STUDI DI EGITTOLOGIA E DI PAPIROLOGIA

Rivista internazionale

2 · 2005

ESTRATTO



 $\begin{array}{c} \text{PISA} \cdot \text{ROMA} \\ \text{ISTITUTI EDITORIALI E POLIGRAFICI INTERNAZIONALI} \\ \text{MMV} \end{array}$

R. S. BAGNALL · R. CRIBIORE · T. T. RENNER A COPTIC LETTER FROM TWO WOMEN

This letter, written on a papyrus now in the collection of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria (PAlex inv. 675), was first published by L. S. B. Mac-Coull in «Aegyptus» 66 (1986), pp. 190-191 with plate III. The provenance is unknown; the editor suggested the eighth century as a date. We became interested in it in connection with the preparation of a work on women's letters from Egypt.1 The first edition does not give an entirely clear or accurate picture of the state of preservation of the text, and its readings and interpretations are, we believe, capable of improvement in a number of places. Here we give a new text, translation, and notes, not claiming to have solved all of the problems created by the dirty and deteriorated condition of the right-hand side of the papyrus, but believing that much more of the letter can be understood than was the case initially.2 We hope that others will be stimulated to solve the remaining problems.3

XUT 2 [апок] тинатог : феллахістос : текилля иптенвира нетселі ипстровіс пэц нөбс эх гшій [ип]шахе : тишие врок ди падит тира митеифаки тирё : хаю типросктиеі кифоеіф инекотернте the aux admyme mus sha просктиет нак тшиот : айсти же екушпе ападнт шкад. еіс [те]пот хоот пекото най : мон фоливе

1

- тшиот : ерепхоеіс насцот ерок йткаде епекфюие . . [. .]пос : же птапхоеіс чар чочноск
- нат проференти в зоонови так наи із Каблемана тонэт
- -апиатиз йшей эх поцатра : раз[и] ракалеї ймок етвите : кшстантіне адтамон же акр
- R. S. BAGNALL, R. CRIBIORE, Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC-AD 800; print version forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press and electronic version as part of the American Council of Learned Societies History E-Book Project.

- ран эө \dagger этгонпэрэ : ранин ай[п] томойтэппори : йтни кабияри типаракалег ймоске —
- Г. . Јек пекна евой пинач ато танон минесинт тирот просктией нак томот ... й : Б . и имот ших
- евол же кости же кушие тепсшие строкіх шіпе арок : πασείο ño . . . apok necu[ine]
- [ии]ок ехи пекоронос би очернин : же енборат зунь ковэ тири : йтачх † уне . .
- [. .]н тирот сф тегре нат ипесотоещ : Eqovယ္ထင္ပ ииекхтте SACKOTENTE, OTALI
- тшій оїзохи тічэнчи оїзохи йв 13 vacat атш йшнре. Н ауга тргас.

Verso:

таас шпанеріт нішт : arw ñ (place for seal) шире ппапас : гітй течилат йелла хистос

2 важистос зийтенфтхн

(2) «I, Tmmatoi the humblest, your mother, and Tenbora, write to their lord father: Before (3) the matter, we greet you with all my heart and all my soul, and we embrace the dust of your feet; (4) and Theodore and Ama Heu embrace you warmly. I heard that you were ill, and my heart was distressed. Look (5) now, send your news to me, or else I am greatly afflicted. May the Lord bless you. You are in need because of your illness. (6) ... because it is God who sent you to them as a helper and as rescuer. Now, your servant came to us (7) yesterday, and he informed us that the matter concerning which we besought you, about Konstantinos, he informed us that you were (8) kind to him. May God grant him the means to serve you and find your blessing. We beseech (9) ... your mercy upon him, and inform us and all

4 We are indebted to Jean-Luc Fournet for a digital image of the papyrus.

'We are grateful to Terry Wilfong for reading a draft and making several useful suggestions.

the brothers. <All the brothers> embrace you warmly and were (very?) distressed (10) because they heard that you were ill. And our sister Eudokia greets you. May the Lord . . . you and establish (11) you upon your throne in peace; for all of us are awaiting you as he . . . (12) . . . all of them to give them food in its season, and with him destroying all your enemies under your feet. Farewell (13) in the Lord, my beloved father and son. The Holy Trinity».

Verso:

«Give to my beloved father and son the Papas from his humblest mother».

2 There are only slight traces of the first letter, probably the right side of the horizontal stroke of tau. We do not know why the name of Tmatoi (cited by W. E. Crum, A Coptic Dictionary, Oxford 1939, 190 b from PKRU 119, 1) is given with two mus. We have restored the singular pronoun anox on the supposition that even with multiple authors, it is more likely that Tmatoi used the first person pronoun than the plural. We have not found the name Tenbora elsewhere; it would also be possible to take this as «our Bora» with the possessive, but we also have not found the name Bora in other texts. In the grammatical framing of the letter, Tenbora is sometimes included, sometimes not (as in «my heart» in 3) in the pronouns and verbs. Such vacillation between singular and plural is a common feature of Egyptian letter-writing. It is in many cases a sign of oral style and thus probably of dictation of the letter (see Bagnall-Cribiore, above n. 1, chapter 7). As the restorations of succeeding lines show, there is not enough space at left to restore the name of a third sender, as the editor supposed.

4 For the name en see PKell IV (Kellis Account Book), p. 67. Crum expresses doubt about whether one should take the element and as the respectful title («Mother», the feminine equivalent of the common male Apa) or as part of a compound name and hr (Crum, Coptic Dictionary cit., 729 b). The phenomenon of names formed from «Apa» plus the name of a saint has been discussed most recently by Tomasz Derda and Ewa Wipszycka, L'emploi des titres Abba, Apa et Papas dans l'Egypte byzantine, «JJP»

24 (1994), pp. 23-56 at 50-54, concluding that such formations are indeed to be seen as names in which the title was incorporated, rather than as separate titles. We do not know of any similar systematic treatment of the use of Am(m)a. Given the ecclesiastical context of this letter, we have considered it more likely that Ama is actually to be taken as a title.

5-6 Between the traces at the end of line 5 and the lacuna at the start of 6, no more than 5 letters are probably lost. Together with NOC in line 6, these may have contained a verb, perhaps in the first person, expressing happiness or gratitude. We have not found a suitable restoration along these lines.

8 It appears on the photograph that there are strands of papyrus out of place and folded over near the start of this line, making the reading of the *nu* at the start of nānaq difficult. We see no ink remains preventing the reading, however, and context seems to make it unavoidable. At the end of the line there is a filler stroke.

9 Although little is lot at the start, we cannot see how to restore it. Later in the line, probably «all the brothers» is to be taken with «us» as an object of «inform»; but if so, προσκτησι lacks a subject; most likely the writer failed to repeat the phrase. At the end, it is hard to avoid the thought that the idiom тюкй йент (Crum, Coptic Dictionary cit., 406 b, «be troubled at heart») is intended. But the colon between hori and пи is very clear, and although neнт is a very possible reading at the end of the line (the top of the hori is visible), what precedes the colon is not at all clear. None of the obvious words for «greatly» or «exceedingly» can be read (enate and twoor would be the most obvious possibilities).

10 The unread portion must contain a verb containing another of God's actions affecting the addressee: heal you, or something like that.

12 Perhaps an allusion to Psalm 144, 15, καὶ σὺ δίδως τὴν τροφὴν αὐτῶν ἐν εὐκαιρίᾳ, **ανω πτοκ ετπα**† ερε καν ῶπεονοειω, followed by an allusion to Psalm 109.1 (ἔως ἄν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου, ωαν†κω πκεκείκε εγεαπεωητ πκεκονερητε) or 1 Corinthians 15, 25 (ἄχρι οὖ θῆ πάντας τοὺς ἐχθρούς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ,

Bantqκω πηε ακε τηρος ε απε σος στε.). The reference in both cases is to God, but we have not managed to reconstruct the missing text at the end of 11 and start of 12.

13 The bottom of the surface in the first part of this line has been lost, but it appears that it was left blank; if instead there was text written there, then a restoration of some 18 letters would be required. Because nothing seems to be needed to complete the expression of good wishes that begins in 12, this possibility is unattractive.

Verso The first editor suggests from the mention of a thronos in 11 that the recipi-

ent of the letter may have been a bishop. The use of *papas* to refer to him here might also be taken in that sense, as it is mostly to bishops that the term refers in the Greek papyri later than the fourth century. Tomasz Derda and Ewa Wipszycka (above, note to l. 4), pp. 54-56, assert that «dans les textes coptes, *papas* sert habituellement comme titre des presbytres». They do not mention the present letter.

Columbia University, New York (R. S. B.-R. C.)

Montclair State University, Montclair-New Jersey (T. T. R.)