

LETTERS ON OSTRACA

P. J. Sijpesteijn

Amsterdam

In August 1972 fifteen ostraca were given to me by a dealer in antiquities at Luxor. According to the dealer the ostraca were found by fellahin in the vicinity of Esna (Latopolis Magna). One of the ostraca turned out to be a fake. The other ostraca (12 Greek and 2 Latin) are published below.

All the ostraca are letters or fragments of letters. None of the ostraca bears a date, but on palaeographical grounds the texts may be assigned to the middle of the second century of our era.

I do not think it necessary to deal with itacistic and kindred mistakes, although they will be corrected in the adnotatio critica, in the notes. I refer the reader to:

- E. Mayser (H. Schmoll), *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit*, Leipzig, 1906 sqq.;
 S. G. Kapsomenakis, *Voruntersuchungen zu einer Grammatik der nachchristlichen Zeit*, München, 1938;
 F. T. Gignac, *The Language of the Non-Literary Greek Papyri*, Proc. of the XIIth Intern. Congress of Papyrology, pp. 139 sqq., Toronto, 1970 and
 B. G. Mandilaras, *The Verb in the Greek Non-Literary Papyri*, Athens, 1973.

1

CELER TO PLUTION

10 × 9.5 cm.

A medium-brown ostrakon which is complete on all sides. The text has been written by a well-trained scribe with very dark ink.

- 1 Κέλερ Πλουτίωνι τῷ
- 2 ἀδελφῷ χαίρειν. Κα-
- 3 λῶς ποιήσης ἐτήσης
- 4 Κοκόνην στατήρα περὶ

5 ἀχοίρου. Μὴ ἀμελήσης
6 ἐτῆσε αὐτέν.

3 γ. ποιήσεις αἰτήσης
αὐτήν

4 γ. περί

5 γ. ἀχούρου

6 γ. αἰτῆσαι

Translation

Celer to his brother Plution, greeting. Please ask Kokone a stater on account of chaff. Do not neglect to ask her.

Notes

2/3 Cf. for the expression Καλῶς ποιήσεις (as for the expression μὴ ἀμελήσης in line 5) H. A. Steen, *Les clichés épistolaires dans les lettres sur papyrus grecques*, *Classica et Mediaevalia* I, 1938, pp. 119 sqq.

4 The proper name Κοκόννη is unknown.

Cf. for stater L. C. West/A. C. Johnson, *Currency in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, Princeton, 1944, p. 65 and p. 134.

2

VICTOR TO LUCIUS AUNAX

11.2 × 8.4 cm.

A dark brown ostrakon which is complete on all sides. The writing is quite faded and in several places difficult to decipher. The scribe does not seem to be a practiced writer.

1 Δὸς εἰς Ἀπολ traces
2 Οὐίκτωρ Λουκίω Αὔ-
3 νακι .αιριν. Κόμισσαι μῆ-
4 λα κ. Ἀριστάρχω δεκά-
5 πεντε καὶ πέντε Θαρ-
6 σέατι δώσις καὶ γράψον
7 πῶς στέχι τὸ παῖδιν σου.
8 Ἀσπασαι τὴν γυνήν σου
9 καὶ τὸ παῖδιν καὶ
10 Θαρσέαν.

1 γ. εἰς 3 γ. κόμισαι 6 γ. δώσεις 7 γ. στέγει (?); γ. παῖ-
διον, also l. 9.

Translation

Deliver to -----, Victor to Lucius Aunax-----, Bring 20 apples. Fifteen you will give to Aristarchus and five to Tharseas

and write how your son stands it(?). Salute your wife and your son and Tharseas.

Notes

- 1 There seems to be writing at the end of this line, but it is very faded. Perhaps it is possible to read 'Απόλλωνος πόλιν, though one would expect ἀπόδος (cf. P. Mich. VIII, 495, 34). Apollinopolis Magna (Edfu) is only 50 Km. to the south of Esna.
- 2/3 The proper name Αὔναξ is unknown.
- 3 One expects χαίρειν, but the first letter seems to be a theta and the last four letters are extremely doubtful.
- 5/6 The proper name Θαρσέας (cf. also I.10) is unknown, cf., however, Θρασέας.

3

CALPURNIUS TO ONNOPHRIS

10 × 10.5 cm.

A medium-brown ostrakon. Complete except for a few letters missing at the left. The text has been written by a well-trained scribe with clear dark letters. Lines 1-3 were added after the letter was finished. They are by the same scribe, but the letters are smaller and written with a thinner pen-point.

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Εἶπον καὶ Ὠρίωνι ἵνα |
| 2 | καὶ αὐτὸς πέμψῃ πόθεν λά- |
| 3 | βω καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ. |
| 4 | Καλ]ποῦρνις Ὀννόφρι |
| 5 | χαίρειν. |
| 6 | Καλ]ῶς ποιήσεις πέμψας μοι |
| 7 | φάσ]ιν πόθεν δύνομαι τὴν κιθά- |
| 8 | ραν] σου λαβεῖν. Ἐπέμψθη γὰρ ἐπὶ σέ. |
| 9 | . . .]υρσεν καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησες εἰσελθεῖν. |
| 10 | Ἐάν] σχολάζεις γράψον μοι παρὰ τίνες |
| 11 | αὐ]τὴν λάβω. Καλῶς ποιήσεις |
| 12 | πέ]μψας καὶ Βελλῆτι φάσιν εἰς καὶ |
| 13 | τ]ὴν συνορίαν ἵνα καὶ αὐτὸς γράψῃ |
| 14 | π]ερὶ τῆς κιθάρας αὐτοῦ ἐπεὶ οἶδατε |
| 15 | ὅ]τι ἀνάγκη ἐστίν. Μὴ με ἄτε- |
| 16 |] . γεισι. Μὴ οὖν ἀμελή(σης). |
| 17 | Ἐρρῶσ(θαί) σε εὖ]χομαι τα[|

Translation

I said it also to Horion in order that he himself too sends <a notice> from where I can catch also the one of him. Calpurnius to Onnophris, greeting. Please send me a notice from where I can catch your lyre. For it was sent to you. ----- and you did not want to go in. If you have time write me from whom I can catch it. Please send Belles too a notice even to the border-land in order that he himself too writes on account of the lyre, because you know that there is a necessity. Do not make me -----, Do not neglect it. I pray for your good health-----

Notes

- 9 Clearly part of a verb is missing here, but I have not found a suitable three-letter supplement.
- 16 Though no mark of abbreviation was written on the ostrakon I think ἀμελήσης was abbreviated, because there is still space enough at the end of this line to write σης and the lacuna of 10 letters at the beginning of line 17 is more than filled with ἐρρωσ(θαί) σε εὔ].

4

SERAPODORUS TO HIS BROTHER

10.2 × 7.4 cm.

A light-brown ostrakon which is incomplete at the right-hand side where only a few letters are missing and at the bottom. The writing is faded. A well-trained hand.

- 1 Σεραπόδωρ[ος
- 2 νῶ τῷ ἀδελφ[ῷ χαίρειν.
- 3 Ἐκομισάμην παρὰ [
- 4 τος (δραχμάς) 8 καὶ τὸ βιά[τικον
- 5 καὶ λέγει Ἀμμων ὅτι[
- 6 δάπανα (δραχμαὶ) ἱβ. Μεθ' ὑγία[ς
- 7 αἰτίζι Σατορνείλος [
- 8 χιν εἶνα αὐτὸς ἐχ[η
- 9 Γράφεις μοι περὶ

In the left margin, at right angles

IO Πέ<μ>ψις μοι τὸ βιάτ[ικον

II εἶνα πέμπω.

7 τ. αἰτίζει

8 τ. ἵνα, also l. II

IO τ. πέμψεις

Notes

- 1 Cf. for the proper name Σεραπόδωρος D. Foraboschi, *Onomasticum Alterum Papyrologicum*, Milano, 1968 sqq.
- 2 ω the end of the name of Serapodorus' brother.
- 4 τος the end of the name of the person from whom the four drachmae and the viaticum (cf. S. Daris, *Il lessico latino nella lingua d'Egitto*, Barcelona, 1971, s.v.; R. O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, Case Western Reserve University, 1971, Index 9, s.v.) were received. The word viaticum makes it probable that we are in a military environment.
- 7 The verb αἰτίζειν is new. Cf. L. R. Palmer, *A Grammar of the Post-Ptolemaic Papyri*, London, 1946, pp. 140 sqq. for many new verbs in—ίζω.

5

TAMERYLLA TO CELER

9.9 × 4.5 cm.

A medium-brown ostrakon which is incomplete at the right-hand side and at the bottom. Written by a well-trained scribe.

- 1 Ταμερύλλα Κέρερι [
- 2 χαίρειν. Ἐκομισάμ[ην παρὰ
- 3 τος κολοφώνιον [καὶ
- 4 ζ. Ἐγραψάς μοι [
- 5 επ[

1 τ. Κέρερι

Notes

- 1 The proper name Ταμερύλλα is unknown. τα undoubtedly is the Egyptian feminine article. The meaning of the name is "She of Mandulis" (cf. W. Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar*, Copenhagen, 1954, p. 169).
- 3 τος the end of the name of the person from whom Tamerylla received 1 koloophonion and 6 other things (in the lacuna at the end of this line we must probably read $\bar{\alpha}$ and another substantive).

6

A FATHER TO HIS SON(?)

17.8 × 13.8 cm.

A medium-brown ostrakon which is complete at the bottom and partially at the left- and right-hand side. The large letters are plainly written by someone who was not at all used to writing. With the exception of the last 5 lines I am not able to understand the text of this ostrakon.

1	]
2	]ληφα εκω. . .
3	]σουτο ἔδωκα δὲ
4	]αβαν πάντες ὡς
5	]· ἀραβῶνα εἰς λόγον
6	]· ουρις μονή πρὸς φόρτια
7	. . .]. ρες γάρ εσι. Δ[ή]λωσέν μοι εταχιπος
8	θέλεις ηκελα τῆς πρεσβυτάρας προειληπτε
9	τη θέλεις τὸ συνποσι σου ὅπου ηση παραειταλιν
10	ο δεκατῶ ειναι. Γράψεν μοι διὰ τοῦ δίδον-
11	τος τὸ ὄστρακον. Ἐρωτῇ σε, τέκνον, τὴν παρα-
12	θήκην, ἣν δωκά σοι, φυλάξε. Τὴν ἀδελφή σου
13	ἐπιηκουσου πολάλις. Ἐρῶσθαι ὑμᾶς εὐχο-
14	μαι.

10 Γ. γράψον

11 Γ. ἐρωτῶ

12 Γ. ἔδωκα; Γ. φυλάξαι; Γ. ἀδελφὴν

13 Γ. ἐπάκουσον; Γ. πολλάκις; Γ. ἐρῶσθαι

Translation

(Lines 10-14): Write through the person who gives you the ostrakon. I ask you, child, guard the deposit which I gave to you. Give ear to your sister many times. I pray for your good health.

Notes

5 Cf. for ἀρ(ρ)αβῶν = arra R. Taubenschlag, *The Law in the Light of the Papyri*³, Warszawa, 1955, pp. 408 sqq.; F. Pringsheim, *The Greek Law of Sale*, Weimar, 1950, pp. 333 sqq.

6]·ουρις probably a proper name.

7 Perhaps εἰσι.

7/8 Perhaps we should read δῆλωσόν μοι ἐκ<ν> τάχει πῶς θέλεις.

8 Perhaps ἡκ ἐκ<λ>α τῆς πρεσβυτέρας and a form of the verb προ-λείπειν.

9 Read θέλεις and τὸ συμπόσιον.

11 For ὄστρακον in a similar formula cf. O. Bod. 1991.

7

A SON TO HIS FATHER

10.5 × 6.5 cm.

A dark brown ostrakon which is only complete at the top. Written by a well-trained scribe with very dark ink.

1	]ρουχᾶτι τῷ πατρὶ
2	χαί]ρειν. Γινώσκιν σε θ[
3	]ακα σοι τὰ ἡμάτια χ[αί
4	]φασιν καὶ τὰ κρῆ[α
5	]σι παρὰ τοῦ ναυ[
6	]οὐκ ἐπεμψές μ[οι
7	]α Πάχορις ἀρτ[
8	]χης τῶν ἡμ[ατίων
9	] πέμψω σε ε[
10	πέμψ]ον μοι ξύλα[
11	] . . [

2 γ. γινώσκειν

3 γ. ἡμάτια

8 γ. ἡματίων

Notes

2/3 Exempli gratia we could supply θ[έλω ὅτι ἡγόρ]ακα

5 Perhaps τοῦ ναύ[του.

7 The proper name Πάχορις is unknown in papyrological sources, cf. Πακῦρρις; Πακοῖρις and Πάχωρις in W. Pape/G. Benseler, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, Braunschweig, 1911.

8

A FATHER TO HIS SON (AND HIS MOTHER?)

8.2 × 7 cm.

A medium-brown ostrakon which is complete at the top and at the right-hand side. The large letters are written by an unskilled scribe.

1	]ι τῷ υἱῷ πλῖστα
2	]τρι πάλα χαίριν.
3	]· ὄστρακα τοῦ κουρά-
4	τορος]πτο ἀπέσταλκες

- 5]δοι Πονπεσίω ἔδο-
 6]το τὸν κουράταρα
 7]τι ἀπεσταλκα'ς' υ[
 8]κεντυρίονος δ[

1 Γ. πλεῖστα
 κουράτορα

2 Γ. πόλλα; Γ. χαίρειν

4 Γ. ἀπέσταλκας

6 Γ.

Notes

- 3/4 It is impossible to know which kind of curator (cf. Daris, *op. cit.*, s.v.) is meant (cf. A. von Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*, Köln/Graz, 1967, Register A 2 and A 3, s.v.).
 5 The first letter of this line can also be an alpha.
 Πονπεσίω seems to be a form of the well-known proper name Πομπήιος.
 8 Cf. for κεντυρίων = centurio Daris, *op. cit.*, s.v.; von Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, Register A 2, s.v.

9

N.N. TO IULIUS EUPOLEMON AND TO NIKIARIOS(?)

11 × 7 cm.

A dark brown ostrakon which is complete only at the top and at the right-hand side. Very thin letters written by a well-trained scribe.

- 1]νιος χ(ιλί)αρχος) 'Ιουλίω Εὐπολέμω
 2 Ν]ικιαρίω τῷ τιμωτάτῳ
 3 χαίρει]ν. Γείνωσκε τὸν κράτι-
 4 στον στρ]ατηγὸν παραγινο-
 5 μενο κ]αὶ εὖ δίδοντα ἡ-
 6 μῖν]τῇ β. 'Επεὶ τῷ ξ -
 7].δης

3 Γ. γίνωσκε

Notes

- 1 χιλίαρχος = tribunus militum (a horizontal stroke above the χ does not seem to be the continuation of the preceding sigma but a mark of abbreviation), cf. von Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, Register A 2.

- 1/2 It is not clear how much of the ostrakon is broken away at the left-hand side. It is therefore possible that Julius Eupolemos had an alias or that the letter was written to two persons. In lines 3/4 I supplement κράτιστον and στρατηγόν. As κράτιστος is not an epitheton used for στρατηγοί (cf. O. Hornickel, *Ehren-und Rangprädikate in den Papyrus-Urkunden*, Giessen, 1930) I think another person (the praefect?) was mentioned in the lacuna at the beginning of line 4 and therefore we have at the left-hand side of this ostrakon more space than only for τῷ καὶ in line 2. I therefore think that this ostrakon was directed to more than one person.
- 4 Although one is inclined to think we are in a military environment because of the χιλίαρχος in line 1, στρατηγός as a military rank is in this period only used for the emperor.

10

N.N. TO N.N.

7.8 × 6.6 cm.

A dark brown ostrakon which is complete at the top, at the right-hand side and probably at the bottom. The very thin letters are written by a very well-trained scribe.

1	ἐ]πειδὴ ἔγραψεν ὁ ἑπαρχος ἡμῶν
2	τ]ὸ διπλωμα. Ἐξ αὐτῆς οὖν ἐλθέ' τω' ἐπεὶ
3	]αγεισα καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰσίου Τρύφων
4	]σοι ἐλθεῖ ἐπεὶ ἔγραψέν μοι ὁ ἑπαρ-
5	χ]ος]βολὴν ὁμοίως Ὡρίων
6	] . [.]ει εἰς παρεμβολήν
7	]υ ἡμῶν.

3 τ. Ἰσιείου

Notes

- 1 ἑπαρχος = praefectus, cf. von Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, Register A 2.
- 3 Cf. for the worship of Isis and her temples P. Bottigelli, *Repertorio topografico dei tempi e dei sacerdoti dell'Egitto tolemaico*, Aegyptus 21, 1941, pp. 3 sqq. and Aegyptus 22, 1942, pp. 177 sqq. Tryphon is a proper name in the nominative. There is no connection whatsoever with τὸ Τρύφωνος Ἰσιεῖον mentioned in P. Oxy. VIII, 1124, 10/11 and in PSI VI, 687, 1.

6 I am not sure about the word παρεμβολήν (also in line 5?; cf. for παρεμβολή = castra = military camp Preisigke/Kiessling, *Wörterbuch* III, Abschnitt 10; J. Lesquier, *L'armée romaine d'Égypte d'Auguste à Diocletien*, Le Caire, 1918, Index IV, s.v.; H. Rink, *Strassen- und Viertelnamen von Oxyrhynchus*, Giessen, 1924, p. 40). The ostrakon is faded between the rho and the beta. There seems to be place for more than only 2 letters. It seems likely that some other letters (more than 2) were written first and afterwards deleted.

11

N.N. TO N.N.

 $8.8 \times 6.4 \text{ cm.}$

A medium-brown ostrakon which is incomplete on all sides. The large, dark letters bespeak a skilled scribe.

1].ου ει[
2].κειν δυη[
3].ας μοι ἐὰν θελ[
4]ον μοι 'ἐν' χαλκὸν καὶ α[
5]καὶ ἐὰν ἔλθης εἰς τὴν ισ[
6]ησον τὴν τράπεζαν το[
7]μου.
8 'Ερρωσθαί σοι

4 Γ. Ένα

8 Γ. ΣΕ

Notes

2 Probably a form of the verb δύναμαι.

4 Perhaps πέμψον.

For χαλκός cf. Johnson/West, *op. cit.*, pp. 43 sqq.

8 On a lost line stood at least εὔγομαι.

12

N.N. TO N.N.

14.7 × 10.8 cm.

A dark brown ostrakon which is complete at the bottom and at the right-hand side. The text is very faded and difficult to read. The very thin letters point to a well-trained scribe.

I].ἰα δεχο[
2 τοῦ δ'ίδοντός μοι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν

3 . .].ατωι δεκουρίων γεν[
 4 παρακαλῶ σε, ἀδελφέ, ἐνκρατῇ[ς
 5 ἕως ἀλλαγῆς ἐπὶ οὐκ ἔχεις τὰ ἴσα .[
 6 καὶ ταῦτα ἐπὶ ξένης ι[. .] Γερμανός[
 7 βε χαλα καὶ ἀν κάθηται. Ἀσπάζεται σε
 8 ἀμμάς μου καὶ ἐὰν τινός< σοι χρειαν
 9 ἔσται γράψον μοι.
 10 Ἐρρωσσο.

4 γ. ἐγκρατῆς
 10 γ. ἔρρωσσο

5 γ. ἀλλάγης; γ. ἐπεὶ; γ. ἔχεις

8 γ. χρεία

Notes

- 1 Probably a form of the verb δέχομαι.
- 3 Cf. for δεκουρίων = decurio Daris, *op. cit.*, s.v. and von Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, Register A 2.
- 7 The reading of the beginning of this line is very uncertain. Perhaps a form of the verb λαμβάνειν at the end of line 6 and the beginning of this line.

13

SEVERUS TO DOMITIUS RESPECTUS

10.8 × 9.4 cm.

A medium-brown ostrakon which is complete on all sides. There are some dark stains on the surface of the ostrakon. Written by a well-trained scribe.

1 Domitio Respecto praef(ecto) suo
 2 Severus (centurio) salutem.
 3 Onnuphin Panamea e
 4 turma Proclidis misi excur-
 5 su. VIII K(alendas) Ianuarias.
 6 Opto te, domine,
 7 multis annis felicem
 8 videre.

Translation

Severus, centurio, to Domitius Respectus his praefect, greeting. I have sent Onnuphis, son of Panameus from the turma of Proclis on an expedition. The 25th of December. I hope, my lord, to see you happy for many years.

This and the following ostrakon, both written in Latin, are undoubtedly military in character. The dealer who gave me these ostraca said that they were found in the neighbourhood of Esna (cf. the introduction) and J. Lesquier, *L'armée romaine d'Égypte d'Auguste à Dioclétien*, Le Caire, 1918, p. 410 writes: „Au Sud de Thèbes, ni Hermonthis----- ni Latopolis et Contra-Latopolis (Esna et El Hillah)-----, ne sont connues dans les sources militaires; Hermonthis devait avoir un poste, relevé par la garnison si voisine de Diospolis magna. De même Latopolis”. It is very well possible that these two ostraca (and some of the Greek ones) have come from the site of the camp of the detachment stationed at Esna: at this time the turma of Proclis.

Notes

- 1 Neither Domitius Respectus (nor Severus, line 2, nor On-nuphis, son of Panameus, line 3) appears in the list of soldiers compiled by R. Cavenaile, *Prosopographie de l'armée d'Égypte d'Auguste à Dioclétien*, Aegyptus 50, 1970, pp. 213 sqq.
- Domitius Respectus probably is a praefectus castrorum, cf. von Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, Register A 2.
- 2 Centurio (cf. nr 8, note on line 8) is written by the conventional symbol, cf. Fink, *op. cit.*, Index 10.
- 3 Probably Panameos is meant. The Roman habit of referring to a person by his praenomen and nomen caused the mistake.
- 4 The turma of Proclis was unknown.

14

N.N. 10 N.N.

6.8 × 6.2 cm.

A medium-brown ostrakon which is complete at the right-hand side and at the bottom. Written by a well-trained scribe.

1	suo [sa] l(utem).
2	]uficcanum mil(item)
3	]ad praesidium dimisi
4	]bene val(ere)
5	].

Notes

- 2 Undoubtedly a proper name which I am not able to identify.

I do not know whether the spot of ink between]. uſiccanum and mil(item) was meant as a (separation) dot; or is it a product of casual sloppiness?

- 3 At the beginning of this line: e turma + a proper name?

- 5 Only the end of a horizontal line; part of the letter s of the formula: te opto multis anni] s?