

## 8. Letter with an Order to Arrest

Lincoln Blumell (Provo)

[P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 75](#)

35,9 x 10,5 cm

Provenance unknown

7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century

plate XIII

This papyrus contains a letter that was written along the fibers of a darkened sheet of papyrus. The body of the letter is comprised of eight lines that are mostly intact with the exception of a few lacunae. While the address on the back is largely effaced there are legible traces of a few Greek words.

The hand is clear and regular and has a slight rightward slant; the average line height is 0.95 cm. On paleographic grounds the letterforms are characteristic of the late seventh or eighth century with a close paleographic parallel being P.Brux.Bawit 4 (VIII). A reference to Fustât (Babylon/Cairo) in l. 6 secures a post-conquest date.

The provenance of this text is unknown. The acquisition records indicate that this papyrus was acquired by Heidelberg through Karl Reinhart at the end of the nineteenth century along with a number of other papyri in its collection. Nevertheless, it may be possible that this letter originally emanated from Aphrodito, or the region thereabouts, given that it contains a few orthographic peculiarities common in these region: β => ϣ (l. 4); ετβε => ντβε (ll. 6, 7, 8); ειρε => ηρ (l. 4); ρεν- => ρν- (l. 2, 3, 6, 7). Additionally, as some of the papyri acquired by Reinhart were known to have come from Aphrodito,<sup>1</sup> this proposal is a distinct possibility.

The letter concerns administrative matters and was sent between two lesser officials. Though the title of the sender is no longer extant, in the address on the verso the word *comes* (κόμης) can with confidence be reconstructed. Elsewhere the letter refers to the *dux* on two occasions. It seems that the sender was acting on his orders.

The sender of the letter is an official whom the *dux* apparently holds responsible for collecting and sending workers, sailors and craftsmen, or their works' money worth if they do not do the labor themselves. He reports that some sailors had paid money to a certain individual named Enoch in order not to have to go in person, but apparently Enoch had absconded with the money. They complained to the *dux* and now the sender asks the addressee to bring him the said Enoch for questioning.<sup>2</sup>

As the letter closes the sender asks the addressee to send some other workers, guardsmen this time, to patrol a certain district. A postscript follows in l. 8, possibly referring to payments that would release a sculptor from the obligation to work in person.

1 For this see P.Lond. IV p. xi.

2 For texts illustrating similar situations see e.g. P.Lond. IV 1494, 1496, 1497, 1508, or 1509.

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[ῥαθην με]ν̄ ἡπ̄ωαχε̄ τιπ̄ροσκῡνεῑ ἡ̄τεκ̄περιβλ̄(επ̄)τ̄(οσ) ἡ̄μ̄ντ̄χ̄οεῑς ἡ̄σ̄ον  
 επ̄[ειδ̄η] ἡ̄τ̄α ῥ̄ἡ̄νεε̄[β]  
 [κατηγορ]ε̄(?) ἡ̄π̄εν̄χ̄οεῑς πεγ̄κλ̄(εε̄στα)τ̄(οσ) π̄δ̄ογ̄ζ̄ κ̄ᾱτ̄ᾱ εν̄ω̄χ̄ δε̄ ἡ̄τ̄ᾱγ̄τι  
 ῥ̄ἡ̄τ̄ριμη̄[ς]ε̄ἡ̄ νᾱγ̄ ῥ̄ᾱ νε̄χ̄η̄γ̄  
 ἡ̄τ̄ᾱγ̄τ̄νοο̄γ̄ ἡ̄αῑ ε̄π̄ροο̄γ̄. λοῑπο̄ν̄ μᾱρε̄ τ̄[εκ]ἡ̄ἡ̄τ̄περιβλ̄(επ̄)τ̄(οσ) ἡ̄χ̄οεῑς ἡ̄σ̄ον  
 ἡ̄ρ̄φ̄ω̄γ̄ ἡ̄γ̄ᾱςφ̄αλῑζε̄ ἡ̄μο̄ο̄  
 5 ἡ̄σ̄οο̄γ̄τ̄ἡ̄ ἡ̄γ̄τ̄νοο̄γ̄γ̄ ἡ̄αῑ ε̄πεῑ π̄νο̄γ̄τε̄ σο̄ο̄γ̄ν̄ πε̄ν̄χ̄οεῑς π̄δ̄ογ̄ζ̄ ᾱφ̄κε̄λε̄γε̄ ἡ̄αῑ δε̄  
 τ̄νοο̄γ̄ ἡ̄γ̄π̄λ̄[ἡ̄ρο̄γ̄]  
 ἡ̄[γ̄]ω̄ ἡ̄τ̄βε̄ π̄νο̄γ̄τε̄ πᾱμε̄ρῑτ̄ ἡ̄σ̄ον̄ ε̄ω̄ω̄πε̄ ἡ̄κο̄ω̄γ̄ τ̄ω̄ω̄ ῥ̄ἡ̄ρω̄με̄ ἡ̄ξ̄ικ̄αν̄ο̄ς ἡ̄ἡ̄  
 ῥ̄ἡ̄ε̄ργ̄ᾱτ̄η̄ς το̄γ̄φῑλ̄[ο̄κᾱλε̄]  
 ἡ̄ἡ̄ε̄κ̄με̄ρῑς τ̄η̄ρο̄γ̄ ω̄αν̄το̄γ̄εῑ ε̄ρο̄γ̄ν̄ ε̄φ̄ω̄σᾱτον̄ ε̄πεῑ ῥ̄ἡ̄κο̄γ̄ῑ ἡ̄ν̄ νε̄ ἡ̄εν̄τ̄ᾱγ̄ω̄ω̄πε̄  
 ἡ̄π̄ροο̄γ̄ ἡ̄τ̄βε̄ τε̄[. . .]  
 ἡ̄αῑ ε̄ῑς̄ῥ̄αῑ ἡ̄μο̄ο̄γ̄ τ̄ιᾱσ̄πᾱζε̄ ἡ̄τεκ̄περιβλ̄(επ̄)τ̄(οσ) ἡ̄(μ̄ν̄τ̄)χ̄οεῑς ἡ̄σ̄ον̄ δε̄σ̄πο̄(τ̄α) +  
 ἡ̄γ̄ω̄ ἡ̄νᾱγ̄ ἡ̄τ̄βε̄ ἡ̄σ̄ο̄τε̄ ε̄τ̄μ̄ π̄ρ̄ἡ̄μο̄ο̄γ̄ἡ̄[κ]

Verso (→)

[ ±10 ] ἡ̄δ̄ελ̄(φ̄ω̄) . . . . . κ̄[α]ἰ̄ τ̄ω̄ περιβλ̄(ε̄π̄)τ̄(ω) κ̄ό̄μ̄ε̄τι . . . . . +  
 κα . . . . . [ ±8 ]

2 προσκυνέω, περιβλεπτος, par. περιβλ<sup>T</sup>, [ἐπειδή] 3 [κατηγορέω], εὐκλεέστατος, par. εγκλ<sup>T</sup>, δούξ, κατά, τριμήσιον 4 λοιπόν, περιβλεπτος, par. περιβλ<sup>T</sup>, ἀσφαλίζω 5 ἐπεὶ, δούξ, κελεύω, πληρώω 6 ἰκανός, ἐργάτης, φιλοκαλέω 7 μερίς, ἐπεὶ 8 ἀσπάζομαι, περιβλεπτος, par. περιβλ<sup>T</sup>, δεσπότης, par. δεσπ<sup>o</sup>

## Translation

[First] of all I make obeisance to your brotherly *spectabilis* lordship.

[Since] some sailors <sup>(3)</sup> made [accusations (?)] against Enoch before our most famous *dux*, because they had given him *trimesia* for the ships, <sup>(4)</sup> (and a message) was sent to me today, then may your *spectabilis* brotherly lordship act accordingly and arrest him <sup>(5)</sup> immediately, and send him to me. For, God knows, our lord the *dux* has ordered me: “send and [fulfill]!”

<sup>(6)</sup> Furthermore, by God, my beloved brother, when you have finished order some able men and some workers that they [maintain] <sup>(7)</sup> your entire district until they come to Fustât since there are no small matters which have happened today concerning the [...].

<sup>(8)</sup> These things I write them. I greet your brotherly *spectabilis* lordship, master. And take a look concerning the ransom for the sculptor [...].?

*Verso*: . . .to [my] brother . . . and the illustrious *comes* . . .

2 [ῥαθην με]ν̄ ἡ̄π̄ωαχε̄: For parallels of phraseology see: SB Kopt. II 811,1 (VI/VII); 853,1 (VI/VII ?); 895,1 (?); cf. SB Kopt. I 292,1–2 (VII); SB Kopt. II 804,1 (VII); 836,1

(VII/VIII). Another possibility for the lacuna is: [νωρορι με]ν νπωαχε (SB Kopt. I 296,1 [?]).

τεκπεριβλ(επ)τ(οc): On the title περιβλεπτος (περίβλεπτος) see: Förster, Wörterbuch, 638; cf. O. Hornickel, Ehren-und Rangprädikate in den Papyrusurkunden, Mainz 1930, 31–2. This epithet is attested overwhelmingly for the κόμες but is also used as an honorific title for various other lesser officials: βοηθός (CPR XXV 32,6 [c. 643–44]); διοικητής (CPR XXX 2,14 [c. 643–44]); μάγιστρος (PSI XIII 1344,5 [501–600]); οικονόμος (Oxy. XVI 2039,15 [562–63?]); όσπριγίτης (SPP VIII 1111,2 [633 ?]); πάγαρχος (P.Apoll. 29,11 ([Later VII]); σκρινιάριος; PSI V 481,13 [V–VI]); χαρτουλάριος (P.Oxy. XVI 1843,3 [623]). While this epithet is masculine (ππεριβλεπτος) the author of the letter has rendered it as a feminine due to the feminine abstract prefix μνητ-, see line 4: τ[εκ]μνητπεριβλ(επ)τ(οc) νχωειc νcοm. On this phenomenon see: Layton, Coptic Grammar, 109; P.Bal. II 622. It is also worthy of note that in the Greek address on the verso (l. 9) where the writer also employs περίβλεπτος he uses the masculine definite article.

ρ̄ν̄νεε[β]: Alternatively it might be ρ̄ν̄νεε[ϗ]. ρ̄ν̄- here for ρεν-, likewise in l. 3, 6 and 7).

3 ν̄πενχωειc πεγκλ(εεcτα)τ(οc) π̄λοϗζ: For this phrase see: P.KRU 10,18 (VIII); BKU III 420,6 (?); P.Mich.Copt. 14,2 (VIII); SB Kopt. 242,29 (649 CE). On the title εγκλεεcτατοc (εὐκλεέcτατοc) see: Förster, Wörterbuch, 305; cf. O. Hornickel, Ehren-und Rangprädikate in den Papyrusurkunden, 13. The latest dated reference to a *dux* can be found in KRU 41,64 (29 April 749 CE). It is not known if the office of the *dux* survived into the ‘Abbāsid period. See N. Gonis, Another Look at Some Officials in Early ‘Abbāsid Egypt, ZPE 149 (2004), 195. For the office of the *dux* in the sixth century see J. L. Fournet, Hellénisme dans l’Égypte du VIe siècle: La bibliothèque et l’oeuvre de Dioscore d’Aphrodité (MIFAO 115/1), Le Caire 1999, 330–36. Besides the *dux* the epithet εγκλεεcτατοc is primarily used for the αμπα (άμπα).

κατα ενωx: For the meaning of κατα as “against” see Förster, Wörterbuch, 384 where he cites CPR IV 1,7 (VII/VIII).

4 ηρφωϗ: l. ρ̄πρωβ. See P.Bal. I pp. 54–5 and 93–4 where ειρε => ηρ and β => ϗ interchanges are explained; cf. W. Vycichl, Koptische Quellen zur Topographie von Hermopolis, in: Günther Roeder (ed.), Hermopolis 1929–1939, Hildesheim 1959, 137–39.

5 The sender of the letter underlines that it is he who is held responsible. That is to say, the *dux* made him responsible for collecting and sending money for the sailors/workers if these do not go in person. Now, since some sailors say that they have paid their money to Enoch, Enoch needs to be brought in, to be questioned on what had happened to that money.

6 ν̄τ̄βε: l. ετβε (also in ll. 7 and 8). On the ετβε => ν̄τ̄βε interchange see P.Bal. I 73 n. 27 where examples are given (cf. Crum, dict. 61a).

τοϗφιλ[οκαλε]: For the meaning of the verb φιλοκαλε (φιλοκαλέω) see: Förster, Wörterbuch, 850. τοϗ- for τροϗ-/τρεϗ-, 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural of the causative infinitive.

7 φωcατον: This is the post-conquest name of Babylon, which is derived from the Latin *fossatum* (“ditch”). See: Herbert Verreth (ed.), A Survey of the Toponyms of Egypt in the Graeco-Roman Period, Köln/Leuven 2008, 93; P.Lond. IV p. xviii. In Greek the name is typically rendered τὸ Φοcσᾶτον. In dated Greek texts the term is not attested before the beginning of the eighth century (P.Ross. Georg. 47,5 [20 September 709]).

Ⲫ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉⲓⲥⲗⲁⲓ ⲙ̀ⲙⲟⲟϥ ⲧⲓⲁⲥⲡⲁⲗⲉ: Seemingly echoes the Greek epistolary cliché ταῦτα γράφω ἀσπαζόμενος . . . (P.Gen IV 168,19 [576–625 CE]).

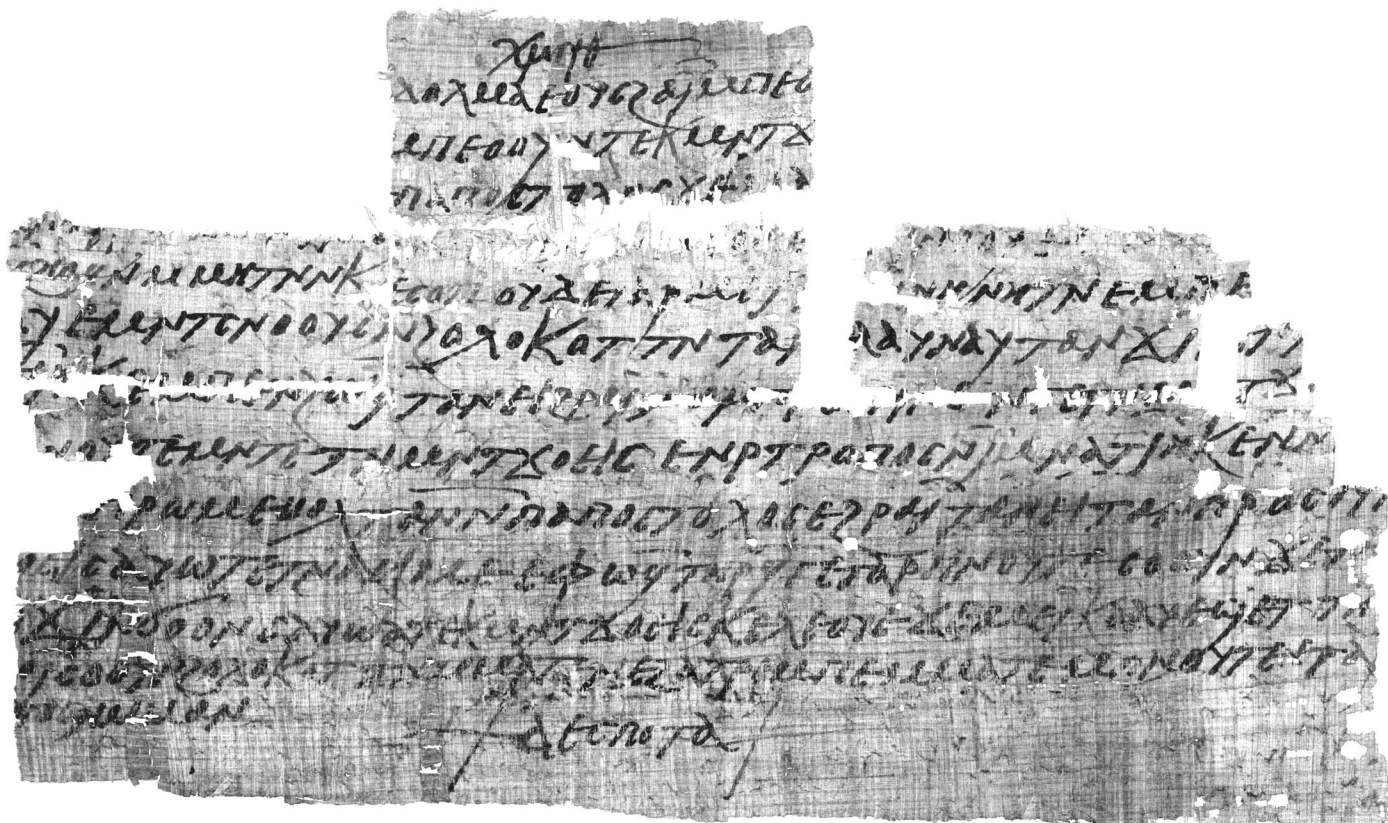
Δⲉⲥⲡⲟ(ⲧⲁ): This term seems to be rendered in Greek script δέσπο(τα). It seems more likely that the author is employing the vocative form δέσποτα instead of the nominative form δεσπότης; e.g. CPR XIX 30,3 (VIII); P.Ant. II 95,16 (VI); P.Oxy. XVI 1855,14 (VI/VII).

ⲁϫⲱ ⲁⲛⲁϫ ⲛ̀ⲧⲃⲉ ⲛ̀ϫⲟⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲙ ⲡⲗⲙ̀ⲟϥⲛ̀ⲓⲕ: ⲟⲧⲉ in this context most likely a form of ⲟⲩⲧⲉ “ransom” (nn. m. Crum, dict. 362b), payments due for the release of a worker, perhaps here for a ϫⲙ̀ⲟϥⲛ̀ⲓⲕ “sculptor”, with ϫⲙ̀- für ϫⲁⲙ̀- (Crum, dict. 673b) denoting a craftsman, who prefers to pay money rather than to go and work in person.

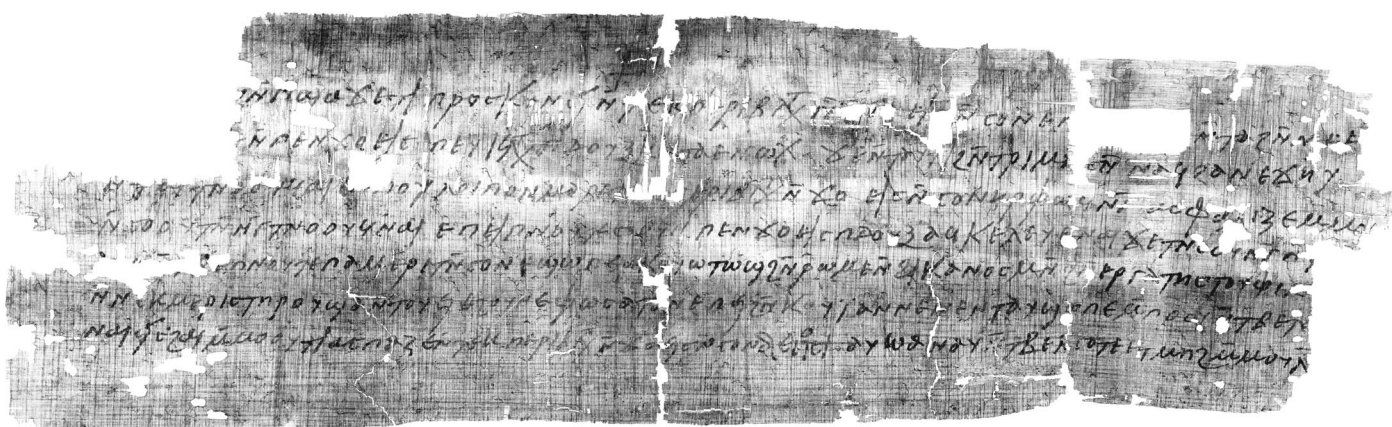
Verso:

The closest Greek parallel to the fragmentary remains of the address may be found in P.Amh. II 154,12 (643–44 CE) where the address begins with: † τῷ δεσπό(τη) μ(ο)υ ἀδελφῷ τ(ῷ) α[ ] ( ) περιβλ(έπτῳ).

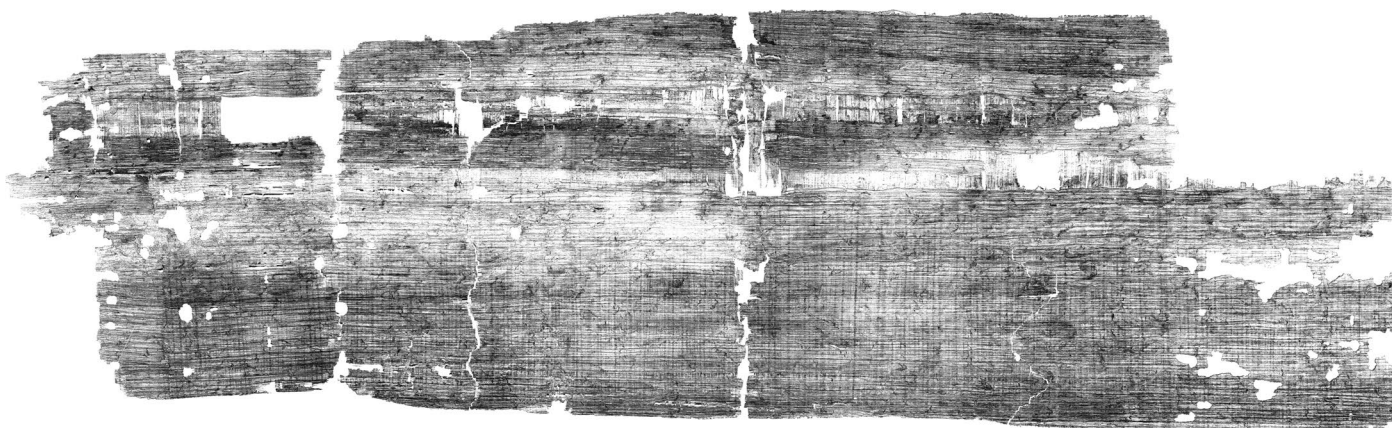




Nr. 07 Recto



Nr. 08 Recto



Nr. 08 Verso