

TWO GREEK LETTERS FROM THE PETRIE AND HARRIS COLLECTIONS¹

I. Letter about the Delivery of Certain Items

UC 71092

10.2 × 9.0 cm (H x W)

Second Century A.D.
Oxyrhynchus (?)

This papyrus is housed in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology and is mounted with a number of other fragments (both Greek and Demotic) between two sheets of glass². The papyrus consists of two fragments and contains twelve lines of text. Though the papyrus has a large lacuna that runs vertically down the center of the letter and is broken off at the bottom where the valediction begins, the lost text can be completely reconstructed so that the entire letter can be read.

The letter is written with dark brown ink in a remarkably clear and regular hand that has semi-literary qualities. The hand may be described as an upright block script with well-formed letters and no ligatures. The address at the start of the letter and the valediction at the end of the letter are set off from the body of the letter. The overall presentation of the letter suggests that the writer was skilled and probably points to the use of a scribe. Furthermore, the valediction at the end of the letter is written in a different hand, suggesting the use of a scribe for the body of the letter. Paleographically the letter likely dates to the second century; a similar kind of semi-literary script may be found in

¹ I would like to thank Alice Stevenson, Curator of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, as well as Susan Worrall, Director of Special Collections and University Archivist, Cadbury Research Library, for permission to edit, image, and publish editions of the two papyri presented here.

² In total there are just over 40 fragments, most of them quite small, that are mounted between these two sheets of glass.

P. Oxy. XLII 3057 that is dated to the end of the first or beginning of the second century A.D.³

The letter is sent by a woman named Sarapias to an individual named Cornelius who is identified as a “brother”. In the letter she informs Cornelius that the bearer of the letter will be delivering certain items: a small white tunic, some small offcuts of wood, and a copy of a division of property that has been enclosed within the letter. The letter then concludes with a rather long valediction that can be entirely reconstructed based on parallels. While the exact form of the rather elaborate valediction is not attested elsewhere, given that a number of valedictory parallels appear in letters otherwise known to have come from Oxyrhynchus it may be possible that this letter also originated in Oxyrhynchus, but this is by no means certain.

There is no address or writing on the backside of the papyrus.

→

Σαραπιὰς [Κ]ορνηλίῳ τῷ
ἀδελφῶ[ι] χαίρειν.

vac.

κομίσαι π[αρὰ τ]οῦ ἀναδιδού-
τος σοι τῆ[ν ἐ]πιστολὴν τὸ

5 κολόβιν λ[ευκ]ὸν καὶ τὸ ἀπο-
τόμιν κ[αὶ τὸ ἀ]ντίγραφον
τῆς δι[αιρέ]σεως συν-
ηλιγμέ[ν]η.

vac.

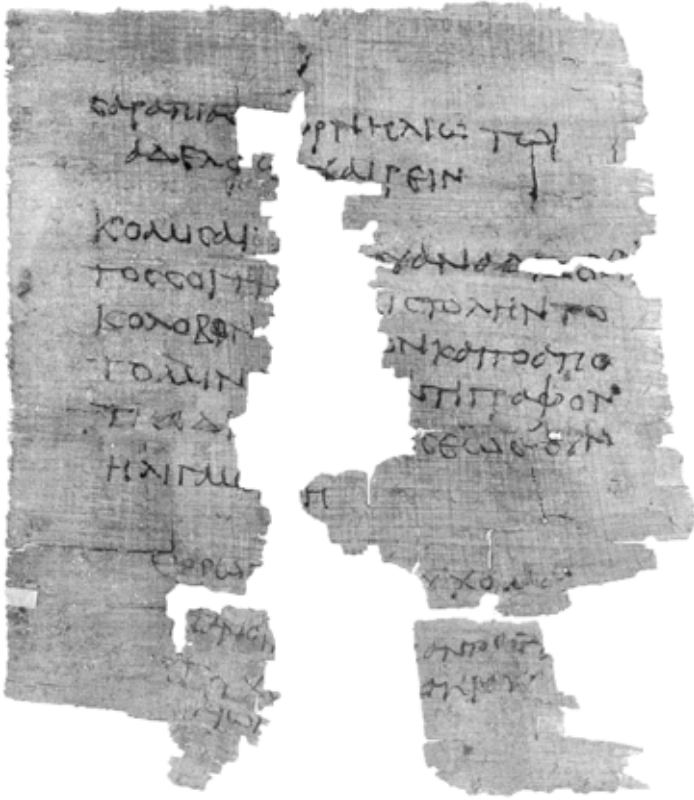
(m2) ἔρρωσ[θαί σε ε]ὔχομαι
10 πανοικ[εῖ] διὰ]παντὸς εὐ-
τυχο[σύντα εἰς μ]ακροῦς
αἰῶν[ας.]

5. κολοβιν corr. ex. κολοβον, *l.* κολόβιον.

5-6. *l.* ἀποτόμιον.

7-8. *l.* συνηλιγμένης.

³ *P. Oxy.* XLII p. 144 where the hand of the letter [i.e. *P. Oxy.* 3057] is described as follows: «This sort of script should belong to the late first or earlier second century».



Sarapias to her brother Cornelius, greetings. Receive through the one carrying up this letter to you the short-sleeved white tunic and the small offcut [of wood] and the copy of the division of property that is enclosed. I pray that you farewell and that your whole household continually prospers for a long time.

1-2. [Κ]ορηλίω τῷ | ἀδελφῷ[ι]. While ἀδελφός could be taken literally to mean that Cornelius was the biological brother of Sarapias, it could simply be taken as a term of endearment for a close friend or associate. Similarly, in the Roman period (as well as in the Ptolemaic period) it was not unusual for spouses, even non-consanguineous marriage partners, to address each other as “brother” (ἀδελφός) or “sister” (ἀδελφή). See E. DICKEY, *Literal and Extended Use of Kinship Terms in Documentary Papyri*, «Mnemosyne» 57 (2004) pp. 154-161; H. ZILLIACUS, *Zur Sprache griechischer Familienbriefe des III. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (P. Michigan 214-221), (Societas Scientiarum Fennica. Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 13), Helsinki 1943, p. 31.

3-4. κομίσαι π[αρά τ]οῦ ἀναδιδόν[το]ς. In BGU III 801, 12-13 (A.D. II) the very same phrase is used. If ἀναδίδωμι is taken literally it might imply that the sender of the letter was

situated somewhere to the north of the addressee and that the letter carrier was literally “carrying up” (i.e. ascending) the letter and the items mentioned.

5. κολόβιν λ[ευκ]όν. A κολόβιον was a sleeveless or short-sleeved tunic. In the papyri it is periodically rendered κολόβιν, as it is here: *O. Bodl.* II 1947, 4 (A.D. II/III); *P. Oxy.* VII 1051, 4 (A.D. III); *P. Oxy.* XLIV 3201, 10 (A.D. III); *P. Rein.* II 118, 9 (A.D. III); *P. Wash. Univ.* I 58, 9 (A.D. V). On the loss of the *omicron* see GIGNAC, *Gram.* II pp. 25-28 who discusses the loss of *omicron* in diminutive endings -ιον. See also *P. Oxy.* I 109, 3 (A.D. III) and *CPR* V 26, 873, 876 (second half A.D. V) for κολόβιον λευκόν.

5-6. τὸ ἀποτόμιν. The word ἀποτόμιν is otherwise unattested, therefore, the reading ἀποτόμιον (from ἀπότομον) is probably intended. The meaning of ἀπότομον is somewhat nebulous. In the papyri it appears a couple of times. *SB* XXIV 16652, 201 (= *P. Lond.* III 1177; c. A.D. 131-132): καὶ ἐτέρου ἀποτόμου εἰς ἀ[ψείδ]ας κα[ί] κνή[μ]ιας μηχανῶ(ν) [(δραχμαῖ) -ca.?-]. In W. HABERMANN, *Zur Wasserversorgung einer Metropole im kaiserzeitlichen Ägypten: Neuedition von P. Lond. III 1177 Text – Übersetzung – Kommentar*, München 2000, p. 21 he translates ἀπότομον with “Zugeschnittenes”. The context of the passage suggests that ἀπότομον was used in the construction of the “rim” (ἀψίς) and the “spokes” (κνήμη) of a water wheel. When ἀπότομον appears in *BGU* VII 1546, 6 (III B.C.) it is in the context of different kinds of lumber used for building: δοκός (“heavy timber”); κύβος δοκοῦ (“block of wood”); στρωτήρ (“cross beam”). In light of these references it seems that perhaps ἀπότομον was some kind of “offcut” of timber.

6-7. [τὸ ἀ]ντίγραφον | τῆς δι[αιρέ]σεως. For parallels see *BGU* IV 1013, 1 (c. A.D. 41-68) and *P. Oxy.* XIV 1648, 43 (late A.D. II).

7-8. συν[ηλιγμέ]ν[η]. From συνελίσσω: “roll up with”. It is often used, as in the present case, to inform the addressee that another document or some other item has been “rolled up with” or “enclosed” with the letter: *P. Brem.* 51, 3-4 (c. A.D. 113-120): συνήλιξα ἐ[ν] τῇ ἐπιστολῇ χειρόγραφα; *P. Haun.* II 17, 11-14 (A.D. II): καὶ ὁμοίως συνήλιξα τῆδε τῇ ἐπιστολῇ δειγμάτα φαρμάκων ὡς εἰς σορόν; *P. Strasb.* IV 187, 5-6 (c. A.D. 113-120): συνήλιξα ταύτῃ τῇ ἐπιστολῇ γράμματα; *P. Oxy.* I 113, 4-5 (A.D. II): συνήλιξα ἐκεῖνη τῇ ἐπιστολῇ δεῖγμα λευκόνιν.

9-12. ἐρρῶ[σθαί σε εὐ]χόμεαι | πανοικ[εῖ διὰ] παντὸς εὐ[τυχο]ῦντα εἰς μακροὺς | αἰῶν[ας]. The first part of the valediction can be reconstructed based on a parallel in *P. Berl. Zill.* 11, 23-24 (A.D. III): ἐρρῶσθ(αί σε) εὐχόμεαι πανοικῖ διὰ παντὸς εὐτυχοῦντα. See also *P. Oxy.* XLII 3084, 6-7 (A.D. II/III): ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχόμε(αι) κύριέ μου πανοικ(εῖ) εὐτυχοῦντ(α); *P. Flor.* II 273, 23-25 (A.D. 260): ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχόμεαι, κύριε, σ(ε) εὐτυχοῦντα πανοικεῖς; *P. Princ.* II 68, 15-16 (A.D. II): ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχόμε(αι), φίλτατε, πανοικεῖ εὐτυχοῦντα. The phrase εἰς μακροὺς αἰῶνας occasionally appears in valedictions: *P. Oxy.* XLI 2982, 27-28 (A.D. II/III): ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχόμεαι εἰς μακροὺς αἰῶνας; *P. Oxy.* LIX 3992, 18-20 (A.D. II): ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχόμεαι εἰς μακροὺς χρόνους καὶ ὕλοι σου τῷ οἴκω[ι]; *P. Warr.* 13, 19-20 (A.D. II): ἔρρωσό μοι κύριέ μου πάτερ εἰς μακροὺς αἰῶνας εὐτυχῶν; *P. Würzb.* 21 Fr. B 17-21 (A.D. II; Oxyrhynchus): ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὐχόμεαι ὑγιαίνειν καὶ εὐτυχεῖν ἐπι[] . . . αἰζονα εἰς μακροὺς αἰῶνας.

II. Letter of Request and Greeting

P. Birmingham inv. 274

10.5 × 17.7 cm (H x W)

Fifth/Sixth Century A.D.

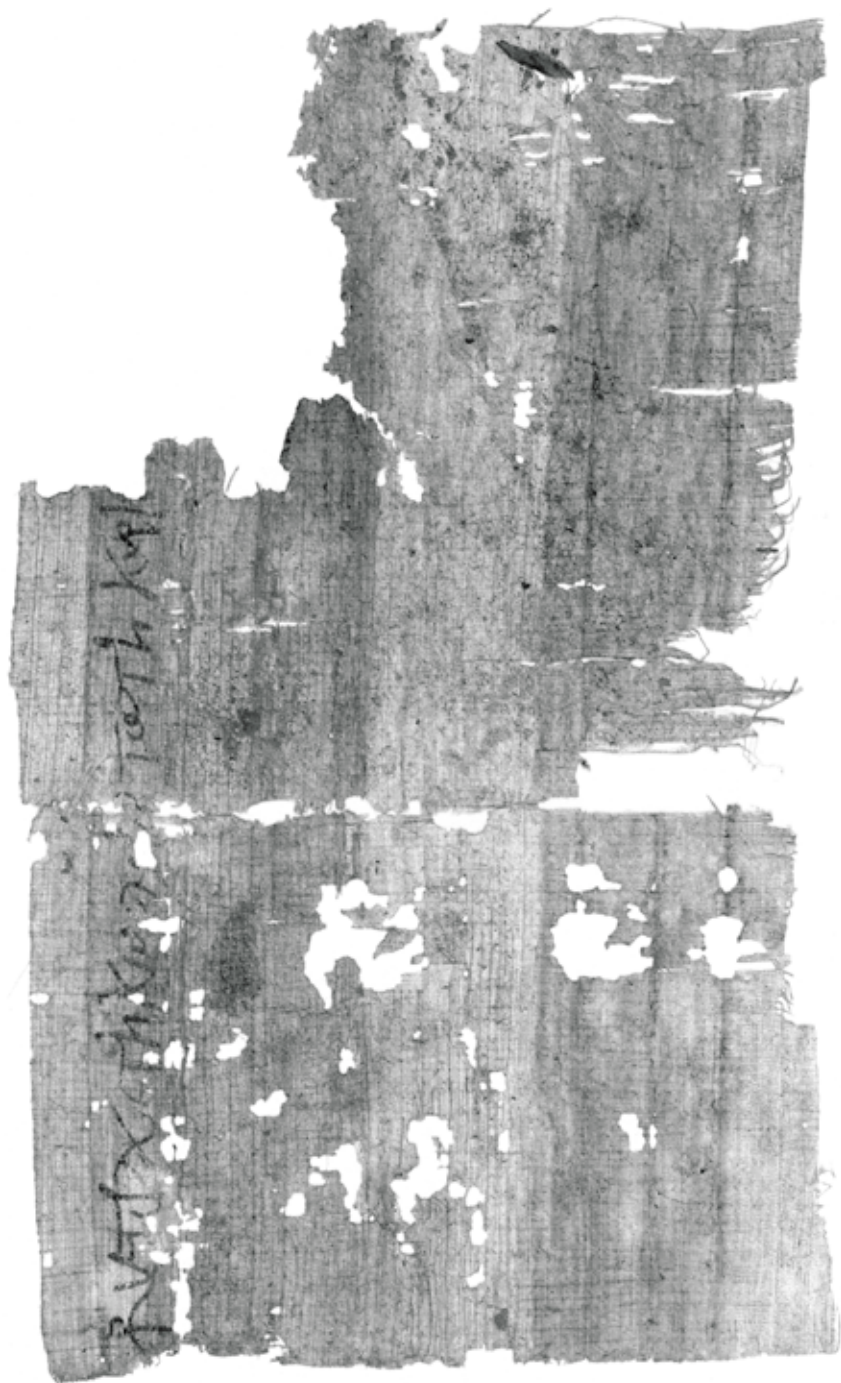
Provenance ?

This letter is housed in the J. Rendel Harris collection at the University of Birmingham and is preserved in its entirety aside from a lacuna that occupies the top left corner of the front side of the papyrus. The lacuna spans the first three lines and results in the loss of anywhere between 12 to 14 letters at the beginning of each line; however, these lines can nonetheless be reconstructed with some degree of confidence based on parallels and in l. 3 some of the bottoms of some of the letters can be partially read.

The letter spans seven lines of text and is written with a fairly rapid hand that is nonetheless clear. The text is at times written with ligatures and orthographically the writer periodically employs phonetic spellings and interchanges certain letters: $\omicron > \omega$; $\upsilon > \iota$; $\delta > \tau$. Grammatically the writer occasionally confuses cases endings, which results in some uncertainty at times about the intended meaning of the text. The hand of the letter suggests a date of the fifth or possibly early sixth century A.D.; hands sharing similar graphic trends may be found in the following documents: *P. Oxy.* XVI 1881 (A.D. 427); *P. Wisc.* II 64 (Jan. 1, A.D. 480); *P. Oxy.* LXIII 4396 (Feb. 18, A.D. 542). Furthermore, the epistolary formula that is used at the start of the letter (l. 1, $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\varphi\omega \pi\rho\omicron\sigma\kappa\upsilon\nu\hat{\omega}\nu$) otherwise only occurs in letters of the later fifth or sixth century (see n. 1 below). Additionally, the use of the staurogram (Ϡ) at the end of the letter and again at the beginning of the address on the back suggests that the letter is unlikely to be any earlier than the end of the fourth century when this monogram first begins to appear in letters⁴.

The letter is sent from an unnamed male to an unnamed female who is addressed as his “lady sister”. After a brief request at the start of the letter, wherein the sender asks that someone be sent, the writer then greets four individuals by way of his daughter. The letter concludes with the sender informing the addressee that he has made a ladle for his son-in-law. On the back of the letter there are the partial remains of an address written against the fibers.

⁴ L.H. BLUMELL, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus*, Leiden-Boston 2012, pp. 44-46.



- [Ϝ διά μου ἐπιστολῆ]ς γράφω προσκυνῶν τὴν
 [κυρίαν μου ἀδελφῆ]ν κωσμιωτήτι ἀπόστιλόν μοι
 Ἄπρον [τὸν υἱὸ]ν Νικύτου. πολλὰ προσκυνῶ
 διὰ τῆς θυγατρὸς μου Μαρίας καὶ τοῦ γλυκυτά
 5 Ἀμάσιν καὶ Σερήνον καὶ Θεοδώρον καὶ Ἄμα Λένην.
 ἐποίησα δὲ τὴν τροῦλαν καλῆ[ν] πάνι πρὸς
 τὸν ἄντρα τῆς ἐμῆς θ[υγ]ατρὸς. Ϝ

Backside

- ↓ Ϝ ἐπίδ(ος) σ(ὺν) θ(εῶ) τῆ κωσμιωτῶτη κυρία [μου ἀδελφῆ.]

1. *l.* προσκυνῶν. 2. *l.* κωσμιωτῆτη ἀπόστειλον. 4. *l.* τὸν γλυκυτάτον. 6. *l.* τροῦλλαν; πάνυ. 7. *l.* ἄνδρα. 8. *l.* κωσμιωτῆτη.

Through my letter I write to salute my most esteemed lady sister. Send to me Apros the son of Nikys. Through my daughter Maria I also heartily salute the sweetest Amasis, Serenos, Theodoros, and Ama Lene. Also, I made an exceedingly beautiful ladle for my son-in-law. (Back) Deliver, with God's help, to my most esteemed lady sister.

1. [Ϝ διά μου ἐπιστολῆ]ς γράφω προσκυνῶν. The reconstruction of the lacuna is based on the following epistolary parallels: *P. Laur.* II 48, 1 (A.D. VII) and *P. Cair. Masp.* I 67076, 1 (A.D. VI): διὰ τῆς παρούσης μου ἐπιστολῆς γράφω προσκυνῶ(ν) . . . ; *SB VI* 9397, 1 (A.D. VI-VII; Arsinoite): διὰ τῆ[ς] παρούσης μου ἐπιστολῆς γράφω προσκυνούσα; *P. Got.* 29, 1 (second half A.D. VII): διὰ τῆς ἐλαχίστου μου ἐπιστολῆς γράφω προσκυνῶν . . . ; *SB VI* 9138, 1 (end A.D. VI): καὶ διὰ τῶν παρόντων γραμμάτων γράφ[ω] προσκυνῶν. Given the size of the lacuna there are about 13 or 14 letters that are lost, so the reconstruction [διά μου ἐπιστολῆ]ς fits rather well.

For προσκυνῶ taking the meaning of “salute” or “greet” see LSJ and LAMPE *s.v.*

1-2. προσκυνῶν τὴν | [κυρίαν μου ἀδελφῆ]ν κωσμιωτήτι. In the lacuna on l. 2 κυρίαν is expected given that it also appears in the address on the backside (l. 8) and seems to be anticipated by the τὴν at the end of l. 1. The proposed reconstruction fits the lacuna remarkably well, as it would require about 13 or 14 letters, and is an attested greeting: *P. Oslo.* III 161, 7 (A.D. III/IV): ἀ[σ]πάξου μοι τὴν κυρίαν μου ἀδελφῆν; *P. Oxy.* LXVII 4627, 11-12 (late A.D. III): ἀσπάξομαι τὴν κυρίαν μου ἀδελφῆν; see also *P. Oxy. Hels.* 46, 14 (A.D. I/II); *CPR VII* 57, 1 (A.D. III/IV); *P. Batav.* 21, 12-13 (A.D. V); *P. Oxy.* X 1300, 3-4 (A.D. V).

On the use of the epithet κωσμιώτατος in Christian epistolary address see L. DINEEN, *Titles of Address in Christian Greek Epistolography to A.D. 527*, Chicago 1980, pp. 77-78. Dineen notes that in patristic literature this title is only used for women; as one turns to the papyri the use of this title is almost exclusively reserved for women: *BGU XII* 2173, 1-2 (A.D. 498); *P. Cair. Masp.* I 67006V, 7 (c. A.D. 567); *P. Fouad* 88, 12 (A.D. VI); *PSI VII* 839, 1 (A.D. VI).

προσκυνῶν and κωσμιωτήτι: on the interchange ω > ο see GIGNAC, *Gram.* II, pp. 275-278.

2-3. ἀπόστειλον μοι | Ἄπρουγ [τὸν υἱὸ]γ Νικύτου. The reading Ἄπρουγ (from Ἄπρος) is somewhat uncertain but does fit the traces rather well. When ἀπόστειλον appears in the papyri in the imperative it is typically followed by μοι, as is the case here, as well as a direct object in the accusative case. When the direct object is not a person it is typically prefaced by a definite article; at the beginning of the line a definite article, whether masculine or feminine, singular or plural, cannot be read given that the second letter is securely a *pi*. Furthermore, the fact that a name in the genitive appears to immediately follow the lacuna suggests that a name in the accusative likely precedes the lacuna and that the phrase here involves two names and that the latter is a patronymic.

3-4. πολλὰ προσκυνῶ | διὰ τῆς θυγατρὸς μου Μαρίας καὶ τοῦ γλυκυτά. The phrase πολλὰ προσκυνῶ often takes an accusative object: *P. Harr.* I 154, 1 (A.D. V/VI); *P. Harr.* I 162 Fr. 2, 4 (A.D. VI); *P. Oxy.* XVI 1865, 14 (A.D. VI/VII); *P. Ross. Georg.* III 18, 1-2 (A.D. VI/VII). Therefore, the τοῦ γλυκυτά that appears before a string of four names on l. 5, all in the accusative case, seems best to be taken as τὸν γλυκύτατον and refers to the first person being saluted. While the καὶ might appear a little oddly placed and redundant, it could be that the sender was employing it here because he had already saluted the addressees in l. 1 using προσκυνῶ and was signaling that he was “also” saluting some additional people.

6. τροῦλλαν καλή[ν]. A τροῦλλα is a ladle or a cup that could be used as a liquid measure; cf. Lat. *trulla*. In the papyri this vessel is most often referenced in a list of various items and the present reference to a “beautiful cup” is not otherwise attested: *P. Alex. Giss.* 46, 14 (c. A.D. 113-20); τροῦλλαν λι(τρῶν) γ; *BGU XIII* 2360, 7 (A.D. III-IV); τροῦλλια μικρά; see also *O. Krok.* I 17, 7 (c. A.D. 108-09); *P. Sijp.* 54, 5 (A.D. II); *P. Wisc.* I 30, 2.7 (A.D. III); *SB XVIII* 13966, 3 (A.D. V-VI); *P. Berl. Sarisch.* 21, 25 (A.D. V/VI); *CPR VIII* 66, 6 (A.D. VI).

πάνι. On the interchange $\upsilon > \iota$ see GIGNAC, *Gram.* II pp. 267-69. With an adjective πάνυ means “exceedingly” or “very”. See LSJ *s.v.*

8. ἐπίδ(ος) σ(ὺν) θ(εῶ). The *sigma* of σύν is somewhat obscured by a ligature and the theta of θεῶ is faint, nonetheless they can be read and appear to be part of the address. The address ἐπίδος σὺν θεῶ is attested: *P. Stras.* I 35, 23 (A.D. IV/V); *P. Harr.* I 154, 7 (A.D. V/VI); *P. Cair. Masp.* III 67293, 5 (A.D. VI); *P. Strasb.* VII 680, 12 (A.D. VII). Given the length of the papyrus it seems unlikely that the address contained the addressee’s name.

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ABSTRACT

This article presents editions of two previously unpublished Greek letters. One dates to the Roman period and is housed in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology at University College London and the other is housed in the J. Rendel Harris Collection at the University of Birmingham and dates to the Byzantine period.

