

## 10. Personal Letter

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[P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 125](#)

13,5 x 9,5 cm

provenance unknown

beginning 8<sup>th</sup> century (?)

plate XIV

The papyrus is a fragment of a Coptic personal letter, seemingly addressed to a superior. It shows the remains of eight lines: the left hand side and the top of the document have been torn or cut (the lines are very even), however clear margins survive on the right and at the bottom of the text. The reverse is blank. The cut at the top is irregular, leaving traces only of the second half of the first line and the first half of the second line. Five horizontal tears and one vertical (perhaps fold-lines) obscure the ends of lines 2 and 3, and the middle of line 4. It is possible that the vertical tear (roughly centered in the surviving fragment) is an ancient fold-line. If this is the case the papyrus was probably folded in half twice, such that what survives is only half of the original width of the document. Line 5 appears to have been written supralinear to line 6 in a cramped script.

The well formed, semi-cursive hand is reminiscent of hands from the beginning of the eighth century such as in the P.Mon.Apollo plates. The supralineation employed by the scribe takes two forms. A strong, straight line is used above ϣⲛ (l. 3), τϣ (l. 4), and ⲙ (l. 6). However, a small curved stroke is also employed regularly: above ⲙ in line 2; α, ε, ⲛ, and ι in line 4; four times above ⲛ and once above ο in line 7; and once above ⲛ in line 8<sup>1</sup>. A combination of this line and a dot seems to be used above the ι of οϣϫαⲓ on line 8. The regular use of this stroke above ⲛ suggests a supralinear stroke, however its use above α, ε, and ι is suggestive of diaeresis. The scribe also employs a midpoint before ετβε on line 4, and before εⲓⲛⲁⲟϣϫⲁⲓ on line 8.

Little sense can be made from what remains of this text – as such, a translation has not been given. That we are dealing with a personal letter is suggested by the formulaic ⲁϫⲡⲁⲗⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ ⲑⲉⲟⲧⲓⲙⲓⲧ/ ⲛ̅ϫⲟⲓⲉⲓ – “... greet you, God-fearing lord ...” (l. 7) and εⲓⲛⲁⲟϣϫⲁⲓ γⲁⲣ ⲛ̅ϣⲏⲧⲟϥ – “For it is through them that I will become well” (l. 8) (see A. Biedenkopf-Ziehner, *Untersuchungen zum koptischen Briefformular unter Berücksichtigung ägyptischer und griechischer Parallelen*, Würzburg 1983, 103.107). It is likely that the recipient was a monk, or held an ecclesiastic title, as the honourific ⲑⲉⲟⲧⲓⲙⲓⲧ(ⲏ)ⲧ(ⲟϫ) ⲛ̅ϫⲟⲓⲉⲓ is frequently used in a monastic context (See P.Mon.Apollo. 55.1,4,8; P.Pisentius 44.2; and P.Bal. 190.6; and without ϫⲟⲓⲉⲓ but in a monastic context: SB Kopt. I 302a and P.KRU 106,14; 46,106). Further, the terms δίδωμι – give (l. 2), κω περζο – give permission (l. 3), and κελεύω – order (l. 6) suggest that we are probably dealing with a request. Beyond these bare details, the lack of context for the remaining phrases prevents a more comprehensive understanding.

1 A supralinear stroke also occurs above ⲛ in line 5, however as this ⲛ is particularly cramped it is difficult to say which style of supralineation would have been employed.

(↑)

-----  
*traces* . N  
*traces* ]ΔΙΔΟΥ ἡμοου. . .  
 [κω πεγρο ριχωου ρ̄ν̄ ςυναρσις η̄ιμ  
 ]νᾱαρ̄ερᾱτ̄ϛ̄ · ε̄τβε δε νογκογ̄ι  
 5 ]κω πεγρο ριχ̄ν̄ ταρ̄ασ̄εον  
 ]γαρ δε πετνακελεγε ἡμοου ναγ  
 ]ασπαζε ν̄τετ̄ν̄ε̄ο̄τιμ(η)τ(ος) ν̄χοεις ν̄  
 --- ετογ]ᾱαβ · ειναουχᾱι γαρ ν̄ρητογ +

2 δίδωμι? 3 σύναρσις 6 κελεύω 7 ἀσπάζομαι. *pap.* θε̄ο̄τιμ\τ/. θεοτίμητος

2 ]ΔΙΔΟΥ is likely the end of a form of the Greek verb δίδωμι such as ἀναδίδωμι, ἀποδίδωμι or παραδίδωμι. All forms are attested with -ΔΙΔΟΥ endings, however of these ἀποδίδωμι is quite rare (Förster, Wörterbuch p. 79 lists only three occurrences). Both ἀναδίδωμι and παραδίδωμι are used in a range of contexts, and the present instance is too damaged for a reasonable guess at what was intended here (see Förster, Wörterbuch pp. 48–49 and 614).

3 The combination of κω + ρο occurs rarely (see also line 5). According to Crum, dict. 647a it has the meanings “give leave, license, heed (?)”. However this construction occurs rarely in Coptic texts (Crum cites only four instances) and often the meaning or context is unclear. This is the case with P.Lond. IV 1642.18 (αγω κογ πεκρω ριχενφ]) the only example given by Crum which uses both a possessive pronoun and the preposition ριχ̄ν̄.

ςυναρσις (ἢ σύναρσις), if correctly read here, must have the meaning “help”, “aid”. Förster (p. 776) also gives the technical meanings “rechnerische Zusammenstellung; Rechnungsübersicht”, however the only two examples he provides (P.CLT 5,53 and P.Lond.Copt. I 1105,8) both have the sense “help, aid”. Given that these are used in a religious context and that this text was likely addressing a monastic or ecclesiastical figure, this meaning seems likely here as well.

4 To read ν̄ογκογ̄ι as an adverb seems a reasonable approach to these letters. Alternatively, the ν̄ could be the initial N of a negation, the rest of which is lost in the lacuna. Other alternatives are much less likely. To read ουγ as the indefinite article, one would then have to cope with a superfluous N; and to read νογ- as the feminine, second person, singular possessive article is unlikely as the recipient is addressed with the masculine article in the closing formula (l. 7).

5 It is unclear whether ταρ̄ασ̄εον should be read as a Greek or Coptic word, or how it should be divided (if at all). A toponym ρασ̄ε is well attested in texts from the Hermopolite nome (Greek Ἄκις, see Drew-Bear, Le Nome Hermopolite (ASP 21), Missooula 1979, 55–56) and appears in other texts from the Heidelberg collection (P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 110,7), however such a reading does not explain the presence of τα.

6 The traces of the letter joining the *alpha* at the beginning of this line are reminiscent of the writing of ΓΑΡ on line 8. It is probable that this is part of a formula such as ΝΤΕΤΝ̄CΘΟΥΝ] ΓΑΡ, ‘for you know that...’ or ΠΝΟΥΤΕ CΘΟΥΝ ΓΑΡ... ‘for God knows that’ (for attestations of this formula see Biedenkopf-Ziehner, *Briefformular*, 221).

7 There is a grammatical contradiction between the feminine possessive article ΤΕΤΝ- on the adjective ΘΕΟΤΙΜΗΤΟΣ and the corresponding masculine noun ΧΘΕΙC. Kahle has noted similar cases with adjectives of similar type (see P.Bal. 191), and an exact parallel from the eighth century can be found in P.Mon.Apollo 55,8.

8 This line is likely the end of a request for prayers. A potential restoration would be [... ΑΡΙ ΠΑΜΕΕΥΕ Θ̄Ν̄ΕΤ̄Ν̄ΩΛΗΛ ΕΤΟΥ]ΑΑΒ · ΕΙΝΑΟΥΧΔΑΙ ΓΑΡ Ν̄ΖΗΤΟΥ – ‘remember me in your holy prayers, for it is through them that I will become well’ (for similar formula see Biedenkopf-Ziehner *Briefformular*, pp. 130–131, 261–264).

This fragment contains two columns of ancient Greek text. The left column begins with 'μαυτ' and 'καλαδα' and continues with several lines of script. The right column starts with 'νεωροπ' and 'εβολιμος' and also contains multiple lines of text. The papyrus shows signs of age and wear.

Nr. 09 Recto

A narrow horizontal fragment of papyrus containing a single line of ancient Greek text. The characters are somewhat faded but legible.

Another narrow horizontal fragment of papyrus with a single line of ancient Greek text, similar in style to the previous fragment.

Nr. 09 Verso (Ausschnitt)

A larger fragment of papyrus with several lines of ancient Greek text. The text is arranged in a single column and includes some larger characters and diacritics. The fragment is irregularly shaped with some missing parts.

Nr. 10 Recto