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GREEK LETTERS ON PAPYRUS FIRST TO EIGHTH CENTURIES: A SURVEY

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Abstract

This paper provides a survey of the Greek letters, which were written on papyrus in the first eight centuries of the Christian era. It discusses the use of papyrus sheets as compared with that of potsherds and other writing materials. It shows how scrap papyrus was occasionally used in preference to new sheets. Furthermore it examines the differing formats of sheets and the relationship between the writing surface and the text to be copied on it. It also shows how handwriting may vary in relation to the official and private character of the message to be conveyed by the letter. The opening and closing formulae as well as the contents of the documentary letters from Roman and Byzantine Egypt are surveyed. Postscripts and addresses are touched on; and an attempt is made at sketching the differing practices whereby the papyrus sheets were closed and sealed. This paper also provides basic information on the conservation habits that were in use in the official and private sphere. Finally, attention is drawn to select aspects of bilingualism and register.

Greek letter-writing constitutes a complex subject, encompassing as it does a variety of phenomena of both literary and documentary character which span many centuries from classical Greece down to the late Byzantine period (from the 5th century BC to, say, the 15th century AD), and are attested in contact with epistolary texts in nearby languages, including Latin as well as Egyptian and Arabic.[1] The notion of letter itself is a very broad one since the letter form was used in Graeco-Roman antiquity not only as a concrete medium of communication to be materially carried from a sender to a recipient, but also as a format in which works of philosophy and literature, whether in verse or prose, were cast.[2]

1 For surveys of Greek and Latin letter-writing, see SYKUTRIS, 1931; *OCD*^{3} 846–847 (Greek), 847–848 (Latin); TRAPP, 2003: 1–47; SCARPAT, 1972. Several topics are discussed by CUGUSI, 1989; REED, 1997; THRAEDE, 1970; see also GARZYA, 1983: 115–148, who focuses on late antique letter-writing. On Byzantine epistolography see HUNGER, 1978: 199–239, and also KARLSSON, 1959 for a survey of select themes. Major works on Latin letter-writing include CUGUSI, 1989; 1983; 1972; 1970; and PETER, 1901. Epistolary theory in antiquity and its relationship with rhetoric: MALHERBE, 1988; TRAPP, 2003: 42–46; LUISELLI, 1997; CELENTANO, 1994; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 54–63.

2 *OCD*^{3} 846; TRAPP, 2003: 1–5; SYKUTRIS, 1931: 186–216. See further HUNGER, 1978: 203–207.

For the purpose of this paper, though, it will be useful to distinguish between three types of letters. The first category comprises letters composed for sending by individuals or groups of individuals who are known to have been living in antiquity. These letters are preserved on perishable materials, and were unearthed from the collapsed buildings of ancient towns and villages, or from the rubbish mounds near them, or indeed from the ruins of military camps, monasteries, and so forth. For the sake of clarity I shall call them "documentary". The second category comprises letters composed for sending by equally historical individuals, and subsequently built into edited collections for a broad readership. Unlike the letters belonging to the previous category, these have come down to us in parchment and paper codices which are seldom earlier than the eleventh century. For example, the letter-collection of Libanius (AD 314–c. 393/4), the orator and teacher who held the chair of rhetoric at Antioch and elsewhere, seems to derive from an edition compiled after his death, chiefly with the purpose of making his letters available as models of style. Letters of this type are often referred to as "literary". The third category comprises letters from and to fictional characters. These too are preserved in manuscript traditions, but unlike the letters belonging to the previous category they are works of literature unrelated to actuality. Some of them circulated in collected editions. Others were composed to be embedded into non-epistolary narratives. All of them are the sophisticated products of highly-educated writers who were steeped in the literary language and the learned traditions of an earlier (reputedly golden) age. These letters are usually called "fictitious".[3] This paper focuses on the Greek documentary letters which were penned on papyrus and other perishable materials in the first eight centuries of the Christian era. The geographical area with which I am concerned embraces all of Egypt. Nonetheless I shall on occasion draw on texts found in other provinces, as well as on literary and fictitious letters, to emphasize analogies and differences.[4]

3 On fictional epistolary literature see ROSENMEYER, 2001. For useful anthologies of texts, see ROSENMEYER, 2006; COSTA, 2002.

4 Comprehensive discussions of papyrus letters from Egypt include PARSONS, 2007: 122–136; 1980. See further BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 12–93; NALDINI, 1998 (1968): 7–59; WHITE, 1986: 189–220; BUZÓN, 1984 (focusing on letters of the Ptolemaic period); TIBILETTI, 1979: 27–129; WHITE, 1972; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956; STEEN, 1938; EXLER, 1923; ZIEMANN, 1910. Major editions of Greek documentary letters from Egypt among collected publications (all equipped with introductions, translations, and notes): SIRIVIANOU in SIRIVIANOU ET AL., 1989: 100–171; IOANNIDOU in HANDLEY/IOANNIDOU/PARSONS/WHITEHORNE, 1992: 119–188; YOUTIE/WINTER, 1951: 1–164. Anthologies of Greek and Latin letters including

1 A survey of evidence

How many letters survive from Graeco-Roman antiquity? It is hard to tell. No fewer than 21 of the 27 books of the New Testament contain letters, and there are over 9,000 Christian letters preserved from antiquity in medieval manuscripts.[5] To these we must add the fairly large number of texts written by prominent figures of the fourth-century pagan élite, and equally preserved in codices. For example, the epistolary collection of Libanius, the orator and teacher, comprises over 1,500 items. That of Julian the Apostate (emperor 361–363, born in 331) amounts to just over 200 letters, public and private. As for the letters preserved on perishable materials, a variety of factors makes it difficult to attempt an accurate estimate of the number of texts surviving. By the years 1979–1980 about 1,000 private letters had been reportedly published, but that figure has since been augmented considerably as a result of the steady increase in the publication of new texts,[6] and will no doubt continue to rise since all the major European and American collections still house a large number of unpublished items awaiting full editions. Except for some dozen items, the surviving documentary letters in Greek all come from Egypt, where most of them were (or are likely to have been) written. As it happens, some of the texts excavated in Egypt were written elsewhere. The letters sent home by Egyptian recruits who joined the Roman fleet at Misenum near Naples represent the work of mobile military personnel.[7] The Greek letter written, upon arrival at Puteoli, by a moneyed Roman (presumably the naturalized son of a Greek) to his steward

documentary material: TRAPP, 2003; STOWERS, 1986. Anthologies of assorted Greek letters on papyri and ostraca: WHITE, 1986: 21–186; TIBILETTI, 1979: 133–197; HUNT/EDGAR, 1932: 268–395; DÖLLSTÄDT, 1934; OLSSON, 1925: 24–211; WITKOWSKI, 1911 (letters of the Ptolemaic period). Anthologies of Greek Christian letters (besides Tibiletti's): NALDINI, 1988 (1968): 63–376; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 31–213; GHEDINI, 1923: 47–286. For an anthology of women's letters, see BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 97–416. Anthologies of documentary letters and of other papyrus documents: MIGLIARDI ZINGALE, 1992: 158–170; HENGSTL, 1978. As regards Latin documentary letters, we now possess a very full *corpus* of published texts (*CEL* I–III) and some excellent editions of letters from a variety of western sites (see e.g. BOWMAN/THOMAS, 2003: 74–130; 1994: 183–343).

5 I take this figure from TRAPP, 2003:18. For very full lists of editions and translations of Greek Christian letters, see *EC* I and III.

6 According to CHAPA, 1998: 15, about 2,000 private letters were available for research in 1998.

7 See nn. 176, 178, 179 below. See further BGU II 632 (= WHITE, 1986, no. 103B).

in Oxyrhynchus provides evidence of temporary upper-class mobility.[8] Unlike these texts, the letters found in various provinces of the Near East are by and large the products of local populations. Some of these texts belong to the Roman period; the others are much later in date.[9]

The documentary letters which may be thought to have been either drafted or dictated (§ 4) by single individuals are far fewer in number than those belonging to the extensive letter-collections preserved in medieval manuscripts; and, as has been observed, "we are hardly ever in the position of having a large enough body of material from one family or milieu to get a clear sense of individuals in the way that early modern letters allow us to do".[10] But detective work enables us to identify and assemble groups of letters written by certain individuals. Some examples will suffice. We possess no fewer than 26 family letters written from AD 94 to 110 by (or on behalf of) Lucius Bellenus Gemellus, a discharged veteran who owned property in the neighbourhood of Euhemeria (Qaṣr al-Banāt) and on other Fayyum sites.[11] Some extant business letters are the work of a man called Patron, a farmer contemporary with Gemellus.[12] We possess eleven letters of Claudius Terentianus, who served in the Roman fleet stationed at Alexandria in the early second century.[13] Mons Claudianus in the Eastern Desert has yielded a considerable number of epistolary ostraca, including 11 letters of a soldier called Dioscorus and 11 texts of a civilian named Petenephotes, all of which belong to the mid-second century.[14] Slightly later in date are eight private letters from Sempronius to some of his relatives.[15] We possess a substantial number of mid-third-century letters on matters of business from the central administration and the local managerial units of Aurelius Appianus' large estate in the Fayyum and of other related estates. No fewer than thirteen of the published letters from the estate archives

8 P.Oxy. XVIII 2191. Cf. MARTIN, 1980: 273–274.

9 Documentary letters in Greek from the Near East: COTTON/COCKLE/MILLAR, 1995: 218–235, nos. 3 (?), 5, 6, 8, 11 (?), 22, 33, 61, 67, 167–169, 176, 242, 245, 246, 317, 320, 358, 459, 462–465, 570, 584, 587, 590, 591. Further texts: P.Ness. III 134 (?), 145, 146, 148–155, 158–175.

10 BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 23.

11 P.Fay. 110–120; 248–249; 252; 254–255; 259; 265–273. Cf. HOHLWEIN, 1957.

12 P.Mil.Vogl. II 50–51; IV 218 (= SB VIII 9646); VI 279 (= SB VI 9483); SB VIII 9643–9645.

13 See n. 286 below. On the find spot of his letters see STEPHAN/VERHOOGT, 2005: 197–199.

14 Dioscorus: O.Claud. II 224–234. Petenephotes: O.Claud. II 243; 245–254.

15 P.Wisc. II 84; P.Mich. XV 751–752; SB III 6263 (= Sel. Pap. I 121; WHITE, 1986, no. 113); P.Heid. VII 400. Cf. PAPATHOMAS, 1996: 117.

were sent out by Appianus himself, and many more items are from his subordinates. These include 67 letters of Alypios, the general manager of the Arsinoite branch of the estate; 19 letters of Ninnos, a central administrator; 20 letters of Ischyrion, another top administrator; 37 letters of Syros, a councillor of Arsinoe, former *kosmētēs*, and *epitropos* ("steward") with particular responsibility for the Theadelphia area; six letters of Sarapammon, another *epitropos*; eleven letters of Heracleides the *oikonomos*; and several dozen letters written by (or on behalf of) a number of assistants in the central administration as well as by managers of local units and by minor employees.[16] Fourth-century material includes as many as five letters of Aurelius Papnuthis, a collector of taxes and manager of estates who was living in Oxyrhynchus in the mid-fourth century,[17] and nine letters, all datable to the 350s, from a pious layman called Paul to a prominent monk of the Hathor monastery in the Heracleopolite nome.[18] As for the Arab period, mention should be made of the numerous letters of the Umayyad governor Qurra b. Šarīk (in office 709–715).

These letters are part of what Greek papyrologists usually call archives. In fact the word "archive" may or may not be an appropriate label for such clusters of papers, since there is often no telling whether they were ever collected and classified intentionally in antiquity.[19] Texts recovered from the rubbish mounds may or may not have been part of collected archives before being discarded.[20] Even in the case of the papyri found in the ruined structures of towns and villages, where the dispersal of fragments over rooms and houses is a well-known phenomenon,[21] it may be very difficult to tell whether particular pieces were ever stored as elements of an organized collection of papers. Yet the study of clusters of texts centering on single individuals and their families (and/or their affairs) has proved most productive for historical research,[22] and yields fruitful results on the role of the individual as a letter-writer and a user of language compared not only with the other members of his own household but also with his contemporaries.

16 On these individuals and their papers see RATHBONE, 1991.

17 P.Oxy. XLVIII 3396–3400.

18 P.Neph. 1–9. For the date of these letters, see BAGNALL, 1989: 74–75.

19 MARTIN, 1994.

20 Cf. MAZZA, 2001: 13–18.

21 See e.g. WORP, 1995a: 3–4.

22 BAGNALL, 1995: 40–48 (= 2007: 69–80). For a useful list of "archives" with extensive bibliography, see MONTEVECCHI, 1988: 248–261, 575–578. Further materials are available on the Web at <http://lhpc.arts.kuleuven.ac.be/index.html>.

2 Writing materials

The vast majority of the Greek documentary letters from Graeco-Roman Egypt are written on sheets of papyrus. We also possess many fragments of pottery (ostraca) carrying orders in letter form as well as real letters. Other materials are far less common: there are isolated items written on sheets of parchment;[23] and there is exiguous evidence for the use of pieces cut from the bark of trees (especially acacia-trees).[24] A variety of factors seems to have influenced choice. The price of a papyrus roll (or of a smaller unit), from which blank sheets for epistolary use were cut,[25] was not excessive for the well-to-do, but casual labourers and permanent employees who were living on a subsistence day wage of a little small change and with little money in their pockets are most unlikely to have afforded frequent purchases of papyrus[26] – but then were they sufficiently literate and motivated often to commit their thoughts to writing? Scrap papyrus was inexpensive or even free, and ostraca cost nothing.[27] But while the former always competed with new pieces (§ 3), it would seem that ostraca were not utilized for epistolary use as frequently as papyrus sheets on the sites where papyrus was readily available. Instead, many of the surviving published potsherds come from remote spots in the desert, from which the sources of papyrus supply are not likely to have been reached on a regular basis, and which may have suffered from papyrus shortages.[28] It was their availability on the spot that favoured the use of fragments of pottery as writing materials by soldiers stationed in the military camps scattered in the Eastern Desert of Egypt. It is no coincidence that the letters exchanged between military officials at Mons Claudianus and elsewhere are written on ostraca.[29]

23 P.Iand. II 12 (3rd or 4th c); PSI III 208 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 28) (3rd/4th c); PSI IX 1041 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 29) (3rd/4th c); SB III 7269 (4th/5th c). Two of these sheets (viz. PSI 208 and 1041) carry letters of introduction from the head of a Christian community. A third letter from the same man (P.Oxy. XII 1492 = NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 30) is written on papyrus. Cf. BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 34.

24 O.Douch III 290; 342 (4th c). For another letter on wood, see O.Douch III 259.

25 On this practice see § 3 below.

26 On the price of papyrus for epistolary use see DREXHAGE, 1991: 387. See BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 34–36 for further details.

27 Ostraca as cost-free materials: TRAPP, 2003: 6–7; LEWIS, 1983: 4–5; PARSONS, 1980: 3.

28 PARSONS, 2007: 124; BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 34; LEWIS, 1974: 91 n. 8.

29 O.Claud. II 357–387; O.Krok. 14.

3 Text and writing surface

In Graeco-Roman antiquity, the manufacturer did not sell separate sheets of papyrus, but pasted them together to form rolls, which were usually sold in units of twenty sheets. Each roll in turn was cut into pieces of varying sizes if separate documents were intended to be written on separate sheets. The sheet that was chosen to carry a letter might come from any part of the roll. Even the very first sheet of a roll (πρωτόκολλον), which was in principle not used as a writing surface, and where its fibres are at right angles to those of the subsequent sheets for protection, was usable as a separate piece.[30] The sheets were predominantly cut as tall strips, but other practices are in evidence. For instance, one letter exists which was penned on a sheet cut with the longer sides parallel to the top and bottom of the original roll.[31] Whereas the first usable sheet of a roll was strengthened by a protective sheet (πρωτόκολλον), the fibres of single sheets cut from ready-made rolls were not protected from coming adrift. And yet a piece carrying a letter from the chancery of the prefect of Egypt occurs which was strengthened on its left-hand side by a strip of parchment.[32]

Attention may be called to the format of single sheets. There were no standard dimensions. Of course the content of a letter and the size of the sheet carrying it correlate in principle, for lengthy letters may require large sheets, whereas small pieces suit short messages.[33] Yet a variety of formats is found, and there is evidence to show that within chronologically definable periods letter-writers favoured one or other format. From the early Roman period down to about the second half of the fourth century sheets are usually taller than they are wide. This format survives occasionally into the fifth and sixth centuries. Wide sheets become increasingly popular from the fifth century (or thereabouts).[34] In tall sheets breadth is usually proportional to height, but narrow and very narrow strips do occur,[35] and in Appianus' estate (§ 1) they seem to

30 P.Oxy. I 122 offers one example of this practice.

31 P.Oxy. XLVII 3356 (AD 76).

32 SB I 4639, of AD 209. Cf. TURNER, 1978b: 22; ZUCKER, 1910: 710–711.

33 P.Ammon I 3 (4th c) provides one example of a lengthy letter written on a very broad sheet. Examples of short epistolary texts written on small pieces are offered by P.Oslo III 156 and P.Oxy. I 115 (to cite but two).

34 Cf. FOURNET, 2007: 354–359; IOANNIDOU in HANDLEY/IOANNIDOU/PARSONS/WHITEHORNE, 1992: 176.

35 See e.g. P.Louvre II 99 (early 2nd century), 9.5 x 29.5 cm; P.Oxy. XXXIV 2726 (2nd c), 7 x 30 cm; P.Mert. III 114 (2nd c), 7.5 x 21.5 cm; P.Oxy. LIX 3991 (2nd/3rd c), 8 x 30.5 cm;

have been quite fashionable. In the case of wide strips height is often proportional to breadth, but shallow strips are most common.[36] Square and nearly square formats of varying sizes are also in evidence.[37] Even in the presence of short texts some clerks used sheets of fashionable format, refraining from altering them by cutting away parts of uninked surface. For instance, one scribe in the late 310s or early 320s wrote two letters on sheets c. 14 cm broad and c. 23/24 cm high. One of them (P.Herm. 5) carries 30 lines (including the date), and the other (P.Herm. 4) 13 lines, followed by a deep lower margin. The latter compares with a number of sheets carrying letters of Roman date; amongst them is P.Oxy. LVI 3853, which was written by a professional scribe in the third century, and exhibits uninked space below the closing farewell. By contrast, some writers appear to have been indifferent to the relation between breadth and height. For example, of the two surviving tall-format pieces used by an individual in the second century, one (P.Mert. II 80) displays a balanced proportion of breadth to height, and the other (P.Mert. III 114) is a narrow piece cut from a previously used sheet. Other writers seem to have been uninterested in the format. For instance, a man in the late fifth or early sixth century is known to have written two letters in his own hand, of which one (P.Oxy. XVIII 2193) is written on a narrow tall-format sheet, and the other (P.Oxy. XVIII 2194) on a horizontal strip.

The longest private letter surviving among the papyri from Egypt seems to be an epistle which Ammon, the *scholasticus*, wrote to his mother in 348: the sheet of papyrus as reconstructed from a number of detached fragments bears

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P.Haun. II 18 (3rd c), 6.8 x 20 cm; P.Oxy. LVI 3856 (3rd/4th c), 7 x 26 cm; P.Oxy. XXXIV 2727 (3rd/4th c), 9 x 26 cm; P.Oxy. XXXI 2601 (early 4th c), 7 x 26.6 cm; P.Oxy. LXI 4127 (first half of 4th c), 4 x 26 cm; P.Kell. I 75 (late (?) 4th c), 5.2 x 27 cm; P.Kell. I 76 (second half of 4th c), 6.4 x 29 cm; P.Oxy. LVI 3865 (late 5th c), 7.5 x 28.5 cm; P.Oxy. XVIII 2193 (5th/6th c), 9.4 x 26.5 cm; P.München. III 129 (5th/6th c), 7.5 x 31 cm; P.Prag. II 196 (6th c), 5.8 x 26.3 cm; P.Oxy. LVI 3868 (6th c), 8 x 21 cm. The format of P.Oxy. XVI 1862 (7th c), which is c. 17 cm broad and 100 cm high, is most unusual.

36 See e.g. P.Oxy. LXIII 4373 (AD 364), 27 x 6 cm; P.Oxy. XVI 1836 (5th/6th c), 30.3 x 11.4 cm; P.Oxy. I 156 (6th c), 33 x 12 cm; P.Oxy. LIX 4005 (6th c), 30.5 x 11.5 cm; SB XX 14218 (6th c), 31.3 x 6.5 cm; P.Oxy. LVI 3866 (6th c?), 30 x 10 cm; P.Oxy. XVI 1845 (6th or 7th c), 34.2 x 9.8 cm; P.Oxy. XVI 1846 (6th or 7th c), 34 x 11 cm; P.Oxy. XVI 1847 (6th or 7th c), 36 x 10.5 cm.

37 See e.g. P.Oxy. XXXVI 2786 (1st c), 11 x 10.5 cm; P.Oxy. I 115 = CHAPA, 1998, no. 2 (2nd c), 7.9 x 7.7 cm; P.Oxy. LIX 3994 (early 3rd c), 10.5 x 12 cm; P.Oxy. XXXI 2595 (3rd c), 12.2 x 13.2 cm; P.Oxy. LXI 4123 (AD 307/308), 10 x 9 cm; P.Oxy. LXVII 4629 (6th/7th c), 15.5 x 14.5 cm; P.Köln III 166 (6th/7th c), 29.6 x 30 cm.

remnants of six consecutive columns.[38] Most documentary letters in Greek are much shorter. There are two-column letters, and there are texts written in three columns.[39] But usually each piece of writing material, be it papyrus or ostracon, carries one single-column letter on one side. As it happens, there exist cases of a multiplicity of epistolary texts being penned on one side of a single sheet of papyrus, and arranged either in single vertical file, one on top of another, or (on one occasion only) side by side in two facing columns. Series of two, three, and even four different letters are in evidence.[40] As a rule, these texts are either from different individuals to one and the same person, or from the same individual to more than one person.[41] Furthermore it may happen that two letters are written by one and the same individual on both sides of a single sheet;[42] and one letter may carry messages from people other than the senders themselves.[43] As has been observed, "the practice attests the unity of family life as well as the lack of privacy in correspondence";[44] and it is also a convenient paper-saving device. We know of at least one individual who had a liking for it. Of the five extant sheets carrying his autograph letters three each contain two letters.[45]

38 P.Ammon I 3.

39 Examples of two-column letters: P.Mil.Vogl. I 24 (AD 117); SB XXII 15708 = P.Oxy. XVIII 2190 (late 1st c); P.Oxy. XVIII 2192 (2nd c); P.Münch. III 121 (2nd c); P.Oxy. LIX 3993 (2nd/3rd c); P.Oxy. VI 936 (3rd c); and P.Oxy. LVI 3859 (4th c). One example of a letter written in three (or more than three) columns is provided by P.Amh. I 3 (a) (= SB VI 9557; W.Chr. 126; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 6; GHEDINI, 1923, no. 4), of c. AD 264–282.

40 Two letters: PSI IV 317 = OLSSON, 1925, no. 66 (AD 95); SB XX 14132 (BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 405–406) (1st c); P.Oxy. XLIX 3503 (late 1st c); BGU II 615 (BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 395–396) (2nd c); P.Giss. 81 (2nd c); P.Leid.Inst. 42 (2nd c); SB III 6263 (= Sel. Pap. I 121; WHITE, 1986, no. 113) (late 2nd c); P.Mich. XV 752 (late 2nd c); P.Wisc. II 84 (late 2nd c); P.Mich. VIII 508 (2nd/3rd c); P.Tebt. II 416 (= W.Chr. 98; TIBILETTI, 1979, no. 13) (3rd c); P.Oxy. XXXVI 2789 (BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 401–402) (3rd c); SB XIV 12182 (3rd c) (two cols.); P.Oxy. LXII 4340 (BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 403–404) (late 3rd c); P.Grenf. I 53 (= W.Chr. 131; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 56; BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 397–398) (4th c); P.Oxy. XVI 1829 (c. AD 577–583; cf. *BL* XI: 152). Three letters: P.Brem. 61 (2nd c). Four letters: SB III 7244 (mid-3rd c). Cf. BAGNALL/ CRIBIORE, 2006: 36–37; CHAPA, 1998: 75.

41 HOOGENDIJK/VAN MINNEN, 1991: 177. On P.Leid.Inst. 42 see BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 36.

42 P.Oxy. XXXI 2599 (BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 400–401) (3rd/4th c); P.Oxy. I 120 (= Sel. Pap. I 162; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 62; GHEDINI, 1923, no. 36) (4th c).

43 P.Oxy. VII 1067. 25–31 (3rd c).

44 WINTER, 1933: 49 n. 1.

45 Cf. PAPATHOMAS, 1996: 117.

In principle letter-writers used new sheets, blank on both sides. Yet there exist many letters written on the back of sheets that had previously been used for other texts. An individual apologizes for writing a letter on a piece of scrap papyrus, which he has to use of necessity because of a lack of clean sheets.[46] But papyrus recycling seems to have been acceptable to many people.[47] In the mid-third century, for example, this was common practice in the offices of Aurelius Appianus' estate, where large quantities of papyrus were needed to ensure regular communication between the central administration and the units scattered in the Arsinoite nome.[48] No fewer than 180 of the surviving published letters from the estate archives are written on scrap papyrus. Of the thirteen published letters of Aurelius Appianus, the estate owner, six are written on reused papyrus and three on blank pieces.[49] As many as 47 of the 67 published letters of Alypios, the general manager of the Arsinoite branch, are found on the back of other texts. No fewer than 30 of the 37 surviving letters of Syros are written on scrap papyrus. Thirteen of the twenty published letters of Ischyrion, a high-ranking administrator, exhibit other texts on the front sides. Finally, eight of the nineteen extant missives of Ninnos, another central administrator, are carried by the verso. Not surprisingly recycling was uncommon in the public sphere, but copies of official letters may naturally be written on the back of previously used sheets.[50]

The administrators, managers, and employees of Appianus' estate (or the scribes writing on their behalf) reused sheets carrying a variety of texts. A handful of letters is found on the back of petitions.[51] Some epistolary texts were penned on the back of other letters.[52] Many items are carried by pieces cut from

46 P.Abinn. 21. 3–5 (mid-4th c).

47 Cf. PARSONS, 2007: 123–124; BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 34–35.

48 RATHBONE, 1991: 10ff.

49 RATHBONE, 1991: 11.

50 See P.Oxy. XXXIV 2705, of c. AD 225 (to cite but one example).

51 SB VI 9415/9; P.Flor. II 171; 254; P.Rein. II 114; possibly also P.Flor. II 138.

52 Letters of Alypios: P.Flor. II 132 (recto: P.Flor. III 373); SB VI 9467 (recto: P.Flor. II 159 recto + SB VI 9364, which comes from a τόμος συγκολλήσιμος of letters; cf. PINTAUDI, 1998/9: 141–142); P.Ryl. II 238 = Sel. Pap. I 143 (recto: P.Ryl. II 237); P.Flor. II 140 (recto: P.Flor. II p. 94); and P.Flor. II 167 (recto: P.Flor. II p. 123). See further P.Flor. II 138 (recto: P.Laur. I 19). Letters of other individuals: P.Flor. II 225 (recto: P.Flor. II 134); P.Prag. I 110; cf. also the order P.Laur. III 101 (recto: P.Laur. III 106).

accounts[53] and registers.[54] Some letters are written on the back of fragments of contracts.[55] One letter is found on the back of an official order.[56] Even strips cut from literary texts were reused for letters.[57] The same variety is in evidence elsewhere. We possess letters written on the back of other letters as well as of petitions.[58] Many epistolary texts (i.e. orders and real letters) are written on the back of pieces cut from a variety of registers, lists, and accounts.[59] There are letters written on the back of census returns.[60] Other texts are found on the back of private documents,[61] and on the back of fragmentary and unidentified texts.[62] A letter may also be written on a portion of uninked surface cut from the recto of a previously used sheet.[63]

53 P.Fay. 133; P.Flor. II 123–125; 160 (= SB XX 14980); 182; 184–186; 196; 207 (= SB VI 9471); 209; 230; 248; P.Prag. I 108; 112; 115; P.Rein. I 52 (= P.Flor. II 137*); SB VI 9063 (= P.Flor. II 224*); XVI 12657. See further P.Stras. IX 855.

54 P.Flor. II 137; 143; 145; 175; 194; 195; 199; 201; 202; 204; 208; 233; 233* (p. 249); 252; 262; 277; P.Laur. III 100; 102; 104; P.Prag. I 107; 111; 114; P.Ryl. II 239; SB VI 9415/17 (= P.Prag.Varcl II 38); 9468; XVI 12577; XX 14453. The census declaration P.Flor. I 5, which served for the letter P.Flor. II 255, was also part of a register.

55 P.Flor. II 181; 227; P.Lond. III 948 verso (p. 209 = P.Flor. II 185**).

56 P.Prag. II 202.

57 These comprise P.Flor. II 120; 237; P.Ryl. II 236; 240; and SB XVIII 13609. Cf. PARSONS, 2007: 124; MESSERI, 2005: 21–22; RATHBONE, 1991: 12–13; TURNER, 1978a: 166–168; BINGEN, 1950: 87 n. 4. See further BGU IV 1030, which carries an undated letter from the archive of a large estate related to that of Appianus (RATHBONE, 1991: 6 n. 4), and of which the front carries extracts from Plato (*CPF* I/1***: 508ff.).

58 Three examples of letters written on the back of other letters: P.Oxy. LXIII 4362 (3rd/4th c); P.Kell. I 80 (4th c); P.Genova I 38 (6th/7th c). Two examples of letters penned on the back of petitions: P.Oxy. LXVII 4626 (after AD 259); P.Oxy. LXIII 4365 (4th c).

59 For example, a fragment of a register was reused for P.Oxy. LIX 3991 (2nd/3rd c), a tax list (P.Oxy. LXIII 4374) for P.Oxy. LXIII 4375 (AD 365), a census list for P.Oxy. XXXVI 2781 (2nd c), a lengthy list of names for three different letters by one and the same man (P.Oxy.Hels. 47; 2nd c), a list of buildings and building materials (P.Oxy. XXXI 2581) for P.Oxy. XXXI 2600 (3rd/4th c), and a set of receipts for P.Abinn. 40 (4th c). Examples of letters written on the back of accounts include P.Oxy. LIX 3990 (2nd c); P.Mert. III 114 (2nd c); P.Oxy. LVI 3855 (c. 280/281); P.Oxy. LXVI 4544 (3rd c); P.Oxy. XXXIII 2681 (3rd c); P.Haun. II 29 (3rd c); and P.Oxy. XLVII 3358 (4th c).

60 One example is provided by P.Oxy. LVIII 3919 (after 28 August 188).

61 For example, a registration of a sale of slave (P.Oxy. XLII 3054) was reused for P.Oxy. XLII 3066 (3rd c).

62 See e.g. P.Oxy. XXXVI 2782 (2nd/3rd c); LIX 4007 (6th/7th c).

63 P.Oxy. LIX 3994 (early 3rd c).

It was regular practice in Graeco-Roman antiquity to write first on the inside of the roll, where the fibres run horizontally. The outside, where the direction of the fibres is vertical, may also carry writing, but this was always penned at a later stage. Even in a single sheet the side chosen to carry a letter was usually that in which the fibres run horizontally; and it can often be proved that the side of the sheet where the writing runs with the fibres comes from the inside of the original roll from which the piece for the letter was cut. Deviations from this rule are uncommon in the first four centuries of the Christian era.[64] But in the Byzantine period (especially from, say, the late fifth century onwards) it became increasingly popular to rotate 90° the sheet that had been cut as a tall piece from the original roll; as a result, the writing usually runs across the fibres of the recto in letters of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries.[65]

Greek texts, both literary and documentary, take the shape of continuous blocks of writing. As a rule, however, epistolary texts of documentary character admit blank spaces between words more frequently than literary manuscripts;[66] and stops are used as word dividers in no fewer than two letters of the second century.[67] The use of lectional signs, such as accents and breathings, is mainly a feature of verse manuscripts. But there are examples of letters equipped with varying quantities of accents[68] and breathings, especially rough breathings.[69] Sometimes this lectional apparatus correlates with differing levels of linguistic

64 Note especially P.Oxy. XXXI 2599 (BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 400–401) (3rd/4th c), which carries two letters, one on each side and both across the fibres. See further e.g. P.Kell. I 6 (c. AD 330); and P.Oxy. XXXI 2609 (4th c).

65 FOURNET, 2007: 354–359; IOANNIDOU in HANDLEY/IOANNIDOU/PARSONS/WHITEHORNE, 1992: 176.

66 For a couple of examples, see *GMAW*^{2}: 7 n. 28.

67 P.Ross.Georg. V 4 (2nd c); P.Oxy. LVIII 3917 (early 2nd c), from a Roman *stator*. The editor of the latter argues for an influence of Latin interpunct. See further P.Haun. II 25 (4th c), where double diagonal lines and spaces are used between words.

68 These letters include P.David 14 (= P.Stras. IV 169 + P.Ross.Georg. II 43) (2nd or 3rd c); P.Oxy. LIX 3992 (2nd c); P.Oxy. LV 3812 (late 3rd c); P.Herm. 5 (= TIBILETTI, 1979, no. 27; MOSCADI, 1970, no. 10) (early 4th c); P.Herm. 6 (= MOSCADI, 1970, no. 11) (early 4th c); and P.Ryl. IV 624 (= MOSCADI, 1970, no. 4) (early 4th c).

69 Amongst these are P.David 14 (= P.Stras. IV 169 + P.Ross.Georg. II 43) (2nd or 3rd c); P.Oxy. I 122; P.Oxy. XLVII 3366 (= P.Coll.Youtie II 66), lines 17–39 (AD 253–260, possibly 258 or 259); P.Oxy. LV 3812 (late 3rd c); P.Herm. 2 (= MOSCADI, 1970, no. 7) (early 4th c); P.Herm. 3 (= MOSCADI, 1970, no. 8) (early 4th c); P.Herm. 5 (= TIBILETTI, 1979, no. 27; MOSCADI, 1970, no. 10) (early 4th c); P.Herm. 6 (= MOSCADI, 1970, no. 11) (early 4th c); P.Ryl. IV 624 (= MOSCADI, 1970, no. 4) (early 4th c); P.Kell. I 63 (first half of 4th c); P.Kell. I 72 (mid-4th c); P.Oxy. XXXIV 2729 (4th c).

accomplishment; sometimes it does not. Punctuation, too, is usually lacking, but there are letters carrying stops and other equivalent signs.[70] Greek official letters from offices of the Arab government may carry dots, but the principle in their use is unclear.[71]

Specific devices, such as indention and blank spaces, are used to lay out the constituent elements of the prescript (§ 5), and to separate the final clause (§ 8) from the preceding section. By contrast, thematic articulation within the main body of the letter is as a rule not marked visually.[72]

4 Palaeography

The ancients were fully aware of the personal character of handwriting. An educated individual was expected to pen either the letter in its entirety or the closing formula (§ 8), which is equivalent to the personal signature in modern Western societies. If he chose to append the final farewell only, then a scribe was entrusted with the task of writing for him the prescript (§ 5) and the main body (§ 7) of the letter, either taking down dictation or freely composing for himself. This was common practice in the public sphere and in the administrative bureaux of large estates, where a large amount of letters had to be dispatched weekly. In the private sphere, instead, letter-writers might follow either method. L. Bellenus Gemellus (§ 1), for example, had one of his letters (P.Fay. 110) written by a professional scribe in a hand of a literary type (cf. n. 81), but wrote many of the remaining letters in his own hand. A fully illiterate person had naturally to use the services of someone else if he or she wanted to communicate in writing.

70 CHAPA, 1998: 105. Stops are found in e.g. P.Ross.Georg. III 2 (= CHAPA, 1998, no. 7; HENGSTL, 1978, no. 161; TIBILETTI, 1979, no. 1) (3rd c); P.Oxy. LV 3812 (late 3rd c); P.Ryl. IV 606 (late 3rd c); P.Oxy. XIV 1680 (= Sel. Pap. I 153; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 32) (3rd/4th c); P.Oxy. XXXI 2603 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 47) (4th c); P.Herm. 5 (= TIBILETTI, 1979, no. 27; MOSCADI, 1970, no. 10) (early 4th c); P.Herm. 6 (= MOSCADI, 1970, no. 11) (early 4th c); P.Ryl. IV 624 (= MOSCADI, 1970, no. 4) (early 4th c); P.Ammon I 3 (348); P.Kell. I 63 (first half of 4th c); P.Kell. I 71 (mid-4th c); P.Kell. I 72 (mid-4th c); and P.Dubl. 23 (5th/6th c).

71 BELL, 1945: 84; 1910: xlii.

72 Yet in P.Oxy. LXVII 4624 (1st c) changes of topic within the main body of the letter are indicated by horizontal strokes (*paragraphoi*) entered between the initial letters of two consecutive lines, sometimes in combination with on-line blank spaces.

As a rule, fair copies of official correspondence of the Roman period exhibit a variety of chancery hands. Foremost amongst them is the type known as "Chancery style", which was in widespread use in the late second to fourth centuries, and of which the extant specimens differ considerably in their degree of formality, depending on a variety of factors.[73] In particular, original letters of officials in high government posts, such as the prefect of Egypt and the *praeses Augustamnicae*, exhibit outstanding hands characterized by the generous size of letters,[74] whereas somewhat less formal hands are usually responsible for epistolary communications of lower-level officials as well as for locally-made copies of letters of high-ranking authorities.[75] There is evidence to show, however, that well-trained professional scribes might vary the style and the degree of cursivity to suit the letters copied or their constituent parts.[76] Such a functional use of handwriting is attested elsewhere for Greek documentary letter-writing of official character. In Arab-ruled Egypt, for example, it seems that official letters addressed to single officials and not intended for publication were written in flowing cursive script of sloping type, whereas official letters addressed to a multiplicity of individuals and intended for public display were written in minuscule script.[77] Furthermore, attention may be called to a particular type of Christian epistle, viz. the paschal letters in which the patriarch of Alexandria announces the date of Easter to the bishops of Egypt. The specimens of these letters surviving among the papyri all display splendid literary hands of the type known as "Alexandrian majuscule".[78] This usage attests a correlation between a specific script and the message to be conveyed in writing.

Private letters exhibit a wide variety of styles. There are elegant, yet informal, specimens of the "Chancery style" adopted by professional clerks for

73 CAVALLO, 2005: 17–42; MESSERI/PINTAUDI, 1998: 48–49; MESSERI SAVORELLI, 1990: 39.

74 Prefect of Egypt: SB I 4639 (AD 209); P.Oxy. XIX 2227 (early 3rd c); perhaps also P.Köln VIII 351 (AD 190), cf. n. 201 below. *Praeses Augustamnicae*: P.Münch. III 69 (c. AD 341–342); P.Oxy. L 3577 = ChLA XLVII 1421 (AD 342); P.Oxy. LXIII 4369 (AD 345). See further PSI XII 1247 verso (lines 19–25), which is thought to come from the chancery of a high official at Alexandria (cf. CAVALLO, 2005: 18 n. 4; *SLD*: 205–206, no. 133; MESSERI/PINTAUDI, 1998: 49).

75 Cf. CAVALLO, 2005: 33, 38.

76 See e.g. LOBEL/WEGENER/ROBERTS/BELL, 1948: 83.

77 BELL, 1945: 79–80; 1926: 266.

78 P.Grenf. II 112 (cf. *RGCP* II/1: 537–541; VAN HAELST, 1976: 242, no. 675); P.Köln V 215 (cf. *RGCP* II/1: 530–534); BKT VI 5 (cf. *RGCP* II/1: 523–529; VAN HAELST, 1976: 221, no. 621); P.Heid. IV 295 (cf. *RGCP* II/1: 535–536); P.Horak 3. On these hands see CAVALLO, 2005: 194–195; and CAVALLO/MAEHLER, 1987: 82, 104, 114.

official letters;[79] and there are hands influenced in varying measure by that script.[80] A number of private letters display hands of book-hand quality, which compare in some respects with the hands of single literary manuscripts, and even with specific scripts adopted widely by professional scribes for works of literature, pagan and Christian:[81] for example, one formal upright mixed style influenced the hands of some early second-century letters;[82] the formal mixed style of sloping type affected some epistolary hands of the third century;[83] and a number of fourth-century letters are penned in hands that compare well with contemporary bookhands of sloping type.[84] Sometimes the use of such literary-looking hands correlates with a certain measure of linguistic accomplishment; sometimes it does not. Broadly speaking, it may be said that although fast cursives are in evidence here and there,[85] in the vast majority of cases the hands of private letters aim at legibility:[86] they are often neat and clear; and the individual letters tend to be formed separately, though more or less cursively.[87] Not surprisingly, however, there are considerable variations.[88] The hands may differ in the skill of execution: some individuals write clumsy capitals;[89] many

79 P.Oxy. LVI 3853 (3rd c) provides a nice example. The use of this style for business correspondence is exemplified by SB XVIII 14057 (cf. *SLD*: 201–202, no. 128; MESSERI/PINTAUDI, 1998: 48).

80 Cf. CAVALLO, 2005: 37; GONNELLI, 1997: 30 n. 2.

81 *GLH*: 11 (on Gemellus' letter P.Fay. 110); FUNGHI, 1996: 15 n. 9; CAVALLO/MAEHLER, 1987: 1. See further MESSERI SAVORELLI, 1995: 129–130 on the informal round hand responsible for P.Mert. II 80 and III 114 (2nd c); this hand compares with the script of another second-century letter, P.Oxy. LVIII 3917, which the original editor regarded as a "distant kin to book hands of the 'Roman uncial' type". On the notion of "bookhand" see especially *GMAW*^{2}: 1–4.

82 P.Giss.Univ. III 20; P.Brem. 5; cf. CAVALLO, 2005: 120; MENCI, 1984: 55. To this style I would also assign the letter P.Haun. II 16.

83 P.Flor. II 259 (cf. *GLH*: 22); P.Oxy. VI 936; P.Oxy. XIV 1767 and 1768.

84 P.Herm. 4 and 5 (cf. *GMAW*^{2}: 118; CAVALLO/MAEHLER, 1987: 10); P.Oxy. LVI 3858.

85 See e.g. P.Oxy. XVIII 2191. 16–18 (late 1st c; MARTIN, 1980: 273) and P.Kell. I 7, of c. AD 350 (?).

86 CRIBIORE, 1996: 100. Cf. BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 41.

87 P.Oxy. LXVII 4625 (3rd c?), to cite but one representative example, is written in an almost ligature-free large upright hand. For one example of a competent sloping semicursive, see P.Oxy. XXXI 2601 = NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 35 (early 4th c).

88 BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 41–46.

89 P.Köln I 56 (1st/2nd c), see BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 368; SB V 7572 (early 2nd c), see BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 283; P.Oxy. XXXI 2594 (2nd c); P.Oxy. I 119 (2nd or 3rd c); P.Kell. I 75 (late (?) 4th c).

hands are practised, though not necessarily attractive. The differing ages of individuals are reflected in their handwriting: a little boy writes crude capitals; old age results in shaky hands.[90] Further variations may have been caused by changes in mood.[91] Even Greek-Latin bilingualism (§ 13) affected handwriting, for it may happen that first-language speakers of Latin use Greek script marked by a Latin appearance throughout.[92]

5 The prescript (Roman and Byzantine periods)

From the early Roman period down to about the end of the fourth century, the vast majority of the Greek documentary letters open with a prescript where the names of the sender(s) and of the addressee(s) are indicated.[93] In the mid-third century the offices of Aurelius Appianus' estate exhibit differing practices. Whereas the prescript of the letters from local managers and other employees is conventional, that preceding the business notes and orders of the estate owner as well as of two of the top administrators displays the name of the sender ("from so-and-so") but lacks the name of the addressee; this is penned at the very end of the letter, below the closing formula and the date.[94] The prescript becomes increasingly rare from about the later fourth century onwards,[95] and is usually dispensed with in the documentary letters written on horizontal strips. These may exhibit other features instead: quite a few of them, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, display an abbreviation of controversial meaning, which is put at the head of the letter, above the first line of text midway between its left and right extremities;[96] and cryptograms, both Christian (χμγ, ϙθ) and Jewish (θβ),

90 Boy's letter: P.Oxy. I 119. Shaky handwriting resulting from advanced age: GRENFELL/HUNT/HOGARTH, 1900: 262.

91 Cf. VAN MINNEN, 1994: 246.

92 P.Brem. 5. 14–16 (AD 117–119); P.Oxy. I 122; P.Oxy. LXVII 4625. 8–9 (3rd c?).

93 Early examples of omission are provided by P.Lips. I 105 = W.Chr. 237 (1st/2nd c); P.Louvre II 99 (early 2nd c); and P.Oxy. III 525 (early 2nd c). Cf. LLEWELYN, 1998: 123.

94 RATHBONE, 1991: 67.

95 FOURNET, 2007: 356ff.; PAPATHOMAS, 2007: 507 and n. 100; SIRIVIANOU, 1984; MARTIN, 1929: 97. For a useful (though by no means exhaustive) list of Christian letters of the fifth and sixth centuries lacking the prescript, see O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 217 n. 3.

96 MESSERI/PINTAUDI, 2005; DARIS, 2001. Occasional instances of this abbreviation occur until the sixth/seventh century (for a still later example, see CPR XIV 54). There exist isolated cases of the abbreviation followed by the prescript: see DARIS, 2001: 349–350.

are in evidence.[97] Two letters written in his own hand by one individual in the late fifth or early sixth century are at variance with this practice in that both display a preamble before the prescript.[98]

The basic formulae of the prescript are as follows:

(a) "X (or, far more rarely, from X) to Y, greetings (χαίρειν)",[99] equivalent to the formula *aliquis alicui salutem* ("so-and-so to so-and-so, greetings") in Latin letter-writing;[100]

(b) "To Y, X (or from X), greetings (χαίρειν)",[101] equivalent to the Latin formula *alicui aliquis* (or *ab aliquo*) *salutem* ("to so-and-so, (from) so-and-so, greetings");[102]

(c) "To Y, greetings (χαίρειν)";[103]

(d) "Greetings (χαῖρε, χαίροις), Y!"[104] (cf. Latin *have* / *ave* + personal name in the vocative[105]).

Formulae (a) and (b) compete throughout the first four centuries of the Christian era. Formula (c) is contemporary with, though much rarer than, (a) and

97 Christian cryptograms at the start of Greek letters: e.g. NALDINI, 1998 (1968): 28 n. 1; on the controversial meaning of χμγ see the secondary literature cited by MITTHOF, 2002: 217. Jewish θβ at the start of Greek letters: P.Heid. IV 333. 1 (5th c); SB XX 14727. 1 (6th c); on its meaning see HAGEDORN in KRAMER/HAGEDORN, 1986: 227–229.

98 P.Oxy. XVIII 2193 (= *CEL* I 243; ChLA XLVII 1410; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 53); P.Oxy. XVIII 2194 (= *CEL* I 244; ChLA XLVII 1411; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 54).

99 CUGUSI, 1989: 385; TIBILETTI, 1979: 28; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 218; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 157; EXLER, 1923: 23, 24ff. (private letters), 50ff. (letters from and to officials), 60–61, 62–64, 133–134. On the "from X" variant see EXLER, 1923: 34–35, 59–61, 67.

100 *CEL* I: table facing p. 20; III: 13; CUGUSI, 1989: 385; 1983: 50–51; SCARPAT, 1972: 478.

101 CUGUSI, 1989: 385–386; TIBILETTI, 1979: 28–29; HUNGER, 1978: 216–217; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 218; EXLER, 1923: 33–34 (private letters), 58 (letters exchanged between officials), 61, 67, 133; ZIEMANN, 1910: 268ff. Letters addressed to the prefect of Egypt open with this formula: see BASTIANINI, 1984: 1337.

102 CUGUSI, 1989: 385; 1983: 54; SCARPAT, 1972: 478–479. For the use of "from X" (*ab aliquo*), see *CEL* I, table facing p. 20; III: 13; CUGUSI, 1989: 385–386; 1983: 55–56.

103 TIBILETTI, 1979: 29; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 218. See further ZIEMANN, 1910: 285.

104 HAGEDORN in KRAMER/HAGEDORN, 1998: 109–111 (focusing on the χαῖρε variant); LLEWELYN, 1998: 124–126; MARTINEZ in RÖMER/GAGOS, 1996: 272–276 (focusing on the χαίροις variant); TIBILETTI, 1979: 29, 30; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 164–167; DÖLLSTÄDT, 1934: 13–14; EXLER, 1923: 35–36, 61, 67–68; ZIEMANN, 1910: 295–297. To the occurrences of χαῖρε collected by Hagedorn and Llewelyn add P.Oxy. LXVI 4544. 1–2 (3rd c). Further examples are supplied by letters cited in texts preserved in medieval manuscripts.

105 CUGUSI, 1983: 55; SCARPAT, 1972: 479.

(b).[106] Formula (d) belongs mainly to the first three centuries of the Christian era (but not exclusively so in the case of the χαῖρε variant), its peak being found in the third century. But it occurs far less frequently than (a) and (b), and unlike them it has not yet surfaced in official letters. During the time when the three formulae compete, the reason behind the use of (d) in preference to either (a) or (b) is not clear. Individual preferences may or may not have played a role. For example, all the surviving letters of no fewer than two individuals display formula (d).[107] But of two of the published letters of one man in the late fifth or early sixth century one exhibits formula (b) and the other formula (d) (in the χαῖρε variant).[108] Finally, it is worth noting that a most unusual prescript, styled "I, PN (in the nominative), write to you", has surfaced in a handful of letters of the fifth and sixth centuries, where it might have been used under the influence of Coptic epistolary usage.[109]

Alterations to the basic formulations of the prescript as set out above are fairly common. For instance, the name of the sender is often added to formula (d): some writers say "from X", whereas other individuals prefer writing "I, PN, salute (προσαγορεύω, ἀσπάζομαι) you". Christians may add "in the Lord" or "in God".[110] The intitulations of the recipient vary: St Paul expands on them; Greek-speaking individuals in Graeco-Roman Egypt are far less flexible,[111] although they may have their unusual preferences. A lady in the second century addresses her recipient as "sun".[112] Similarly the author of a medical treatise which found its way into Galen's huge output of medical writings addresses his

106 For example, it occurs in a letter of AD 117 (P.Mil.Vogl. I 24. 1–2) and turns up again in the second half of the third century (P.Oslo III 160. 1). For some Byzantine examples, see n. 119 below.

107 One set consists of P.Gron. 17. 1–2 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 24. 1–2) and P.Gron. 18. 1–2 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 25. 1–2). The other set comprises PSI III 208. 1–3 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 28. 1–3); PSI IX 1041. 1–3 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 29. 1–3); and P.Oxy. XII 1492. 1–3 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 30. 1–3).

108 Formula (b): P.Oxy. XVIII 2194. 5 (= *CEL* I 244; ChLA XLVII 1411; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 54). Formula (d): P.Oxy. XVIII 2193. 4–6 (= *CEL* I 243; ChLA XLVII 1410; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 53). Both letters are written in the same hand.

109 GONIS, 2005.

110 TIBILETTI, 1979: 29–30; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 219; ZIEMANN, 1910: 300–302. It has recently been suggested (MONTEVECCHI, 2000: 191–192) that in earlier times Christian letter-writers might add a horizontal stroke above the first letter of the Greek verb χαίρειν, possibly to convey the name of Christ.

111 For a survey of epithets, see e.g. TIBILETTI, 1979: 31–46.

112 P.Oxy. XLII 3059. 2 (BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 275). Cf. n. 168.

friend as "sun of my soul".[113] Other individuals in Graeco-Roman Egypt prefer "lord of my soul".[114]

The utterance "greetings" in formulae (a) and (b) is often extended by other words. In the first four centuries of the Christian era it may become "many greetings" (πολλὰ χαίρειν) or "very many greetings" (πλεῖστα χαίρειν).[115] Individuals in the time of Augustus and later may add their wishes "for good health" (ὑγιαίνειν) or "for continued good health" (διὰ παντὸς ὑγιαίνειν), or indeed "for (continued) good health as I pray for" (διὰ παντὸς ὑγιαίνειν καθάπερ (or καθὼς) εὔχομαι); and other writers may expand with "I pray always for your health" (διὰ παντὸς (or πάντων) εὔχομαί σε ὑγιαίνειν).[116] In two Christian letters of fourth-century date the greeting is expressed "with fullness of joy" (χαρᾷ χαίρειν),[117] which sets itself along the line of the prescript of the *Letter to the Ephesians* of St Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (died c. 110).[118]

Furthermore, late examples of (c) may lack the word for "greetings";[119] this may also be dispensed with in formulae (a) and (b), especially from the fourth century onwards.[120] Or it may be replaced by other words. A couple of letters of condolence of the second and third centuries display "take heart" (εὐψυχεῖν, εὐθυμεῖν) in place of "greetings" (χαίρειν);[121] so does a model letter of condolence which seems to have been penned early in the second century.[122] Somewhat surprisingly the utterance "grace to you and peace" (χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ

113 "Galen" XIX 680. 3 Kühn. Cf. PARSONS, 1974: 148.

114 BRUGGISSER, 1989.

115 EXLER, 1923: 27–28, 28–29, 30, 31, 54, 62–63; ZIEMANN, 1910: 299–300. Similarly Latin documentary letters of the first, second, and third centuries may display *plurimam* (cf. Greek πλεῖστα) in addition to *salutem*: see *CEL* I: table facing p. 20.

116 ARZT-GRABNER, 2003: 116–121 (where further variations are discussed); EXLER, 1923: 32–33, 64. So far as I know, the latest (dated) example of this usage occurs in an Oxyrhynchite text of AD 410, where the writer says: "Best wishes for your health, and greetings (πλεῖστα ὑγιαίνειν καὶ χαίρειν)" (P.Wisc. II 63. 1).

117 P.Genova I 26. 4; P.Oxy. VIII 1162. 5 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 50. 5; GHEDINI, 1923, no. 22. 5).

118 In early Christian literature, similar expressions are found in John's Gospel (3. 29) and in St Paul (*1 Thess.* 3. 9). See further NALDINI, 1998 (1968): 51, 224.

119 Cf. e.g. P.Oxy. XVI 1831. 2 (late 5th c); 1830. 1–2 (6th c); 1930. 1 (6th c).

120 TIBILETTI, 1979: 29, 31. It is occasionally omitted in earlier letters: see e.g. ZIEMANN, 1910: 284–285. Similarly the prescript of the Latin documentary letters of the fourth and fifth centuries may lack the word *salutem*, see *CEL* I: table facing p. 20.

121 P.Oxy. I 115. 2 = CHAPA, 1998, no. 2. 2 (εὐψυχεῖν); PSI XII 1248. 2 = CHAPA, 1998, no. 6. 2 (εὐθυμεῖν).

122 P.Hamb. IV 254. 1 (εὐθυμεῖν).

εἰρήνη), which appealed strongly to St Paul and other early Christian writers, has not yet surfaced in Christian letters from Egypt.[123] There is evidence to suggest that the choice between alternative formulations is a function of the occasion on which the letter is written. One lady adopts "greetings" in a letter on practical matters, reserving "take heart" for a letter of condolence.[124] This consolatory utterance is used on gravestones and mummy labels as a farewell to the deceased, and is thus suitable for a condolence letter.[125] But the majority of condolence letters display "greetings", not "take heart".[126]

6 The prescript (Arab period)

Compared with the letters of the fifth, sixth, and early seventh centuries, the Greek epistolary texts from Arab Egypt exhibit elements of change and continuity. As a rule, private letters and official messages and orders written by Christians, whether they be members of the clergy or civil officials (pagarchs, notaries, and other officials), lack the prescript.[127] This practice is in keeping

123 St Paul: *1 Thess.* 1. 1; *Rom.* 1. 7; *1 Cor.* 1. 3; *2 Cor.* 1. 2; *Gal.* 1. 3; *Phil.* 1. 2; *Philem.* 3. Pseudo-Pauline epistles: *Eph.* 1. 2; *Col.* 1. 2; *2 Thess.* 1. 2; *Tit.* 1. 4; *1 Tim.* 1. 2; *2 Tim.* 1. 2. Cf. ARZT-GRABNER, 2003: 122–123. (The extant fragments of papyrus codices of these epistles display no significant textual variations in the use of the opening expression, see WACHTEL/WITTE, 1994: 1 (*Gal.*), 44 (*Eph.*), 127 (*Col.*), 161 (*1 Thess.*), 186 (*2 Thess.*).) Further New Testament epistolary literature: *1 Petr.* 1. 2, *2 Petr.* 1. 2; cf. *Iud.* 2; WHITE, 1984: 1752. The same formulaic expression is elsewhere found in the prescript of the "first" epistle of Clement of Rome (written about AD 95–96), whose debt to Pauline epistolary usage is explored by HAGNER, 1973: 196. See further the prescript of the encyclical letter written in the year 177 by the churches of Lyons and Vienne, in Gaul, to the churches of Asia and Phrygia (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* V 1. 3; text with facing translation also available in MUSURILLO, 1972: 62–63). The word "peace" (εἰρήνη) compares with Hebrew *šālōm* (cf. MUSSNER, 1987: 108; SCHLIER, 1982: 76), which is found in the prescript of Jewish letters (cf. e.g. FITZMYER, 1982: 33–35), on which Pauline usage is thought to have drawn: see e.g. ARZT-GRABNER, 2003: 115–116; LLEWELYN, 1998: 127; STOWERS, 1986: 21; SCARPAT, 1972: 481.

124 "Take heart": P.Oxy. I 115. 2 (= W.Chr. 479. 2; TRAPP, 2003, no. 46; CHAPA, 1998, no. 2. 2; WHITE, 1986, no. 116. 2; BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 172–173). "Greetings": SB XX 15180. 1 (BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 174–175).

125 Cf. CHAPA, 1998: 62–63; HAGEDORN in KRAMER/HAGEDORN, 1998: 100–101.

126 CHAPA, 1998: 25–26; WORP, 1995b: 151.

127 Some examples will suffice. Private letters: P.Apoll. 60–64; 72 (second half of 7th c); CPR XIV 53 (8th c). Letters of pagarchs: CPR XXII 1 (mid-7th c); SB XVI 12284 (mid-7th c; cf.

with that followed by the majority of writers in the sixth and early seventh centuries. Instead, letters from Muslim officials may display an Arab-style prescript, which in turn appears to have occasionally influenced the opening section of private correspondence. This new type of prescript consists of the following elements, of which the first two are necessary:

(A) an invocation;

(B) the address, styled "X to Y" or "from X to Y";

(C) the greeting "Peace upon you" (εἰρήνη σοι, εἰρήνη ὑμῖν);

(D) the utterance "We thank God" (εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ), paralleled in several texts from Arab Palestine (where the singular is preferred); and

(E) the transitional formula "thereafter", viz. μετὰ ταῦτα in letters from Egypt and ἔπειτα in Greek letters from Arab Palestine.

The appearance of (A), (C), (D), and (E) as elements of letter headings in Greek epistolary texts from chanceries of the Arab administration was clearly influenced by Arabic epistolary formulae. If account is taken of the Greek and Arabic letters of the Umayyad governor Qurra b. Šarīk, it appears that element (A) in the Greek letters compares well with the *Basmalah* (*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīmi* "In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate"); (D) occupies a position corresponding to (or comparable with) that of Arabic "I praise God" (of which, however, it is not a literal translation); and (E) renders the Arabic transitional formula. The use of (A) and (E) represents in particular a novelty in Greek epistolary usage. A (C)-like element was borrowed by St Paul and other early Christian letter-writers under the influence of Semitic usage, but does not seem to have influenced later letters (see n. 123). Nor is (D) used as a set phrase in the prescript of Greek letters;[128] a thanksgiving expression like (D) is adopted by St Paul under the influence of Jewish usage,[129] as well as by some Christians in late antiquity,[130] to introduce the opening section of the main body

MORELLI, 2001: 20); SB XX 14219 (mid-7th c; cf. MORELLI, 2001: 20); P.Apoll. 10 (?); 37–40 (second half of 7th c). Letters of notaries: P.Apoll. 11; 15; 16; 18; 20–22; 24; 26; 33; 50 (on the seventh-century date of some of these items see GASCOU/WORP, 1982: 88). See further CPR XXII 3 (7th/8th c), from a high official (pagarch?); P.Apoll. 9. 1–4 (from a *topotērētēs*; on the date see GASCOU/WORP, 1982: 88); 41 (from a bishop?); 42 and 54.

128 ARZT-GRABNER, 2003: 135–136. For a survey of thanksgiving expressions and their uses in papyrus letters, see ARZT, 1994: 31ff.

129 *Rom.* 1. 8; *1 Cor.* 1. 4; *Phil.* 1. 3; *Col.* 1. 3; *1 Thess.* 1. 2; *Philem.* 4. On the Jewish character of this expression see ARZT-GRABNER, 2003: 134.

130 See P.Herm. 7. 2 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 82. 2) and P.Herm. 10. 5–6 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 85. 5–6). In spite of the differences between Pauline usage and the expression of

of the letter. Element (A) also surfaces in private correspondence of the Arab period.[131]

In Arab-style Greek prescripts, (A) and (B) are compulsory, whereas (C), (D), and (E) are optional, as we shall see in a moment. By far the commonest formulation of (A) is "In the name of God" (ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ), which represents a short version of the *Basmalah*.[132] There is one example of variation, though: of two of the surviving published Greek letters of Subēeit son of Chedez (i.e. Zubayd b. Ḫudayǧ?), duke of the Thebaid, one (P.Apoll. 7. 1) has "In the name of God" and the other (PSI XV 1570. 2 = PSI Congr. XI 14. 2; cf. *fig. 1.3*) "In the name of God the Almighty" (ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος).[133] The latter is used in Greek letters from the Arab governor in Gaza in the later seventh century.[134] It has also surfaced in an undated private letter in Greek, which the editors assigned to the eighth century, and which exhibits evidence of orthographic/phonetic interference from Coptic; and it is paralleled in Coptic texts of the seventh and eighth centuries.[135] Naturally the words "God the Almighty" must have been very familiar to the Christians of Egypt and Palestine; for the concept of Omnipotent God is obviously Jewish in principle, and through the Old Testament according to the Septuagint, where the Greek word παντοκράτωρ is used as translation of *Sebaoth*, it reached the New Testament and subsequent Christian literature and liturgy, eventually spreading considerably through Byzantine theology and art.[136] As has been observed with regard to Arab-ruled Palestine, "the early development of Islam certainly took place within a context of strong Christian and Jewish influences, on which it drew very heavily, while conversely, the gradual awareness by Christians of Islam as a new faith made a reconsideration of the common Jewish background an urgent necessity".[137] In such a complex background is set the emergence of

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gratitude in these letters (ARZT, 1994: 44 n. 57) the latter may well have been inspired by the former.

131 P.Ross.Georg. V 11, fr. I 1 (8th c).

132 The full Greek version of the *Basmalah* (viz. ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐλεήμονος καὶ φιλανθρώπου) is found in protocols, see GROHMANN, 1924: XXVII–XLVII.

133 In yet another Greek letter of Subēeit (P.Apoll. 8. 1) the original editor restored the formula "In the name of God". On Subēeit see n. 141 below.

134 P.Ness. III 73. 1 (AD 683?), though the word "Almighty" is restored; 72. 1 (AD 684?); 71. 1 (7th c); see further the ἐντάγιον P.Ness. III 63. 5, of AD 675.

135 Greek private letter of the eighth century: P.Ross.Georg. V 11, fr. I 1. Coptic texts: P.Laur. V 204 (letter; 7th c); BAGNALL/WORP, 2004: 100.

136 MONTEVECCHI, 1956. See further NALDINI, 1998 (1968): 22–23.

137 CAMERON, 1991: 304.

the invocation by God the Almighty at the start of letters written by Greek-speaking clerks in the Arab administration. In post-conquest Egypt, too, where the majority of population long continued to be Christian, Byzantine culture survived.[138] The word "Almighty" in one constituent element of Islamized bureaucratic language fits in well with this context; so does the Christian cross which is penned before the invocation in Subēeit's letters (cf. *fig. 1.3*) and elsewhere.

Variations in the use of elements (C), (D), and (E) are also in evidence. The three of them are omitted in some of the Greek letters of the governor Qurra b. Šarīk, as well as in other official correspondence and in one eighth-century private letter;[139] and (so far as I know) they never occur together. But there is evidence for the use of one or two of them in a variety of official letters and orders issued by governmental authorities at Babylon (al-Fusṭāṭ) and elsewhere. Thus in many of the items belonging to Qurra b. Šarīk's correspondence the cluster (D) + (E) is found between (A) + (B) and the body of the letter;[140] no fewer than two epistolary texts varying in date and provenance exhibit (C) + (E) in the same position;[141] and we encounter (E) only in one letter of a high official at al-Fusṭāṭ.[142]

138 SIJPESTEIJN, 2007: 455.

139 Qurra b. Šarīk: MORELLI, 2001: 249; cf. BELL, 1910: xliii. Other official correspondence: SB VI 9578 (AD 642); 9576 (AD 643); 9577 (AD 643); VIII 9753 (AD 643); VIII 9751 (AD 644 cf. *BL* VIII: 353); P.Apoll. 7.1 (second half of 7th c); 9.6 (late 7th c). Eighth-century private letter: P.Ross.Georg. V 11, fr. I 1.

140 MORELLI, 2001: 248–249. This usage can be paralleled in two orders, of AD 683 and 684, from the Arab governor in Gaza (P.Ness. III 72. 3; 73. 3).

141 SB VIII 9748. 1–2 (from Kōm el-Ḫaryāna in the Fayyum), issued by Abū Umayya ʻUbaid b. ʻUmar al-Maʻāfirī in the time of the Arab conquest of Egypt (see GROHMANN, 1957: 8–9); PSI XV 1570. 3 (= PSI Congr. XI 14. 3), a letter of Subēeit, duke of the Thebaid (see GASCOU/WORP, 1982: 91). In SB VIII 9752. 1–2, of c. 643, the words "Peace upon you" are restored.

142 See line 3 in SB XVI 12575, an undated letter of ʻAbdallāh b. al-Ḥāriṯ (KARLSSON/MAEHLER, 1979: 293; cf. also *BL* VIII: 384 and IX: 287), presumably a high official at al-Fusṭāṭ (see KARLSSON/MAEHLER, 1979: 292).

7 The body of the letter

After writing the prescript, one individual in the third century begins the main part of his message by acknowledging the arrival of a letter from the recipient. Then he asks for information about his health. Before appending the final clause, he gives instructions and greets third parties.[143] This example is representative of the structure and content of Greek private correspondence on papyrus. In the Roman period many letters start with "Before all I pray for your health";[144] and requests for information on someone's health occur time and again.[145] After that initial formulaic expression writers make obeisance (προσκύνημα) for their addressees before Sarapis or other gods;[146] and in the late first, second, and third centuries they may also wish the best things in life and prosperity to the recipients.[147] Then comes (or may come) an array of mere commonplaces. For example, the joy at receiving a letter and the complaint that none has arrived are very common stereotyped motifs.[148]

Salutations, too, constitute a recurrent theme.[149] They are usually placed before the final farewell, but may as well occur after the prescript or in other positions. They may be expressed in condensed form: "Greetings to all your family", says a gymnasiarch in the first century;[150] and such collective utterances are frequent throughout the Roman period and later.[151] "Young and old", specify

143 P.Oxy. LVI 3853.

144 ARZT-GRABNER, 2003: 123–127; CUGUSI, 1989: 386; TIBILETTI, 1979: 47, 50–52; EXLER, 1923: 107–110; ZIEMANN, 1910: 318. For the equivalent formula in Latin letter-writing, see *CEL* I: table facing p. 20; III: 13; CUGUSI, 1989: 386; 1983: 53–54.

145 TIBILETTI, 1979: 48–50; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 71–72.

146 BÜLOW-JACOBSEN, 1997: 65–68; CUGUSI, 1989: 386; TIBILETTI, 1979: 53–58; GERACI, 1971: 163–208; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 139–145; EXLER, 1923: 108–110; GHEDINI, 1917: 54–56; ZIEMANN, 1910: 321–323. See further ARZT-GRABNER, 2003: 127. For the use of similar formulae in Aramaic letters, see DION, 1982: 61, 66–67.

147 GONIS, 1997b: 38–40.

148 Joy and other sentiments and comments upon receipt of letters: KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 75–77. Complaint: STOWERS, 1986: 186; CUGUSI, 1983: 76; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 64–67.

149 TIBILETTI, 1979: 59–61; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 148–151; ZIEMANN, 1910: 325ff. They also surface in Latin documentary letters (see *CEL* I: table facing p. 20) and elsewhere (cf. e.g. DION, 1982: 61, 68 on Aramaic letters).

150 P.Oxy. LXVII 4624. 19–20.

151 TIBILETTI, 1979: 60; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 150; EXLER, 1923: 114–116; ZIEMANN, 1910: 329–330. The earliest dated occurrence of one of these formulaic expressions is provided by a letter of AD 42 (see GONIS, 1997c: 59).

several writers in the fourth to seventh centuries.[152] But itemized salutations are often listed. The catalogue may happen to be quite long: in a letter of fourth-century date the writer greets fourteen "brothers", five "sisters", two "mothers", and one "father";[153] in other cases the greeting occupies the letter in its entirety or most of it.[154] Even horses are saluted, and their welfare is notified along with that of the writer.[155] To greet people had social implications.[156] It was certainly seen as a sign of politeness;[157] and in the Byzantine period it was viewed as a token of deference, as is suggested by the commonplace expression whereby writers salute (or even worship or kiss) the feet or the footsteps of the addressees.[158] But it is also likely to have been regarded as an opportunity of keeping in touch in a time when telephone and e-mail were not available. In one third-century private letter the writer tells the recipient that he is writing simply to salute him, and to exhort him to write about his health: "We shall have the impression, through our letters, of seeing one another face to face", he adds.[159] The letter was viewed in antiquity as a conversation in writing between distant relatives, friends, and acquaintances,[160] as if they were present on the same

152 PAPATHOMAS, 1996: 198, where further bibliographic references are found.

153 P.Oxy. LVI 3859.

154 P.Köln II 108 (3rd c); P.Mil. II 81 (4th c); P.Neph. 12 (mid-4th c); P.Kell. I 75 (late (?) 4th c); P.Ross.Georg. III 10 (4th/5th c).

155 Salutations: P.Mich. VIII 482. 12 (AD 133); P.Oxy. XIV 1772. 2 (late 3rd c); cf. MAEHLER, 2006: 156; 2002: 247; PARSONS, 1980: 7; TIBILETTI, 1979: 60; GERACI, 1971: 148 n. 1; GORTEMAN, 1957: 113–115; YOUTIE/WINTER, 1951: 75. Welfare: P.Paris 18. 4 (3rd c, see *BL* IV: 67); cf. MAEHLER, 2006: 157; 2002: 248; GERACI, 1971: 148 n. 1; GORTEMAN, 1957: 112–113. Horses were most important in ancient life, and were even praised in rhetorical encomia, see P.Oxy. LXVIII 4647 (2nd/3rd c); MAEHLER, 2006: 149ff.; 2002: 240ff.; 2003: 48.

156 PAPATHOMAS, 2007: 501.

157 PARSONS, 1980: 7.

158 On this commonplace see GONIS, 1997a: 152–154; SARISCHOULI, 1995: 136–137. It also occurs in Greek letter-writing of the tenth century (see e.g. KARLSSON, 1959: 36). For similar expressions in Coptic letters, see BIEDENKOPF-ZIEHNER, 1983: 92, 100.

159 P.Oxy. XLII 3067. 12–13 (3rd c) (trans. PARSONS, 1974: 160).

160 THRAEDE, 1970: 27–38, 47–52, 162ff.; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 42–47.

spot;[161] and the main purpose of many papyrus letters seems to have been the maintenance of contacts between people.[162]

Commenting on that third-century letter, the original editor observed that its content "belongs to those exchanges of civil nothings which spread during the third and fourth centuries". But were such nothings pleasing? In fact a lady in the second half of the third century is said to have reproached her correspondent: "I have received other letters from you in which you write nothing."[163] Did she dislike clichés? Unfortunately there is no way of telling. But even if that were what she meant, a complaint of this sort would be something of an exception since clichés are ubiquitous in Greek and Latin letter-writing, and must have been acceptable to most writers and readers. Formulaic patterns are most common in the Christian letters of introduction.[164]

Conventional phrasing aside, the subject matter of the documentary letters is usually a practical one. They convey news and orders, or reply to questions and requests for information. They accompany the dispatch of goods and commodities. They deal with matters of business, and may even serve as notes of credit for money transfers.[165] They contain a wealth of information on trade and administration, on persons involved in them, and on a variety of problems, be they commercial, financial, legal, and personal. In other words, the documentary letters provide valuable insights into *Realien*, and contribute greatly to our knowledge of the evolution of the Greek language in the crucial phase intervening between the late classical age and the Byzantine world. But they are mostly silent on the private sphere of individuals. Love is the main topic of many fictitious letters, where it is addressed on a highly rhetorical level, but rarely surfaces in the documentary letters.[166] Affection, though, is heard of here and there.[167] A lady writes to a man, whom she calls "brother": "You must know

161 PARSONS, 1980: 9; THRAEDE, 1970: 39ff., 52ff., 79–80, 83ff., 146ff.; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 38–42. This motif continues into the Byzantine world (see KARLSSON, 1959: 34–37), and surfaces in one Coptic letter, presumably under the influence of Greek letter-writing (see BIEDENKOPF-ZIEHNER, 1996: 23–24, 29).

162 KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 104–114. See further PARSONS, 2007: 122; WHITE, 1984: 1731.

163 P.Oxy. LXVII 4626. 6–7 (after AD 259).

164 SIRIVIANOU in SIRIVIANOU ET AL., 1989: 111–114. On letters of introduction see further PARSONS, 2007: 131–132; TEETER, 1997; KIM, 1972; KEYES, 1935. On Latin letters see in particular COTTON, 1981 and also 1985.

165 WHITEHORNE in HANDLEY/IOANNIDOU/PARSONS/WHITEHORNE, 1992: 97.

166 MONTSERRAT, 1996: 6–8; WHITEHORNE, 1979: 243–244.

167 PARSONS, 2007: 134–136; 1980: 11. For comparable motifs in Demotic and Coptic letters, see BIEDENKOPF-ZIEHNER, 1996: 16–17.

that I do not view the sun, because you are out of my view; for I have no sun but you."[168] A man expresses his longing for a woman: "I want you to know that ever since you left me I have been in mourning, weeping at night and lamenting during the day. [...] You sent me letters that could move a stone, so much have your words moved me."[169] A similar sentiment is couched in more rhetorical words in a fictitious letter of slightly later date.[170]

The sexual sphere was no doubt important in Roman society, but sex does not seem to have been a favourite subject of communication between individuals. A first-century letter containing an indecent proposal in the form of an explicit proclamation along with an explicatory design is a unique piece.[171] This document reveals a rather primitive attitude to the sexual sphere, which contrasts sharply with the important role played by erotic prudery in fictional letter-writing.[172]

No political attitudes are in evidence. As has been observed, the great events of history are touched on when they affect the personal convenience of people.[173] One Christian speaks calmly of the sacrificial test in court as required by a newly-issued edict of Diocletian: he reports on the steps taken to evade, but does not comment on the effects which the law is likely to entail on the Christians of Egypt.[174] As a rule, writers exhibit little inclination to description. Pliny the Younger's accurate description of his sea-front villa near Rome is unparalleled in the papyrus letters from Egypt.[175] An Egyptian recruit stationed at Misenum, the famous naval base near Naples and the splendid villas of Baiae and of other nearby resorts, reports on his new Roman name, his wage and the seafaring perils,[176] not on the beautiful landscape surrounding his quarters, not even on the mild and temperate climate of *felix Campania*, which pleased so many prominent figures of the Roman élite, and which struck contemporary intelligentsia as a place suitable for *otium*.[177] A recruit from Karanis (Kōm

168 P.Oxy. XLII 3059. 3–5 (2nd c) (trans. PARSONS, 1974: 148). Cf. BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 275.

169 P.Oxy. III 528. 6–14 (2nd c), reedited as Sel. Pap. I 125 and TRAPP, 2003, no. 15.

170 Philostratus, *Letters* 59. See BENNER/FOBES, 1949: 525, 527 for an English translation.

171 P.Oxy. XLII 3070 (1st c). Cf. PARSONS, 2007: 134 (with plate 27).

172 ARNOTT, 1982: 310ff., especially 311–312.

173 PARSONS, 2007: 134; 1980: 9.

174 P.Oxy. XXXI 2601 (early 4th c), reedited by NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 35.

175 Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* II 17.

176 BGU II 423 (= W.Chr. 480; Sel. Pap. I 112; WHITE, 1986, no. 103A; HENGSTL, 1978, no. 84).

177 For comments on Baiae, for example, see Seneca, *Epistles to Lucilius* 51. 1; 55. 7.

Ušīm) in the Fayyum tells his mother upon his arrival at Rome that he has come into "a beautiful place",[178] but does not expand on the matter.[179]

No literary discussions surface. Educated writers exchange information about the availability of rare books, and ask friends for copies. They may also invite their addressees to read them, but they do not discuss their contents.[180] Similarly one letter about the lending of Christian books is uninformative on the correspondents' views about their contents.[181]

Writers in their consolatory letters make it clear how much the sad news of someone's death made them suffer. They adopt consolatory commonplaces, and exhort the recipients to bear and overcome grief. But they use stock material; and even one model letter of condolence draws on this repertoire.[182] Christian belief does not seem to have had a special impact on the writers' attitude to death. Compared with St Basil's letters of condolence, Christian consolatory letters on papyrus are much shorter and more stereotyped; and the consolatory themes may occur next to the usual preoccupation with private business.[183]

And yet letters from intellectual circles may be more thoughtful than usual. One writer from late Roman Oxyrhynchus exhorts his addressee, a philosopher, to persist in the pursuit of virtue without yielding to wordly distractions: "Yes – he says – we may deservedly congratulate ourselves, not because we do these things, but because we are not diverted from them by ourselves. Courage! carry through what remains like a man! Let not wealth distract you, nor beauty, nor anything else of the same kind: for there is no good in them, if virtue does not join her presence, no, they are vanishing and worthless."[184]

178 P.Mich. VIII 491. 10–11 (= SB IV 7353. 10–11; Sel. Pap. I 111. 10–11; White, 1986, no. 104B. 10–11).

179 Nor does he make any comments on Portus in another letter written on the same day: P.Mich. VIII 490 (= SB IV 7352; White, 1986, no. 104A).

180 SB XIV 11996 (= CPF I/1* 5); P.Mil.Vogl. I 11 (= CPF I/1* 6); P.Oxy. XVIII 2192; SB XII 11084. Cf. Otranto, 2000: xxivff., 17–27, 55–61, 115–119.

181 P.Oxy. LXIII 4365 (4th c). Cf. Otranto, 2000: 128–129.

182 P.Hamb. IV 254 (early 2nd c).

183 For a thorough study and collection of Greek consolatory letters on papyrus, see Chapa, 1998. See further Parsons, 2007: 129–131; Worp, 1995b. On St Basil's consolatory letters see Mitchell, 1968.

184 P.Oxy. XLII 3069. 10–20 (3rd/4th c), trans. Parsons, 1974: 163. The letter has been reprinted by Trapp, 2003, no. 35.

8 The closing formulae

The Greek documentary letters of the first five centuries of the Christian era usually close with a farewell. The following formulae are in evidence:

(a) "Good health" (ἔρρωσο)[185] (cf. Latin *vale*[186]);

(b) "I pray for your good health" (ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι and the like)[187] (cf. *opto te bene valere / opto bene valeas* in Latin letter-writing[188]);

(c) "Prosper" (διευτύχει);

(d) "The Lord preserve you" (ὁ θεός σε διαφυλάττοι and the like)[189] (cf. *deus te custodire dignetur* and the like in Latin letter-writing[190]);

(e) "Abide in good health" (ὑγιαίνων δίελθε).[191]

Formulae (a) and (b) compete down to about the sixth century, although (b) is much rarer than (a) in the first century.[192] Formula (d) is characteristic of Christian letter-writing,[193] though there exists a considerable number of Christian letters from Egypt which display (a) or (b) instead of (d). Formula (c) is characteristic of petitions of the second and third centuries, but is most rare in epistolary texts: it occurs on occasion in place of both (a) and (b);[194] it may be

185 CUGUSI, 1989: 387; TIBILETTI, 1979: 62; EXLER, 1923: 70, 74–75. See further O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 225.

186 *CEL* I: table facing p. 20; III: 14; CUGUSI, 2007: 142–143; 1989: 387; 1983: 58–59.

187 CUGUSI, 1989: 387; TIBILETTI, 1979: 62–64; EXLER, 1923: 70, 75–77. See further O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 225.

188 *CEL* I: table facing p. 20; II: 37, 144; III: 14; CUGUSI, 2007: 142–143; 1989: 387; 1983: 60–61; 1972: 149–150.

189 NALDINI, 1998 (1968): 14–15; CUGUSI, 1989: 388; TIBILETTI, 1979: 64–66; KOSKENNIEMI, 1956: 151; ZIEMANN, 1910: 346–350. This usage survives into letter-writing of the later Byzantine periods, see HUNGER, 1978: 217 n. 17. See further SIRIVIANOU, 1984.

190 *CEL* II: 365; CUGUSI, 1989: 388.

191 SIRIVIANOU, 1984.

192 SCHUBERT in JÖRDENS/SCHUBERT, 2005: 33–34. Formula (a) also survives until the fourteenth century, see HUNGER, 1978: 217. The Latin equivalent of formula (b) occurs from the Augustan period to the fifth century, see *CEL* I: table facing p. 20; III: 14.

193 Yet a variant of this formula is used by a pagan writer in P.Oxy. LV 3812. 13–15, which the editor assigned to the late third century.

194 P.Oxy. LXV 4483. 12 (AD 194); P.Berl.Zill. 12. 22 (3rd/4th c).

used to extend formula (a);[195] and in one letter it is joined by formula (b).[196] Formula (e) is found in a handful of letters of the sixth and seventh centuries.[197]

Formula (a) may be extended by other words, such as the personal pronoun in the dative referring to the writer(s) (μοι, ἡμῖν),[198] and also by further wishes, including "be well" (καλῶς ἔχε) and "prosper" (i.e. formula (c) above);[199] and the writer may expand it by greeting the recipient's family.[200] Formula (b), too, is flexible. To begin with, the main verb may be replaced. Prefectorial letters of the Roman period display "I wish" (βούλομαι) in place of "I pray" (εὔχομαι).[201] The same replacement is found in one letter issued in the epistrategus' bureau,[202] and also occasionally in private letters.[203] An individual who held some official post in 262 prefers "May it be possible" (εἴη) to "I pray".[204] Alteration by

195 P.Oxy. LVIII 3917. 11 (early 2nd c); P.Amh. II 181 (3rd c).

196 O.Claud. II 279. 20–22 (2nd c).

197 P.Stras. I 35. 21 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 96. 21; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 13. 21; GHEDINI, 1923, no. 43. 21), assigned to 4th/5th c; SB VI 9139. 16 (6th c); P.Vind.Worp 14. 11 (6th/7th c); SB VI 9140. 16 (7th c); cf. P.Iand. II 22. 7 (AD 619–629). It has also surfaced in an early seventh-century letter from Nessana (P.Ness. III 50. 8).

198 EXLER, 1923: 75 (μοι); P.Oxy. LXIII 4365. 6 (4th c) (ἡμῖν). Cf. *mihi* in the formula *vale mihi* in Latin documentary letters (*CEL* I: table facing p. 20; II: 14; CUGUSI, 1983: 63).

199 "Be well": P.Oxy. XLVII 3357. 19 (late 1st c); "Prosper": see n. 195 above.

200 P.Oxy. XXXVIII 2844. 13–15 (late 1st c). For further variations, see EXLER, 1923: 75; ZIEMANN, 1910: 340–341.

201 P.Fam.Tebt. 15. 129 (= SB IV 7378. 20; Sel. Pap. II 422. 20) (AD 103); P.Oxy. XX 2265. 10 (AD 120–123); P.Berl.Leihg. II 46. 11 (AD 136); SB XIV 11374. 19 (AD 168); BGU II 432, col. ii, fr. 2. 11 (AD 190); BGU II 646. 7 (= W.Chr. 490. 7; Sel. Pap. II 222. 7) (AD 193); P.Oxy. XLVII 3343. 8 (AD 204–206); P.Oxy. VIII 1100. 5 (AD 206); P.Oxy. XLVII 3364. 23 (AD 206/207, probably 206); SB I 4639. 6 (AD 209); SB XX 15143. 5 (AD 212 or later); P.Oxy. XII 1408. 20 = Sel. Pap. II 224. 20 (AD 211–213); SB XIV 11651. 16 (AD 232–233? Cf. MITTHOF, 2001, II: 345, 347; on the authorship see MITTHOF, 2001, II: 345, and THOMAS/CLARYSSE, 1977: 196–197). Furthermore, "I wish" is restored (plausibly, in my opinion) in P.Leid.Inst. 32. 18, of AD 110/111, and in SB XIV 11935. 23 (= PSI Corr. I 1148. 23), of AD 210. See further P.Köln VIII 351. 4, of AD 190, and PSI XIII 1361. 5, of AD 218. The names of the senders are lost in both letters. Both may well come from the chancery of the prefect, but there is no way of proving it until further evidence comes to light.

202 P.Brem. 6. 7 (early 2nd c). It is restored in SB XVI 12290. 25, of AD 158.

203 P.Mil.Vogl. II 76. 13 (first half of 2nd c); P.Bon. 44. 9 (= SB V 7616. 9) (2nd c), where "I wish" occurs next to "I pray"; P.Brem. 61. 44 (2nd c); P.Mich. VIII 500. 19 (2nd c); P.Erl. 118. 20 (3rd/4th c); P.Iand. VI 102. 28 (6th c). Cf. also P.Mich. VIII 464. 23 (= WHITE, 1986, no. 101. 23), of AD 99, and P.Amh. II 181 (3rd c).

204 P.Oxy. XVII 2107. 9. On the sender see RATHBONE, 1991: 57.

expansion is often exploited. The utterance "for many a year" (πολλοῖς χρόνοις and the like) occurs time and again,[205] just as the equivalent formula in Latin letter-writing may be extended by *multis annis* until the fifth century.[206] The sender may also pray for the recipient's "well being".[207] Christians may expand with "in the Lord" or "in God".[208] The additional material may happen to be fairly long: "I pray for your good health for many a year, lord brother, and may we soon get you back in good spirits in all respects", says one individual in the fourth century;[209] and one Christian in a letter of slightly later date extends formula (d) as follows: "May the Almighty God preserve you for a long time for us, sinners that we are, that through your most pious prayers we may be saved throughout our life."[210]

The final clause may be lacking in business notes. It is often omitted in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, and the letter may close with the simple, yet respectful, address utterance "lord" (δέσποτα) in the vocative.[211] Moreover individuals may or may not salute their recipients; and letters from Muslim officials may close with "Peace upon you".[212]

9 Additional materials

Letters were written on pieces cut from rolls. But the chosen sheet sometimes turned out to be too small. If the writer ran out of space, then he could enter what he had to say, including the closing formula, in the blank spaces: he might write on the back;[213] he might rotate the sheet 90° to the left, writing one or more lines

205 TIBILETTI, 1979: 62–63; ZIEMANN, 1910: 342.

206 *CEL* I: table facing p. 20; II: 144; III: 14; CUGUSI, 1983: 62. See ADAMS, 2003: 80 on the relationship between this Latin expression and the Greek one.

207 P.Oxy. LIX 3993. 47 (2nd/3rd c). See further TIBILETTI, 1979: 63.

208 See e.g. P.Heid. VII 407. 16 (4th/5th c); CUGUSI, 1989: 388; TIBILETTI, 1979: 64; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963: 226; ZIEMANN, 1910: 343–344.

209 P.Herm. 5. 25–29 (= TIBILETTI, 1979, no. 27. 25–29; MOSCADI, 1970, no. 10. 25–29), trans. REES, 1964: 10.

210 P.Herm. 8. 22–28 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 83. 22–28), trans. REES, 1964: 16.

211 PAPATHOMAS, 2007: 507.

212 HAGEDORN in KRAMER/HAGEDORN, 1986: 235.

213 P.Kell. I 65 (early 4th c); P.Oxy. LXVII 4629 (6th/7th c).

of text in the left-hand margin, along the greater dimension;[214] and he might start out to do so, proceeding with his job by turning the papyrus over and writing the additional material on the back.[215] Any final messages could also be written on the two faces of the rolled-up package.[216] Ostraca display comparable practices, as is shown by the potsherds from Mons Claudianus: the writing may run downwards in the left margin;[217] or it may be penned upside down in the top margin,[218] or in both.[219]

The writer might also wish to add extra messages after appending the farewell formula. In papyrus sheets such postscripts may run down the left-hand margin,[220] and may be carried further on the back if necessary.[221] In either case, they may close with another farewell formula.[222] The postscript may also be entered in the blank space below the closing formula;[223] and if the writer had more to say, then he could add the extra message in the left margin, along the

214 See e.g. P.Flor. II 212 (AD 254); 213 (AD 255); 245 (AD 255); P.Oxy. XX 2273 (late 3rd c); P.Oxy. XXXIV 2728 (early 4th c, see *BL* VIII: 261); P.Oxy. XLIX 3507 (early 4th c, see *BL* VIII: 271); P.Princ. II 102 = CHAPA, 1998, no. 10; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 34 (3rd/4th c); P.Kell. I 74 (mid-4th c); P.Neph. 1; 4; 7 (all mid-4th c); 18 (mid-4th c); P.Abinn. 19; 26 (mid-4th c); P.Grenf. I 53 (= W.Chr. 131; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 56) (4th c); P.Oxy. LIX 4003 (4th/5th c); P.Oxy. XVIII 2193 (5th/6th c).

215 See e.g. P.Oxy. XXXI 2601 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 35) (early 4th c); P.Oxy. XXXIV 2729 (4th c); P.Oxy. LVI 3860 (late 4th c). See further P.Oxy. XXXVIII 2835 (mid-1st c).

216 P.Oxy. LVI 3860 (late 4th c). On the rolling-up procedure see § 11 below.

217 O.Claud. I 155 (2nd c); 171 (c. AD 100–120); O.Claud. II 246 (mid-2nd c); 250 (mid-2nd c).

218 O.Claud. I 161 (c. AD 100–120).

219 O.Claud. I 169 (c. AD 100–120); II 259 (mid-2nd c).

220 See e.g. BGU II 423 (= W.Chr. 480; Sel. Pap. I 112; HENGSTL, 1978, no. 84) (2nd c); P.Flor. II 247 (AD 256); P.Oxy. LXVII 4626 (after AD 259); P.Mich. III 218 (= SB III 7250; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 15) (late 3rd c); P.Oxy. XXXVI 2783 (3rd c); P.Oxy. XXXVI 2788 (3rd c); P.Oxy. LIX 3998 (4th c); P.Oxy. XXXI 2603 = NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 47 (early 4th c); P.Abinn. 8; 10; 30 (mid-4th c).

221 See e.g. P.Oxy. LIX 3997 (3rd/4th c); P.Kell. I 6 (c. AD 330); P.Kell. I 71 (mid-4th c); 72 (mid-4th c); 73 (4th c); P.Oxy. LIX 4003 (4th/5th c).

222 P.Oxy. LIX 3997 (3rd/4th c); P.Kell. I 71 and 72 (mid-4th c); P.Abinn. 30 (mid-4th c).

223 See e.g. P.Mil.Vogl. I 24 (AD 117); P.Mich. VIII 490 (2nd c); P.Oxy. XVIII 2192 (2nd c); P.Oxy. LIX 3990 (2nd c); 3992 (2nd c); 3993 (2nd/3rd c); P.Flor. II 244 (AD 255); P.Oslo III 161 (late 3rd c); P.Mich. III 216 (= SB III 7248; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 14) (late 3rd c); P.Kell. I 66 (early 4th c); P.Kell. I 7 (c. AD 350?); P.Oxy. LVI 3861 (4th/5th c); LIX 4004 = CHAPA, 1998, no. 11 (5th c).

greater dimension.[224] Comparable evidence is provided by potsherds, where postscripts may be put at the left side[225] or in the top margin.[226]

10 Addresses and delivery notes

If a new sheet is utilized for the letter, the address is written on one or both of the exposed panels of the rolled-up spill (§ 11), in two halves separated by the binding;[227] when the sheet carrying the letter is unrolled, the address is seen on the back. Conversely, if the letter is written on the back of a previously used piece of papyrus, there were many ways of writing the address. A vertical strip of inked surface of the recto could be washed to take the address, at 90° to the text itself.[228] In other cases the address was written in the blank spaces: it may run between the remains of two consecutive columns[229] or between different sections of the previously written text;[230] it may be written in the margin along the greater dimension,[231] below the previously written text;[232] and it may be written on the verso of the sheet, in either margin and at 90° to the text of the letter itself.[233] Furthermore, it may even happen that the address is written across the original text carried by the recto, at right angles to it.[234]

There are many cases of letters lacking an address: perhaps the letter-carrier did not need it;[235] or perhaps the letter was expected to travel inside a bundle.[236] By contrast, other letters contain precise directions for delivery in addition to the

224 P.Giss. 103 (= NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 43; GHEDINI, 1923, no. 24) (4th c); P.Kell. I 67 (4th c).

225 O.Claud. II 248 (mid-2nd c); O.Florida 17 (2nd c).

226 O.Claud. II 226 (mid-2nd c).

227 On bindings see § 11 below.

228 P.Oxy. LXVII 4626 (after AD 259).

229 P.Flor. II 118 (AD 260; cf. *BL* I: 148); 173 (AD 256); P.Oxy. XXXI 2600 (3rd/4th c).

230 P.Flor. II 129 (AD 260; cf. *BL* I: 149); 188 (mid-2nd c).

231 P.Oxy. LIX 3991 (2nd/3rd c).

232 P.Oxy. LVI 3855 (c. 280/281).

233 SB VI 9415/1 (AD 266); P.Flor. II 154 verso (AD 267; cf. MITTHOF, 2007: 194); P.Flor. II 158 (mid-3rd c).

234 Examples from the letters relating to Appianus' estate (§ 1): P.Flor. II 132; 133; 171; 175; 249; SB VI 9415/9 (= P.Prag.Varcl II 30); see further P.Flor. II 157. Other texts: P.Mert. III 114 (2nd c); P.Oxy. XLVII 3358 (4th c).

235 PARSONS, 1980: 5.

236 PARSONS, 1980: 15 n. 34. On bundles see § 12 below.

names of the addressee and of the sender. For instance, the city where the receiver lives may be indicated; or the writer may specify the name of the person at whose house the letter should be delivered.[237]

11 Closing and sealing practices

Although there is evidence of letters being thrown away in a carelessly folded shape,[238] it was regular practice to package them for dispatch according to standard rules.[239] The completed letter was rolled up along the greater dimension, either (a) on the horizontal axis or (b) on the vertical one depending on whether the sheet on which it was written was meant to be kept horizontally or vertically before the reader's field of vision. The resulting package was either a long narrow spill or a tall one. In the case of procedure (b) the letter was usually rolled up leftwards with the right-hand edge inside. As has been observed, this practice imitates that of literary rolls, which were rolled up with the end inside so as to enable the reader to see the beginning of the text as soon as he began to unroll the closed roll. Yet contrary to this practice letters occur which were rolled up with the left edge inside.[240] In the case of method (a) the letter was usually rolled up with the bottom edge inside; this, too, enables the reading of a text from the start, downwards from top to bottom, as soon as the package begins to be unrolled. However, we possess letters which were rolled up with the top inside.[241] Deviations from these practices are in evidence. Letters occur which were folded inwards from both sides.[242] It also happens that tall strips were folded in half, head to foot or vice versa;[243] and in the sixth century

237 City: GONIS, 1997c: 58; ZIEMANN, 1910: 282–283. Delivery of letters to third parties: LLEWELYN, 1994a. On directions for the delivery of letters see further LLEWELYN, 1994b: 29ff.

238 Note especially P.Oxy. LVI 3858 (4th c).

239 PARSONS, 2007: 124; IOANNIDOU in HANDLEY/IOANNIDOU/PARSONS/WHITEHORNE, 1992: 119, 121, 137, 142, 158, 179, 183–184, 186; REA, 1991: 47; SIRIVIANOU in SIRIVIANOU ET AL., 1989: 100, 102, 104; PARSONS, 1980: 4–5.

240 E.g. P.Oxy. LIX 3988 (2nd c?); 3998 (4th c); 3999 (4th c); P.Oxy. LVI 3860 (late 4th c); P.Haun. II 25 (4th c).

241 P.Oxy. LIX 3994 (early 3rd c) is a case in point.

242 P.Mich. XVIII 790 (2nd/3rd c); P.Oxy. XXXI 2600 (3rd/4th c); LIX 4005 (6th c).

243 P.Oxy. LIX 3991 (2nd/3rd c); P.Oslo III 88 (late 4th c); P.Oxy. LVI 3861 (4th/5th c).

there is evidence for sheets being folded from right to left.[244] Whatever the rolling-up method chosen, the resulting package was squashed flat, the exposed edge was tucked inside to protect it, and the flat package was tied with a binding, usually round the middle. There is also evidence for the use of two strings;[245] and the package might be bent in half with the binding being fastened closed to the joined ends of the package.[246] More complicated practices were used in the case of packages carrying extra messages on either face.[247]

After being closed, letters were usually sealed. Sealing practices changed in the course of time. Clay seals were used in the early Ptolemaic period, but became most rare thereafter.[248] In the Roman period it was widespread practice to draw a saltire pattern over the string binding the flat package so that any attempt at tampering would be detectable. The letters of the first, second, and third centuries display fairly simple drawings.[249] From about the fourth century onwards the signs of patterning became more elaborated.[250] These, however, were frequently omitted in the sixth and seventh centuries. In Arab-ruled Egypt official letters from the chancery of the Umayyad governor were sealed at the foot.[251]

244 P.Oxy. LVIII 3932 (6th c).

245 P.Oxy. LIX 3998 (4th c).

246 P.Oxy. LIX 3999 (4th c).

247 See SIRIVIANOU in SIRIVIANOU ET AL., 1989: 125.

248 VANDORPE, 1995: 12. Apparently only two of the surviving examples of clay seals (VANDORPE, 1995: 46–47, nos. 72–87) are post-Ptolemaic: one belongs to a letter of the mid-third century (SB VI 9467) and the other to a letter assigned to the sixth century (P.Genova I 33). For a third (apparently dubious) item, see p. 13 n. 1 of Vandorpe's book.

249 VANDORPE, 1995: 12–14, 48–49 (nos. 93–148).

250 VANDORPE, 1995: 14–15, 49–50 (nos. 149–181).

251 BELL, 1910: xlii.

12 Conservation

Letters travelled either as single sealed sheets or in bundles of two or more items.[252] They might not be successfully delivered to the addressees;[253] and completed letters might not be dispatched at all.[254] But, in the case of successful delivery, how were letters kept by the recipients before being either reused as scrap papyrus (§ 4) or thrown away on the rubbish dumps? In the Roman period, it was an essential requirement of state record-keeping practice that correspondence exchanged between officials be duly registered in the bureau so that all messages, both incoming and outgoing, might be kept available for consultation.[255] Letters on papyrus were built into files in roll form.[256] First, the original letters were pasted together to form long rolls (τόμοι συγκολλήσιμοι).[257] We possess fragments of such pasted-up rolls made up of letters received by strategi, royal scribes, and other officials, civil and military;[258] there is evidence for the practice of sticking outgoing (or incoming) orders;[259] and there exist fragments of pasted-up rolls consisting of incoming and outgoing correspondence.[260] Second, the original letters were copied out on new rolls. Fragments of such letter-books occur which comprise series of copies of correspondence

252 References to bundles of letters: SPP XX 24. 3–4 = SB I 5282 (2nd/3rd c); P.Ryl. IV 604. 28–31 (3rd c); P.Oxy. XX 2273. 32 (late 3rd c); PARSONS, 1980: 14 n. 21. For a photograph of such a bundle, see plate 3 in MONTEVECCHI, 1988 (the two letters constituting the packet have since been unbound; for a discussion of their contents, see BALCONI, 1997). For one example of a letter enclosed in a packet of papers, see P.Oxy. XXXIII 2679 (2nd c) and the editor's introduction; for another case, see PARSONS, 2007: 125.

253 For one example of an undelivered bundle of letters, see BALCONI, 1997. On the delivery of letters see especially PARSONS, 2007: 125–126; BAGNALL/CRIBIORE, 2006: 37–40; LLEWELYN, 1994b: 26–47; and also PARSONS, 1980: 5. On the official postal service in the Roman empire see RANKOV, 2006; NELIS-CLÉMENT, 2006; LLEWELYN, 1994b: 13–22. On the official postal service in Arab Egypt see RÉMONDON, 1953: 129.

254 Cf. SALVO, 1998: 133–134; PINTAUDI, 1998/9: 142.

255 CUGUSI, 1989: 413–414.

256 SKEAT, 1964: xxi–xxii, who notes examples of this practice from the Ptolemaic period.

257 CLARYSSE, 2003: 355 n. 31.

258 Strategus: P.Oxy. XLVII 3348 (AD 228–231/232); for references to such rolls, see EITREM/AMUNDSEN, 1936: 69. Royal scribe: SB XVIII 13175 (AD 194); P.Oxy. XLII 3030 (AD 207?). *Curator*: P.Oxy. LV 3793–3794 (= ChLA XLVII 1426–1427) (AD 340). Military officials: CUGUSI, 1983: 138 n. 493.

259 Cf. P.Oxy. LX 4059 (AD 159–163), which contains two orders from the strategus to the state bankers.

260 See e.g. P.Bub. I 4 (AD 221) and FRÖSÉN/HAGEDORN, 1990: 98–99 for further details.

incoming to the office of the strategus;[261] and there are rolls consisting of copies of outgoing letters of a variety of officials.[262] Similar archival practices were used in the administrative units of large estates, of which the record-keeping practices in many ways resembled the state ones. Thus it is not surprising to find employees following the practice of filing business letters by pasting sheets together.[263] But what about correspondence on private matters? Was it built into extensive files? Cicero's acquaintances kept book-rolls comprising filed incoming letters (*libri epistularum adlatarum*) as well as filed outgoing letters (*libri epistularum missarum*);[264] and early Roman Egypt has yielded evidence for the practice of sticking Latin private letters together into pasted-up rolls.[265] But in the private sphere neither pasted-up rolls nor letter-books made up of copies were ever normal ways of record-keeping.[266] There is evidence, instead, for the practice of keeping letters folded one inside the other,[267] and of storing up single sheets of papyrus as well as entire rolls in jars or in wall niches.[268] Jars, however, would seem to have been inconvenient repositories for consultation.[269]

Was private correspondence kept for long, or was it not? And why was it kept at all? It is hard to tell. If account is taken of sheets of papyrus carrying dated texts on the backs of dated letters dealing with matters of business, then it

261 P.Oxy. LX 4060 (AD 161); P.Oxy. XIX 2228 (AD 283 or 285); P.Amh. II 137 (AD 288/289), see SKEAT, 1964: xxii; P.Panop.Beatty 2; PSI X 1125 (AD 302), see LOBEL/WEGENER/ROBERTS/BELL, 1948: 83.

262 Copy-rolls of correspondence sent out by strategi: P.Oslo III 82 (3rd c); P.Panop.Beatty 1. One item from the latter has been reprinted with facing translation and succinct notes by TRAPP, 2003 (no. 65). For a register of prefectorial letters, see P.Oxy. XLVII 3343 (AD 204–206). For a copy-roll of letters dispatched by a military official at Babylon, see P.Flor. II 278 = ChLA XXV 779, of AD 203/204.

263 P.Berl.Sarisch. 10; P.Flor. II 159 recto + SB VI 9364. Cf. MITTHOF, 2007: 191; PINTAUDI, 1998/9: 141–142.

264 Cicero, *Verrines* II 3. 167. Cf. CUGUSI, 1983: 140.

265 CUGUSI, 1983: 140 and n. 505; *CEL* II: 11.

266 CLARYSSE, 2003: 355; PARSONS, 1980: 15 n. 39A.

267 P.Oxy. XXXI 2598 (3rd/4th c).

268 For an archive of official and private letters found in a jar at Edfu, see RÉMONDON, 1953: v–vi and GASCOU, 1979: 25. For further examples of this storage practice, see MESSERI, 2005: 15 (including n. 22); RÉMONDON, 1953: v. Papyri and potsherds found in wall niches: GRENFELL/HUNT/HOGARTH, 1900: 52; ZUCKER/SCHUBART, 1971: 38; MESSERI/PINTAUDI, 2000: 265; on this storage practice see HUSSON, 1975: 179, and also PARSONS, 1980: 15 n. 39A. Claudius Terentianus' letters (§ 1) were found in a niche under a staircase of a private house at Karanis, see STEPHAN/VERHOOGT, 2005: 198–199.

269 Cf. RÉMONDON, 1953: vi.

is possible to observe, for example, intervals of several years between the dates of the letters on the fronts and the dates of the items on their backs.[270] But there is nothing to tell whether in such cases the original letters were kept for reference for some time or if the sheets carrying them were stored up to be reused as scrap papyrus soon after being delivered. One other example will suffice. The man who occupied the house at Euhemeria where all the letters of Lucius Bellenus Gemellus (§ 1) were found[271] appears to have kept messages dated 94 to 110. Why did he in October 110 still want to keep a sixteen-year-old letter on practical matters, such as P.Fay. 110? Was it because the sheet carrying it was meant to be used one day as scrap papyrus? We simply do not know.

13 Bilingualism

Egypt had two languages in use besides Greek: one was Latin and the other Egyptian. But before the fourth century Latin had a marginal place in society,[272] and Egyptian was virtually unused as a written language in daily life, except for tax receipts and temple documents – most Egyptians having to resort to Greek whenever they wished or needed to write a letter.[273] Things changed in some respects in the later Roman period. On the one hand, Latin became more widespread than earlier, although its diffusion was by and large a short-lived one.[274] With the rise of the Coptic script in the third century, on the other hand, Egyptians found a new means of written expression, which appears to have been used for private correspondence from about the 330s.[275] Yet Egyptians continued to write in Greek on occasions. Greek letters thus represent important sources of information on bilingualism in Greek and Egyptian as well as in Greek and Latin throughout the first four or five centuries of the Christian era; and they provide

270 A long interval intervenes between SB VI 9364 (which joins P.Flor. II 159 recto, p. 116) and SB VI 9467 (on the date of the latter see MITTHOF, 2007: 191); and there is an interval of no fewer than 152 months between P.Ryl. II 237 and P.Ryl. II 238 (cf. RATHBONE, 1991: 50).

271 GRENFELL/HUNT/HOGARTH, 1900: 261–262.

272 *C.Gloss.Biling.* II: 8–11; ADAMS, 2003: 527; BAGNALL, 1993: 231; KAIMIO, 1979: 27–28; STEIN, 1915: 132–186.

273 FEWSTER, 2002: 225; BAGNALL, 1995: 19 (= 2007: 41–42); 1993: 234–235, 237–238; CLARYSSE, 1993: 201. For a survey of Demotic texts of the Roman period, see ZAUZICH, 1983.

274 *C.Gloss.Biling.* II: 11; ADAMS, 2003: 635–637; BAGNALL, 1993: 231–232. See further HORN, 1984: 1373–1375 on the impact of Latin upon Coptic.

275 BAGNALL, 1993: 238–240.

invaluable evidence on Greek-Egyptian bilingualism in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. Although evidence of multilingualism involving Greek, Latin and Coptic is rare,[276] this phenomenon is likely to have been regarded as potentially affecting epistolary communication as much as the spoken language. Attention may be called to a conversation manual that was written on papyrus in the late fifth or early sixth century. The extant sheet contains three versions of a couple of scenes of everyday life, of which the second draws on the spoken language as well as on the repertoire of written epistolary usage. The first version is in Latin, written in Greek letters. This is followed by a Greek version and by a Coptic translation of the Greek text.[277]

Private correspondence written in Greek by first-language speakers of Egyptian and Latin shows varying levels of linguistic accomplishment. This in turn points to a variety of levels of competence in Greek as a result of differing levels of second-language learning. In an excellent study of bilingualism, James Adams has recently discussed a large number of cases of interference from Greek in Latin texts, and from Latin in Greek texts, including letters.[278] Greek epistolary texts of the fourth to eighth centuries supply comparable evidence of interference from Egyptian. Attention may be called, for example, to three letters of fourth-century date. A man writing on behalf of a group of Christians, among whom is an anchorite named John, prefixes the Coptic masculine article to a Greek noun.[279] An Egyptian writing a Greek letter to the same John has no control over grammar and syntax.[280] A monk from a Melitian monastery in the Heracleopolite nome writes a letter from Upper Egypt back to his brethren, which exhibits cases of code-switching and interference from the writer's first language through imperfect competence in Greek. He lapses into Coptic script when he has to spell a place name; he adopts transliterated Coptic when he has to mention the name of the village to which his monastery belongs; and like John's correspondent he has no command of case endings.[281] In post-conquest

276 ADAMS, 2003: 529–530.

277 P.Berol. inv. 10582, ed. SCHUBART, 1913. The papyrus has been reedited as C.Gloss.Biling. I 15 and CPL 281. The epistolary expressions are found on the verso, lines 103–124. For similar scenes, see *CGL* III: 284 (l. 36ff.), 655 (no. 4).

278 ADAMS, 2003.

279 P.Herm. 10. 2, reedited as NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 85. 2. ZUCKERMAN, 1995: 188–194 argues that the anchorite John was John of Lycopolis.

280 P.Herm. 7, reedited as NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 82.

281 P.Neph. 12. On confusion over case endings as a well-known indicator of interference from Egyptian, see also FEWSTER, 2002: 235.

Egypt, the impact of written (and spoken) Arabic, if any, on Greek epistolary language has yet to be investigated.

In a multilingual society the question arises of what factors determined language choice on any particular occasions. This issue is a very complex one. The greeting at the end of the letter may be in a language other than Greek, namely in Latin or Coptic.[282] In some cases this may well have been the writer's native tongue,[283] but in other cases the context may have been a more complex one.[284] It has been observed, for example, that in one Greek notification of AD 23, which is addressed to a Greek-speaking high official, the Latin clause at the end is unlikely to be in the writer's first language in view of the indicators of interference from Greek which it contains; the writer may have been a native speaker of Greek switching into Latin although the addressee was a Greek-speaking official.[285] Furthermore there is evidence to show that writers versed in both Greek and Latin might use either language when writing to the same individuals. Claudius Terentianus (§ 1) wrote to his father five letters in Greek and six letters in Latin.[286] A *curator* of a Roman *praesidium* in the second century wrote in both languages to one and the same addressee.[287] It would seem that both Terentianus and his father had the choice of using either language, but the reason or reasons behind Terentianus' choices are beyond retrieval.[288]

There is further, and indeed more complex, evidence of code-switching within single texts. Let us consider, for instance, a set of three letters sent out by a certain Theon, perhaps a Christian priest, in the late fifth or early sixth century. In two of these letters[289] the main text (including not only the body of the letter

282 Latin: P.Mert. III 115 = ChLA XLVI 1363 (early 4th c); P.Oxy. LV 3793 = ChLA XLVII 1426 (AD 340); P.Abinn. 16 (mid-4th c); P.Köln IV 200 = ChLA XLVII 1455 (5th/6th c). Coptic: P.Amh. II 145 (= W.Chr. 53; NALDINI, 1998 (1968), no. 49; O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 2; GHEDINI, 1923, no. 41) (4th/5th c).

283 For example, the anchorite John who appends a Coptic farewell to a Greek letter (P.Amh. II 145, see preceding n.) seems to have been a native speaker of Coptic, see ZUCKERMAN, 1995: 189–190, 191.

284 Cf. ADAMS, 2003: 396–399.

285 P.Oxy. II 244 (= ChLA III 206; CPL 175), discussed by ADAMS, 2003: 306–308, 397–398, 399.

286 Greek letters: P.Mich. VIII 476–480. Latin letters: *CEL* I 141–146.

287 O.Claud. II 366 is written in Greek, whereas O.Claud. II 367 is a Latin letter.

288 On this issue see most recently KRAMER, 2007: 62–63; ADAMS, 2003: 593–597.

289 P.Oxy. XVIII 2193 (= O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 53) and 2194 (= O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 54). They have recently been reedited as *CEL* I 243 and 244 respectively, and also as ChLA

but also the prescript) is written in Greek, whereas Latin is used for an unusual preamble, apparently reminiscent of *Wisdom* II 23–24, which is found on top of the prescript;[290] and even the address on the back is in Latin. Of the third letter only the lower half is preserved:[291] here too, as in the other missives, the body of the letter and the closing formula are in Greek, whereas the address on the back is in Latin; but unlike those letters, this one displays two closing formulae, of which the second is written in Latin but is not equivalent to the preceding Greek formula. How these cases of language shift are to be explained we are unable to say. Somewhat different, yet equally puzzling, evidence is provided by a number of fourth-century epistolary ostraca, where Greek and Coptic alternate. In two of the published items the prescript and the closing formula are in Greek, whereas the main body of the letter is reportedly written in Coptic.[292] In three or perhaps four more texts we find a Greek prescript followed by Coptic throughout the rest of the letter.[293]

Bilingual texts of a different kind are also in evidence. One sheet of papyrus occurs which carries two (unfortunately very fragmentary) versions of one and the same letter, both seemingly penned by the same individual in the late first or early second century: one is a Latin letter, written in a Latin cursive equipped with Latin lectional apparatus, whereas the other is a Greek letter, penned in a clear Greek semicursive.[294] Whether the Greek text represents a translation of the Latin version or vice versa cannot be established; nor is the purpose of the translation clear. Educational purposes are likely to account for the contents and layout of a remarkable manuscript of the late third or early fourth century. The surviving fragments carry two versions of a number of model letters of thanks, advice, and congratulation. One version is in Latin and the other in Greek, set out in parallel. The former seems to be the original version, although doubts have been cast on the possibility of Latin being the writer's mother tongue.[295]

XLVII 1410 and 1411. See further CAVALLO, 2005: 67 n. 155 on the Latin hand used for the address.

290 On the puzzling text of this preamble see *CEL* III: 286; VAN MINNEN, 1993: 120.

291 P.Köln IV 200 (= *CEL* III 244bis; ChLA XLVII 1455).

292 O.Douch V 547; 606.

293 O.Douch I 44 (?); V 508; 524; 636.

294 P.Köln III 160 (= *CEL* I 166; ChLA XLVII 1454).

295 P.Bon. 5, reedited as *CEL* I 1, C.Gloss.Biling. I 16, and CPL 279. See further MALHERBE, 1988: 44–57, where an English translation is provided. For linguistic commentaries, see *CEL* II: 3–7, and *C.Gloss.Biling.* I: 118–123.

Furthermore, we possess Greek texts written in the Latin alphabet and Latin texts written in Greek characters.[296] The use of transliteration may be a matter of choice, or may depend on the writer's partial illiteracy in the target language. The interpretation of evidence may not be as straightforward as it may seem. It has been suggested, for example, that in one Greek letter written in Latin characters by a Roman citizen the use of transliterated Greek should not be taken as evidence for the writer's unaccomplished literacy in Greek.[297]

14 Style and register

Style is a multifaceted concept, and it is important to distinguish between levels. The presence or absence of formulae, formulaic utterances, and recurrent themes are matters of epistolary style, and their use pertain to generic composition. How these elements are expressed is a matter of linguistic style. The levels of linguistic accomplishment in turn vary considerably. Among fourth-century private letters, for example, we possess an illiterate jumble of clichés[298] and a repository of commonplaces couched in rather flowery language.[299] Furthermore, there is evidence to show that the ability to handle formulae does not necessarily correlate with competence in writing correct Greek. A little boy writing a childlike letter to his father in his own unpractised hand knows how to phrase the prescript (§ 5, formula (a)) and the closing formula (§ 8, formula (b)), but his colloquial Greek is marred by many flaws.[300] A letter which a widow (or someone on her behalf) wrote in the late fourth century in a large, sloping hand exhibits a respectable prescript formula (§ 5, (b)) couched in ungrammatical Greek.[301] Even professional scribes in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries might write atrocious Greek in fluent chancery hands.[302]

Ancient Greek is a complex language, which embraces the usual types of sociolinguistic variations. Broadly speaking, a distinction must be drawn be-

296 ADAMS, 2003: 40ff.; KRAMER, 1984.

297 P.Oxy. XXXVI 2772. Cf. ADAMS, 2003: 65–66.

298 P.Oxy. XXXI 2602.

299 P.Herm. 5, reedited by TIBILETTI, 1979 (no. 27) and MOSCADI, 1970 (no. 10).

300 P.Oxy. I 119, reedited as HENGSTL, 1978, no. 82 (2nd or 3rd c). Cf. PARSONS, 2007: 129.

301 P.Herm. 17. On the date see ZUCKERMAN, 1995: 188.

302 P.Oxy. XVI 1831 = O'CALLAGHAN, 1963, no. 24 (late 5th c); P.Oxy. LVI 3870 (6th/7th c); P.Oxy. LIX 4008 (6th/7th c).

tween, on the one hand, the formal, artificial, rhetorical character of the high-level language used by the literati in their written performance, possibly for display in an official setting, and the relaxed Greek spoken by the illiterate on the other. The self-conscious language of Libanius' letters is an example of high-level epistolary style, and it is not surprising that they were used as models. The language of a tiny fraction of the surviving published letters on papyrus compares in some respects with it. Instead, a large number of the remaining letters approximate to the Greek spoken by the illiterate; and the language of many letters fluctuates between the two poles.

The range of resources available to an educated Greek who wished to depart from casual performance was very wide. They include rhetorical preambles and philosophical digressions; well-rounded periods, in various degrees of complexity; artificial orderings of clauses; artificial orderings of words within the clause; rhythmical sequences; metaphors, similes, and other rhetorical figures; syntactic constructions characteristic of higher-level prose; puristic variants; elements of poetic language; and other choice lexemes. He could use one or more of these ingredients. He could either confine his chosen high-level features to a particular context or could spread them throughout his composition; and he could either avoid or create concentrations of different ingredients. These typologies of premeditated language behaviour produce varying degrees of stylistic refinement. The stylistic level of a text depends, in consequence, on the degree of consistency to which the above features are integrated into it, as well as on their degree of reciprocal interaction. Educated writers could thus rely on countless modes of refinement. A variety of profiles of stylistic refinement are in evidence in private correspondence on papyrus.

The question arises of what factors determined written epistolary performance on any particular occasions. This is a very complex issue, which cannot be summarized here. But one point must be emphasized. Theorists of letter-writing stressed the importance of the recipient in the process whereby utterances should be selected for adoption in epistolary composition.[303] This factor certainly exerted a great influence on address practices, especially from the third century onwards. The occasion also mattered: we have seen earlier (§ 5) how specific formulae or expressions might be chosen to suit particular occasions.

303 LUISELLI, 1997.

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Figures

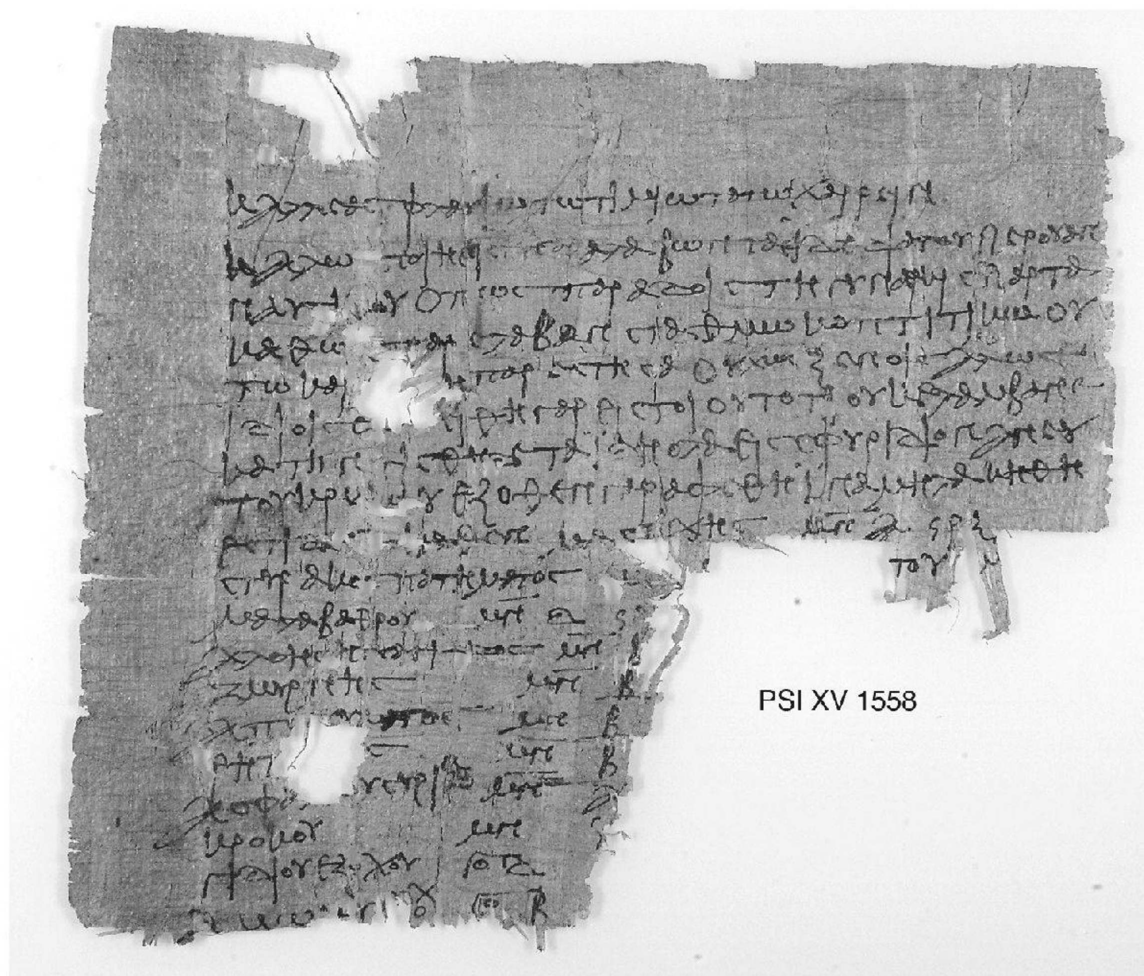

Fig. 1.1. Business letter. Third century. PSI XV 1558 = PSI Congr. XI 12 (Università degli Studi di Firenze, Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli", PSI inv. 2450).

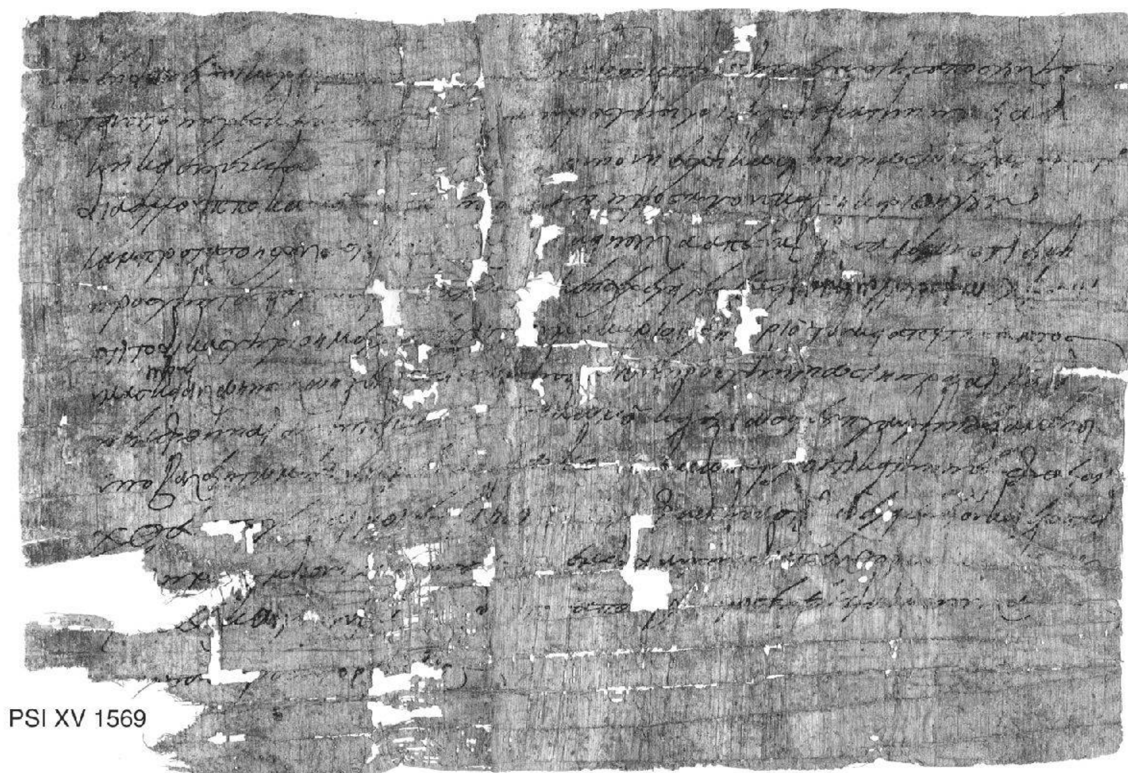

Fig. 1.2. Official letter. Sixth century. PSI XV 1569 = PSI XV Estr. 1569 (Università degli Studi di Firenze, Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli", PSI inv. 499).

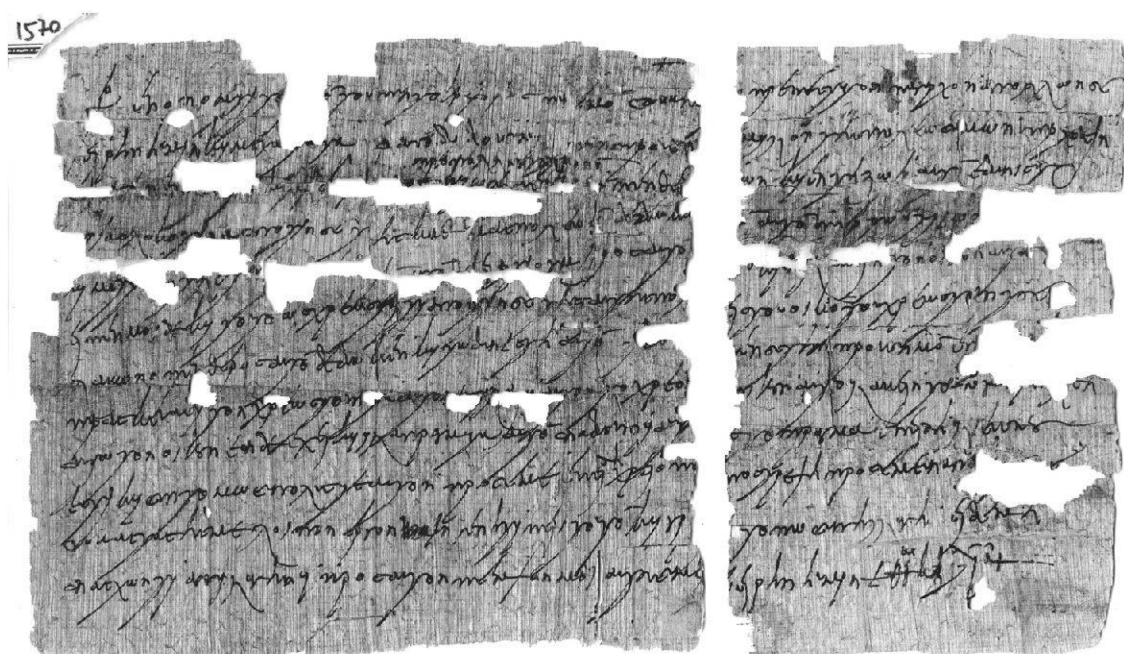

Fig. 1.3. Official letter of the duke of the Thebaid. Second half of the seventh century. PSI XV 1570 = PSI Congr. XI 14 (Università degli Studi di Firenze, Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli", PSI inv. 473).