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A GREEK PAPYRUS LETTER IN KEIO UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, TOKYO

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A GREEK PAPYRUS LETTER IN KEIO UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, TOKYO¹

Among the holdings of Keio University Library in Tokyo, which comprise some 10,000 manuscripts and rare books, is a Greek papyrus bearing shelf-mark 170X@21@1.² The papyrus was bought by Keio in September 1994 from Bernard Quaritch in London, who had bought it from Maggs.³ Its previous whereabouts are unknown.

The papyrus was briefly described in a sale's notice, and its description and a photograph were included in the catalogue of an exhibition held at Keio University Library in 1996.⁴ The catalogue identifies the papyrus as a 'personal letter by one Adrastus, a Greek merchant in Antinopolis, Egypt, to his father, Theon'. To our knowledge, the papyrus has never been published; the only way to determine more precisely its origin is to publish its contents.

Description, date and origin

The papyrus consists of a single rectangular sheet positioned vertically, measuring 216 × 108 mm. It is in good condition, with some damage in the lower half. The upper (17 mm), lower (30 mm), and left (30 mm) margins remain intact; the right margin has probably been trimmed.

On the front, the main text of the letter is written in a professional hand, in black ink. The writing is fluent and rather angular, the inclination is uneven – some letters are upright, others slightly inclined to the left or to the right. Most letters are written separately: ligatures are rare, such as *epsilon-iota*, double *lambda*, and *alpha* with a following letter, mainly *iota*. Among individual letters, it is worth noting *alpha* written in two ways: with a narrow triangular body, and with a small round body; narrow *theta*; *kappa* with its arms attached to its stem; *pi* with its horizontal stroke fully fitting within two vertical strokes; *rho* and *phi* with a small round body and a long descending tail. The *diaeresis* over *iota* is well marked (15–16: διπλοῖδος). There are dots above the first two letters of line 17, a difficult passage for which we have not found a full explanation. Those could be cancel dots, as found also in literary papyri.⁵ This seems to be confirmed by the presence of another cancel dot in line 10 above the *rho* of πᾶρρα ντα, where the meaning of the text

¹ Natalie Tchernetska thanks T. Nishimura, who invited her to Keio University, facilitated her work in many ways, and helped obtaining a digital image of the papyrus; T. Takamiya for his help establishing the papyrus' provenance; T. Tsutsui of the Rare Books Room of Keio University Library for her assistance; R. Linenthal and the staff of Bernard Quaritch and Maggs Bros for information. Her research on the papyrus was mainly carried out in 2013, during her Invited Fellowship granted by the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), and she thanks N. Notomi for acting as her host and JSPS for its support. We thank wholeheartedly Dieter Hagedorn, who checked our first reading of the papyrus and – with his customary competence – saved us from several mistakes. Sophie Gällnö provided us with some useful bibliographical data. Andrea Jördens, editor of *ZPE*, made several significant suggestions for which we are grateful. We thank Keio University Library for making available a digital scan of the papyrus and granting us a permission to publish it. Image credit: Keio University Library.

² The collection of the Keio University Library is one of the most varied in Japan: alongside Eastern manuscripts, there are Western manuscripts (Latin, Greek and vernacular), *incunabula* and early printed books, and several papyri. See T. Matsuda (ed.), *Mostly British: Manuscripts and Early Printed Materials from Classical Rome to Renaissance England in the Collection of Keio University Library*, Tokyo, 2001; T. Matsuda (ed.), *Codices Keioenses: Essays on Western Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Keio University Library*, Tokyo, 2005; N. Tchernetska, Greek Manuscripts in Keio University Library, Tokyo, *Scriptorium* 66 (2012) 174–184; S. Tokunaga, The First Report of the Keio Incunabula Project: A Checklist of Incunabula in the Keio University Library, *The Round Table* 18 (2004) 7–21. Most Western manuscripts were acquired by the university from European and American booksellers in the last quarter of the 20th century.

³ Private email from 27 October 2010. Although the precise circumstances of acquisition remain somewhat unclear, the date of the purchase excludes that this papyrus could have left Egypt in the context of the recent political turmoil, as is the case, reported by Rosario Pintaudi, for some stolen papyri from Antinoou Polis.

⁴ *In Search of Gutenberg in the Digital Universe: Treasures of the Keio University Library*, Tokyo: Humi Project, Keio University, October 1996 (mainly in Japanese): pp. 9–10.

⁵ See E. G. Turner / P. J. Parsons, *GMAW*², # 15, 16, 34 and 67. Dots above letters can also be used for purposes other than cancellation, e.g. 'cantillation', a sort of religious melody accompanying liturgical texts; see P.Gen. IV 153, p. 45. Such a use does not seem, however, relevant to the present case.

calls for a correction by the scribe; there could also have been a cancel dot above the following *alpha*, but the surface of the papyrus is rubbed off at the place where the dot may have been written.

The first two lines – the greeting formula – are in a larger and slightly more formal script. Whereas the body of the text is written in *scriptio continua*, in the initial greeting formula all words are separated.

The final greeting has been added in a cursive script, presumably by the sender himself, an epistolary practice well attested in Greek papyri.⁶

On the back, the name of the recipient ΘΕΩΝΙ ΠΑΤΡΙ is written in a large (10 mm tall) majuscule, with a distance of 70 mm between the two words. The script bears resemblance to the so-called Alexandrian majuscule. *Alpha* is triangular, *epsilon* and *theta* are very narrow, and *pi* has serifs at the lower ends of its vertical strokes with a horizontal stroke reaching beyond the vertical. This type of script is attested in papyri from the mid-second century AD onwards.⁷

Below the recipient's name is an oblique line and a dark mark. One presumes that the scribe, once he had rolled the letter and written the recipient's name, put some papyrus fibres around the letter, between ΘΕΩΝΙ and ΠΑΤΡΙ, and applied a mud seal.⁸ Above the oblique line is a sequence of barely visible traces, offprints, or tiny characters.

The letter mentions Antinoou Polis, which provides us with a *terminus post quem*, i.e. AD 130, this city's year of foundation.⁹ Although the script of the first hand is rather difficult to date because it lacks a well-defined style, parallels suggest that it could be assigned to the second half of the second century.¹⁰ This matches also a possible dating of the second hand.¹¹ Therefore the provisional dating offered in the sale's catalogue is a bit late: all in all, it seems that this letter can be dated to the mid-second century.

A striking feature of the text is the high level of linguistic competence of the scribe, and perhaps also of the sender himself, Adrastus. The scribe makes systematic use of *iota adscript* in the dative (1: τῷ; 6: τῷ ... φίλῳ; 9: τῇ) and in the subjunctive (8: δέη). We also find several expressions that display a good command of the language: 7–8: ἐν οἷς ἐὰν δέη; 9–11: μὴ δὴ (...) κατόκνει; 19: ὁ σοὶς ὄκνο[ς]; 21: ὅσου γὰρ οὖν ἐάν. The choice of such a wording should presumably be put to the credit of Adrastus, who dictated his letter.

Contents

There are five characters to the story: Adrastus and his father Theon; Sarapion, presumably his relative, acquaintance, or business partner; Rufus, the prefect's friend; and finally someone called 'father', probably Sarapion's. We cannot exclude that Rufus and the prefect's friend are two separate persons (see note on lines 3–6), but this has little impact on the overall interpretation. Adrastus is writing from a place which we cannot identify; Theon is elsewhere, not far from Antinoou Polis, and his son is asking him to go to Antinoou Polis, where he is to join Sarapion in order that they conduct some business; to that effect, they will meet Rufus, the prefect's friend. The only clue as to where those people are located comes from the name Theon, which is quite frequent in Oxyrhynchus; but this remains a mere possibility.

The role of the prefect's friend is especially important because Antinoou Polis, being governed as a Greek city, does not answer to a local στρατηγός, but directly to the Prefect of Egypt, presumably through

⁶ See e.g. P.Mert. I 23 (pl. XXV; late II AD); P.Flor. II 259 (Pap.Flor. XXX, Tav. CXXVI; AD 249–268); P.Gen. I 75 (pl. LVI; late III AD).

⁷ On the Alexandrian majuscule, see G. Cavallo, *Grammata Alexandrina*, *JÖByz* 24 (1975) 23–54. A recent overview is to be found in P. Orsini – W. Clarysse, *Early New Testament Manuscripts and Their Dates: A Critique of Theological Palaeography*, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 88 (2012) 443–474, esp. 452–453. On the dating of the Alexandrian majuscule, see G. Cavallo, *Il calamo e il papiro. La scrittura greca dall'età ellenistica ai primi secoli di Bisanzio* (Pap. Flor. 36), Firenze, 2005, 182.

⁸ See e.g. the back of P.Gen. IV 163 (pl. XXVI).

⁹ On Antinoou Polis, see esp. M. Zahrnt, *Antinoopolis in Ägypten: Die hadrianische Gründung und ihre Privilegien in der neueren Forschung*, *ANRW II* 10.1, Berlin–New York, 1988, 669–706.

¹⁰ See e.g. P.Fay. 21 (<http://www.pappal.info/sample/show/5559>; AD 134); P.Köln II 115 (Tafel XVIIIa; H. Harbauer, *Handbuch der griechischen Paläographie*, n° 109; AD 142); P.Köln V 229 (Tafel XVII; AD 178).

¹¹ See SB X 10214 (<http://www.pappal.info/sample/show/5621>; AD 151); P.Oxy. XLI 2962 (<http://www.pappal.info/sample/show/5628>; AD 154).

the ἐπιστράτηγος.¹² It thus seems that Adrastos and Theon are trying to use an indirect connexion to the prefect in order to facilitate their business. Adrastos, however, does not specify explicitly in what capacity this prefect's friend could help.

There seem to be two transactions of different scales: a rather important matter for which the prefect's friend's help is required, and the business of buying some clothes. Lines 20–22, where Adrastos mentions the purchase of woof, probably in bulk, suggest that the first task is related to the textile industry, and that Theon is to seize the opportunity to buy a few finished products on the same occasion.¹³

Adrastos has had some contact with Sarapion, who may actually be the bearer of the letter. At least, it seems that he is a facilitator in the transaction. When Theon makes his purchase, Sarapion will help, perhaps make the payment, which Adrastos can then refund directly to Sarapion's father in their place of origin. We are thus probably dealing with a loose partnership of dealers in the textile market.

P.Keio inv. 170X@21@1

H: 21.6 cm, W: 10.8 cm

Provenance: unknown

Date: mid-second century AD

Front:

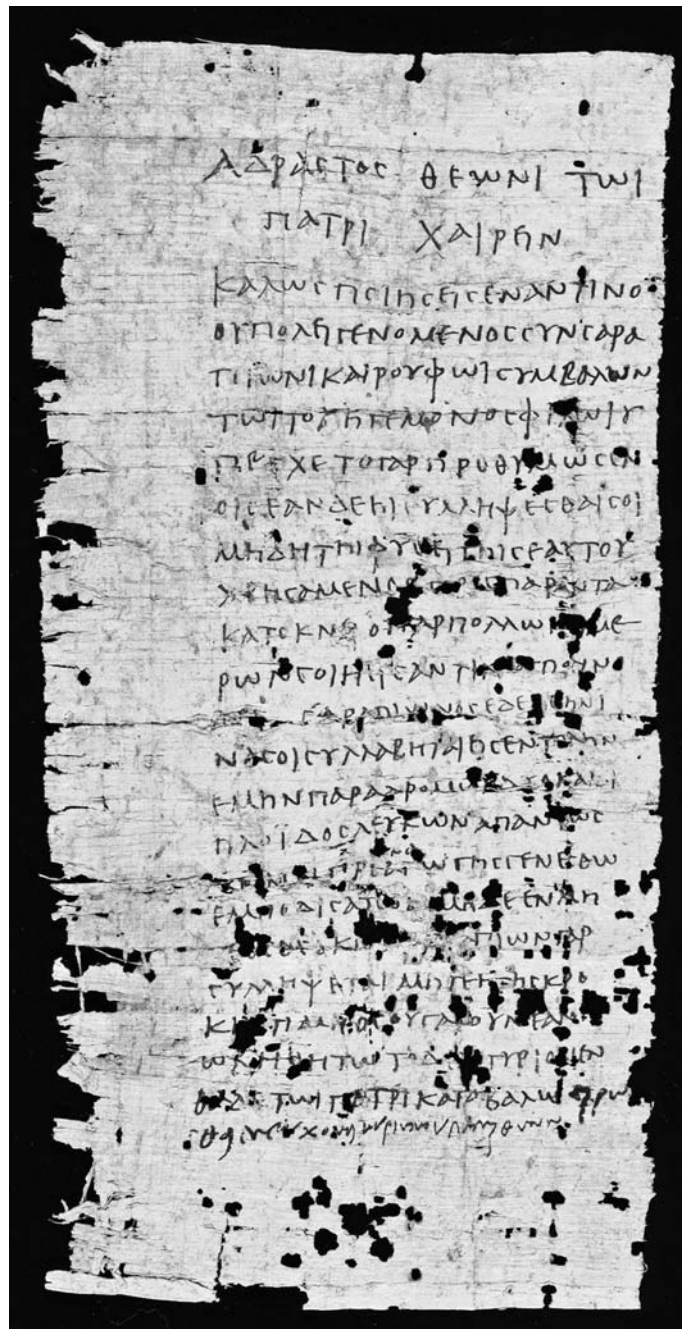
- Ἄδραστος Θέωνι τῷ
πατρὶ χαίρειν.
Καλῶς ποιήσεις ἐν Ἀντινό-
ου Πόλει γινόμενος σὺν Σαρα-
5 πίωνι καὶ Ρούφωι συμβαλὼν
τῷ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος φίλῳ. Ὑ-
πέσχετο γὰρ προθύμως ἐν
οἷς ἐὰν δέῃ συλλήψεσθαί σοι·
μὴ δὴ τῇ φύσει τῇ σεαυτοῦ
10 χρησάμενος πρ[ὸ]ς πά[ρα]ντα
κατόκνει· οὐ γὰρ πολλῶν [ἡ]με-
ρῶν σοι ἢ εἰς Ἀντιν[ό]ου Πόλιν ὁ-
δός. Σαραπίωνος ἐδεήθην ἵ-
να σοὶ συλλάβηται εἰς ἐντολήν
15 ἐμὴν παραδρόμων δύο καὶ δι-
πλοῖδος λευκῶν, ἃ πάντως
[κ.] μοι πρὸ ἀνάγωγῆς γενέσθω.
Ἐμποδισάτω δ[ὲ] μηδὲ ἐν μή-
τε ὁ σὸς ὄκνο[ς] – Σαραπίων γὰρ
20 συλλήψεται – μήτε ἡ τῆς κρό-
κη[ς] τιμή· ὅσου γὰρ οὖν ἐὰν
ὠνηθήτω· τὸ δὲ ἀ[ρ]γύριον ἐν-
θάδε τῷ πατρὶ καταβαλῶ. (2nd h.) Ἐρρω-
σθαί σε εὐχομαι, κύριέ μου πάτερ Θέων.

Back:

Θέωνι πατρί
15–16 διπλοῖδος pap.

¹² On the role of the ἐπιστράτηγος in such matters, see A. Jördens, *Statthalterliche Verwaltung in der römischen Kaiserzeit. Studien zum praefectus Aegypti* (Historia Einzelschr. 175), Stuttgart, 2009, 335, with reference to SB V 7601 C, 9–11.

¹³ On the general context of the textile industry in Roman Egypt, see K. Dross-Krüpe, *Wolle, Weber, Wirtschaft: Die Textilproduktion der römischen Kaiserzeit im Spiegel der papyrologischen Überlieferung*, Wiesbaden, 2011, esp. 182–186 for a description of the process of purchase of raw material.



Keio University Library 170X@21@1, recto © Keio University Library

Translation

Front:

(1–6) Adrastos to his father Theon, greetings. You will do well, when you are in Antinoou Polis with Sarapion, to meet also Rufus, the prefect's friend. (7–13) For he willingly promised to help you in whatever is needed; do not hesitate, however, to use your own capacity in order to achieve everything; for the journey to Antinoou Polis does not take you many days. (13–17) I asked Sarapion to help you in order to get on my behalf two mantles and a double cloak, all of them white, which in any case should be (...) for me before the upstream delivery. (18–23) Let there be no hindrance on any account either by your hesitation – for Sarapion will help – or because of the price of the woof: at whatever price, let it be bought; and the money I shall pay here to his father. (23–24) I pray that you be well, my respected father Theon.

Back: To my father Theon.

Commentary

1–2 Ἀδραστος Θέωνι τῷ | πατρί: a man called Theon, son of Adrastus, is attested on an ostrakon, SB XVI 12310 (provenance unknown, II AD). This Theon could be related to the Theon we encounter in our papyrus.

3–6 Those lines could also be translated as follows: ‘You will do well, when you are in Antinoou Polis with Sarapion and Rufus, to meet the prefect’s friend.’ This would imply that Sarapion and Rufus are both travelling to Antinoou Polis; on the other hand, a Latin name like Rufus could well match the profile of the prefect’s friend. The word order in lines 5–6, with συμβαλὼν placed between Ρούφωι and τῷ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος φίλωι, is quite ordinary in the Greek style of the Roman period, and especially appropriate for a scribe with a high level of writing competence. The translation for which we finally opted was proposed by Andrea Jördens, whom we thank for the suggestion.

9–11 μὴ δὴ (...) κατόκνει: for a parallel to the construction μὴ δὴ + imperative, see P.Flor. III 367, 13–15: μὴ δὴ (...) γίνου. This is already found in Thuc. 2, 89, 5: μὴ δὴ αὐτῶν τὴν τόλμαν δείσητε. See also Joh. Chrys. *epist.* 82 (vol. 52, p. 652, 5 Migne): μὴ δὴ κατοκνεῖτε γράφειν ἡμῖν συνεχῶς.

10 πρ[ὸ]ς πά[ρα]ντα: on the correction, see the introduction (cancel dots).

15–16 παραδρόμων δύο καὶ διπλοῖδος λευκῶν: we have found no parallel for the use of παράδρομος or παράδρομον as a garment. The word seems, however, to be used in a diminutive form in P.Oxy. X 1346 descr. (Oxyrhynchus, II AD [?]): (...) ἐν τῇ πόλει γέγναπται καὶ κακῶς ἐγνάφη, καὶ ἐὰν χρειαν αὐτοῦ ἔχῃς, ἔχε, ἐὰν δὲ μή, ἄφος αὐτῷ ἄχρεις (l. ἄφες αὐτὸ ἄχρεις) ἂν παραγένομαι, ἐπιδὴ (l. ἐπειδὴ) ὁ λευκός μου παραδρόμας ἄχρηστος [γ]έγωναι (l. γέγωνε). ἡγώρακά σοι (...) ‘It was fulled in the city and was badly fulled, and if you have use of it, or else, leave it aside till I come, since the white *paradromax* has become useless. I bought for you (...).’ See also SB V 7576, 3 (Elephantine, I BC [?]), an order for shopping: παραδρόμακες δύο. We opted here for a neutral form, which would help to explain the relative ἃ in line 16 (see following note). A διπλοῖς is – obviously – a double cloak, also called τρίβων διπλοῦς or εἶμα διπλοῦς and worn by the Cynics among others: see *Anth. Pal.* 7, 65, 1–3: σοφοῦ κυνὸς (...) ὃ μία τις πήρα, μία διπλοῖς (...). As mentioned by the editors of O.Claud. I 129, 9, it is ‘probably a lined cloak, as opposed to ἀπλοπάλλιον’, for which see SB XVIII 13748, 2 (VI/VII AD).

16–17 ἃ πάντως (...) γενέσθω: a word *ἁπάντως is unattested, and the flawless spelling in the rest of the letter does not speak in favour of a misspelling for ἅπαντος. At the beginning of line 17, the first letter looks like a *kappa*, but *chi* is also possible. There are dots above the two first letters in this line; the scribe may have meant to erase and correct them (see introduction). Although the reading of the beginning of this line remains uncertain, the general purpose of the sentence seems understandable: the purchase must be made before Theon sails back upstream.

18–19 ἐμποδισάτω δ[ὲ] μηδὲ ἐν μήτε ὁ σὸς ὄκνο[ς]: see Phot. *epist.* 283 (vol. II, p. 246, l. 298–299 Laourdas/Westerink): ἵνα μὴ ὁ σὸς ὄκνος καὶ ἡ ἀναβολὴ μείζον παρασκευάσῃ τὸ κακόν.

23 τῷ πατρί: it is hard to tell whether the word ‘father’ is to be taken literally or not. One could perhaps think of a term of respect in the context of a business association.

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