilammon adds his salutations to those of the sender Parnoutheios, ἀσπάζο[μαί] σοι ἐγὼ Νιλάμμων ὁ γρ[άψας] τὴν ἐπιστολὴν καὶ [πάντ]ας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς κατ’ ὄνομα. More generally, the intrusion of a named amanuensis is occasionally found elsewhere in contemporary epistolography. In the letter **PSI 14 1429** (6th c.?), a similar greeting is probably to be recognized: punctuate after υἱός in 7 and read continuously into the following line, ὁ κύριος Μαρριανὸς ταῦτα γράφω, πλεῖστα ὑμᾶς ἀσπάζομαι ἐν κυρίῳ; cf. also **CPR 25 35.12**, ἐξ ἐμοῦ δὲ παρακαλῶ προσκ(υνῆσαι); **P.Lond. 2233** (ed. **Zellmann-Rohrer 2017: 166-170 no. 5**), 7, ἐγὼ δὲ Βίκτωρ ὁ ὑμέτερος οἰκείος πολλὰ τὰ σεβάσμια ἴχνη τοῦ ἐμοῦ δεσπ(ότου) προσκυνῶ (for further parallels see p. 166 there). The apparently self-referential honorific κύριος might be due to dictation by the sender.
- §31 12-13 πλεῖστα ὑμᾶς ἀσπάζομαι ἐν κυρίῳ. This form of the greeting, under the influence of the Pauline ἀσπάζομαι ἐν κυρίῳ πολλά (1 Cor. 16:19), is relatively rare: cf. **CPR 30 21.11**, **PSI 14 1429.8**, which shows other similarities of formula with the present text (see the previous note), and **SB 24 15898.2**.
- §32 14 Καίρ[.] ὄντιος (l. Γερόντιον). The spelling with /g/ for /k/ is paralleled in the Hermopolite toponym ἐπόικιον Κερωντίου in **SB 26 16737.3**, cf. in general **Gignac, Gram.: 77**.

- §33 15 ϥϥϥ ϥ(εϥ). The ink is faded, with further losses perhaps connected to the removal of the sealing, but the conjunction of the final two uprights with a round letter above the line is assured by microscopy, and this common Christian formula is the most credible solution.
- §34 The end is very obscure and still partially obscured by dirt; one expects the name of the addressee in the dative, perhaps followed by a title or the name of the sender in the nominative, but the latter would have had to have been quite short.

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