#articleTitle

Critical notes on published documentary papyri and ostraca

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In this paper, I offer corrections and remarks on various documentary papyri and an ostracon. The proposed changes are based on readings conducted either through high-quality digital images accessible online or through personal inspection in Warsaw (specifically, at the National Museum and the Department of Papyrology of the University of Warsaw).

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**[BGU 4 1031](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/bgu%3B4%3B1031)**

On the verso side of this private letter, the address was uncovered during conservation.

The papyrus has: Ἡρακλείδηι vac. φίλωι; this text was not included in the editio princeps, and the subsequent revisions[[1]](#footnote-1) of the text had no knowledge of it. During a conservation project carried out at the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, when the original Berlin cardboard was removed from the glass frame, we discovered a line of text on the back of the papyrus. It contained the address line, written in an elegant upright script (comparable to the one on the recto, albeit with a slight style shift: fig1 vs fig2 on the back) and employing the iota adscript (as observed throughout the recto, interestingly forgotten by the author in the epigraphe section, where the same name Ἡρακλείδῃ is written), indicating the sender’s advanced level of education. fig3

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**[BGU 7 1584 = SB 18 13878](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B18%3B13878)**

This tax receipt together with the subsequent papyrus was personally inspected by me at the Department of Papyrology of the University of Warsaw.

line 6: Κα̣ι̣λ̣ίου → Κα̣[ι]σ̣ίου fig4 this man reappears in the following [BGU 7 1585 = SB 18 13879](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B18%3B13879).6, where once again he represents Διδύμη Μένωνος and his name is evidently written as Καισίου (for a snapshot, see the next entry). The lambda is distinctly different and there is a noticeable hook towards the right at the bottom of the lambda in question. It is worth noting that the name Caesius/Καίσιος is quite rare in Egypt, with only a total of eight documented occurrences in both papyri and inscriptions (TM Nam 9727), excluding the example from Side in Pamphylia. With Καίλιος, however, the situation is slightly worse with a total of five confirmed attestations, if we exclude the two papyri corrected here. Surprisingly, in line 23 of 13878 we find a hook-shaped slanting stroke in the first lambda of Φιλαδελφίας (fig5 ), yet the form of the letter in the alleged Καιλίου in line 6 of 13879 as compared to the λι of Α̣ὐ̣ρηλίου in line 2 of the same text leaves almost no doubt that it should be read as sigma.

line 16-17: Φαρμ(οῦθι) β̣ | διέγραψεν → Φαρμοῦ̣(θι) | θ̣̅ διέγραψεν. At the beginning of the line, a letter with a horizontal stroke on top marking a number went unnoticed in both the editio princeps and the subsequent re-edition[[2]](#footnote-2): fig6

Contrary to what R. W. Daniel and P. J. Sijpesteijn argued, the day was not written at the end of the preceding line, where the alleged number was the malformed ου of Φαρμοῦθι with an abbreviation stroke above it. Consequently, the date should be corrected to Pharmouthi 9th (3rd April 174).

line 18: Λούκειο[ς] Οὐαλέρις → Λούκιος vac. Οὐ̣α̣λέρις. Here I restore the original edition’s Λούκιος. There is no epsilon on the papyrus.

fig7 The square shape of the omicron and other strokes indicate a scribal correction of unclear nature, possibly from an initial Λουκις, cf. l. 23.

line 23: Φιλαδελφίας → Φιλαδελφεί̣ας. On the papyrus, the ει ligature is visible. fig8

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**[BGU 7 1585 = SB 18 13879](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B18%3B13879)**

To the upper left corner of the papyrus, there exists an unmentioned line in the original edition that is likely to be read as π̣ρ̣[ά]κ̣(τορσιν) ἀ̣ρ̣γ̣(υρικῶν) Φ̣[ι]λ̣α̣(δελφείας). The text is not well preserved but the multitude of parallels of this abbreviated phrase is sufficient to confirm the reading, cf. e.g. [P.Gen. 2 108](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.gen%3B2%3B108).5. fig9

line 6: Καιλίου → Καισίου; in this case, the reliable reading of the name as “Καισίου” confirms the correction in the above [BGU 7 1584 = SB 18 13878](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B18%3B13878) fig10

#articleHeader

**[BGU 7 1647](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/bgu%3B7%3B1647)**

This contract of apprenticeship can be improved further with a few additions.

lines 4-5: επ̣ ̣[ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣]ος | [ ̣] ̣ ̣[ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣] τῇ μεγ̣άλῃ π̣α̣ρ̣ε̣μ̣β̣ο̣λῇ → as a tentative reconstruction one could propose ἐπὶ̣ [ἔτη τ]έσ|σ̣σ̣α[ρα (l. τέσσαρα) ἐ]ν̣ τῇ μεγ̣άλῃ π̣α̣ρ̣ε̣μ̣β̣ο̣λῇ based on the traces, but in such an event, one must presume a repetition of the first sigma of τέσσαρα after the line break. Cf. [P.Heid. 4 326](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.heid%3B4%3B326).12-13 (98 CE, Ankyron) with similar phrasing right after the name of the apprentice: τὴν θυγατέραν (l. θυγατέρα) αὐτῶν Συα[ι]|ρ̣οῦν ἐπὶ ἔτη τέσσαρα.

ὥστ̣ε̣ [ ̣ ̣] ̣ ̣→ ὥστε α̣[ὐτ]όν̣, cf. the above cited [P.Heid. 4 326](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.heid%3B4%3B326).16-17.

line 9: μηνιε̣ίων (l. μηνιαίων) → μηνιαίων. The ligature used here is “αι” and not “ει.” fig11

lines 12-13: ἢ ̣ ̣ ̣[ ̣ ̣]ν ̣ ̣ | [ ̣]ε̣σ ̣ ̣ν ̣ ̣ ̣ διδόναι → ἢ ἰς (l. εἰς) ἕτ̣ε[ρ]ο̣ν ἐ̣ρ̣̣|[γ]α̣στ̣ή̣ρ̣ι̣ο̣ν διδόναι. This clause specifies that the owner of the shop is not allowed to outsource his apprentice to another shop. fig12 fig13

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**[P.Giss. 1 57](https://papyri.info/hgv/36872)**

On palaeographical grounds, the papyrus should be dated to the 5th - early 6th century, cf., e.g., [P.Mich. 11 613](https://papyri.info/apis/michigan.apis.1552) (415 CE, Herakleopolis); [P.Oxy. 34 2718](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy%3B34%3B2718) (458 CE, Oxyrhynchos), which exhibit the characteristic horn-shaped tip of the sigma: fig14

line 2: ε̣ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣ρει → ἐν τῷ ὄ̣ρει. The new reading shows that Apa Kollouthos is a presbyter connected with a monastic foundation in the Oxyrhynchite. For the term ὄρος, see [Cadell and Rémondon 1967](https://papyri.info/biblio/46348): 343-349. Although the specific monastic foundation is not explicitly mentioned, we do have some evidence of oros-related designations in the Oxyrhynchite:

* entries in an account including pious donations directed to a monastery of Oros,[[3]](#footnote-3) and in the following entry the coenobium of Abba Pamoun located in the Oros Paee[[4]](#footnote-4) ([P.Oxy. 27 2480](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;27;2480) 119-120, 565-566 CE);
* a list of offerings to religious institutions, a prosphora is made to Mega Oros[[5]](#footnote-5) ([P.Oxy. 67 4620](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;67;4620) 18, 5th-6th cent. CE). As a toponym, this place is also found in a 7th-8th century tax list ([P.Leid.Inst. 80](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.leid.inst;;80) v, 2. 7);[[6]](#footnote-6) Furthemore, an unpublished papyrus from Oxyrhynchos (inv. no. 68.6B.25/F(3)a) cited by M. Mountford in her unpublished doctoral thesis, mentions a payment made by a pronoetes to Mega Oros.[[7]](#footnote-7) See also [Benaissa 2021](https://papyri.info/biblio/96514), s.v. Oros, Mega;
* a monastery named after Abba Kopreous located in the western oros of the city ([P.Oxy. 16 1890](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;16;1890).6-7, 508 CE);[[8]](#footnote-8)
* a receipt made by Kollouthos, a monk of the oros of the village Berky ([PSI 7 786](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/psi%3B7%3B786).9-10, 581 CE),[[9]](#footnote-9) for which see [Benaissa 2021](https://papyri.info/biblio/96514), s.v. Berky.

line 6: ἄξασθαι → δέξασθαι, made out of a triple ligature of delta, epsilon and xi. fig15 Cf. e.g., [P.Apoll. 37](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.apoll%3B%3B37).9 (second half of the 7th cent. CE): ἄλλας ἀποκρίσεις ἐδεξάμην τοῦ δεσπότου ἡμῶν; [P.Fouad 86](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.fouad%3B%3B86).16 (6th cent. CE): οὐδὲ ἀπόκρισιν ἐδεξάμεθα.

line 7: πρὸς τὰ̣ με̣ → πρὸς τω (l. τὸ) μέ. One observes an omega with a redundant stroke connected to the mu fig16. Cf. τω in l. 1 τῷ ὄ̣ρει. As a general principle, an alpha has one less stroke compared to omega, cf. the sequence in μετὰ τῶν in l. 4.

line 10: For this line, see [Benaissa 2020](https://papyri.info/biblio/96051): 220. It is worth noting that an unpublished papyrus from Vienna (P.Vind. G 47705), which was edited in my still unpublished Ph.D. thesis, contains a reference to a Phoibammon boethos of ab actis: Φ]οιβάμμονι βοηθôͅ τ̣ο̣ῦ ἀβάκτης.

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**[P.Oxy. 41 2951](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy%3B41%3B2951)**

In this sale of a slave, a few revised readings are proposed.

line 8: dec(urio) ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣nẹ → dec[urio]ne (l. decurio).

The complete clause is spopondit Barsimes | Bass[u]s dec[urio]ṇe filịo suo Maria Barsime. The editor of the papyrus puts forth an unconvincing suggestion to read <in> ṇọṃịṇe, which would only complicate the matter. This erroneous use of the ablative absolute instead of the proper nominative can be compared to line 21, where a similarly inaccurate use of the Greek genitive (apparently as an equivalent of the ablative absolute) is found: Βαρσιμις Βάσσος δ̣ε̣κ̣αδάρχου.

line 20: κατέχοντος → καὶ ἔχοντος: tau’s vertical stroke in the Greek text never descends so low fig17, for which compare καὶ in line 29 fig18 as opposed to κατ in κατεχομένης fig19. For a parallel, see [P.Oxy. 9 1208](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy%3B9%3B1208).6 (291 CE): τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ καὶ ἔχοντος αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῇ χειρὶ κατὰ τοὺς Ῥωμαίων ννόμους (l. νόμους).

line 22: ὀπτίωνει (l. ὀπτίωνι) → ὀπτίωνι: the vertical right leg of the nu crosses the curved horizontal stroke before its end, creating a false impression of an epsilon fig20. Cf. the nu in κατεχομένης (line 29) fig21 or in the following τήν fig22 in the same line, with a slightly protruding stroke.

line 23: Μετεθεν → Μεγέθιν (corr. ex Μεγεθεν): It is common for girls/women to bear names that are either diminutives or have a neutral ending: orig. Μεγεθία → Μεγέθιον → later Greek Μεγέθιν; likewise, Σαπρικία → Σαπρίκιον → Σαπρίκιν. In BL VII 154 an intriguing theory is proposed based on the fact that the same woman is surprisingly named Νίκην ἐπικαικλημένην (l. ἐπικεκλημένην) | Σαπρίκιν in lines 29-30. This is explained as a direct translation of the alleged Μετεθεν, a Greek phonetic transcription of the Arabic term for ‘spoiled, rotten’ m-it-ʿṭṭn. This hypothesis is attractive – and frankly, it is puzzling why else one would use a completely different alias – but not compelling due to the complete absence of any other evidence or attestations of such a form. Conversely, there is an overwhelming dominance of well attested masculine and feminine forms of the name Μεγέθιος/Μεγεθία et sim., with particular concentration in Arabia,[[10]](#footnote-10) which is probably a decisive factor in our choice. At any rate, even the popularity of the name in Arabia does not necessarily mean that it could not derive from the Greek word μέγεθος. Cf. an inscription from Thessalonike ([IG X,2 1 628](https://epigraphy.packhum.org/text/137815?hs=486-495) Β.1, 5, early 3rd cent. CE) Κάστορος ἡ θυγάτηρ, Μεγέθιν δ’ οὔνομα ἦν μοι.

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**[P.Oxy. 50 3581](https://papyri.info/hgv/32313)**[[11]](#footnote-11)

line 4: πρὸς γάμ̣[ον ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣] ̣δο ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣μ[ ̣] ̣ → πρὸς γάμ̣[ον καὶ ἐπα]ι̣δοπ̣ο̣ι̣η̣σά̣μ̣[η]ν̣. The insertion of καί in the lacuna is necessary to achieve transition in the narrative of the petition. At the same time, it is one of the few suitable conjunctions narrow enough to fit together with the initial part of the verb. The impression of an αι ligature after π̣ο̣ι̣η̣σ and just before the lacuna can be misleading. Still, it can be easily dismissed by the fact that the shape of αμ sometimes resembles an αι with an elongated left upright stroke of the mu, cf. αμ in l. 6 πάντα μου fig23. Moreover, for a woman, the middle voice of the verb παιδοποιῶ is the standard form often accompanied by the prepositional phrase with ἐξ + the male parent, cf. e.g. [P.Tebt. 2 334](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.tebt%3B2%3B334).8-9 (200/1 CE) ἐξ οὗ καὶ <ἐ> παιδο/ποιησάμην [πα]ιδία δύο; [P.Ryl. 2 269](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.ryl%3B2%3B269).5-6 (2nd cent. CE): ἐ̣κ̣ δυεῖν οἴκ̣[ω]ν̣ | ἐπ̣α̣ιδ[οπ]ο̣ι̣ήσατο; [P.Cair.Masp. 2 67156](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.cair.masp%3B2%3B67156tripl).9-10 (570 CE): τῆς ἐξ αὐτοῦ παιδοποιηθείσης | [μοι] γλ[υκ]υτάτης θυγατρός.[[12]](#footnote-12)

line 5: μη̣ ̣[ ̣]ν → probably μηδ̣[ὲ]ν … She probably asserts that she was completely unaware of her husband’s ill intentions.

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**[SB 5 8006](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B5%3B8006)**

As a preliminary remark, what was printed as the verso is, in fact, the recto side, for which see BL V 101. The papyrus underwent conservation in Warsaw, yet the dispersed ink blotches render certain readings extremely challenging. This is particularly true for the actual verso side, where the stains are ubiquitous.

lines 4-5: χαλκοῦν ̣ ̣χ̣|μο̣ν̣→ χαλκοῦν | μου̣[[13]](#footnote-13) The traces of ink after χαλκοῦν are most likely merely meaningless blotches. fig24

The lines do not exhibit uniformity in their length, although in this case χαλκοῦν aligns well with μνήσθητι in line 5.

line 11: Σουμμηνίῳ → Σουκμηνίῳ; this appears to be an alternative form for the more often attested Σοκμῆνις (TM Nam 1130). What seems to form a mu are various ink traces that occur throughout the text. For comparison, observe the kappa in φυλά|κων in line 13: fig25 vs. fig26

line 14: ἐρωτήσοντε (l. ἐρωτήσονται) φερνήν → ἐρώτησον Τεφεράιν (Τνε corr. ex. Τε) (l. Τνεφερσάιν?) vel Τν̣εφερά̣ι̣ν. In BL III 2, 196 a ghost-name Τεφέρνην was proposed, which is a suspected hapax legomenon.[[14]](#footnote-14) Upon closer inspection, we can see that the addresser initially wrote Τε but seemingly inserted a nu in between (although due to the numerous ink stains throughout the papyrus, this impression may be incorrect). This is followed by a clear φε with the cross-stroke of epsilon being longer than usual, but still plausible, in my opinion. Otherwise, one could also consider an unattested and difficult metathesis of the sigma, i.e. Τνεφεσ̣ράιν/Τεφεσ̣ράιν. Regarding the ending, the traces are misleading. After the rho, there seems to be a letter starting with a curved line ascending to create a loop. As ligatures are not employed after a rho, this suggests that the letter is rather not a nu (which has a different shape) but a vertical alpha, otherwise used elsewhere in this text. However, it is not easy to interpret the double vertical lines that follow. It seems that the first represents the iota and the second the left vertical component of the nu (thus ΑΙΝ). fig27

The omission of the nu appears to be quite common in the various versions of this feminine name, for which we have plenty of examples:

* Τεφερσάις (a variant of Tnephersais, TM Nam 1433);
* Τεφερῶς (a variant of Tnepheros, TM Nam 1272);
* Τεφερᾶς ([BGU 9 1891](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/bgu%3B9%3B1891) passim, and [PSI I 51](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/psi%3B1%3B51). 4).

line 18: ἔλεγ(έ) μοι → ἔλεγ<έ> μοι; there is no abbreviation. The addresser, by a lapsus calami, conflated the epsilon with the mu.

π̣ ̣ ̣ ̣ς → πά̣̣ρ̣ε̣ς (‘do not bother as I have found it’). fig28

line 19: ̣ ̣ ̣→ I am uncertain how these traces could be justified since there are no visible ink traces on the papyrus. It must be either a misprint or an ellipsis marked by the editor, who intended to imply that the text ends abruptly and the thought remained unfinished. fig29 fig30

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**[SB 6 9395](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B6%3B9395)**

Since its initial edition,[[15]](#footnote-15) this private letter has undergone a series of corrections. To provide a brief overview of the current state of affairs, a significant contribution to its understanding was offered by [Papathomas 2009](https://papyri.info/biblio/77869): 261-263, where several new readings were proposed and discussed. Additionally, three other scholars offered their ideas on specific words:

[Jördens 1986](https://papyri.info/biblio/57917), esp. 106 n. 12, revised the ghost-name Σύμμαχος in line 6; [Bonati 2016](https://papyri.info/biblio/84753): esp. 203 n. 27, discussed the potential colour of the olives mentioned in the text (μελίχροας); [Martinez 1992](https://papyri.info/biblio/62503): 216, used the text as a reference to the Saite jars (Σαΐτια). In this review, I aim to present further corrections and interpretations of the content, utilizing the high-resolution images now available online.[[16]](#footnote-16)

line 2: Φαμούτ̣ωνος: an attempt to re-read this difficult name inserted above ἀδελφοῦ ἡμῶν was made by A. Papathomas (see above) as `Φ<ο>ι̣βάμμων̣[ος]´. Upon closer examination, it seems that this is not an individually added text, but rather a continuation of the address in line 1. According to Papathomas’ restoration, the letter is addressed using the plural τ̣[οῖς δεσπόται]ς, with the first name read as Νε̣μ̣ε̣σ̣[ι]α̣[νῷ]. Nevertheless, the text appears to lack at least one more addressee, whom I believe to be the person mentioned in the inserted line. I read `Φλ̣αουι̣ανῷ´, followed by other abraded letters. If so, Φλαουιανῷ does not belong to this line, and therefore, the name of the “common brother” follows ἡμῶν and starts with a delta.

line 3: [ ̣ ̣ ̣ ἰ]σ̣οτύ̣πως → [πρω]τ̣οτύπως, with the meaning ‘primarily/first of all,’ attested not seldom in private correspondence in Late Antiquity, e.g. [P.Abinn. 28](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.abinn%3B%3B28).24-27 (around 346 CE): ἀλλὰ | πρωτοτύπως σοι τῷ ἐμῷ | δεσπότῃ ἔγραψα ἐκδικηθῆναί| με; [P.Erl. 120](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.erl%3B%3B120).2-3 (546-547 CE ?): ἐδεξάμην κ[αὶ ἔμαθον] πρωτοτύπως μὲν τὴν ἐν Χρισ[τῷ] | [α]ὐτῆς ὑγιείαν; [P.Lond. 3 1244](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.lond%3B3%3B1244).4 (4th cent. CE): προσγυνῆσαί (l. προσκυνῆσαι) σοι̣ (l. σου) τὸ [ε]ὔμορφον καὶ ἱλαρὸν πρόσωπον προτ[οτ]ύπως (l. πρωτοτύπως); [P.Neph. 8](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.neph%3B%3B8).13-14 (352 CE): διὸ ἀνα̣[γκαῖ]ον ἡγησάμην γράψ̣αι σοι πρωτο|τύπω[ς; [P.Neph. 11](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.neph%3B%3B11).6-9 (4th cent. CE): πιστὸν ἡγησάμην καὶ πάσης | ἀποδοχῆς ἄξι\ο/ν πρωτοτύπως | προσειπεῖν ὑμῶν τὴν ἐν θ(ε)ῷ | διάθεσιν; [P.Oslo 3 88](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oslo%3B3%3B88).5 (around 370 CE): ἀπετίτω (l. ἀπαιτείτω) τὸν παλεὸν (l. παλαιόν) οἶνον πρωτοτύπως. [P.Oxy. 16 1832](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy%3B16%3B1832).5-6 (5th-6th cent. CE): κελεῦσαι πρωτοτύπ[ως] | τὰ ἅγια κιμήλ[ια] (l. κειμήλια) ἀναδοθῆναι. These instances demonstrate how common it was, especially in stressing, as a rhetorical device, the significance of the addressee.

line 7: ὄνον πρά̣τ̣ιον → ὄνον πρωτῖον (l. πρωτεῖον), i.e. ‘of first quality.’ For the ωτ, compare the one in θαυμασιωτάτοις in line 1. For examples of similar references to various commodities, one may refer to, e.g., [BGU 3 950](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/bgu%3B3%3B950).3-4 (4th-7th cent. CE): κραβατ̣ά̣λ̣ιον ἓν | πάνυ πρωτῖον (l. πρωτεῖον); [P.Flor. 1 65](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.flor%3B1%3B65).15 (570-571 CE): παρασχεῖν σοι ἐν̣ π̣[ρ]ω̣τ̣ίῳ (l. πρωτείῳ) οἶ\ν/ον̣ (l. οἴνῳ); [P.Lond. 5 1764](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.lond%3B5%3B1764).7 (6th cent. CE): παρασχεῖν ἐν πρωτίῳ (l. πρωτείῳ) οἴνῳ; [P.Mich. 11 608](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.mich%3B11%3B608).17 (6th cent. CE): παρασχ(εῖν) ἐν προτίῳ (l. πρωτείῳ) οἴνῳ; [P.Ness. 3 87](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.ness%3B3%3B87).2/4 (7th cent. CE): μ̣έ̣λιτος [πρ]ω̣τί[ου (l. πρωτείου) / γ̣άρου πρωτίου (l. πρωτείου); [SB 26 16830](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B26%3B16830).27-28 (6th-7th cent. CE): παρασχεῖν σοι τὰ ἴσα ἐ̣ν πρ̣[ω]|τίου οἴνου (l. πρωτείῳ οἴνῳ);

line 9: θεοφοβίῳ → Θεοφοβίῳ (TM Nam 9527). It is most likely a name known from at least one more document, [SB 20 14965](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B20%3B14965).6 (4th cent. CE): δι(ὰ) Θεοφοβίου σί(του) (ἀρτάβαι).

line 11: The content of this line is directly related to the olive pots mentioned in line 10. The missing information that one would consider natural is the number of these pots, whereas the Saite jars were specified as two. A revised reading of the line produces the following meaningful text:

ἐλιας (l. ἐλαίας) κύθρας | μελιχωρας (l. μελίχροας) τρῖς̣ (l. τρεῖς). ὅρκον δαὶ (l. δέ) ἔλαβον <παρὰ> Ἡρακλίδου (l. Ἡρακλείδου) ὥσται (l. ὥστε) αὐτὸν μὴ ἀμελῆσαι περὶ | τούτου (= ‘three pots of honey-coloured olives. I had an oath given to me by Herakleides, to ensure that he does not show negligence in this matter’).

Ὄρκον ἔλαβον is attested in [P.Cair.Masp. 2 67200](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.cair.masp%3B2%3B67200).4 (6th cent. CE): φρι̣κ̣[τ]ὸ̣ν̣ δ̣ὲ̣ ὅρκον ἔλαβο̣ν παρὰ Ἡρακλ̣ε̣ί̣ου.[[17]](#footnote-17) Cf. also examples such as Schol. Apoll. Rhod. I, 773: (...) μέχρις οὗ ὅρκον ἔλαβον παρ᾽ αὐτῶν (...); [Vita Adam et Evae](https://archive.org/details/apocalypsesapocr02tiscuoft), 19.3: ὅτε δὲ ἔλαβεν ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ τὸν ὅρκον; Eur. Supp. 1188: πρῶτον λάβ᾽ ὅρκον.

line 14: Here I prefer to read διαφυλάξα̣ιεν (l. διαφυλάξειεν), which goes back to Gerstinger’s version, while Papathomas had transcribed it as διαφυλάξοιεν. Limited space leaves the latter possibility open, if one accepts the iota leaning on the omicron. I have dotted the alpha, although I do not believe the scribe had intended an epsilon iota ligature here as from the few instances occurring in the text, the epsilon-iota combination has a distinct shape with a curved line descending from the epsilon’s cross-stroke (see, e.g., εἵνα in l. 3).

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**[SB 8 9746](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb%3B8%3B9746)**

This private letter contains a few obscure points and a ghost-name.

line 29: Οὐαλερ[ιάν]η: It is nearly impossible to fit the letters ιαν into the available space.

fig31 I propose to read Οὐαλερ[ία], followed by an undeciphered phrase.

line 30-31: Βι|κευτίαν → Βι|κεντίαν. Vikeutia is a ghostname. The papyrus reads Βικεντίαν, with the impression of an upsilon produced by the hat of the tau touching upon the right leg of the nu in an awkward ligature. However, the top tip of the right leg of the nu leaves no doubts that this is indeed a nu: fig32

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**[O.Did. 464](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/o.did%3B%3B464)**

This private letter on ostracon found at the Didymoi praesidium contains two enigmatic starting lines, written by a different hand than the rest of the text. The edition reads: ἔρ̣ρ̣ωσ(ο) Ζ ̣ωσιμῆτι | ὕπ̣α ἄπανξε (l. ἀπάγξαι). It has been suggested that these lines may have been a postscript, for which reason the initial ερρωσ was interpreted as ἔρ̣ρ̣ωσ(ο) as if this was the text’s closing section. However, several problems emerge with this interpretation:

* Ζωσιμῆτι is in the dative, thereby indicating her as the addressee.
* The two lines are written by a different hand.
* Ἔρρωσο never appears in this contextual position, also in the case of other ostraca from Didymoi.
* There is no indication of an abbreviation after or above the sigma of ερρωσ.

In light of the above considerations, a much more plausible hypothesis based on a revision of the text may be proposed:

Ἔρως (corr. ex Ερρως) Ζωσιμῆτι (ζ corr. ex δ̣ι̣ ̣| ὕπα (l. ὕπαγε) ἄπανξε (l. ἄπαγξαι)

‘Eros to Zosime. Go and hang yourself.’

If Eros is viewed as the addresser of the brief message, which appears probable, he may have secretly added a humorous remark before it was dispatched. The story becomes even more theatrical, if, following the editor, we assume that Beryllus was illiterate (his sister’s letter was read to him) and, thus, was incapable of reading what Eros presumably wrote to his sister. In this scenario, Beryllus did not compose the main corpus of the text but had someone else do it.

In line 2, although the editor does consider the reading ὑγια instead of ὑπα, the final choice of ὕπα is well founded. Two illustrative parallels corroborate this interpretation of ὕπα: P.Athen. 62. 9-12 (1st-2nd cent. CE): ἡ μή|τηρ μου ὑπάγῃ εἰς Ἀρσε|νοείτην (l. Ἀρσινοΐτην) ὑπα (l. ὕπαγε) μα̣ι̣τὰ (l. μετὰ) αὐ|τῆς σὺ (‘My mother is setting out to the Arsinoite. You too, go with her.’) mentioned in the edition; SB XIV 11588. 19-20 (late 4th cent. CE): ὑπα (l. ὕπαγε) παρὰ Μαρίαν τὴν ἀδελφὴν | μου καὶ δείδει (l. δίδωσι) σου (l. σοι) αὐτά (‘Go to Maria’s, my sister, and she’ll give them to you.’), which was published by H. Youtie three years after [Mandilaras 1973](https://papyri.info/biblio/8046), where he made reference to the former instance in § 690. The form survived into Medieval Greek, cf. e.g., ὕπα καλῶς, γεράκιν μου (‘farewell, my hawk’),[[18]](#footnote-18) and is attested in a number of demotic Greek folk songs.[[19]](#footnote-19) fig33

In the ensuing section (the main letter corpus), the addressee is again Zosime in a standard dative form (Ζωσίμῃ). Various feminine names are often found in a non-standard dative form ending in -ᾶτι or -ῆτι, as observed here. I intend to explore this phenomenon in another paper currently under preparation.

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1. \* Thanks are due to W. G. Claytor for reading the draft and offering useful comments.

   [Böhm 1953](https://papyri.info/biblio/40386): 468-470 (= BL III 16); [Kapsomenos 1957](https://papyri.info/biblio/42185): 354–355 (= BL IV 6); [Gonis 2003](https://papyri.info/biblio/71982): 163 (= BL XIII 29). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Daniel and Sijpesteijn 1985](https://papyri.info/biblio/57128): 47ff., esp. 55-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. εἰς τὸ μοναστήριον τοῦ Ὄρους λόγῳ εὐσεβ(είας). Could this be the Mega Oros? [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. εἰς τὸ κοινόβι(ον) ἀββᾶ Παμοῦν ἐν τῷ Ὄρι (l. Ὄρει) Π̣άεε. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. εἰς τὸ Μέγα Ὄρος. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ／ χ(ωρίον) Μ(ε)γ(άλου) Ὄρου̣ς. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [Mountford, M. (2012), Documentary papyri from Roman and Byzantine Oxyrhynchus](https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1348496/), unpub. PhD thesis, University College London, London: 207, accessed online on 17.02.2023 at:

   <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1348496/1/1348496.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ἐν τῷ λιβικῷ ὄρει ταύτης τῆς πόλεως / ἐν τῷ μ[ο]ναστηρίῳ τῷ καλουμένῳ ἀββᾶ Κοπρεοῦτ[ο]ς. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Κολλοῦθος μονάζ(ων) τοῦ ὄρους κώμ(ης) / Βερκὺ. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See, e.g.,

    [http://epigraphy.packhum.org/search?patt=%CE%BC%CE%B5%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%B8%CE%B9](http://epigraphy.packhum.org/search?patt=%2525CE%2525BC%2525CE%2525B5%2525CE%2525B3%2525CE%2525B5%2525CE%2525B8%2525CE%2525B9); [Aliquot, J. - Shdaifat, Y. - Weber, T. M. (2014), “New Byzantine inscribed tombstones from the Land of Moab,” ZPE 189](https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01709318/document): 153; see also P.Petra I 5.8 with n., and P.Petra V 60.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See BL XIII 163, for the probable date of the petition (5th century). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The only exception to this pattern is [P.Cair.Masp. 1 67005](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.cair.masp%3B1%3B67005).10-11 (ca. 568 CE): καὶ παιδοποιήσασα | [ἀπὸ(?)] τοῦ εὐμοίρου ἀν̣[δρὸς - ca.12 - τέκ]νον [ἀρ]ρενικὸν̣, where the subject of the active participle is Sophia. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Credit goes to W.G. Claytor for this suggestion. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See also B. Borelli’s note in the papyri.info digital commentary, where she entertains the possibility of Τεφέρνη being a variant of Τεφερσάις. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. [Gerstinger 1957](https://papyri.info/biblio/42143): 100-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. <https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_8642472> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The opposite, “to give an oath,” is also attested: [P.Flor. 3 279](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.flor%3B3%3B279).23 (514): ὅρκον δίδομεί (l. δίδωμι) τε; [P.Oxy. 16 1862](https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy%3B16%3B1862).40 (around 624 CE?): ὅρκον δέδωκα τῷ Βίκτωρι. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. [Politis 1912](https://papyri.info/biblio/97048): 644 [= [Politis, N. G. (1980-1985), “Λαογραφικὰ Σύμμεικτα Δ΄,” Athens](http://www.kentrolaografias.gr/sites/default/files/Laografika_Summeikta_t_D.pdf): 202]. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. References and details can be found in [Politis 1954](https://papyri.info/biblio/97043): 271-272, n. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)