LETTERS ON OSTRACA

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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 neccessary 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

1

CELER TO PLUTION

10 X 9.5 cm.

A medium-brown ostracon 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 ἁλεσιν. Κα-
3 λόις ποιήσας ἐκήσοις
4 Κοκόντινι στατήρα περή
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 Καλὸς ποιήσεις (as for the expression μὴ ἀμελήσῃς 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 Κοκόνη is unknown.


2

VICTOR TO LUCIUS AUNAX

ΠΠ.2 × 8.4 cm.

A dark brown ostracon 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 ἰς Ἄπολ traces
2 Οὐλικτὸρ Λουκίῳ Αὐ-
3 νακι αἰριν. Κόμισσα μὴ-
4 ἔκι χ. Ἀριστάρχῳ δεξᾶ-
5 πεντε καὶ πέντε Θαρ-
6 σεκτι δῶσι καὶ γράψον
7 πῶς στέχει τὸ παιδίν σου.
8 "Ἀστασάω την γυνὴν σου
9 καὶ τὸ παιδίν καὶ
10 Θαρσέαν.

1 r. εἰς 3 r. κόμισα 6 r. δῶσεις 7 r. στέγει (?); r. παί-

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 'Απόλλωνις τόλμη, though one would expect δπόδος (cf. P. Mich. VIII, 495, 34). Apollinopolis Magna (Edfu) is only 50 Km. to the south of Esna.
2/3 The proper name Αὐνάξ is unknown.
3 One expects χάλρειν, but the first letter seems to be a theta and the last four letters are extremely doubtful.
5/6 The proper name Θορσατας (cf. also 1.10) is unknown, cf., however, Θραστας.

3 CALPURNNIUS TO ONNOPHRIS
10 × 10.5 cm.

A medium-brown ostracon. 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 Ὀμίλων ἵνα
2 καὶ αὐτὸς πέμψῃ πόθεν λά-
3 βω καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ.
4 Κα]λπούρνης Ὀννόφρι
5 χάλρειν.
6 Καλ]ῶς ποιήσεις πέμψας μοι
7 φάσιν πόθεν δύνομαι τὴν κυθά-
8 ραν] σου λαβεῖν. 'Επέμψαθν γὰρ ἐπὶ σέ.
9 . . . ]ορεῖν καὶ οὐχ ἥθελησες εἴσελθεῖν.
10 'Εὰν] σχολάζεις γράψων μοι παρὰ τίνες
11 καὶ] τὴν λάβω. Καλὸς ποιήσεις
12 τέ]μψας καὶ Βελλῆτι φάσαι εἰς καλ
13 τὴν συνορίαν ἵνα καὶ αὐτὸς γράψῃ
14 περὶ τῆς κυθάρας αὐτοῦ ἐπεὶ οἴδατε
15 ὁ[ν τῆς ἁγάκη ἔστιν. Μὴ με ἀπε-
16 . . . . ] γεςί. Μὴ οὖν ἀμελή(ς).]·
17 'Ερρόος(θαλ) σε εὐχαριστοῦ τά[·

7 ο. δύναμαι 10 ο. σχολάζεις; ρ. τίνος
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 Onnothris, 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 ostracon I think ἀμελήσης was abbreviated, because there is still space enough at the end of this line to write σῆς and the lacuna of ιο letters at the beginning of line 17 is more than filled with ἔφρωσ(θα)ι σε εὖ).

4

SERAPODORUS TO HIS BROTHER

10.2 × 7.4 cm.

A light-brown ostracon 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 Σεραπόδωρος

2 νομ τῷ ἄδελφῳ χαίρειν.

3 'Εκομισάμην παρὰ [ ]

4 τοῦ (δραχμᾶς) δὲ καὶ τὸ βιότο πιστὸν

5 καὶ λέγει: Ἄμμων δτ[ ]

6 δάπανα (δραχμαὶ) ἵππ. Μεθ' ὑγίας[ ]

7 αἰτίζει Σατορνηέλου [ ]

8 χιν εἶναι αὐτῶς ἔχ[η]

9 Γράφεσις μοι π[ερί]
In the left margin, at right angles
10 Πέκινψες μου τῷ βιάτ[ικον
11 εἶνα πέμπω.
7 τό αίτιζει
8 τό ἱνα, also l. 11
10 τό ηπέψεις

Notes
1 Cf. for the proper name Σεραπόδωρος D. Foraboschi, Onomasticum Alterum Papyrologicum, Milano, 1968 sqq.
2 νω the end of the name of Serapodorus' brother.
4 τὸς 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.

5 TAMERYLLA TO CELER

9.9 × 4.5 cm.

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

1 Ταμερύλλα Κέρερι
2 χαίρειν. Ἐκομισάμην παρά
3 τὸς κολοφόνιον καὶ
4 Εγραψάκας μοί
5 ἐπ[ι

Notes
1 The proper name Ταμερύλλα is unknown. τὰ undoubtedly is the Egyptian feminine article. The meaning of the name is "She of Mandulis" (cf. W. Erichsen, Demotisches Glossar, Copenhagen, 1954, p. r69).
3 τὸς the end of the name of the person from whom Tamerylla received τὸ kolophonion and 6 other things (in the lacuna at the end of this line we must probably read α and another substantive).
A Father to His Son (?)  
17.8 x 13.8 cm.

A medium-brown ostracon 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 ostracon.

I

[μσ]

2

[ληρα εκω . . .

3

[σουτο έθωσα δὲ

4

[αβαν πάντες ὡς

5

[. ἀφαβίων εἰς λόγον

6

[. οὑρὶς μοὶ πρὸς φόρτια

7

[. ρες γὰρ εἰς. Δ[η]λωσέν μοι εταχύτος

8

θέλεις ηκελα τῆς προσβυτάρας προευληπτε

9

tη θέλεις τὸ συμποσί οὐ δοκεῖ ηγη παραέκτιν

10

ο δεκατω εἰκα. Γράφων μοι διὰ τοῦ διδον-

11

tος τὸ διστρακον. Ἐρωτῇ σε, τέχνον, τὴν παρα-

12

θήκην, ἡν δωκά σοι, φυλάξε. Τὴν ἀδελφὴν σου

13

ἐπινκουσούν πολύλιν. Ἐρωσθαί υμὰς εὐχο-

14

μακι.

10 [γράφων 11 [ἐρωτᾶ 12 [έθωσα; [φυλάξει; [ἀδελφὴν

13 [ἐπικουσσον; [πολλάκις; [ἐρωσθαί

Translation

(Lines 10-14): Write through the person who gives you the ostracon. 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


6 [.]οὐρὶς probably a proper name.

7 Perhaps εἰς.

7/8 Perhaps we should read δῆλωσόν μοι ἐκ ντάχει ποὺς θέλεις.

8 Perhaps ἵκ έλκα τῆς προσβυτάρας and a form of the verb προ-

9 Read θέλεις and τὸ συμπόσιον.

11 For διστρακον in a similar formula cf. O. Bod. 1991.
7

A Son to His Father

10.5 × 6.5 cm.

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

1 Ἰωνάτι τῷ πατρί
2 χαίρειν. Γινώσκειν σε θ[...
3 ηκα σοι τά ἡμᾶται χ[αλ
4 φασίν καὶ τὰ κρέ[α
5 γι παρὰ τοῦ ναυ[...
6 οὐκ ἔπεμψες μ[οι
7 .μ. Πάκορις ἀρτ[...
8 .μ. τῶν ἡμ[ατίων
9 πέμψει σε ε[...
10 πέμψ[]οι μοι Ἑύλα[...
11 . .[

Notes

2/3 Exempli gratia we could supply θ[έλω ὅτι ἡγῷ]ακα
5 Perhaps τοῦ ναυ[τού.
7 The proper name Πάκορις is unknown in papyrological sources, cf. Πακύρις; Πακούρις and Πάκορις 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 ostraca 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 πλέοντα
2 τροπαλα ἔχωριν.
3 διστραχα τοῦ κουρά-
4 τορος ]ποτο ἀπέσταλκες
N. N. to Iulius Eupolemos and to Nikiarios (?)

11 × 7 cm.

A dark brown ostracon 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(ιλιαρχος) Ἰουλίω Εὐπολέμῳ
2 υ[μισαρίῳ τῷ τυμιστάτῳ
3 χαίρε]ν. Γελνωσκε τὸν κράτι-
4 στον στρ[άτηγον παραγινο-
5 μενο ]ξ[αζ εὖ δίδοντα ἦ-
6 μῖν ]τῇ β. Ἑπει τῷ ε ἐ-
7 ]δῆς

3 ἐν γίνωσκε

Notes

1 χιλιαρχος = 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 ostracon 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 στρατηγὸν. As κράτιστος is not an epithetos used for στρατηγὸι (cf. O. Hornickel, Ehren-und Rangprädikate in den Papyrus-Urkunden, Giessen, 1930) I think another person (the præfect?) was mentioned in the lacuna at the beginning of line 4 and therefore we have at the left-hand side of this ostracon more space than only for τὸ καὶ in line 2. I therefore think that this ostracon was directed to more than one person.

4 Although one is inclined to think we are in a military environment because of the χιλαρχὸς in line 1, στρατηγὸς 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 ostracon 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 ἐγραψεν ὁ ἐπαρχὸς ἡμῶν
2 τὸ δίπλωμα. Ἑξαυτῆς οὖν ἐλθὲ·τω ἐπει
3 ἁγείσα καὶ ἀπὸ τρῆ Ἰσίου Τρύφων
4 ἵσοι ἐλθὲ ἐπεὶ ἐγραψεν μοι ὤ ἐπαρ-
5 χος ἁρσὶ ὡμοίως Ὅριων
6 ἵσοι ἐξ ἐς παρεμβολὴν
7 ἵμων.

3 Ἰσίου

Notes

1 ἐπαρχὸς = præfectus, cf. von Domaszewski, op. cit., Register A 2.

2 Cf. for the worship of Isis and her temples P. Bottigelli, Repertorium 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 Ἰσίου mentioned in P. Oxy. VIII, 1124, 10/11 and in PSI VI, 687, I.
I am not sure about the word παρεμβολή (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 ostracon 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 × 6.4 cm.

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

1 ].ou ei[
2 ].kein duyn[
3 ].ax mou ean thei[
4 ]on mou ’en ’xalxan kai a[
5 ]kai ean elthes eis thn it[
6 ]son thn traypezan to[
7 ]mou.
8 ’Erfosiai sai

4 r. ena 8 r. se

Notes

2 Probably a form of the verb δύναμαι.
4 Perhaps τέμψων.

For χαλκός cf. Johnson/West, op. cit., pp. 43 sqq.
8 On a lost line stood at least εύχομαι.

12

N.N. to N.N.

14.7 × 10.8 cm.

A dark brown ostracon 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.

1 ].ia dexo[
2 tou diodon tos mou thn epitostolyn
..].ατωι δεκουρλων γεν[  
παρακαλω σε, ἀδελφέ, ἐνκρατής[  
ἐως ἀλάγης ἐπὶ οὐκ ἔχεις τὰ ἱσα .[  
καὶ ταῦτα ἐπὶ ξένης ι[. ι] Γερμανὸς[  
βε χαλα κἂν κάθηται. Ἀσπάζεται σε  
ἀμμάς μου καὶ ἐὰν τινόςς> σοι χρειαν  
ἕστι γράφον μοι.  
Ερρωσο.  

4  g. ἐνκρατής  
5  g. ἀλάγης; g. ἔπει; g. ἔχεις  
8  g. χρεῖα  
10  g. ἔρρωσο

Notes

1 Probably a form of the verb δέχομαι.
3 Cf. for δεκουρλων = 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 λαμβάνει 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 ostracon which is complete on all sides. There are some dark stains on the surface of the ostracon. Written by a well-trained scribe.

1 Domitio Respecto praef(ecto) suo
2 Serverus (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 ostracon, 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 Hermouthis----- ni Latopolis et Contra-Latopolis (Esna et El Hillah)------, ne sont connues dans les sources militaires; Hermouthis 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 Onnuphis, 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. to N.N.

6.8 × 6.2 cm.

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

1 suo [sa] 1(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 \textit{uficcanum} and \textit{mil(item)} was meant as a (separation) dot; or is it a product of casual sloppiness?

3 At the beginning of this line: \textit{eturma} + a proper name?

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