

## 11. Letter of an Ecclesiastical Superior to His "Spiritual Son"

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[P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 313](#)

34,0 x 32,0 cm

Provenance unknown

(Hermupolis?)

7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century

plate XV

The light-brown papyrus contains a letter written against the fibers. The margins are 3,2 cm on the left and 4,5–5 cm at the top, while the writing reaches the right and bottom edges. The address on the verso, written with the fibers, has a top margin of 4,5–5 cm.

The hand is a quickly written but quite elegant uncial with minor cursive influence, and a noticeable slant to the right. The more cursively written Greek date in l. 21 and the address on the verso were written by the same hand. The letters are generally bimodular and quadrilinear, though without rigid consistency. Only kyima, gamma, and the odd iota extend above the line, while lambda, rho, upsilon, chi, and shai generally reach below the line, as do other letters on occasion. Omegas are frequently raised. Points, or roundels, adorn the majority of letters and interpuncts separate clauses. The hand has affinities with a CPR XII 4 (837 CE).

Two small fragments are detached: the one with ]HT[ might be the end of [NHT] in the middle of l. 5, while the other, with ]TE[, might belong to the end of one the lines near its current position because of the coloration of the fibers on the back.

This letter is an impressive specimen. Its size, the quality of the hand, and the stylized Greek address point to high-level correspondence. The addressee, Apa Ioul( ) Kouï, is styled πνευματικὸν τέκνον, which suggests that the sender of the letter, whose name is lost, was an ecclesiastical superior.

After an invocation, greeting, and prayer, the sender acknowledges the receipt of Apa Ioul( ) Kouï's letter (ll. 1–4). Something specific in this letter, largely lost in the lacunae, has caused the writer great grief, which prompts another prayer, this time for the help of God the Almighty (παντοκράτωρ) (ll. 6–8). After this second prayer, the writer returns to the content of his correspondent's letter, but the fragmentary nature of these lines makes it difficult to determine the train of thought. It seems to involve business matters, including an order to not borrow anything (ll. 8–10). The next lines are even more fragmentary and concern the location of the recipient (ll. 11–14).

After what appears to be a proverbial phrase used to reprimand the recipient (l. 15), the rest of the letter is completely preserved, although comprehension is still difficult. The sender continues to express his grief about what Apa Ioul( ) Kouï wrote and goes on to remind him of his general diligence towards him (ll. 16–19). The letter moves to its conclusion with prayers, the farewell formula, and, unusually, a date (ll. 17–21), but the writer later added two additional lines of economic instructions as an afterthought (ll. 22–23).

The language of the letter is standard Sahidic, except for two instances of ε for η (εωωυ, l. 15; ετετριαι, l. 21), which Kahle notes is common in Ashmunein.<sup>1</sup> Since many Heidelberg

<sup>1</sup> P.Bal. I, pp. 113 ff.

Coptic papyri originate from this region, it seems reasonable to suppose that this is the provenance of the present text as well. Stylistically, the writer is fond of  $\alpha\gamma\omega$  + conjunctive to continue prayers introduced by the optative and he repeats the phrase  $\epsilon\tau\upsilon\epsilon\ \theta\epsilon\ \nu\tau\alpha\kappa\chi\omicron\omicron\varsigma\ \chi\epsilon$  three times.

The letter can be dated palaeographically to the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The formulaic greetings and address find some parallels in the archive of Apa Georgios,<sup>2</sup> which G. Schmelz has recently re-dated to the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>3</sup> although the present text is set apart by the Greek syntax of the address.

↓

[+ σὺ]ν θ(εῶ) τιῶνι εἰποῦσαι ντεκμντμαινοῦτε εἰτα(εἰν) γμ πχοεἰς μν  
 [π]οῦσαι μπεκνι τηρϣ· πχοεἰς ι(ησοῦ)ς πεχ(ριστο)ς πεννοῦτε εφεζαρεζ  
 [ε]ρ[ο]κ εβολ γμ πεθοοῦ νιμ[·] ἀγῶ νησμοῦ εροκ μν [πεκνι μν]  
 [νετ]ῶοοπ νாக· μννσα ναι [α]ιχι ννεκςζαι διοῶοῦ [εσοοῦν επεν-]  
 5 [τα]κςζαιϣ ναι· αιμκαζ [νηητ] μματε ντερεκταμο[ι χε? ca. 5]  
 [ca. 2?] ροϣμ\ο/ ϣ· ερε πχοεἰς [πεννοῦ]τε ππαντοκρατωρ [χοοῦ τεϣ-]  
 [βο]ηθια ναν νμμακ ζν οὔσεπη· ἀγῶ νησβτε η[ ca. 5 πεκ]  
 ωναζ μν νεκωηρε· ε[τ]βε θε ντακχοος χε τεκ[ ca. 8 ]  
 [ca. 2?] εχωκ· νгерζωβ ζιωϣ· εωωπε κσοοῦν χε [ ca. 8 ]  
 10 [ π]ωλϣ [·] [ca.4] ητοοτκ [ε]ηε μπρχι λααγ εχωκ [ ca. 8 ]  
 [ ca.4 ] [ ca. 15 ] ἀγῶ εἰτα πμα εκοῦη[ζ? ca. 7 ]  
 [ ca.4 ]η[ ca. 15 ]ε]μπητ νγβωκ ε[ ca. 8 ]  
 [ετ]βε θε [ν]τακχοος χε τα[ει] ερης κσοοῦν χε η[τοκ μπεκ-]  
 ῶβωκ ελααγ μμα ηποοῦ· εἰτα πετεγ[ ca. 13 ]  
 15 ννερωμε εἰβωω εσωοῦ ζι νεζοοῦ [ ca. 17 ]  
 σοοῦν χε τιοῶωω πεκςνριστα· ἀγῶ παρηητ ροσε μμοκ  
 ἀγῶ εἰτα θε ντακχοος χε ταβνοῦρωμε νγβωκ ζαζηηϣ  
 λοιπον ῶαιῖ ταβομ ταῶνι ζι πζωβ· εἰῶανζε εροϣ ῶαι  
 οὔωρη νாக· ερε πχοε[ι]ς μαζε νμμακ· ἀγῶ νηκα πεχσμοῦ  
 20 μν τεφειρηνη εζραι εχωκ· μν πεκνι τηρϣ· ἀγῶ νητοῦχοκ  
 επρωμεβωων· οὔχαι ζν τβομ ετετριας ετογααβ + μη(νός) Φαρμ(οῦ)θ(ι) α /+\  
 ἀγῶ εωωπε ῶακβν αρωιν η οὔκογι ιωτ ῶωπ πωηη  
 τααϣ εβολ· ζαηλως ῶωπ οὔειτος ρολως ντιζε ῶακτι βολ ζιωωϣ

1 pap. εττ<sup>λ</sup> 2 pap. ιϛ πεχϛ 6 παντοκράτωρ 7 βοήθεια 16 συνίστημι 18 λοιπόν 20 ειρήνη 21 τριάς 23  
 ἀπλῶς, εἶδος, ὄλως

2 Trismegistos Archives (<http://www.trismegistos.org/arch>), archID 511.

3 G. Schmelz, Das Archiv des Archimandriten Apa Georgios. Texte aus P.Fay.Copt. und P.Lond.Copt. in: A. Boud'hors, J. Clackson, C. Louis, and P. Sijpesteijn (edd.), *Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt. Ostraca, Papyri, and Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, Cincinnati 2009, 216–223.

→

+ τῷ τὰ πά(ν)τα θεο(φιλ(εστάτω)) φιλοχ(ρίστῳ) πνευματικῷ τέκν(ῳ) κύρω Ἄπα  
 Ἰουλ(-) Κουι ἐνδ(οξοτάτῳ) ἄρχ(ι-) + [ NN †]

## Translation

With God! I enquire after the well-being of your honored piety in the lord and [the] well-being of your entire household. <sup>(2)</sup> May the Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, protect you from all evil <sup>(3)</sup> and may he bless you, [your household, and] your possessions.

<sup>(4)</sup> Furthermore, I [have] received your letter. I read it [in order to know what] you had written to me. <sup>(5)</sup> I was greatly grieved in my [heart] when you informed [me that ...] ...

<sup>(6)</sup> May the Lord, [our] God, the Almighty (παντοκράτωρ) [send his] help (βοήθεια) to us and you at once, <sup>(7)</sup> and may he prepare [... your] life with your children. <sup>(8)</sup> Regarding how you said that your [...] upon you, <sup>(9)</sup> and you are working for him. If you know that [...] come to an agreement [...] ... [...] through you, <sup>(10)</sup> then do not borrow anything [...]

<sup>(11)</sup> Regarding where you are dwelling [...] <sup>(12)</sup> down and you go to [...]

<sup>(13)</sup> Regarding how you said, "and I come south," you know that [you were not] <sup>(14)</sup> able to go anywhere today. Because of those who [...]

<sup>(15)</sup> No one who plunders sheep shall find / hit (?) [...] <sup>(16)</sup> know that I wish that you were not involved (συνίστημι). My heart suffers for you also <sup>(17)</sup> because of the way you said, "and I find someone and you go with him."

<sup>(18)</sup> Now (λοιπόν), I (usually) do my utmost and I search for the thing. If I find it, I (usually) send (it) to you. <sup>(19)</sup> May the Lord support you; may he place his blessing <sup>(20)</sup> and peace (εἰρήνη) upon you and your entire household; and may he protect you from the evil man.

<sup>(21)</sup> Farewell in the power of the Holy Trinity (τριάς). In the month of Pharmouthi, 1.

<sup>(22)</sup> And whenever you find lentils or a bit of barley, buy! The small (kind), sell! <sup>(23)</sup> In short (ἀπλῶς), buy an item (εἶδος) exactly (ὁλῶς) in the way in which you usually sell it.

## Verso

To the most God-loving in all respects and Christ-loving spiritual son, lord Apa Ioul( ) Kouι, the most esteemed arch(i- ), [(from) NN].

**3** [πεκνη μν]: Possibly πεκνη τηρῳ is to be reconstructed here, as in ll. 2 and 20.

**4–5** λιοφωγ [εσοογν επεν|τα]κςχαις ναι: εἰμε or σωτη would also fit the sense, but the writer is fond of σοογν (elsewhere in ll. 9, 13, and 16).

**6** παντοκρατωρ: Common in oaths from the mid-fourth century on, the epithet appears in epistolary prayers around the same time.<sup>4</sup>

[χοογ τεφ-]: [τνογ τεφ-] would fit the lacuna at the end of line equally well.

**9** ηγερωβ ζωφω: "Work for him" (Crum, dict. 654a).

4 E.g., P.Abinn. 22 (after 351 CE [?]). See generally O. Montevecchi, Pantokrator, in Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni, Milano 1957, 401–432.

**13** Τᾶ[εἰ] ἔρησ: If read and understood correctly, the writer is quoting his correspondent's letter and has retained the conjunctive without adjusting the grammar to the new context. Cf. l. 17.

**15** ΝΝΕΡΩΜΕ ΕΥΒΩΩ ΕΩΩΟΥ ΖΙ ΝΕΖΟΟΥ .[: In this negative energetic future clause, the main verb appears to be ΖΙ-, the nominal state of either ΖΙΟΥΕ "to hit," or ΖΕ Ε- "to find." One might consider, "no one who plunders a sheep shall strike the cows," or "no one who plunders a sheep shall find the clothes." In either case, the phrase has a proverbial ring and it may be employed as a reprimand for something Απα Ιουλ( ) Kouι has done.

**16** ΟΟΥΝ: Taken here as an imperative, but a lost subject at the end of the previous line cannot be ruled out.

ΠΕΚΥΝΖΙΣΤΑ: Apparently unattested as a noun (see Förster, Wörterbuch, s.v. συνίστημι, p. 779), so one might think instead of ΠΕΚ- for ΜΠΕΚ- (negative perfect) and an intransitive meaning of the verb (unattested in Förster).

**17** ΤΑΘΝΟΥΡΩΜΕ ΝΓΒΩΚ ΖΑΖΤΗΦ: Again, the writer appears to quote from his correspondent's letter, retaining a first-person conjunctive (cf. l. 13). The second verb may have been switched from an original first person to the second person.

**18** ΤΑΩΙΝΕ ΖΙ ΠΖΩΒ: Crum, dict. 569a does not record ΩΙΝΕ with ΖΙ-, so perhaps one should read ΤΑΩΙΝΕ <ε>ΖΙ ΠΖΩΒ, with ΖΙ being the nominal state of ΖΕ Ε- (cf. l. 15 n.).

**19** ΜΑΖΕ: for ΑΜΑΖΤΕ (Crum, dict. 10a), rather than a form of ΜΟΟΩΕ. Crum gives examples of ΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΜΝ-, meaning "support".

**20** ΕΧΩΚ· ΜΝ ΠΕΚΗ ΤΗΡΦ: Elsewhere, the interpunct separates clauses, so perhaps ΜΝ ΠΕΚΗ ΤΗΡΦ was added as an afterthought.

**21** ΤΩΜ ΕΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ : For ΕΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ l. ΝΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ.

+ μη(νός) Φαρμ(οῦ)θ(ι) α /+\\: The date is written more cursively, but by the same hand. The closing cross was written below the line because the writer ran out of space. Dating is unusual in private letters of this period and its inclusion here reflects the high status of the sender, who was perhaps accustomed to official correspondence, or the work of a professional scribe.

**22** ΠΩΗΜ: Almost certainly comparative, but it is difficult to decide between "the smaller (quantity)," "the newer (crop)," or "the cheaper one." Small lentils and barley might be of better quality (i.e. sell what is as good as you would buy it), unless one is to assume that the advice is to sell the lesser quality goods.

ΟΥΚΟΥ ΙΩΤ: l. ΟΥΚΟΥ ΝΙΩΤ.

**23** ΟΥΕΙΤΟΣ: εἶδος (Förster, Wörterbuch, s.v., pp. 227–228), a word more at home in contracts and wills, but fitting the economic instructions at the end of this letter. It appears in Coptic as early as the Kellis letters (P.Kell. V 22, 77; 39, 15; 40, 32), where the editors note that it "often means no more than 'article' or 'item'," (P.Kell. V 39 ad l. 15). This general meaning is clear from phrases such ΝΑΕΙΔΟΣ ΝΖΙΜΕ and ΝΕΥΕΙΔΟΣ ΝΕΖΟΟΥΤ in the will P.KRU 76, 38–41.<sup>5</sup> Here, εἶδος seems to refer to any good available on the market.

ΝΤΙΖΕ ΟΥΑΚΤΙ ΒΟΛ: l. ΝΤΙΖΕ ΕΟΥΑΚΤΙ ΕΒΟΛ.

5 On this document, see T. Wilfong, Women's Things and Men's Things, BASP 40 (2003) 213–221.

Verso: The address is written in the same hand as the body of the letter, but with Greek syntax. Numerous Coptic letters from ecclesiastical or monastic circles continue the Byzantine practice of adorning the outsides of letters with elaborate and highly stylized addresses. These Byzantine addresses consist of a long dative phrase, loaded with honorary epithets and titles, followed by a more perfunctory identification of the sender in the nominative.<sup>6</sup> Numerous examples can be consulted in CPR XXX and P.Oxy. XVI. These Greek addresses were a key part of a scribe's training, a process that one can witness in the writing exercise P.Ross.Georg. V 48 (VIII CE), where the scribe-to-be struggles in copying down a similar address: + τῷ δὰ πάνδ(α) θεοφιλο(στάτῳ) (καὶ) εὐλο(γιμωτάτῳ) [.

θεο(φιλ(εστάτῳ)) φιλοχ(ρίστῳ): Probably haplography rather than the unattested compound θεοφιλόχριστος, which would be an unusual Greek construction (although comprehensible). Cf. P.Lond.Copt. I 464,1: τιασπαζε ντετνθεοφιλc/ μνηφίλοx/ νωμρε ετταιηγ.

πν(ευματ)ικῳ τέκν(ῳ): Found elsewhere in Greek only at CPR XXX 22v, 3 (ca. 640–700 CE), but P.Fay.Copt. 17v has the equivalent νωμρε πν(ευματ)ικῳ.

ἐνδ(οξοτάτῳ) ἄρχ(ι-): G. Schmelz has recently argued that the similarly-styled ἐν<sup>Δ</sup> ἀρ<sup>Χ</sup> in P.Fay.Copt. 12, from the archive of Apa Georgios, should be considered an archimandrite because of the monastic context of the letter and the archive.<sup>7</sup> In the present case, however, ἀρχιμανδρίτης seems less likely because of the greeting and prayers on behalf of the recipient's household. ἄρχων, referring generally to a secular official, or the ecclesiastical titles ἀρχιεπίσκοπος and ἀρχιδιάκονος all seem possible.

6 See D. Hagedorn, Zu den Adressen einiger spätantiker Briefe, ZPE 165 (2008) 129–132.

7 G. Schmelz (n. 3), 218–219.



