

**Communication and the Circulation of Letters in the Eastern  
Desert of Egypt during the Roman Period**

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Submitted by: Fatma E. Hamouda

First evaluator: Prof. Dr. Andrea Jördens

Second evaluator: Prof. Dr. Cornelia Römer

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**To my mother and the soul of my father**

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years, excavations in Egypt's Eastern Desert, which was home to important mining sites and the hub for long-distance trade between Rome and the Near and Far East, have turned up thousands of potsherds inscribed with Greek and much fewer with Latin. Most of these texts are private and official letters and they tend to date to the first three centuries of the current era. Studying this large corpus of material, which has not been studied in a synthetic manner before, reveals multiple aspects of life in Roman Egypt: for example, we see how letters were exchanged, who handled and delivered them, whence and to where they were delivered, what obstacles could prevent their delivery, and who communicated with whom, namely, the networks that were formed through epistolary communication.

The Eastern Desert brought people of different cultures together, who came to this hardly habitable area generally for reasons of work and commercial interest. It was important to the Romans because of its mines of precious metals and stones, and for its access to the Red Sea trade route, which connected the Mediterranean to South Arabia, Southern Africa, and India. People stationed in the Eastern Desert needed to communicate, and communication required infrastructure. The present work has thus been conducted with particular focus on the circumstances that surrounded the process of the circulation of letters and goods in the Eastern Desert. Overall, this study attempts to reveal how epistolary communication was the underpinning of Roman commercial and military operations in a critical part of the Roman empire. The data for this work is derived from around 931 published (and forthcoming) letters from the Eastern Desert, information about which was gathered in a Filemaker database. The letters date from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.

The first chapter explores the communities of inhabitants in the Eastern Desert who corresponded with each other. Besides that, it provides a survey of the Eastern Desert letters and elucidates their common features and the materials used for writing. It also sheds light on the routes and stations between which the correspondence traveled. Moreover, it discusses the reasons for writing these letters. Studying them reveals that the inhabitants of the Eastern Desert relied on letter writing to serve a wide range of life necessities. To get most things one had to write requesting them. This explains why a large number of letters are concerned with exchanging goods and various commodities. On the official side, individuals mainly used letter writing in order to manage complex logistics and to control work progress in the mines and quarries.

The second chapter deals briefly with the ancient postal service, generally. Then, it turns to the official postal system in the Eastern Desert and the types of couriers that were employed by it. The study discusses each type of messenger (e.g., cavalryman, *monomachos*, etc.) who conveyed letters, sometimes with accompanying goods, trying to show in which capacity they operated, whether officially or unofficially.

The third chapter focuses on the individual carriers, whose number appears to have been the largest in the Eastern Desert, particularly in the case of the transfer of the unofficial correspondence. The chapter also deals with some aspects pertaining to these carriers, such as their social networks, and extends to discuss other means of delivery (e.g., boats, the caravan, the *probole*, etc) which are not much attested with regard to letter exchange, so far, but rather with regard to goods transfer.

The fourth chapter deals with aspects pertaining to the process of circulation of both letters and goods, either in official or unofficial correspondence, such as the organization of the circulation of official correspondence and goods, the obstacles and dangers that hampered the activity and movement of the carriers, privacy and the authentication of letters, and verbal messages and the herald.

The fifth chapter looks at the writers of the Eastern Desert letters and discusses various examples of these throughout the first three centuries CE. Studying the hands exposes the agents involved in writing the letters. Here we meet people of different origins (Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, Thracians etc.) who held various positions. They were high officials, soldiers, civilians, workers and also women. Many of these women were from the circle of the trader Philokles, the most prolific letter writer of the Eastern Desert, which reflects the vital connection between commerce and literacy. As a trader, Philokles relied heavily on letters to conduct his business, even though he was hardly literate. Had he lived along the Nile, he may well have never written, because the necessity to do so might not have existed.

Chapter five also considers the largely silent apparatus of official scribes (and interpreters) who were likely responsible for some of the clerical work at the Eastern Desert sites, but who are known mainly through brief references in dedicatory inscriptions (e.g., from Berenike) and the occasional ostraca (from Mons Claudianus and Krokodilo). Moreover, the chapter tries to prove the existence of a central “postal” office in three main stations: Mons Claudianus in the northern part of the desert, Krokodilo on the road to Myos Hormos, and, most likely, Dios on the road to Berenike.

Ostraca, papyri, and wooden tablets are cited according to the “Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets”, which is available at

<http://www.papyri.info/docs/checklist>. Inscriptions are cited according to abbreviations found in the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.<sup>1</sup> All of these are not repeated in the bibliography. Dates of the published texts are recorded according to the HGV,<sup>2</sup> except for O.Krok. II, which follows the edition, as it has not yet been taken up in the HGV. All dates are CE unless identified as BCE. The term “unofficial correspondence” refers to both the private and business letters. Translations of the ancient texts are my own or modified by me unless the source of the translation is indicated. The dimensions of the texts are provided in centimeters, as w(idth) x h(eight). Images are taken from the printed editions, or from [papyri.info](http://papyri.info),<sup>3</sup> which also provides further links to the host institutions.

In the case of O.Krok. II, some of the letters were published earlier in Cuvigny (ed. 2003), *La route de Myos Hormos* (Cairo) and SB XXVIII, to which I refer. For the others, I am grateful to Adam Bülow-Jacobsen for sharing the manuscript with me prior to publication.

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<sup>1</sup> It is also available at [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/supplementum-epigraphicum-graecum/\\*concordances-Concordances](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/supplementum-epigraphicum-graecum/*concordances-Concordances) (accessed 27 September 2018).

<sup>2</sup> <http://aquila.zaw.uni-heidelberg.de/> (accessed 08 November 2019).

<sup>3</sup> <https://papyri.info/> (accessed 08 November 2019).

# 1 Circumstances Surrounding Correspondence in the Eastern Desert of Egypt

## 1.1 The inhabitants of the Eastern Desert

In the closed community of the Eastern Desert of Egypt during the Roman period, the habit of writing letters was directly tied to the nature of the environment and the professional needs and life requirements of the inhabitants. The desert constituted a central hub of people from different cultures, who came to this hardly habitable area generally for reasons of work. There were civilians of various professions, quarry workers and military men who supported the operations and secured the highly important trade roads, the military stations, the water stations, and of course the mines and quarries.<sup>1</sup> This community included, in addition to soldiers, officials and civilian personnel and workers, women, girls as well as children and infants.<sup>2</sup> It comprised also people of different origins: Egyptians, Hellenized Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, Dacians, Thracians, Cypriots,<sup>3</sup> Cyreneans,<sup>4</sup> Nabataeans,<sup>5</sup> and Jews,<sup>6</sup> lived together side by side.<sup>7</sup> And from Egypt itself, workers came from different regions: such as Alexandria, the Arsinoite nome, Memphis and Syene to perform the quarry duties.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike big communities, such as Oxyrhynchus or Karanis, we cannot say that the number of the people stationed in the Eastern Desert was numerous.<sup>9</sup> As observed in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Kaper and Wendrich (1998) 2.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. O.Claud. I 126 (ca. 107), O.Claud. II 386 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.?), O.Did. 402 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 404 (before (?) ca. 140-150).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. O.Did. 430 (before (?) ca. 100-110).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. O.Did. 414 (before (?) ca. 125).

<sup>5</sup> The Nabataeans arrived in the Eastern Desert in the early first century CE. A few potsherds and a coin found at the area of Sikait, prove that there was contact between them and the area of Sikait during the first century CE, which is the zenith of the Nabataeans commercial activity throughout the middle East and the Mediterranean, see Sidebotham, Hense and Nouwens (2008) 296. In two ostraca from Berenike, there are attestations to soldiers with Nabataean names (*Zaneos*, *Zannae*), which the editors point out could be the same person, see O.Ber. III 348, note to l.1 and 392, note to l.4. Also the name *Dosarion*, in O.Ber. III 266, 11, is likely Nabataean, see note to l.11.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g. O.Claud. IV 878 (ca. 150-154), and on the existence of Jews at the quarries, see Cuvigny (2014a) 344-345.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the types of people in the Eastern Desert, see Bülow-Jacobsen (2001) 157.

<sup>8</sup> See O.Claud. IV p.263.

<sup>9</sup> The number of people in Mons Claudianus was around ca. 913 persons on a particular day, as proved by an ostrakon (O.Claud. inv. 1538+2921) from there dating to the Trajanic period. This text also shows that the types of people stationed in the Eastern Desert were soldiers and civilians of different skills and professions, such as doctors, smiths, stone-masons, doorkeepers, barbers, donkey drivers; see Cuvigny (2005b) 309-353 and O.Claud. IV pp.263-264. For more discussion, cf. the intro. to O.Claud. I 33-118, p.79, Adams (2007) 209, Veen and

correspondence, the inhabitants constituted circles or networks, their correspondence with each other concerned matters related to the purposes of their existence in the desert. This limited number of people also puts constraints on the number of actors we can observe in the correspondence and sometimes encourages us to identify homonymous individuals. This does not mean that all the people in the desert are known to us. There are letters written by unknown persons that do not belong to any of the dossiers or known networks. In this respect, the situation is similar to that in the area of the Nile valley, where some actors within a given archive are known to us and others not. One needs to compare only a few of the best known archives of the Roman period, such as those of the soldiers Gaius Iulius Sabius and his son Gaius Iulius Apollinaris;<sup>10</sup> of Claudius Tiberianus from Karanis;<sup>11</sup> of Epagathus, the estate manager of the Roman veteran Lucius Bellienus Gemellus from Euhemeria.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2 The nature of the Eastern Desert letters

Most of the Eastern Desert letters are addressed from men to men largely because of the military nature of the milieu; a small number are addressed from or to women<sup>13</sup> or between women only,<sup>14</sup> The bulk of them are short texts but there are some longer letters.<sup>15</sup> The majority does not contain an address with instructions for the deliverer, but some do, whether on the

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Hamilton-Dyer (1998) 101, and for the limited number of soldiers in Didymoi and Krokodilo, see Cuvigny (2003b) 307-309 and Broux (2017) 138.

<sup>10</sup> P.Mich. VIII 465-466, 482, 485-487, 493, 496-501, 509, see Sarri (2018) 273. For this archive see, Claytor, Feucht, Trismegistos ArchID 116 (2013) 1-13 and the forthcoming P.Mich. XXII.

<sup>11</sup> ChLA V 299; P.Mich. VIII 467-481, 510, see Sarri (2018) 276-277. For this archive, see Strassi (2008).

<sup>12</sup> P.Fay. 110-124, 248-249, P.Laur. II 39, see Sarri (2018) 270-271. For this archive, see Ast and Azzarello (2012) and (2013); Römer (2019) 190.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. P.Ber. II 129; 130 (ca. 50-75); P.Ber. III 270 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); O.Max. inv. 279+467 and 267 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) published in Bülow-Jacobsen, Cuvigny, Fournet, (1994) 32-33 nos. II and III. O.Florida 14 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. I 126 (ca. 107); 138 (ca. 110); O.Did. 360 (before (?) ca. 88-96); 361? (1. March 77?); 379 (before (?) ca. 115-120); 383-385 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 386 (before (?) ca. 120-125); 393? (before (?) ca. 88-96 (?); 394? (before (?) ca. 110-115); 400 (before (?) ca. 120-125); 402-403 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 404 (before (?) ca. 140-150); 405 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 410 (before (?) ca. 115-120); 417 (ca. 120-125); 418 (before (?) ca. 120-125); 427; 444; 445-6? (before (?) ca. 125-140); 451 (before (?) ca. 176-210).

<sup>14</sup> E.g. O.Did. 386 (before (?) ca. 120-125).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. O.Did. 390 (before (?) ca. 125-140); 406 (before (?) ca. 115-140); P.Ber. II 129 (ca. 50-75); P.Ber. III 270 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.).

same side after the body of the letter<sup>16</sup> or between the body and the closing greetings<sup>17</sup> or even on the back as docketed information, particularly when papyrus was used.<sup>18</sup> In a few exceptional cases letters even start with the address.<sup>19</sup> Most of the letters are written in black ink, only a few in red ink<sup>20</sup> or charcoal,<sup>21</sup> and on one side of the potsherd; both sides might be used as an opisthograph,<sup>22</sup> if the back of the potsherd is clean or if the material of writing is papyrus.<sup>23</sup> The majority of letters are not dated, but there are exceptions, such as O.Krok. II 274 (end of the reign of Trajan).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. SB XXVIII 17100 (150-175) at the end of the letter beside the dating; O.Did. 317 (before (?) ca. 77-92).

<sup>17</sup> In O.Claud. I 177 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) the editor suggests that the writer wrote the address then the letter and because of the lack of the space he added the final greetings after the address; since there is difference between the left margin of the letter body and the address.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. P.Ber. II 129; 130 (ca. 50-75); P.Ber. III 270 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.).

<sup>19</sup> εἰς Κάνοπον: O.Did. 370, 1 (before (?) ca. 88-92); [ἀπόδος] εἰς Διδύμους: 418, 1 (before (?) ca. 120-125); ἀπόδος Ἀπολιναρίῳ: SB XXVIII 17092= O.Krok. II 267, 1 (98-117); [ἀπό]δος Ἀπολιναρίῳ: O.Krok. II 268 (end of the reign of Trajan), 1. For the address of the letter in the Eastern Desert, see Fournet (2003) 488-489, and the importance of the docket, in general, see White (1978) 307-309.

<sup>20</sup> O.Claud. IV 818 (ca. 109-110).

<sup>21</sup> O.Claud. IV 678 (ca. 98-117).

<sup>22</sup> E.g. SB VI 9017 Nr. 14 (40-42); 21; 27 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 31; 37; 39; 46; 56 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.)=O.Faw. 14; 21; 27; 31; 37; 39; 46; 56; SB XXVIII 17097 (1<sup>st</sup> cent-early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 225; 227 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 379 (before (?) ca. 115-120); 380; 382; 383; 384 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 390 (before (?) ca. 125-140); 393 (before (?) ca. 88-96 (?)); 395 (before (?) ca. 120-125); 425 (before (?) ca. 125-140); 440 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 451 (before (?) ca. 176-210); O.Krok. I 10 (ca. 108); 79 (ca. 98-138); 94 (ca. 118).

<sup>23</sup> E.g. P.Ber. III 270 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.).

<sup>24</sup> See Fournet (2003) 488.

One potsherd is usually used to write one letter but there are some instances of two letters<sup>25</sup> or texts<sup>26</sup> written on the same potsherd. Several instances of palimpsests are found in the Eastern Desert corpus, where sherds were washed out and used again.<sup>27</sup> There are instances of single letters written on two or more potsherds. This unique habit belongs to Philokles, who writes one long letter on more than one ostrakon (Fig. 1).<sup>28</sup> Some letters are written without a prescript, providing directly the body of the letter without mentioning the names of the sender and the addressee, as some of these might also have been continuations of letters begun on another sherd.<sup>29</sup> There are other instances of letters in which the writers insert additional parts

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<sup>25</sup> E.g. O.Did. 383 (two letters addressed from Philokles to Sknips and Kapparis, before (?) ca. 110-115); O.Krok. II 296 (two letters likely addressed from Ischyras to NN and Kapparis, 98-117). The practice of writing recording letters from the same sender to different recipients on a single writing support is not new; it is already attested, e.g., in T.Vindol. III 643 (two Latin letters addressed from Florus to Calavirius and Titus, ca. 92-115); SB XX 14132 (two letters from Ptolema to Belous, her mother and Heros her sister, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); SB III 6263 (two letters from Sempronius to his mother Saturnila and Maximus, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); P.Mich. VIII 508 (two letters from Thaisarion to Serenus, her brother and Serapous, her sister, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); P.Tebt. II 416 (two letters from Kalma to his sisters Sarapias and Protous, 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); P.Oxy. XXXVI 2789 (Kleopatra to Epahroditos and Moros, ca. 245-302); P.Grenf. I 53 (two letters from a military context addressed from Artemis to Theodoros her husband and to Sarapion, 4<sup>th</sup> cent.). Although the letters are usually addressed to two different persons the address on the back of the letter is addressed to only one recipient, the recipient of the first letter. But O.Did. 417 (ca. 120-125) contains two letters addressed from different persons to one person: it is addressed from Demetrous and Numosis to Claudius. The reason for this is probably to decrease inconvenience for the letter carrier, see the intro. to O.Did. 417, p. 354. Other letters from two different senders to the same recipient are: P.Oxy. LXII 4340 (two letters from Petosiris and Thaisis to Didyme, 250-275); P.Oxy. XXXI 2599 (two business letters from Apitheon and Theodoros to Tauris, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> cent.). In addition to these, there are letters sent from two different senders to two different recipients written on the same papyrus sheet, e.g. BGU II 615 (two letters one from Ammonous to her father and another one from Celer to Antonius his brother, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). For discussion of double letters, see Fournet (2003) 478 and Vandorpe (2008) 167.

<sup>26</sup> O.Krok. I 7-8 (ca. 108) represent different texts written by different hands on the same potsherd: 7 is most likely a fragment of a daily postal register and 8 is a copy of an official letter.

<sup>27</sup> O.Krok. I 28 (after (?) 8. Nov. 109); 29 (after (?) 13. Jan. 109); O.Did. 433 (before (?) ca. 100-110).

<sup>28</sup> O.Krok. II 192? (28-117) (letter addressed from Sknips and written by the hand of Philokles); O.Did. 376 (before (?) ca. 110-115) written on two sherds; 380? (before (?) ca. 110-115); 393 (before ca. 88-96?); 394 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 395 (before (?) ca. 120-125). 393-395 are groups of letters written in Philokles' hand, but without a prescript. The sherds are complete but the texts are not; they suddenly stop at a certain point, without any sense, which suggests that the text has been completed on other ostraca. However, some of them are written on both sides.

<sup>29</sup> O.Did. 401 (before (?) ca. 115-120); O.Did. 380 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 446 probably belongs to 445 (before (?) ca. 125-140).

to the letter after writing the final farewell, as a postscript.<sup>30</sup> In exceptional cases, letters start with the salutations<sup>31</sup> or end with additional salutations added after the closing formula of the letter.<sup>32</sup> There are very few unfinished letters,<sup>33</sup> cases perhaps where the writer realized that the size of the ostrakon was not enough. The language used in writing the letters is mainly Greek,<sup>34</sup> occasionally Latin,<sup>35</sup> and there are bilingual texts,<sup>36</sup> or only some characters written in Latin form in a Greek text.<sup>37</sup> There are also letters of Greek text written in Latin characters<sup>38</sup> and instances of letters written in two hands.<sup>39</sup> Of course, most letters are written on ostraca and much fewer on papyri.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>30</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 293 (ca. 142-143).

<sup>31</sup> E.g. O.Did. 422 (before (?) ca. 120 -125).

<sup>32</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 283 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 451 (before (?) ca. 176-210).

<sup>33</sup> O.Claud. I 163 (ca. 100-120); O.Did. 426 (before (?) ca. 115-125), 433 (before (?) ca. 100-110) it contains only one line, 450 (before (?) ca. 140-150), O.Krok. I 15 (108-109). All of them are only prescript followed by large vacat, i.e. the rest of the ostrakon. O.Did. 433 contains the sender's name and title and the receiver's name; one might imagine that it was written to serve as an address to another letter or to a carrier of letter. This raises the question of the context of the *σημασία* documents from the Nile valley, which provide addresses and instructions to help the carrier find his way to the addressee. There, it was more detailed than the Eastern Desert examples, but bearing in mind the distinctive character of the desert texts, which are short and brief, this could be possible. In O.Claud. I 177, 5-7 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) the writer supplied the address to the carrier of the letter, the wagoner Kol, ἀπόδοσ ἰς (l. εἰς) Κλαυδιανὸν Οὐαλερίῳ Ἡριανῶ ἱππῆϊ (l. ἱππεῖ) τύρμησ Ἰουλιανοῦ, 'deliver to Claudianus, to Valerius Herianus the horseman, of the *turme* of Ioulianus', and then added the body of the letter above the address; see the intro. to this letter.

<sup>34</sup> For using the Greek rather than the Latin in the Eastern Desert particularly by military men, and the preference of the use of the Latin, in some other cases, see the intro. to O.Ber. III pp.5-10 and the intro. to O.Florida, p.21.

<sup>35</sup> E.g. O.Did. 326 (before (?) ca. 75-85); 362 (before (?) ca. 88-96); SB XXII 15377= CEL III 80 septies (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 15674 (1<sup>st</sup> cent.) = CEL III 80 septies; 15455= CEL III 150 quarter; O.Claud. I 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Faw. 1-7=CPL 303-9 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>). O.Did. 334-335 (before (?) ca. 88-96); 336 (before (?) ca. 77-92); 417 (ca. 120-125); 419-420 (before (?) ca. 115-120); 429 (before (?) ca. 96); 455-456 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup>); 457 (after (?) 219); O.Claud. I 131;135 (ca. 107); II 367 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>36</sup> E.g. O.Claud. IV 788 (ca. 98-117); O.Krok. I 45 (after (?) 14. July 109): register of Greek and Latin letters; 51 (27. Nov. - 26. Dec. 109): there is one Latin line in l.18.

<sup>37</sup> O.Ber. III 387, 3 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.) [λ]εγόμενος.

<sup>38</sup> O.Did. 36 (before (?) ca. 220-240).

<sup>39</sup> O.Claud. I 148 (ca. 100-120); II 258; 259; 284; 376 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 464 (early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.). O.Claud. IV 788 (ca. 98-117); 855; 860 (ca. 186-187).

<sup>40</sup> SB XXII 15482 (5<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup>) from Abu Sha'ar; SB XX 14249=P.Quseir 2; 14250=3 (1<sup>st</sup>-beg. 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 14251=4 (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>); 14252=5 (1<sup>st</sup>-beg. 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 14253=6; 14256=16; 14275=23 (1<sup>st</sup>-beg. 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) from Myos





Figure 1. O.Did. 376 a and b, one letter written across two potsherds. Photos by Adam Bülow-Jacobsen.

The Eastern Desert has produced the majority of ostraca used for writing letters; however, these potsherds are not the most convenient material for writing letters and they do not offer the privacy or confidentiality often associated with letters. They cannot be folded or bound together for longer texts. Mostly they are small pieces used for short texts.<sup>41</sup> That is why the trader Philokles had to write his long letters on more than one potsherd.

Although ostraca were the preferred material for letters there, the following example shows that they might not have been considered the best material in general (or the best in the place where the sender was originally from), and proves that there was a shortage of papyri. In M761, a letter from Maximianon, the sender apologizes to the receiver that he is writing on an ostrakon since he cannot find papyri, *συνγνώσει, ἄδελφε, ὅτι εἰς ὄστρακόν σοι ἔγραψα· οὐχ εὐρίσκω γὰρ χαρτάρην*,<sup>42</sup> ‘Excuse me brother, that I wrote to you on an ostrakon because I cannot find papyrus’. Ostraca were a cheaper alternative to papyri and for the use of any ephemeral communication,<sup>43</sup> but in the Eastern Desert where papyri were not easy to obtain

Hormos; P.Ber. II 123; 124r; 129-130 (ca. 50-75); P.Ber. III 270-271 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); 272 (5<sup>th</sup> century?); 273 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent).

<sup>41</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2009) 15 and Sarri (2018) 77-79.

<sup>42</sup> See Fournet (2003) 471.

<sup>43</sup> See Bagnall (2011) 134.

and had to be brought mostly from the Nile valley, ostraca were the easier option, since they were easier to obtain. There was not any shortage of them because of the many amphoras and jars that arrived in the desert filled with various provisions and goods, therefore ostraca were used freely by the inhabitants, the workers, and the military men stationed there.<sup>44</sup>

The following letters shed light on the use of papyri for writing and in particular for letter writing, particularly SB VI 9017 Nr. 15 = O.Faw. 15, 5-7 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which was found in Persou;<sup>45</sup> in it, the sender asks the addressee to send him papyrus for letter-writing worth 8 obols, χ[άρ]την ἐπιστολ[ικὸν] ὀβολῶν η. In another letter, O.Claud. II 239, 5-6 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the sender, Piso, requests papyri and string from Horion for what was likely to have been an official piece of writing. The demand for string suggests that a seal was intended and thus that the correspondence was of an official nature, πέμψη<ς> μοι μίκρον χαρτάριον καὶ στημόνιν. Piso sent another letter, O.Claud. II 240 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), to Horion for the same purpose. In O.Claud. II 299 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) Serapion asks Serapion his father to buy him a papyrus roll, χάρτης, to give to the teacher, so that he can copy prose for him. In O.Did. 375 (before (?) ca. 125-140 (?)) there is a reference to sending a papyrus document τὸ βιβλίον from Koptos to Didymoi in order to repair or to glue them together. Moreover, O.Claud. II 250 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) contains references to letters written on papyrus that have been forwarded to the Nile valley. Finally, in O.Claud. inv. 5083, Isidoros a civilian worker asks his superior to sell his ration of wine for the price of a roll of papyrus in the Nile valley.

Scholars have been struck by the plentitude of ostraca and shortage of papyri in the Eastern Desert, suggesting that the important archives were transferred to the valley; that individuals took their papyri with them when they returned home; or that useless old papyrus sheets were burnt as fuel in the desert, since traces of papyrus have been found between the layers of ashes.<sup>46</sup> Other possibilities are that they have vanished because they could not resist the humidity of the desert; or that ostraca were simply more prevalent than traditionally believed, and only recent systematic scientific excavations have begun to reflect this.<sup>47</sup>

It is not always easy to know where the letters came from, but a small number of them that were sent from the Nile valley were written on ostraca.<sup>48</sup> O.Ber. III 270, which is written

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<sup>44</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2009) 15; the intro. to O.Florida, p.21; Blumell (2014) 28.

<sup>45</sup> For this site and the Eastern Desert sites, in general, see the next section “The Eastern Desert stations and roads”.

<sup>46</sup> See Cuvigny (2003a) 267-268.

<sup>47</sup> See Bagnall (2011) 118-122, 136; Cowey (2013) 4964-4965.

<sup>48</sup> O.Claud. I 126?-127? (ca. 107); 145?, 150, 156, 160, 177?; O.Claud. II 408?; O.Did. 364?; SB VI 9017=O.Faw. 9?. Precisely from Koptos: O.Did. 28; 374?; 375?; 402?.

on papyrus, is an exception (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); it was probably sent from Koptos to Berenike. One might think the senders intended to write on ostraca since they are sent to the desert, or that the papyri faced the same destiny of all the papyri in the desert. What is also interesting is that all the letters on papyrus were found at the two ports of Berenike and Myos Hormos on the Red Sea coast, except for one from Abu'Sha'ar, also on the Red Sea coast.<sup>49</sup>

### 1.3 The Eastern Desert stations and roads

To acquaint ourselves with the area of the Eastern desert, we should survey the various places where the people found in the letters resided.

Most of the Roman period letters that have been found in the Eastern Desert were circulated between any of three different kinds of settlements: quarries, *praesidia* (or military camps), and ports (Figs. 2 and 3):<sup>50</sup>

The quarries are Mons Claudianus, Tiberiane, Mons Porphyrites, Wadi Hammamat and Domitiane:

- Mons Claudianus: the modern name of this granite quarry, is Gebel Fatireh;<sup>51</sup> situated between Mons Porphyrites and Tiberiane. A large numbers of letters preserved on ostraca (ca. 236 of them) from the site have been published. These letters supply much general information about the work circumstances inside the quarries and they reveal an image of the daily activities of the people there. Claudianus played an important role in forwarding letters<sup>52</sup> and exchanging goods between Tiberiane,<sup>53</sup> Raima,<sup>54</sup> and the Nile valley.

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<sup>49</sup> See note 40 above.

<sup>50</sup> The reason for which I provide this rather dated map is that it is a very detailed one and shows many sites and locations; however, some of the sites are located according to old considerations, for example, Myos Hormos is identified as Leukos Limen, an association that is no longer accepted; see: <https://www.trismegistos.org/place/3156> and also <https://www.trismegistos.org/geo/detail.php?quick=2639> Quseir El-Qadim is now believed to be the site of ancient Myos Hormos.

<sup>51</sup> Maxfield (2001) 143 and Cuvigny (2018a) 5, the article is available online at <https://books.openedition.org/cdf/5231>.

<sup>52</sup> O.Claud. II 250; 252 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>53</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 245; 248 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>54</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 275 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

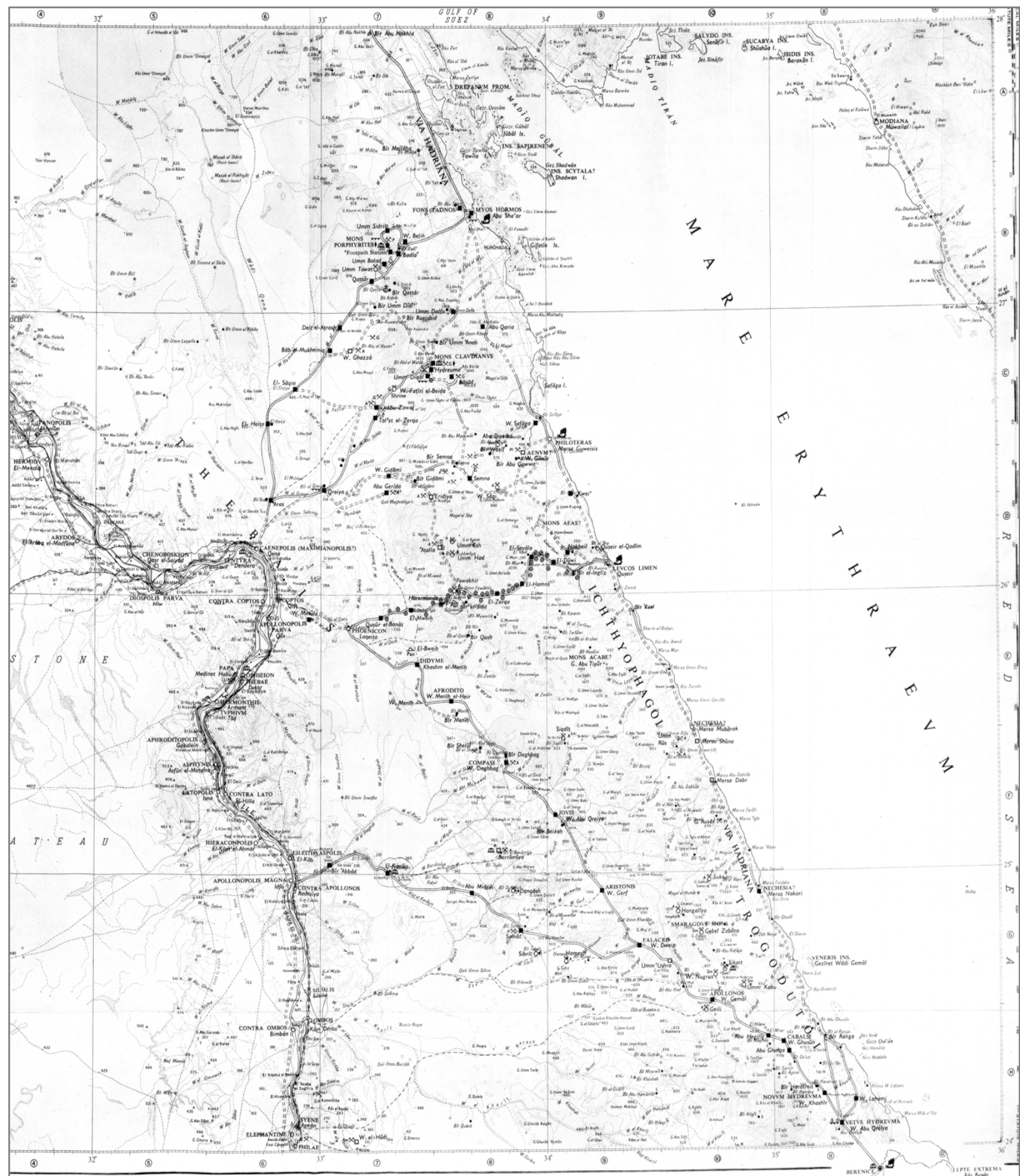


Figure 2. Very detailed map to the Eastern Desert, by D. Meredith, 1958. Taken from Bernard (1972).

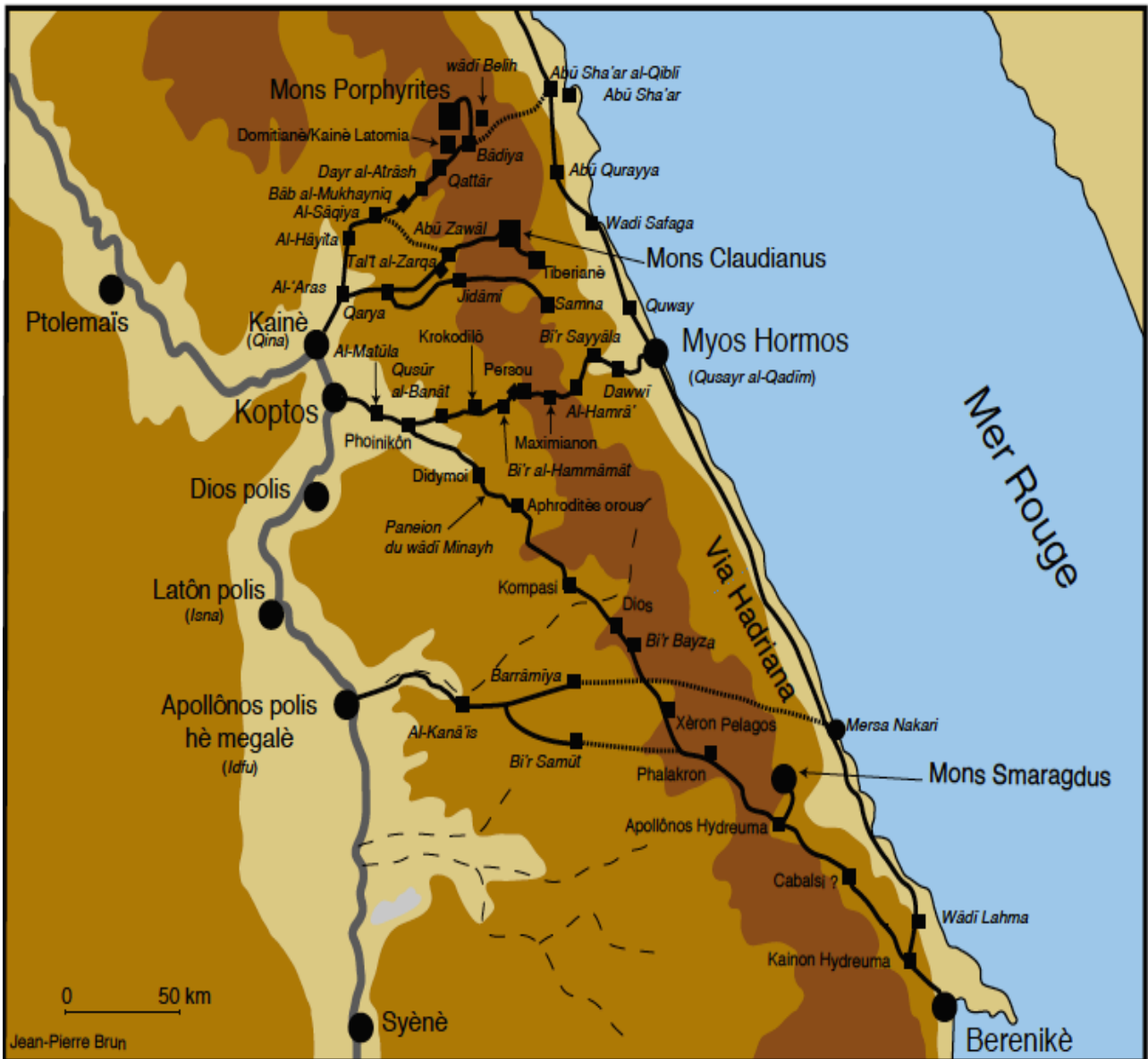


Figure 3. Map of the sites and the main roads of the Eastern Desert. (© J.-P. Brun).

- Tiberiane is another granite quarry. It lies southeast of Mons Claudianus.<sup>55</sup> Many letters were exchanged between it and Mons Claudianus, mainly concerning the quarry work and some aspects of everyday life.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Maxfield (2001) 148.

<sup>56</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 243-254 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. IV 875-884 (ca. 150-154).

- Mons Porphyrites, or modern (Gebel) Abu Dokhan, where the porphyry stone was quarried,<sup>57</sup> is the first quarry to the north of Mons Claudianus. A few letters are known to have been exchanged between it and Mons Claudianus.<sup>58</sup>
- Domitiane or Kaine Latomia, modern Umm Balad, is a quarry very close to Mons Porphyrites, from which very few letters have been published to date.<sup>59</sup>
- Wadi Hammamat, or ancient Persou I, though not the same as Persou II (Umm Fawakhir). It is a quarry settlement lying 5 km east of Umm Fawakhir.<sup>60</sup> About fifteen letters from the place have been published so far.<sup>61</sup>

The *praesidia* are more numerous than the quarries:

- Abu Sha'ar: it has provided 5 private letters so far, one of them written on papyrus.<sup>62</sup> It is located on the Red Sea coast.
- Raima, or Abu Zawal, is a *praesidium* that lies on the road between the Nile valley and Mons Claudianus, closer to Mons Claudianus by ca. 33 km.<sup>63</sup> Like Tiberiane, Raima was well connected with Mons Claudianus and letter exchange between them was more intensive than with Tiberiane. This is according to the number of letters published so far.<sup>64</sup>
- Kampe is a *praesidium* close to Raima, but its precise location is uncertain. It is mentioned in 16 ostraca from Mons Claudianus.<sup>65</sup> Presumably, letters were exchanged

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<sup>57</sup> See Hirt (2010) 17.

<sup>58</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 302 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent); SB XX 14330 (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent.).

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. Cuvigny (2018a) 4. The article is available online at <https://books.openedition.org/cdf/5231>; Grimal and Adly (2003) 118. Letters from Domitiane are E.g: P.Worp. 50 (3. May 89-125) and O.Ka. La. Inv. 396 (81-96 or 98-117) published in Cuvigny (2005a) 272.

<sup>60</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003a) 55 and Cuvigny (2018a) 116, 163.

<sup>61</sup> Published in SB XXII 15661-15675 (1<sup>st</sup> cent.) and Kayser (1993) 132-140.

<sup>62</sup> Four Greek letters are published in SB XXII 15378-80 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 15482 (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> cent.) and in Bagnall and Sheridan (1994b) 117-119, 164-166; the Latin letter is published in SB XXII 15377 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and CEL 3 150 ter.

<sup>63</sup> See Trismegistos places, <https://www.trismegistos.org/geo/index.php>

<sup>64</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 262-265 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 267-269 (ca. 140); 270-278 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 366-367 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 368-370 (98-117); 371-373 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) 374-376 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>65</sup> Cuvigny (2018a) 145, 155.

between the two places because of its proximity to Mons Claudianus, but their numbers are fairly few.<sup>66</sup>

- El-Heita is a station located on the road between Kaine (or modern Qena) and Mons Porphyrites. Few letters were found there, around five are published, so far.<sup>67</sup>
- Krokodilo, or Muwayh, is located on the road between Koptos and Myos Hormos. There has been found, in addition to letters, military postal registers recording the circulation of (daily) official correspondence and the delivery of commodities that were exchanged with the neighboring *praesidia*, such as Persou and Phoinikon. Krokodilo played an intermediary role between them, by virtue of its location.<sup>68</sup> It has provided us with ca. 278 texts, including ca. 19 registers of official correspondence or circulars.
- Persou II, modern Bir Umm Fawakhir or Wadi Fawakhir, is located on the road of Myos Hormos. It played an intermediate role between the desert stations and the Nile valley with regard to transferring food and other goods.<sup>69</sup> It was a source of vegetables to the desert stations during the Roman period and was a gold mining area during the Byzantine period.<sup>70</sup>
- Maximianon, or El-Zarqa, is located on the road of Myos Hormos, after Persou. Most likely the letters of O. Florida were found in there,<sup>71</sup> in addition to several further letters.

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<sup>66</sup> E.g. O.Claud. I 155 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); II 237 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) sent from Kampe to Mons Claudianus.

<sup>67</sup> SB VI 9165 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); 9166 (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) both published in Meredith (1956) 356-362; XX 15517 (4<sup>th</sup> cent.); 15518 (3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> cent.); 15519 (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent), published in Cuvigny (1991) 193-201.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108); 2 (after (?) ca. 26. Apr. - 25. May 108); 24 (after 29. May 109); 25 (after (?) 6. July 109); 26 (after (?) 16. July 109); 27 (after 5. Okt. 109); 28 (after (?) 8. Nov. 109); 29 (after (?) 13. Jan. 109).

<sup>69</sup> See the intro. to O.Flora, p.30.

<sup>70</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003a) 55.

<sup>71</sup> The provenance of these documents is not totally certain, but they most likely all, or at least the majority of them, come from Maximianon. According to the seller, the documents were found in Apollonopolis, modern Edfu, but at the Copenhagen congress in 1992, H. Cuvigny argued that they came from Maximianon, see Bagnall and Crihiore (2010) 221-223 and (2006) 164. For discussion of this point and the assignment of them earlier to other locations: Apollonopolis, Contra Apollonopolis, or modern Redesiya on the Eastern Nile bank and Thebes, see P.Hombert 2, pp. 9-13, BL 9, p.385; Clarysse and Sijpesteijn (1988) 90; and Trismegistos Texts, e.g. <https://www.trismegistos.org/text/74495> (accessed 28 October 2018). In my opinion, the distinctive characteristic of these letters place them in the Eastern Desert: in general, they are short texts, and they follow practical features belong to the military milieu of the Eastern Desert; a number of them follow a fairly consistent pattern, such as the opening wishes for good health, which extend sometimes to the horse of the recipient; the *proskynema*

- Qasr or Qusûr el-Banât: there is one letter from this *praesidium* that has been published so far.<sup>72</sup> The camp lies near Wadi Hammamat, ca. 15 km from its entrance. The ancient name of the station is not known. It was built after the existence of Krokodilo.<sup>73</sup>
- Phoinikon, or modern Laqeita, is the first *praesidium* on the road between Koptos and Berenike. It lies exactly at the juncture of the roads of Myos Hormos and Berenike.
- Didymoi, or Khashm el-Minayh, is located on the road between Koptos and Berenike, directly after Phoinikon and before Aphrodites Orous. The excavations conducted there turned up dozens of letters, ca. 174. They, in general, shed light on the lives of the military men in the army camps. There was considerable correspondence between Didymoi and the other two nearest *praesidia*: Aphrodites Orous<sup>74</sup> and Phoinikon.<sup>75</sup>
- Aphrodites Orous is stationed after Didymoi on the road between Koptos and Berenike.
- Dios, or Abu Qurayye, is located along the road between Koptos and Berenike, ca. 60 km northwest of Xeron. From it comes very few letters, ca. 3 so far. They were sent between the camp and the neighboring stations. One of them is from Xeron and the others are from Kompasi.<sup>76</sup>
- Kompasi, or modern Bir Daghbag, is a station located directly in front of Dios. As often appears in ostraca from the station of Dios, Kompasi was a place with enough water where correspondents used to send their clothes in order to wash it.<sup>77</sup>

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performed by the sender before the gods on behalf of his recipient; the limited subject matter, such as the request for sending or receiving items, in addition to the frequent mention of the carriers.

<sup>72</sup> SB XXVIII 17113 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. – beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.)

<sup>73</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003a) 54.

<sup>74</sup> E.g. O.Did. 451 (before (?) ca. 176-210), 455-456; 459; 462 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); 463 (late 2<sup>nd</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); 464 (early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.).

<sup>75</sup> E.g. O.Did. 326 (before (?) ca. 75-85); 327-328 (before (?) ca. 77-92), 376 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 379 (before (?) ca. 115-120); 381 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 427 (before (?) ca. 125-140); 428 (after (?) 96); 429 (before (?) ca. 96).

<sup>76</sup> See Elmaghrabi (2012) 139, n. 2, and the edition of the letter O.Dios inv. 636 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) on pp.140-141, as well as O.Dios inv. 145 and 1246 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) in Cuvigny (2013) 429-435; the latter two were written in Kompasi and sent to Dios; cf. too O.Dios inv. 568 which references magical practice and is still unpublished, see Trismegistos Texts (<https://www.trismegistos.org/text/111351>) accessed 28 October 2018. For some oracles from Dios, see Cuvigny (2010) 258-280.

<sup>77</sup> See O.Did. p. 259 and O.Krok. II 251, note to lines 5-6, where it is mentioned that Kompasi and Phoinikon were two forts with enough water for washing clothes.



- Xeron Pelagos, modern Feisaleya or Wadi Jirf, is located after Dios on the road between Koptos and Berenike. Very few letters have been published from it so far.<sup>78</sup>

The ports.

- Myos Hormos, or modern Quseir Al-Qadim, preserves 15 letters, 8 of which were written on papyri and the rest on ostraca.<sup>79</sup> Most date to the 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
- Berenike, or modern Bender el-Kebir, is with Myos Hormos, a vital port on the Red Sea coast, playing an important role as a point of entry for the goods coming from the east, which passed through it on their way to the Nile valley city of Koptos, which served as a customs gate. Berenike has also preserved a few letters written on papyri, but most are on ostraca; overall there are ca. 60 letters extant.
- Kom el-Kolzum (Fig.4): Four letters were found in Kom el-Kolzum, which is a harbor on the coast of the Red Sea, near the modern Suez Canal. They date from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Kolzum was associated with trade with India in the late period.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to the previous sites there is one letter from the station of Siaroi.<sup>81</sup> Its identification is not very clear, yet. It is located further toward the Red Sea.<sup>82</sup> Since it was a source of fish, it could be a fishing village on the Red Sea coast, perhaps to be identified with the modern El-Dûwi.<sup>83</sup> Another station called Kanopos was reached by a letter sent from Didymoi.<sup>84</sup> Its exact location is unclear, but it might be located between Koptos and Phoinikon.

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<sup>78</sup> E.g. P.Bagnall 12 (ca. 115-130); O.Xer. inv. 858 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) which represents reply letter to O.Dios inv. 636, see Elmaghrabi (2012) 141-142.

<sup>79</sup> Published in SB XX 14249-14253 = P.Quseir 2-6 mentioned above; 14256 = P.Quseir 16; 14259=24; 14262-14266=27-31; 14275 = no. 8-9, 11-15, 17, 20-21, 23 (1<sup>st</sup>-beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and Bagnall (1986) 11-34; more texts to be published in the future, see Van Rengen (2011) 335.

<sup>80</sup> See Dizionario III, 127 and the talk about the station by Gascou in 2016 in a symposium at the Collège de France, which is available online at: <https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/en-jean-pierre-brun/symposium-2016-03-30-11h30.htm> (accessed 27 May 2018); the article is available online at <https://books.openedition.org/cdf/5183>. The letters from the station are SB VI 9549 (1) (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); SB VI 9549 (2)? (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>); SB VI 9549 (3) (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); SB VI 9549 (4) (mid 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) modified to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE according to Gascou (2018) 4, <https://books.openedition.org/cdf/5183>.

<sup>81</sup> SB XXVIII 17083 (end 2<sup>nd</sup>- beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), published in Bülow-Jacobsen (2003a) 56-57.

<sup>82</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003a) 56.

<sup>83</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (1998) 72.

<sup>84</sup> O.Did. 370 (before (?) ca. 88-92).

There are also a few letters sent from the city of Koptos or the modern Qift<sup>85</sup> to some sites in the desert.<sup>86</sup>



Figure 4. Map shows the location of Kom el-Kolzum. Taken from Baines and Malek (1982) 167.

<sup>85</sup> The reference to the modern names of all the locations accords with Trismegistos Places: <https://www.trismegistos.org/geo/index.php>

<sup>86</sup> E.g. O.Did. 28 (18. May 176 or 18 May 208), P.Ber. III 270 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.).

The roads (Fig.5):

- ὁδὸς Μυσορμυτική: the road from Koptos to Myos Hormos, around 174 km.
- ὁδὸς Βερενίκης: the road from Koptos to Berenike, around 392 km.
- ὁδὸς Κλαυδιανή (or Κλαυδιανοῦ): the road from Kainepolis to the quarries at Mons Claudianus.
- ὁδὸς Πορφυρίτου: the road from Kainepolis to the quarries at Mons Porphyrites.
- The Ptolemaic road from Apollinopolis Magna (modern Edfu) to Berenike and Marsa Nakari on the coast of the Red Sea.

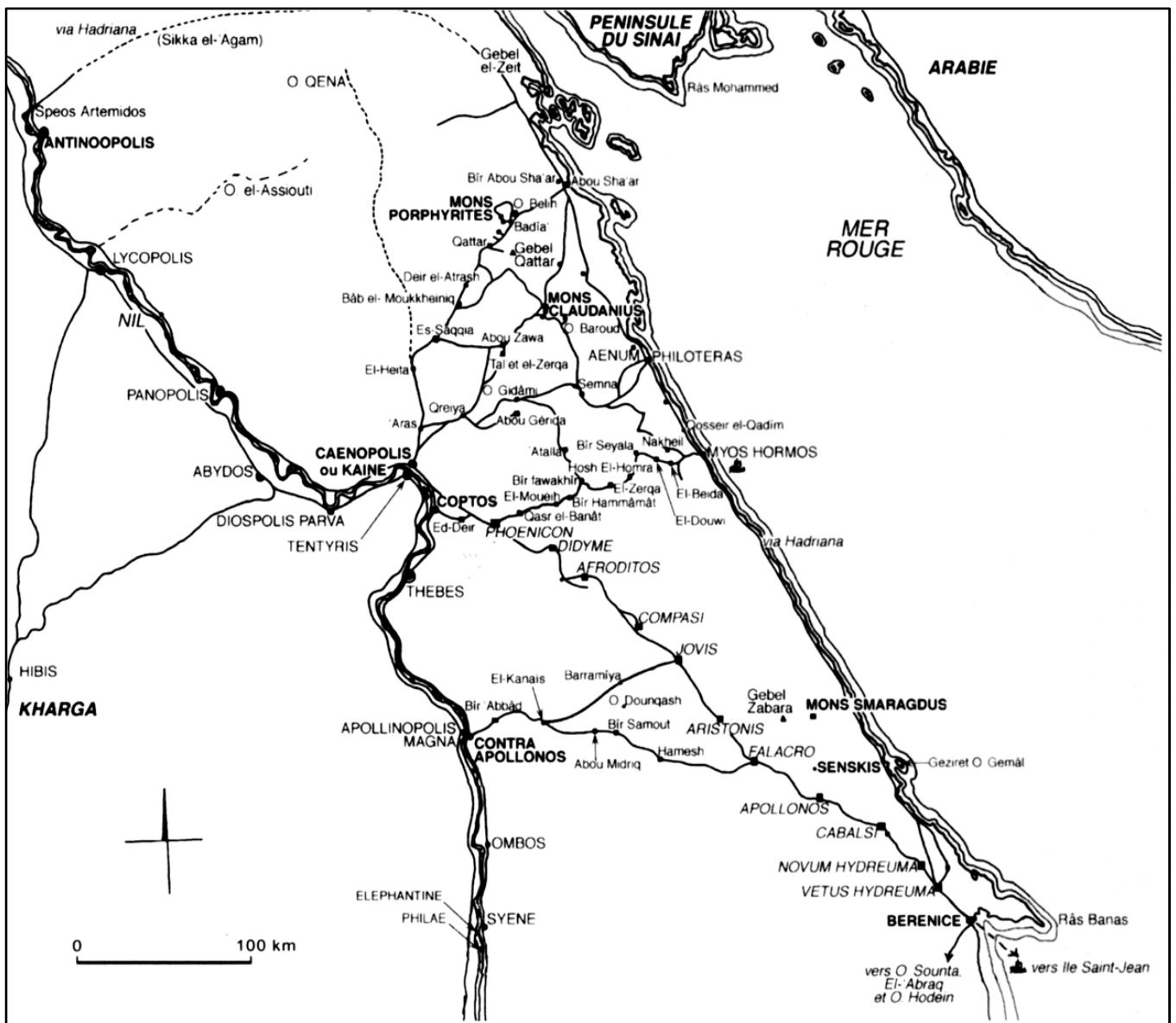


Figure 5. Map of the known roads of the Eastern Desert. Taken from Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 559.

- The Via Hadriana, which runs from Antinoopolis to the north-east through the mountains then it turns down south-east all the way along the coast of the Red Sea. It was established by order of the emperor Hadrian.<sup>87</sup>

From the earlier discussion, it is recognized, that, from what we know to date, communication by letters is concentrated between Mons Claudianus and the surrounding locations of Tiberiane and Raima; between Didymoi and the surrounding *praesidia* of Phoinikon and Aphroditis Orous; and between Krokodilo and the surrounding *praesidia* of Persou and Phoinikon.<sup>88</sup> Most of the correspondences which is known to be sent to or from the Nile valley come from or to Mons Claudianus.<sup>89</sup> The very few letters which are known to be sent from Koptos are addressed to Didymoi,<sup>90</sup> Phoinikon<sup>91</sup> and perhaps Berenike.<sup>92</sup>

#### 1.4 The reasons for writing

People in antiquity corresponded with each other for official administrative reasons or for business and private reasons, such as to reassure others about one's health, to strengthen relationships by conveying greetings, exchanging information, consoling, and for recommendations, etc. This is true too of the Eastern Desert, where we have rich documentation of it. In what follows, I survey the various motivations for corresponding by looking at, first of all, the unofficial letters, whether private or business, which represent the bulk of the corpus.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 558-559; Tomber (2018) 539-542; Bagnall (2004) 280, 282-284; Adams and Laurence (2001, e-print 2005) 140-141. For more discussion about the roads, see Sidebotham (1995) 39- 52 and Murray (1925) 138-150. Ancient authors have also written about the routes of the Eastern Desert and the Red Sea ports, see Pliny the Elder, N.H. 6. 26. 102-103, Strabo, Geography 2.5.12; 16.4.5; 16.4.24; 17. 1. 45, Claudius Ptolemy, Geography 4.5 and also the first section of the Periplus Maris Erythraei, the text and translation of which is found in Casson (1989) 50-51.

<sup>88</sup> See also Bülow-Jacobsen (2003a) 58, where he indicates that the majority of the letters were sent between the neighboring stations.

<sup>89</sup> E.g. O.Claud. I 126-127 (ca. 107); 145-146 (ca. 100-120); 147 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 148-150 (ca. 100-120); 156 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), 160 (ca. 100-120); O.Claud. II 408 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. IV 868 (ca. 138-161).

<sup>90</sup> E.g. O.Did. 374 (before (?) ca. 88-96); 375 (before (?) ca. 125-140 (?)).

<sup>91</sup> E.g. O.Did. 28 (18 May 176 or 18 May 208).

<sup>92</sup> E.g. P.Ber. III 270 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.).

<sup>93</sup> For the distinction between official and unofficial correspondence, see e.g. Vandorpe (2008) 155-177; and for discussion of the private, business, and the official letters, see e.g. Muir (2009) 28-116.

One of the important reasons for letter writing in the Eastern Desert, if not the most important and the primary preoccupation of sending letters, was for the sake of procuring goods and supplies:<sup>94</sup> foodstuffs, foremost clothes, medicine,<sup>95</sup> various tools and materials, along with the delivery of the letters themselves in several cases.<sup>96</sup> This could point to the fact that in the desert exchange of anything often necessitated communication, which was conducted via ostraca letters. Desert life was harsh and basic goods were not easily available at the stations; they had to be sent from other places. Letter writing was therefore essential for managing all aspects of life. This is reflected in the many brief requests for goods, and in the many attempts of individuals to justify their situation, defend themselves and apologize for not sending the requested stuff, so that the correspondent would not perceive the person as neglectful. For example, in a letter from Mons Claudianus, O.Claud. II 298 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a certain Pathermoutis informs Lucius Longinus that he did not find anyone to send wood with him. In O.Did. 416 (before (?) ca. 120-150) Statilius writes to Epaphroditos asking him not to think he neglected to send the plates, but no donkey driver was willing to carry them, so that he needed to send them with the camels. Also, Cassianus asks the recipient of O.Krok. I 96 (ca. 98-138) not to blame him for not sending the vegetables, because of the lack of vegetables in his place. O.Did. 435 (before (?) ca. 110-115) also represents a good instance of not sending the requested stuff, meat, because of the lack of having it. Moreover, in O.Did. 428 (after (?) 96) the sender sends vegetables to the recipient and apologizes to him that he only recently learned that he was in Didymoi; otherwise he would have sent him vegetables daily. The importance of exchanging these items could be confirmed by several instances in which the sender asks the addressee in advance to inform him if he needs anything. For example, in O.Ber. III 472 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.), N.N. writes to N.N. to ask him in advance to write about what he needs,

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<sup>94</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. I 137-171, in which Bülow-Jacobsen indicates that the subject of these letters was mostly the procurement of various necessities, and ἔπεμψά σοι and πέμψον μοι are phrases that occur in nearly all the letters. In addition to this, Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 164 states that the bulk of Eastern Desert letters which he described as short are dealing with the need for supplies. See also Cuvigny (2007) 89. For more about the importance of the procurement and delivery of foodstuffs and various other items and materials to Mons Claudianus, see Veen and Hamilton-Dyer (1998) 109-110; to the Eastern Desert, generally, see the intro. to O.Florida, pp. 30-31.

<sup>95</sup> E.g. in O.Claud. II 408 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) the sender asks the receiver to acknowledge the receipt of medicine and medical tools.

<sup>96</sup> E.g. O.Claud. I 145; 171 (ca. 100-120); 177; II 239 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 344 (before (?) ca. 77-92); SB XXVIII 17113 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), 17114 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), O.Krok. I 76? (ca. 117-125).

since he would gladly bring it with him.

Sending and receiving the parcel posts by messenger is already known as a common epistolary *topos*, where words such as ἐκομισάμην, κόμισαι and ἀπέσταλκα are very familiar,<sup>97</sup> but in the case of the Eastern Desert letters, the number of letters that incorporate these *topoi* is very large. This makes it one of the distinctive features of the Eastern Desert correspondence. Senders often request acknowledgment from the recipients of receipt of the goods, in order to be sure that the stuff has been delivered by the carrier, as in the correspondence of the soldier Dioskoros, who regularly requests acknowledgment from his comrades, the receivers of his letters. For example, in O.Claud. II 228 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Dioskoros concludes a letter addressed to Dracon, by asking him not to hesitate to inform him what he received so that he makes sure that he has received what the messenger was supposed to carry to him. Moreover, he himself informs them that he received their acknowledgment for the stuff sent, as in O.Claud. II 232 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). Also in O.Claud. I 140 (ca. 110), Valerius Palmas asks the addressee to write to N.N., so that he knows that he has received the stuff he sent. One might think of these kinds of letters as a type of receipt written in epistolary form, particularly with some specific figures such as Dioskoros. This may support the idea that Dioskoros was conducting small local trade in the area, but what makes this hypothesis uncertain is the fact that he never asks them to pay money or send stuff in return. In other instances, it is clear that local trade was conducted, in which individuals had to pay for goods, especially salt: O.Did. 320-321 (before ca. 76-77); 322 (before[?] ca. 77-92), vinegar: O.Claud. II 226 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), meat: O.Did. 373 (before (?) ca. 88-96), salty fish: O.Did. 442 (before (?) ca. 120-125) or the fresh fish from the Red Sea: O.Claud. II 241 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent); 242 (ca. 144-145).

Reproaching and blaming: the reasons for reproaching varies from letter to letter. Since the correspondents were very interested in receiving acknowledgments of the receipt of goods, they frequently reproach each other because of the carelessness of not replying and acknowledging. For example, in O.Claud. II 226 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Dioskoros reproaches Dracon and others that he sent them vegetables three days earlier and he did not receive any reply whether they received them or not. In O.Claud. II 225 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), he reproaches the same Dracon for the same matter, since he recently sent him a triple jar (τρικεράμιον) but Dracon did not confirm in a reply. Similarly, in O.Claud. II 236 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Ischyriion reproaches N.N. for not confirming the receipt of items, while also encouraging him to write whether he received them or not. The correspondents also blame each other for neglecting to send items

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<sup>97</sup> See White (1978) 304.

themselves. For example, in O.Did. 317 (before (?) ca. 77-92), Iulius reproaches Dolens, saying that a certain Crispus told him about money and the pen-case but Dolens did not give them to him; therefore he asks him to send the pen-case quickly by someone coming to him because he badly needs it.

Another reason for reproach was when one failed to reassure another of one's well being and safety, as in O.Ber. II 129 (ca. 50-75), where Hikane, the mother, chides her son Isidoros in Berenike who neglected to reply to her letter to him and did not reassure her about his health. Her emotional appeal to her maternal sacrifices are striking, ll.2-5 ἐγὼ (l. ἐγὼ) μὲν σοι ἐπιστολὴν γεγράφηκα [. . .] [. . .] ἐπιστολὴν. διὰ [τ]οῦτο σὲ ἐβάσταζον δέκα μῆνες (l. μῆνας) καὶ τρία ἔτη σὲ ἐθήλαζον εἶνα (l. ἴνα) μὴ εἰ[δ]ῆς μου μνημονεῦσαι δι' ἐπιστολῆς, 'I wrote you a letter [?but did not receive a] letter. Was it for this that I carried you for ten months and nursed you for three years, so that you would be incapable of remembering me by letter?';<sup>98</sup> she emphasizes that she writes to him because it was necessary since she found a boat sailing his way, ll.1-2 πρὸ μὲν πάντων ἀναγκαῖον ἠγησάμην ἐφορκίου ἀναγομένου γρά[ψαι - ca.14 - ] ἐμέ. A similar reproach regarding the carelessness to provide news is found in O.Claud. I 145 (ca. 100-120). There, Serenus who has sent meat to Casianus to buy them on his behalf reproaches him for not informing him whether he sold the meat, while this is the third ostrakon sent to him without a reply; he therefore appeals to him to write whether the meat has already been sold and to send the money with the *tabellarius*<sup>99</sup> who brings the ostrakon to him.

The daily life activities of the military men, workers, and other civilians occupied a fairly good part of the desert correspondence. In O.Did. 341 (before (?) ca. 77-92), a soldier writes to a fellow soldier informing him that he washed the tunic and gave it to the horseman to deliver to him. The same matter of washing clothes is probably the subject of O.Did. 454 (before (?) ca. 176-210). Food and cooking is also a concern in the letters, as in O.Did. 389 (before (?) ca. 115-120) where Philokles asks Arrius to give his wife Sknips five drachmas and three *matia* of barley in order to make to him sour dough.<sup>100</sup> In O.Did. 397 (before (?) ca. 115-120), the sender promises the addressee to send him some vetch porridge, should he made it, and in SB XXVIII 17083 (end of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-beg. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), the sender informs the receiver that he sent him fresh *glaukiskarion*<sup>101</sup> which he sliced and cooked. A different activity is

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<sup>98</sup> Trans. Bagnall et al..

<sup>99</sup> For the *tabellarius*, see ch. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Most likely in this document this refers to gruel or porridge or the malt for beer, see O.Did. 389 note to l.11.

<sup>101</sup> This is a kind of fish, see LSJ γλαυκίσκος, s.v.

attested in O.Florida 14 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) in which Maximus asks Tinarsieges to send him some reed so that he can make her a small basket.<sup>102</sup> Writing about the movement of people between *praesidia* also occupies part of the correspondence. People get transferred to and from *praesidia* in order to find better living and work conditions. In O.Did. 326 (before (?) ca. 75-85), the soldier Iulius instructs the soldier Gaius Valerius Iustus to request permission to move to his *praesidium*, which is perhaps in Phoinikon,<sup>103</sup> since his *praesidium* is better (<h>oc · melior [l. melius] · presidium). When moving they did not carry their basic furniture with them, but kept it in the *praesidia* and exchanged it with each other. In O.Did. 422 (before (?) ca. 120-125), soldiers swapped *praesidia*, exchanging each other's rooms and mattresses. Sometimes transfers were between units, but in O.Krok. II 272 (first half of the reign of Hadrian), there is a reference to the transfer of a cavalryman to a new *ala*.

The request for medical help is also a topic that presents itself. Since people living in the desert were in difficult circumstances and a harsh environment, they were subject to various dangers. For example in O.Claud. II 221 (ca. 145), Bekis asks his son Peteharoeris to send him a bandage for his head. In O.Claud. IV 408 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Askalaphonas informs Alexas that he has sent him medicine and medical tools through Vespasianus, the *tabellarius*. O.Claud. II 222 (138-166) represents an interesting urgent request between two unknown persons, in which the sender requests immediate assistance for an official who is in danger of death because of an inflammation of the tonsils. The use of eye-salves is also attested in some letters. In O.Claud. II 220 (ca. 137-145), there is the mention of the delivery of an eye salve, in addition to a request from the sender for the receiver to get saffron from the doctor and send it to him. This probably is used as an eye cure, as well. In O.Claud. I 174 (early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the father Isidoros, who suffers pain when sleeping, blames his two sons Isidoros and Paniskos for neglecting to send him the small elbow-rest which he requested in a previous letter, and he asks them to send it along with two sticks of eye-salve.

As in all communities, maintaining relationships, conveying greetings and providing reassurances about one's health and well-being are common *topoi* in the Eastern Desert corpus. People found it important to write brief letters just for these matters. In SB XXVIII 17115 (150-175), a letter addressed from Hareotes to Apollonides, Hareotes starts by referring to the *proskynema* he has made on behalf of Apollonides before the god Serapis; then he proceeds to

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<sup>102</sup> On the question of gender of the sender of the letter, see Thomas (1978) 142-144; Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 167-168.

<sup>103</sup> See the intro. to O.Did. 326.



the body of the letter, which contains simple greetings to a string of several people. In O.Claud. I 146 (ca. 100-120), Maximus found it necessary to write a complete letter of 9 lines to greet Cassianus, his brother-in-law, and to ask him to greet his daughter, besides informing him that a certain Artemius greets him. The importance ascribed to the delivery of simple greetings is evident from the frequent appeals in letters for information about the safety and well-being of others.<sup>104</sup> The same is apparent in letters in which the sender begins by saying how he found it necessary to greet the addressee with a letter, as mentioned by Capito in O.Ber. II 198 (ca. 50-75) and by Vibius Maximus in O.Did. 403 (before (?) ca. 110 -115), who tells his receivers, Panisneus and Theanous, that above all he meant to greet them with a letter. On the other hand, receiving reassurances about one's health was a matter of priority in cases of sickness. In the private letter O.Krok. I 76 (ca. 117-125), the curator of the *praesidium* of Persou asks the curator of the *praesidium* of Krokodilo to send an ostrakon with information about the health of a colleague facing the danger of death. In O.Did. 350 (before (?) ca. 77-92), the sender, who heard about the illness of his comrade, sent a letter asking about his health using very expressive sentences, ll.4-5 οἶδες (l. οἶδας) ὅτι γλυκύτερον οὐκ ἔχομεν ἀλλήλω[ν] ἐν τῇ χόρτῃ (l. χόρτῃ) ἡμῶν, 'you know that we have nothing dearer than each other in the cohort', 9-10 οἶδες (l. οἶδας, i.e. οἶσθα) καὶ σὺ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἔχομέν σοι πέμψε (l. πέμψαι), 'you, too, know that we have nothing to send you'.<sup>105</sup>

Just as there was a habit of the writer adding his own wishes to the receiver at the end of the letter in cases where he was well known to both the sender and the receiver,<sup>106</sup> in the corpus of the Eastern Desert there is similarly the habit of the writer adding greetings at the end of the letter.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> See e.g. O.Claud. II 258, 7-8 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 260, 7-8 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 261 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), 7-8.

<sup>105</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>106</sup> See Muir (2009) 9.

<sup>107</sup> E.g. Alexandros, the writer of O.Claud. II 258 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), 8-9, adds his greetings to Alexas the receiver of the letter from Titianus; in this letter, further wishes are added at the end of the letter by a different hand, which is supposed to be that of Titianus the sender, '(hand1) ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἀλέξανδρος. (hand 2) ἐρρωσθαι ὑμ(ᾶς εὔχομαι)'; he does the same thing in O.Claud. II 259 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), 17-18. There are several unpublished letters written by a certain Maximus in which he follows the same way of adding his greetings to receivers known to him, using slightly different formulas; see the intro. to O.Claud. II 260. For more information on this practice, see ch. 5.

Family matters and personal issues are frequent themes in the letters. In O.Florida 14 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Maximus writes to Tinarsieges, who is pregnant, asking her to write to him in advance with her expected delivery date, so that he can come and be with her. Similarly, in O.Did. 402 (before (?) ca. 110 -115), a soldier writes to his wife who has recently given birth discussing with her the possibility of coming to him by caravan, in addition to asking her to bring him a sheet or mattress (τετράδεσμα) if she can.<sup>108</sup> Personal problems are addressed in the desert letters, too. For example, in O.Did. 362 (before (?) ca. 88-96), which is a Latin letter sent from the soldier C. Lurius to the veteran Arius, who is experiencing problems with some young soldiers, Lurius says to Arius that what they are quarreling about is nothing and that he has to behave as an experienced man and to teach these young recruits. In O.Claud. I 138 (ca. 110), Maximus blames his sister because of a family disagreement and the bad attitude of his brother Valerius Longus. The harsh environment that surrounded them also affected their plans, as in O.Claud. II 223 (ca. 153), where N.N. apologizes to N.N that he did not come as planned because he was bitten by a scorpion.

Financial matters and legal issues constitute themes of other letters. Various kinds of business, money transactions, and legal obstacles are discussed in letters. For example, in O.Claud. I 172-173 (ca. 110-120), a father and his brothers Anicetus and Heracleides discuss their concerns about a debt of money. In the first letter, 172, after the father has sent an earlier statement concerning this debt, Anicetus informs his father that as soon as he sells some things he will send him the money for the debt. In the second letter 173, Anicetus informs his father that he sent nothing because a certain person has left taking the staters with him; therefore, he demands from his father to be surety for him. Exchanging money between individuals is a common matter, frequently attested in the Eastern Desert corpus; e.g. in SB XXII 15380 (first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a letter sent to Abu Sha'ar, Psaisteinos asks Niger to give to the carrier Petronius 2 drs. and to receive from him a new stater. In O.Claud. II 243 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Petenophotes asks his brother Valerius to send with the camels the money he earned on a sale, since he needs it. O.Did. 342 (before (?) ca. 77-92) discusses a more legal matter: Numerius asks Longinus to serve as his witness in a case concerning money he has lent to a friend when they were together, and in O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92) Longinus asks Numerius to remind him exactly when he lent his friend the money, so that they have consistent information when he testifies for him.

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<sup>108</sup> The same matter is the subject of O.Max. inv. 267 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) which is published in Bülow-Jacobsen, Cuvigny, Fournet (1994) 33-34.

Requests for relief from duty are also found in the corpus. Being relieved from duty is a matter that concerned the soldier Gaius Antonius to the degree that he asks his colleague Longinus Crispus in two letters (339-341; before (?) ca. 77-92) to tell him if he has heard anything about pending relief.

Additional reasons for writing that are mentioned in the Eastern Desert corpus are complaints,<sup>109</sup> charges of injury and wrongdoing,<sup>110</sup> female companionship,<sup>111</sup> in addition to less frequent letters of consolation,<sup>112</sup> recommendation,<sup>113</sup> and petition.<sup>114</sup>

As for official letters, they circulated among high officials, or between them and the workers concerned with the management of the stations and quarries. They also distinguish themselves from private ones in that they could be copied on large jars together with other letters, as in O.Krok. I 87 (118).

Not uncommon epistolary topics among officials are requisitions of tools and materials and the demand for workers and soldiers in the quarries and for making the columns. Letters were written to the persons in charge of the materials, who would then pass on the requested items to deliverers; e.g. in O.Claud. IV 788 (ca. 98-117), the *decurio* Marcus Caninius orders Sabinus to give certain persons some tools, including pegs, ropes, and pieces of wood. In O.Claud. IV 818 (ca. 109-110), the foreman Phthaus asks N.N. to issue 26 irons to the one who is carrying the ostrakon to him. In O.Claud. IV 819 (ca. 110), the foreman Sansnos asks Petronius to send to the quarry of Apollon a skin of water. In O.Claud. IV 894 (ca. 150-154), in addition to the demand of ten hammers, Hieronymos asks Hermaiskos to send 7 stonemasons, a hammer man, and two other people for work on the stone. Soldiers were also the subject of requests at the different locations. In O.Claud. II 387 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the curator of Tiberiane, Nepheros, requests from Archibios, the curator of Claudianus, 4 soldiers to be sent to him.

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<sup>109</sup> E.g. P.Ber. III 270 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 177; 226 (28-117).

<sup>110</sup> O.Krok. II 224 (28-138).

<sup>111</sup> O.Krok. II 182 (28-117); 221 (28-117/117-138).

<sup>112</sup> E.g. O.Did. 424 (before (?) ca. 125-140). For the letters of condolence in Greek papyri, see Chapa (1998); Worp (1995) 149-154; Stowers (1986) 142-152.

<sup>113</sup> E.g. O.Ber. II 123 (ca. 50-75); O.Did. 345 (before (?) ca. 78-85); O.Krok. II 217 (28-117). For more about the letters of recommendation, see Kim (1972); Keyes (1935) 28-44; Stowers (1986) 153-165.

<sup>114</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 287-288 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

Roll calls of workers and soldiers also occupy correspondence from the Eastern Desert. It was necessary to report the absence of workers at the quarries and of soldiers in the *praesidia*, and workers had to submit letters to obtain permission for leave. In O.Claud. IV 862 (ca. 137?), there is a collective request from the stonemasons addressed to the official Saturnilus in order to gain leave of absence (*commeatus*). O.Claud. IV 864 and O.Claud. II 383 (ca. 98-117), represent perfect examples of reporting the absence of workers to both civilian and military parties: in O.Claud. IV 864, Demetras reports to N.N. the absence of Nemonas, the stonemason, who did not come to work on the well, and in O.Claud. II 383 Demetras reports the same matter to Publius, the *decurio*. Requests of absence or leave for military men was presumably demanded in advance by the responsible officials, most likely the curator, since they would need to carry pass documents recording the period permitted for their leave, in case they were questioned by the authorities.<sup>115</sup> Absence from service was discouraged, and could put a person in an awkward position, as in O.Claud. II 384 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) in which the curator [Jonius Valens reports to [Jnius, the *decurio*, that a soldier has been absent from the *praesidium* for 17 days because of illness, which apparently put him in trouble.

The delivery of water to the quarries is a matter that official correspondence occasionally deals with: in O.Claud. IV 786 (ca. 98-117), the sender asks Sabinus the receiver of the letter to supply water skins to the quarry of Apollo, while in O.Claud. IV 787 (ca. 98-117) there is an order to provide the stone-masons at Mons Claudianus with three camels of water.<sup>116</sup>

Other topics of concern in official letters are the provision of information and feedback to high officials concerning ongoing and completed work: for example, in O.Claud. IV 850 (late 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) the foremen and the stonemasons write to the prefect Antonius Flavianus informing him that they have finished making one of the columns, in addition to demanding supplies of steel and charcoal in order to finish another one faster. Similarly, in O.Claud. IV

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<sup>115</sup> For example, in the following two private letters, the curator was the responsible for the leave permissions to soldiers. In O.Did. 447 (before (?) ca. 140-150), a letter between two soldiers, the sender is warning the addressee Damas to take care that his permission of absence is written by the curator. In O.Did. 439 (before (?) ca. 110-115) there is reference to a demand of a *commeatus* from a curator, too. In O.Florida 1, a furlough pass dating to the mid-to-late 2<sup>nd</sup> century can be found and SB XX 14248=P.Quseir 1 (1<sup>st</sup>-beg. 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) represents a list of absent soldiers from the garrison at Myos Hormos. About the furlough of the military men, see Speidel (1985) 283-293 and the intro. to O.Florida, p.19.

<sup>116</sup> As evidence for the actual delivery of water, see the receipts from the water archive in O.Berenike 3, e.g. 274-453, see also chapter 3.

853 (ca. 186-187), stonemasons and foremen write to the procurator Probus announcing to him the accomplishment of making a column and giving him information about a quarry he was concerned about. In 856 (ca. 186-187) they announce to him the accomplishment of another column.

The loading of, e.g., columns and stones receives attention in some letters. Difficulties and obstacles surrounded this discomfiting work, in particular, since the destination in the Nile valley was far:<sup>117</sup> in O.Claud. IV 889 (ca. 150-154), Nephros the curator of Tiberiane writes to Athenodoros concerning the transportation of columns coming from Tiberiane, to inform him that he has prepared the road for this. In O.Claud. IV 896 (ca. 150-154), Sokrates writes to Hermaskas the *tabularius* (or assistant) to tell him that there is a possibility of finding a two-wheel cart for loading the stone. And in O.Claud. IV 884 (ca. 150-154) Sokrates demands that Athenodoros send him a *dekanos* (an overseer of a group of workers) in order to move the stones, so that he can arrange for the loading of the carts.

Not only the transportation of stones presented problems, but other work-related obstacles could arise as well. In O.Claud. II 365 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Palas the curator of the *praesidium* of Raima informs the *decurio* Marcus Caninius that there is a lack of beasts of burden, and that he cannot find any solution to this problem. In O.Claud. IV 891 (ca. 150-154), Hieronymos informs Athenodoros that the work is lying idle because of the lack of material, therefore he asks him to send certain materials by donkey at once.

Assisting the soldiers so that they arrived safely at their destinations was a preoccupation of some officials, and it required arranging via correspondence. In O.Claud. II 357 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the centurion Horion asks the curators of the *praesidia* to give help to the soldiers who are coming on missions with 2 *tabellarii* to Egypt (i.e., the Nile valley). Similarly, in O.Claud. II 358 (138-161), Nemonianus asks the curators of the *praesidia* Antonius and Furius to provide Eutyches, who is going to Kaine, with a *tabellarius*.<sup>118</sup> In a letter addressed from the decurion Marcus Caninius to Apolinaris, the curator of the *praesidium* of Raima (O.Claud. II 363 [2<sup>nd</sup> cent.]), Paniskos and Didymos son of Doras got permission to pass with a *tabellarius* to Egypt. It seems that the *tabellarii* served in such cases as guides to the soldiers because of their knowledge of the roads; they could thus lead the soldiers safely to their final destination.

As with the private and business correspondence, the delivery of provisions in an

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<sup>117</sup> On transportation to the Nile valley, see O.Claud. IV, pp. 267-272.

<sup>118</sup> O.Claud. II 359 (98-117) is not a complete letter, but most likely addressed from Antoninus to the curators of the *praesidia* of the road of Claudianus for the same matter.

official context had to be communicated in letters. In O.Claud. II 366 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Teres the curator of Raima informs Annius, the *duplicarius*, that the horseman Octavius arrived from Egypt with the monthly provisions, mentioning the precise time and date of his arrival. Most probably these were the monthly rations of wheat for the soldiers.<sup>119</sup>

Orders or instructions are also staple components of official letters, particularly in regard to work matters, as in O.Claud. IV 871 (ca. 138-161) in which Epikouros orders Longinos to give food to the *familia*<sup>120</sup> (or the workers) who arrived from Egypt and to be sure to record this on the account. In O.Claud. IV 874 (ca. 138-161) Nemesion asks Apollonios kindly to take care of the charges of the carts, which are coming the next day to Mons Claudianus.

While official correspondence comprises extensive types of requests, it also is used for reports, such as the reporting of attacks. Official letters report several attacks on stations and isolated individuals committed by groups of barbarians, as in O.Krok. I 87, col.1, 27-38 (118),<sup>121</sup> sent from a horseman to a cohort's *centurio*, informing him that their camp was subject to attack by sixty barbarians who after fighting them succeeded to surround the camp for some hours, kidnapping and killing a soldier, woman and children. Another gladiator writes a letter, O.Did. 44 (beg. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), to inform his superior that he could not accomplish his mission because of an attack by barbarians.

The circulation and dispatch of official correspondence and the delivery of goods represent important elements in the Eastern Desert corpus. Some letters record the very process of circulating official letters, as does O.Claud. II 374 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), in which Sarapion, the curator of Raima, informs Aelius Serenus, the curator of the quarry of Claudianus, that he released the soldier Horion with the two *familiares*, Hermapollon and Roupfos, with imperial letters, specifying the time and day that he did this. In O.Claud. II 376 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), he informs him that he released the *familiaris* Pouonsis with a letter in addition to two pieces of rope for the equipment of the *praesidium*. Similarly, in O.Krok. I 83 (ca. 98-117), a letter addressed from Apollinaris (curator?) to Leukalios (curator?), Apollinaris informs Leukalios that he received the letters and dispatched them further an hour after their arrival.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. II 366, p. 208. O.Krok. I 89, 5 (ca. 25. July - 23. Aug. 118) also refers to provisions for a *praesidium*.

<sup>120</sup> For the *familia*, see ch.2

<sup>121</sup> For more detailed discussion of this ostrakon, see ch.5.

<sup>122</sup> There are also registers from Krokodilo that record the circulation of official correspondence, such as O.Krok. I 88 (ca. 118). From Didymoi, there are detailed daybooks recording the time, the day, the distance and the carriers

It is immediately recognizable that we are dealing with a very practically-minded community, which did not concern itself in the letters very extensively with social concerns; thus there are no examples of invitations for weddings or birthday parties.<sup>123</sup> Personal correspondence focused rather on the well-being of friends and family. It is interesting that a very large number of letters concerns requests for provisions such as cabbage, fish, etc. It seems quite clear that letter writing was closely associated with the exchange of goods, which explains why Philokles is so prominent, since commerce necessitated communication, which was conducted via ostraca letters. Letter writing was thus an integral part of the inner economic and security system. Moreover, officials relied on letter exchange to manage activities at the quarries and *praesidia*. For the Roman administration, the Eastern Desert was an extremely important source of raw materials and a point of access to coveted eastern trade markets. Thus they invested large amounts of resources in the region, despite its harsh nature. In order to realize the benefits of this investment, they had to manage complex logistics. And this required constant correspondence, the production of which will be surveyed in greater detail in the following chapters.

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who delivered the letters to their destination, e.g. O.Did. 22 (before (?) ca. 220-250); 23 (after (?) ca. 220); 24-25 (before (?) ca. 220-250).

<sup>123</sup> For a birthday party invitation, see e.g. P. Oxy. IX 1214 (5<sup>th</sup> cent), For discussion about the parties, their venues and invitations, see El-Mofatch (2016) 1993-2010. For invitations in Roman Egypt, see Bassiouni (1991) 69-85. The military milieu does not exclude social activity completely, as appears from the documents of Vindolanda, see e.g. T.Vind. II 291, a warm invitation to a birthday celebration. For more details on the Vindolanda texts, see Bowman (1994).

## 2 The messengers and means of transportation

A survey of documents from the Eastern Desert reveals that letters and other items were delivered by various types of messengers and means of transportations, over both long and short distances. Since letters were often accompanied with goods, and in many cases the letters were sent as cover letters to the accompanying goods, this chapter discusses the messengers who are attested as letter carriers primarily and as item carriers secondarily.

The circulation of correspondence and transfer of items happened both in official and unofficial contexts. Therefore, couriers are treated in terms of both the official and unofficial correspondence (the latter including business and private letters), although there is not always a clear distinction between the two contexts since couriers were employed for both.

### 2.1 Official postal service and local authority in antiquity

#### 2.2.1. The Persian Empire

During the 6th century BCE, the Persian postal system, the so-called ἀγγαρήιον (or ἀγγαρεῖον), was established by the Persian King Cyrus for the internal communication of the empire.<sup>1</sup> It was a well-organized system operated by relays of couriers riding on horseback.<sup>2</sup> Postal stations were spread all over the Empire at intervals of one day's travel. Delivery depended on the successful hand-off of items from one courier to another along these stations,<sup>3</sup> with the possibility of obtaining night relays, if necessary.<sup>4</sup> The system probably involved members of the ruler's bodyguard who delivered personal items and correspondence. Possibly, at the top of the system, a high-ranking official was in charge of reporting to the king.<sup>5</sup> The system was used not only for letter exchange but also for transporting the king and his officials.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Kolb (2000) 16-17; Muir (2009) 11; Hdt., Hist. VIII.99.1. For *angaria*, see Kolb (1996) 699-700.

<sup>2</sup> See Llewelyn (1995) 341.

<sup>3</sup> See Remijnsen (2007) 130.

<sup>4</sup> See White (1986) 214.

<sup>5</sup> See Llewelyn (1994a) 2-4.

<sup>6</sup> See White (1986) 214.



### 2.1.2 Classical Greece

In classical Greece, no organized postal service was supported and, in the case of urgent missions in some Greek cities,<sup>7</sup> official and military mails were delivered by long distance day-runners or the so-called *hemerodromoi*<sup>8</sup> and probably by ships.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.1.3 Egypt during the Ptolemaic period

The postal system in Egypt during the reign of Ptolemies was modeled on the Persian one, but not exactly duplicated. For the sake of fast exchange of information and goods, a postal system was established and activities of exchange were fairly extensively documented. This provides us with good information about the process of circulation, such as the items delivered, the couriers employed, the delivery schedules, the possible reasons for delays, and the ultimate destinations.<sup>10</sup> In Egypt, thanks to the preservation of some documents, it is known that the regular postal system, which was used for official circulation and communication, ran from the North to South and vice versa. It was been used for the exchange of both letters and goods and depended on relays of riders and sub-post offices.<sup>11</sup> The best text to explain this system is P.Hib. I 110 (27 Aug., 271 BCE), the longest and the most informative daybook to survive. The papyrus documents the exchange of items between the sixteenth and twenty-third (8 days) of an unknown month. They were sent to the king and his financial minister in Alexandria from the south of Egypt, and from the king and his minister to the South of Egypt. The post circulated was either *κυλιστοί* (larger rolled documents) or *ἐπιστολαί* (folded-letters). We can identify the directions of the exchange through the use of the word *ἄνωθεν*, which refers to deliveries from upper Egypt ‘from South to North’ and *κάτωθεν* for the opposite direction from lower Egypt ‘from North to South’.<sup>12</sup> The document records for each day the following entries: the date, time of delivery, the carrier, the delivered parcel, to whom it is addressed, the official who received it and which official passed it on to which carrier, and sometimes from which direction the first carrier arrived, e.g. ll.65-69 ‘η. ὥρας πρώτης παρέδωκεν Θεύχρ[η]στος ἄνωθεν (l. ἄνωθεν) Δινίαι κυλιστούς γ, (ῶν) βασιλῆ (l. βασιλεῖ) Πτολεμαίωι κυλιστοὶ β, Ἀπολλωνίωι

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<sup>7</sup> See Muir (2009) 11.

<sup>8</sup> See Remijsen (2007) 131.

<sup>9</sup> See White (1986) 214.

<sup>10</sup> See Remijsen (2007) 131 and Kolb (2000) 17.

<sup>11</sup> See Muir (2009) 12.

<sup>12</sup> See Llewelyn (1994a) 8-9.

διοικητῆ κυ(λιστός) α, Δινίας δὲ παρέδωκεν Ἴππολύτῳ, ‘the 18th, at the first hour Theuchrestos, who came from the south, gave the three rolls to Dinias. Two of those were for the king Ptolemy, one for Apollonios, the dioiketes. Dinias gave them to Hippolytos’.<sup>13</sup> Since the text has been studied previously, by Preisigke first and after that by Llewelyn and Remijsen, who also discussed the conclusions of Preisigke, I will summarize some of their conclusions and assumptions around the text; some things are still open to question.<sup>14</sup>

The following table represents Preisigke's summary in a table created by Llewelyn (Table 1).

No.	Lines	Day	Hour	Incoming postal items			The same outgoing postal items		
				Received from	Courier	Delivered to the official	Issued by the official	Courier	Dispatched to
1	54-60	16	?	(south)	[ ]	Ἀλεξάνδρῳ	Ἀλέξανδρος	[N]ικοδήμῳ	(north)
2	61-64	17	ἑωθινή	—	—	Ἀμίνων	Ἀμ[ί]ν[ω]ν	Θευχρήστῳ	(south)
3	65-69	18	1	ἄνωθεν	Θεύχρη[η]στος	Δινία	Δινίας	Ἴππολύτῳ	(north)
4	70-74	18	6	—	—	Φανία	Ἀμίνων	Τιμοκράτῃ	(south)
5	75-87	19	11	κάτωθεν	[N]ικόδημος	Ἀλεξάνδρῳ	[ ]	[ ]	(south)
6	91-96	20	?	(south)	[Λ]υκοκλής	Ἀμ[ί]νοι	Ἀμίνων	Ἴππολύτῳ	(north)
7	97-99	21	6	κάτωθεν	[.]εναλε.	Φανία	Ἔρος	Διον[υ]σίῳ	(south)
8	100-105	22	1	(south)	Α[.]ων	[Δινία?]	Δινίας	Νικοδήμῳ	(north)
9	106-108	22	12	ἄνωθεν	Λέων	Ἀμ[ί]νοι	Ἀμίνων	[I]ππ[ολύ]τῳ	(north)
10	109-114	23	ἑωθινή	ἄνωθεν	Τιμοκράτης	[Ἀλεξάνδρῳ]	Ἀλέξανδρος	[ ]	(north)
11	51-53	?	?	(south)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	(north)

The daybook was found in an unknown place, but Preisigke suggests that the location to which the daybook belongs was the Polemon meris in the Arsinoite nome.<sup>15</sup> Remijsen in her article argues for other possibilities, but she tends to locate the station at Hieria Nesos (TM Geo 840), because it lies on the border of the Herakleopolite nome and the meris of Polemon. In addition, there were horsemen troops camped in Hieria Nesos, who could logically serve as postriders. Moreover, several documents from the same mummy cartonnage to which P. Hib. I 110 belongs are connected with this village. The official staff in the postal station of this daybook are all Greeks and were around five in number.<sup>16</sup> The official Phantias was perhaps responsible for managing the station and also kept the daybook, since he is the receiver of the ἄξιον (or the sum paid for the postage at the office).<sup>17</sup> Most likely each carrier operated a fixed stage of the relay and the journey took one day going North, and the return journey was made

<sup>13</sup> See Remijsen (2007) 132. The name Ἴππολύτῳ was previously read as Ἴππολύσῳ, modified in BL 5. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Preisigke (1907) 241-277; Llewelyn (1994a) 1-25; Llewelyn (1993) 41; Remijsen (2007) 127-140.

<sup>15</sup> See Preisigke (1907) 255-256 and Llewelyn (1994a) 9-10.

<sup>16</sup> See Remijsen (2007) 131, 133.

<sup>17</sup> See P.Hib. I, note to l.64.

the following day. No means of transportation is attested in the text, but since the service was quick and immediate and there were at least four dispatches passed by the post office daily, the use of horses rather than boats seems the most likely along stations located at the edges of the Nile valley.<sup>18</sup> What could also support this assumption is the post addressed to the king,<sup>19</sup> which is supposed to be delivered by horsemen. The journeys were done according to six-hour plans, and the 4 journeys each day were performed as follows: at the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> hour of the day from South to North, and from the North to the South at the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> hour of the day, with six hours for the journey between the stations, normally. This simply means that the system runs during the day and night. Similar to the Persian system, officials of high rank who held the liturgical position of postal director oversaw this system. But there was another system that was also employed. It was intended for less urgent communications and relied mainly on foot carriers and camels. The latter were employed for heavier parcels. The system appears in P.Oxy. IV 710 (after 20 Sept. - 19 Oct. 111 BCE) which contains an order of payment to forty-four papyrus carriers, a precis-writer, an escort and a camel-driver in Oxyrhynchus, ll.2-4 ἐν τῷ Ὁξυρυγχίτη βυβλιαφόροις ἀνδράσι μδ ὠρογράφωι α ἐφόδοι α καμηλίτη α, (γίνονται) μζ.<sup>20</sup>

#### 2.1.4 The Roman Republic and Roman Empire

A. M. Ramsay has noted the lack of an official postal service during the Roman Republic; moreover there is no evidence for it in Latin literature.<sup>21</sup> Both private and official post was delivered by slaves or freedmen called *tabellarii*.<sup>22</sup> By the reign of Augustus,<sup>23</sup> a postal system was initiated to facilitate rapid and organized communication throughout the empire. This system was maintained by his successors, too. It relied on the *cursus publicus*, which depended on relay couriers.<sup>24</sup> It was similar to the Persian system in that couriers were

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<sup>18</sup> See Llewelyn (1993) 43, 44, 47.

<sup>19</sup> See Remijsen (2007) 131.

<sup>20</sup> See Llewelyn (1994a) 9-11; Llewelyn (1993) 54; Kolb (2000) 17-18.

<sup>21</sup> See Ramsay (1920) 79.

<sup>22</sup> See Sarri (2018) 12.

<sup>23</sup> Ramsay (1920) 79 argues another point of view, namely that, according to Cicero, there was no serious postal system in his day and in case a provincial governor wished to convey dispatches he would send them by one of his own *lictors* or *statores* or by the *tabellarii* of the tax-farming companies. Each governor had several *statores*, who apparently served as carriers at the disposal of the governor.

<sup>24</sup> See Muir (2009) 11-12.

always ready to deliver items from one station to other.<sup>25</sup> The system was mainly used for official communication,<sup>26</sup> i.e. administrative communication and the military activities, through the entire Roman empire.<sup>27</sup> The system continued to develop until it took its basic structure in the first century, 12 CE, and included transportation of Roman officials and soldiers travelling to take up posts or to perform their official duties. But not all the people were allowed to use the *cursus publicus*, only people who gained a post warrant (*diploma*) from the emperor or his authorized agent.<sup>28</sup> In addition, it is also known that during the first century emperors and governors started to use soldiers to deliver their official correspondence.<sup>29</sup> In the *cursus publicus*, stations were located along military roads on major highways and roads where couriers could refresh themselves before arriving at their final destination.<sup>30</sup> Suetonius reports to us that ‘In order to obtain the earliest intelligence of what was passing in the provinces,

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<sup>25</sup> See Remijsen (2007) 130.

<sup>26</sup> The *cursus publicus* was intended only for government missives and other sorts of official correspondence. Ordinary persons who needed to send private correspondence were able to employ a servant or a slave to perform the task. In some cases, they could also hire a “letter carrier” variously called an ἐπιστολαφόρος, γραμματηφόρος, or σύμμαχος. People who were incapable of hiring a carrier could possibly send their dispatches with a trusted person or friend. In such cases, this trusted person often served to carry the response back from the receiver of the letter to the sender again. During the Ptolemaic period, the earliest word used to refer to the ‘letter carrier’ was βιβλιαφόρος (also βυβλιαφόρος, βυβλιοφόρος); it was used officially to refer to the official carriers and the royal messengers. In the Roman period it was replaced by ἐπιστοληφόρος (also ἐπιστολαφόρος, ἐπιστολοφόρος), who was for at least the first few centuries of the Roman period liturgically appointed within the framework of the *cursus publicus*. At each village there was one ἐπιστοληφόρος, or more than one if necessary, conducting official correspondence for the village. By the late third century another designation for ‘letter carrier’ appeared, γραμματηφόρος, who was also liturgically appointed. Little attested before the 4<sup>th</sup> century is the σύμμαχος; most likely, he worked for wealthy persons as a personal assistant or agent responsible for transferring their post and dispatches, see Blumell (2012) 99-100 and (2014) 46-48, 51, 53; Sarri (2018) 18-19, 23-24. See also Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 37-38 for the delivery of private correspondence. γραμματηφόρος, ἐπιστολαφόρος and σύμμαχος are liturgical posts of letter carriers, see Lewis (1982) 23, 29, 48. For the different function and meaning of γραμματηφόρος in late antiquity and the Byzantine period, see Morelli (2005) 351-371. The office of the σύμμαχος frequently appears from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. It was express post service that was limited to Egypt. They moved on foot or on horseback. They likely were members of military unit, since they were armed carrying sword and shield, see Jördens (1986) 105-106. For discussion about the post of the σύμμαχος as liturgical service, see P.Heid. V, pp. 55-58.

<sup>27</sup> Blumell (2012) 98-99.

<sup>28</sup> See Blumell (2014) 46, Llewelyn (1995) 341, Ramsay (1920) 85.

<sup>29</sup> See Van Dongen (2014) 104-105.

<sup>30</sup> Blumell (2014) 46 and Ramsay (1920) 85.

Augustus established posts, consisting at first of young men stationed at moderate distances along the military roads, and afterwards of regular couriers with fast vehicles; which appeared to him the most commodious, because the persons who were the bearers of dispatches, written on the spot, might then be questioned about the business, as occasion occurred'.<sup>31</sup> Along the roads, change-stations were supplied with 8 to 40 public animals (e.g. mules, donkeys, etc.). The number of these depended on the importance of the road to draw the vehicles along.<sup>32</sup>

By the reign of Diocletian, the *cursus publicus* was probably divided into two divisions, the express post (*cursus velox*/ὄξυς δρόμος) and the slower wagon post (*cursus clabularis*/πλατὺς δρόμος).<sup>33</sup> Unlike the Persian system, the *cursus publicus*'s rounds were not regular, but were established according to the necessity. Moreover, in the *cursus publicus* system the same carrier was responsible for delivering the post to its final destination, and at each station he could refresh himself and receive a fresh horse. Speed was his first priority in this system and correspondence could be transferred the same day over a distance of around 150 km and even further, as we see in P.Panop.Beatty 2 (Jan.-Feb. 300 CE), a document that records correspondence sent to the strategus of the Panopolite nome over a period of 2 months, in which some letters were delivered on the same day over a distance of almost 200 km.<sup>34</sup> Finally, during this period, it seems that a system of Nile boats was also used for the delivery of mail. P.Panop.Beatty 1, col.3, 60-63 and col.9, 252-255 (298 CE) shows that official transfer of letters was carried by boats; Nile cutters or ἀλιάδες.<sup>35</sup>

## 2.2 The postal system in Egypt and the Eastern Desert during the Roman Period

Before I start my discussion of the Roman postal system in Egypt, I have to mention that during the Ptolemaic period evidence for the existence of an official postal system in the Eastern Desert appears in an unpublished ostrakon from Bir Samut (O.Sam. inv. 539),

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<sup>31</sup> The translation to Suet. Aug. 49.3 “*Et quo celerius ac sub manum adnuntiari cognoscique posset, quid in provincia quaque gereretur, iuvenes primo modicis intervallis per militaris vias, dehinc vehicula disposuit. Commodius id visum est, ut qui a loco idem perferunt litteras, interrogari quoque, si quid res exigant, possint.*” is from the website of Perseus. Accessed on 16 May 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Llewelyn (1995) 341.

<sup>33</sup> Blumell (2014) 46. For the system of the *cursus publicus* during the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE and later, see Lemcke (2016) and Crogiez-Petrequin (2009) 143-163.

<sup>34</sup> Blumell (2012) 98-99.

<sup>35</sup> See Llewelyn (1994a) 1-2, more details in Kolb (2000) 198-205. However, a tax was paid for a postal boat in a receipt dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in O.Eleph. DAIK 42 (Elephantine; 10 March 131).

κυλιστοῖ) β, ἐπιστολαῖ) β, (τούτων). It is a fragment of a postal journal that shows the use of a mail exchange system for communicating official dispatches by messengers. The correspondence was delivered by the so-called βιβλιαφόροι between neighboring stations called σταθμοί.<sup>36</sup> Letters were identified as ἐπιστολαί (letters) and κυλιστοί (bundles of rolled documents), as in the Ptolemaic daybook P. Hib. I 110 (27 Aug., 271 BCE).

During the Roman period, the best daybooks preserved from the official and military postal system in Egypt are those from the Eastern Desert. What survive from the Nile valley are quite different from the Eastern Desert records. Besides being on papyrus, which is only a difference of material, they do not provide the same kind of detailed information about the process of mail circulation.

One of the best documents from outside the Eastern Desert is P.Ryl. II 78 (unknown; 25 May 157), which represents an official letter addressed to the strategos of the Busirite nome in the Delta about the dispatch of packets of ἐπιστολαί and ἐπιστάγματα addressed to several officials, including the Prefect of Egypt himself, and concerning administrative matters and taxation. The post was delivered by the ἐπιστολαφόροι, and the offices of the strategoi of the nomes served as relays, next to secondary relays called στατίωνες.<sup>37</sup> But it seems that there were some obstacles surrounding the delivery process; we learn at lines 24-26 that no messenger was there to carry the correspondence, παρ' ᾧ στοχάζομαι αὐτὸν μεμενηκέναι μὴ ὄντος ἐκεῖ τινος ἐπιστολαφόρου ἐκ τοῦ ὑπὸ σοὶ νομοῦ τοῦ δ[ι]ακ[ο]μ[ι]οῦντός σοι αὐτὸν κατὰ τὰ κελευσθέντα, 'where I conjecture that the packet has remained, no messenger being there from your nome to carry it to you according to the orders'.<sup>38</sup>

All of this makes P.Hib. I 110 more similar to the Eastern Desert's daybooks, as the Eastern Desert daybooks document detailed information about the month, the day, the time of delivery, the kind of post delivered, how many items there were, by whom the correspondence was transferred and where it was sent, e. g. O.Krok. I 1, 17 α κλ(ῆρος) λ· ἐπιστολαῖ ἄπὸ Μυσόρμου/ [ῆ]νέκθ(ησαν) (l. [ῆ]νέχθ(ησαν) ἀπὸ Πέρσου διὰ Δομ(ιττίου) ἰπέ(ως) ὄραν (l. ὄραν) γ ἡμ(έρασ)· ἰς (l. εἰς) Φοι(νικῶνα) Καιγιζα, '1st tour, (day) 30, letters from Myos

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<sup>36</sup> σταθμός was the Greek name for the stations or stages along the royal roads in Persia where the king used to rest while travelling, LSJ, s.v. The ostrakon was discussed by Cuvigny in 2016 at a symposium at the Collège de France; the talk is available online at: <https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/en-jean-pierre-brun/symposium-2016-03-30-11h30.htm> (accessed 27 May 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Cuvigny (2013) 421.

<sup>38</sup> Trans. (eds.) Johnson, Martin, S. Hunt.

Hormos, were brought from Persou through Domitius the horseman at the 3rd hour of the day to Phoinikon, (by) Kaigiza'. The following table summarizes this lengthy daybook, which dates to after (?) 28. March 108 and records the circulation of official post between Krokodilo and the neighboring stations, principally Phoinikon and Persou.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> O.Krok. I 1 p.20.

Table 2. Postal Journal from the *praesidium* of Krokodilo. Taken from O.Krok. I

Date	Objet reçu	Provenance immédiate	Courrier arrivé	Heure d'arrivée	Courrier parti	N° de tour	Destination	Objet de la course
Mech. 14	[lettres ?] de Cosconius et de Pompeius [...]	Phoinikôn	Calpurnius, <i>equus</i>	10 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	[Eial]	2	[Person]	
17	<i>diplônacta</i> ?, lettres de Cosconius	[...]	Sabinus, <i>equus</i>	[...]	Eial, Aestiv(i)us	2, 3	[Person]	
18	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Eial [et Aestiv(i)us ?]	2, 3		escortent les chameaux
23	[lettres de ?] Mettius Rufus	Krokodilo ?	Ø	Ø	Kaigiza	1	Phoinikôn	
27	– lettres et <i>diplônacta</i> ? de Cosconius – autres lettres	Phoinikôn	Calpurnius, <i>equus</i>	6 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	Aestiv(i)us	3	Person	
29	1 lettre de Cosconius	Didymoi	Caius Balbus	7 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	Eial	2	Person	
30	lettres de Myos Hormos	Person	Domitius, <i>equus</i>	3 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	Kaigiza	1	Phoinikôn	
Pharm. 1	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Eial avec Philokles	2	Koptos	
[4]	[lettres]	[Person]	Ø	Ø	Ø		Ø	
5	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Aestiv(i)us	3	Phoinikôn	accompagne un chameau ou un chamelier
8	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Kaigiza, Eial	1, 2	Phoinikôn	escortent le centurion Aurelius
18	10 poissons (muges)	Person	Sabinus	6 <sup>e</sup> h. n.	Aestiv(i)us	3	Phoinikôn	
20a	4 poissons-petroquets	Person	Petronius	5 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	[Aestiv(i)us] Kaigiza	1	Phoinikôn	
20b	– <i>diplônacta</i> d'Avitus, <i>paralempitês</i> – 3 poissons-petroquets	Person	Valerius et Domitius	8 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	Eial	2	Phoinikôn	escorte Modestus ?
23	poissons	Person	Dil... (Diza ?)	6 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	Aestiv(i)us	3	Phoinikôn	
24a	poissons	Person	Sabinus	[... ] j	Kaigiza	1	Phoinikôn	
24b	poissons	[Person]	Valerius	3 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	Eial	2	Phoinikôn	
25	poissons	[Person]	Diza ?	1 <sup>er</sup> h. n.	Aestiv(i)us	3	Phoinikôn	
27a	poissons	Person	Petronius	[...]	Kaigiza	1	Phoinikôn	
27b	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Eial, Aestiv(i)us	2, 3	Person	escortent les chars ?
28	--	Phoinikôn	[...]	[...]	Kaigiza	1	Person	
29	lettres et <i>acta</i> scellés du (?) <i>cornicularius</i> du préfet d'Égypte	[...]	[...], <i>equus</i>	3 <sup>e</sup> h. j.	Eial	2	Person	
30	<i>acta</i> scellés	Phoinikôn	[...]	[... ] h. j.	Aestiv(i)us	3	Person	
Pharm. 2	?	Phoinikôn	[...]	[...]	[Kaigiza, Eial]	1, 2	Person	



The Eastern Desert is unique in preserving these official daily postal records because of their kind, form and number. In these texts not only correspondence was attested, but also various transported goods, such as fish<sup>40</sup> and provisions.<sup>41</sup> The majority of these daybooks date to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, more specifically 108-109 CE. The bulk of them was found in Krokodilo, in addition to some single records from Didymoi and Dios.<sup>42</sup> In addition to these daily postal records, there survive some official letters and notes of delivery that document the circulation of letters and acknowledge the receipt and forwarding of letters. They are also from the same places mentioned earlier, namely Maximianon, Dios, Mons Claudianus and Krokodilo.<sup>43</sup>

A survey of these texts shows that mainly horsemen were entrusted with the transfer of these letters, although *monomachoi*<sup>44</sup> also participated in this official process. The survey also reveals that the kinds of correspondence<sup>45</sup> that were circulated were of three types:<sup>46</sup> ἐπιστολαί, διπλώματα and, very rarely, ἄκτα. These types were identified in the letters in several ways:

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<sup>40</sup> O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108), 39 α κζ· ὀψάρια ἀπὸ Πέρσου διὰ Πετρωνίου ἠνέ[χθη ὥραν -ca.?- ], ‘first tour, 27<sup>th</sup>, fish was brought from Persou through Petronius... hour’.

<sup>41</sup> O.Krok. I 25 (after (?) 6. July 109), 7 [ -1-2- ] . σις μετὰ κιβαρίω(v) . [ -ca.?- ].

<sup>42</sup> O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108); O.Krok. I 2 (after (?) ca. 26. Apr. - 25. May 108); O.Krok. I 3 (after (?) 5. June 108); O.Krok. I 4 (after (?) 21. June 108); O.Krok. I 5 (after 16. Nov. 108); O.Krok. I 7, 9?, 10 verso? ca. 108); O.Krok. I 24 (after 29. May 109); O.Krok. I 25 (provision?; after (?) 6. July 109); O.Krok. I 26 (after (?) 16. July 109); O.Krok. I 27 (after 5. Oct. 109); O.Krok. I 28 (after (?) 8. Nov. 109); O.Krok. I 29 (circulations of something not specified; after (?) 13. Jan. 109), O.Krok. I 30-37 (ca. 109); O.Krok. I 38 (ca. end of 109); O.Krok. I 39-40 (ca. 98-138); O.Did. 22 (before (?) ca. 220-250); O.Dios. inv. 986 (no date), partially published in Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 563.

<sup>43</sup> Official letters and notes of delivery: O.Krok. I 12? (descr. and not specified circulation?; 20. Jan. 109); O.Krok. I 83-84 (ca. 98-117); O.Krok. I 89 (circulations of letters and provisions; ca. 25. July - 23. Aug. 118); O.Krok. I 90 (ca. 25. June - 24. July 118); O.Did. 23 (after (?) ca. 220), O.Did. 24 (before (?) ca. 220-250); 28 (18. May 176-208?); 37 (descr.; before (?) ca. 220-240); O.Claud. II 360 (137-145); 374 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Dios. inv. 807 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) published in Cuvigny (2013) 426-428; P.Worp. 51 (Dios, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); SB XXIV 16187 (Maximianon; ca. 150).

<sup>44</sup> O.Krok. I 27 (after 5. Oct. 109); O.Did. 23 (after (?) ca. 220), 24 (before (?) ca. 220-250), 28 (18. May 176 or 208?).

<sup>45</sup> For the kinds, formulas and layouts of the desert correspondence, see Fournet (2003) 468-500.

<sup>46</sup> For more about the different Greek technical terms used to refer to letters, see Stirewalt (1993) 67-87.

letters only (ἐπιστολαί),<sup>47</sup> letters identified by the place from which they came,<sup>48</sup> letters of high officials (curator?),<sup>49</sup> letters of the Prefect of Egypt<sup>50</sup> or of the prefect of the desert<sup>51</sup> or just letters of an unidentified prefect,<sup>52</sup> imperial letters,<sup>53</sup> sealed letters<sup>54</sup> or even letters tied together.<sup>55</sup>

As for the *acta*, they are twice mentioned in one document as sealed *acta*.<sup>56</sup> In the daybooks, the *diplomata* are labelled with the name of the prefect<sup>57</sup> or other high official<sup>58</sup> who

<sup>47</sup> E.g. O.Krok. I 1, 13, 17 (after (?) 28. March 108); 3, 2, 6 (after (?) 5. June 108); 24, 5 (after 29. May 109); 27, 9 (after 5. Oct. 109); O.Did. 22, 1, 3 (before (?) ca. 220-250); O.Did. 28, 12 (18. May 176/208); 37, 3 (before (?) ca. 220-240); O.Dios. inv. 986 (no date); O.Claud. II 360, 4 (137-145).

<sup>48</sup> O.Krok. I 1, 17 (after (?) 28. March 108) α κλ(ῆρος) λ· ἐπιστολαὶ ἄπὸ Μυσόρμου/ [ἠ]νέκθ(ησαν) (l. [ἠ]νέκθ(ησαν) ἀπὸ Πέρσου διὰ Δομ(ιττίου) ἱπέ(ως) ὄραν (l. ὄραν) γ ἡμ(έρασ)· ἰς (l. εἰς) Φοι(νικῶνα) Καιγίσα, ‘1st tour, (day) 30, letters of Myos Hormos, were brought from Persou through Domitius the horseman, at the 3rd hour of the day to Phoinikon, (by) Kaigiza’.

<sup>49</sup> O.Krok. I 1, 10 (after (?) 28. March 108) [- ca.10 -] -1-2- β Μεττίου ‘Ρούφου’, ‘letters? of Mettius Rufus’, who is probably the curator of the *praesidium* of Krokodilo, see Cuvigny (2003a) 273.

<sup>50</sup> P.Worp. 51, 3 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) καὶ ἐπιστολῶν ἡγεμονικῶν, ‘and letters from or for the Prefect of Egypt’.

<sup>51</sup> O.Krok. I 1, 6 (after (?) 28. March 108) ἐπιστολαὶ Κοσκωνίου ἐπάρχ(ου) ὄρους, ‘letters of Cosconius the prefect of the desert’, also l.11, 15, 4?.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. O.Krok. I 30, 9-11 (ca. 109) ‘ἀπὸ Φοινικ(ῶνος) ἐλθὼν [A]ρίμματος κβ ἐπιστολ(ὰς) [ἔ]χων τοῦ ἐπάρχου, from Phoinikon arrived Arimmas with 22 letters of the prefect’.

<sup>53</sup> O.Claud. II 374, 2-4 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ἀπέλυσα Ὁρίωνα στρατιώτην μετὰ δύο φαμηλιαριους (l. φαμηλιαρίων) [Ἐρ]μαπολων (l. Ἐρμαπόλλωνος) καὶ Ῥούφου μετ’ ἐπιστολῶν κυριακα (l. κυριακῶν), ‘I released Horion the soldier with two familiaris and Rufus with imperial letters’.

<sup>54</sup> E.g. O.Dios inv. 807, 1-3 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) [Dinnis curator Dios] parelaba [ta]s procimenas (l. proceimenas) epistullas (l. epistolas) esprag[is]menas sun dipplomate (l. diplomati), ‘Dinnis the curator of Dios, I received the sealed letters mentioned above with the *diploma*’; O.Krok. I 39, 3 (ca. 98-138) [-ca.?- ἐπιστο]λὰς ἐσφραγισμένας; O.Did. 23, 4-6 (after (?) ca. 220) ἐπιστολὰς ἐσφραγιζόμενας (l. ἐσφραγισμένας).

<sup>55</sup> O.Krok. I 40, 5 (ca. 98-138) [-ca.?- ἐπιστ]ρῶλὰς β δεδειμ[έννας] (l. δεδειμ[έννας]) [-ca.?- ] .

<sup>56</sup> O.Krok. I 1, 44-46 (after (?) 28. March 108) ἐπιστολαὶ καὶ ἄκτα ἐσφραγι[σμένα -ca.?- ] κορνικλαρί(ου) (l. κορνικουλαρί(ου)) ἡγεμόνο(ς) ἠνέκθ( ) (l. ἠνέκθ( )) [διὰ -ca.?- ] ἱπέ(ως) (l. ἱπέ(ως) ὄραν γ ἡμ(έρασ); 1.47: ἄκτ[α] ἐσφρα[γ]ιζόμενα ἠνέκθ(η) (l. ἠνέκθ(η)) ἀπὸ Φοινικ(ῶνος), ‘letters and sealed *acta* ... of the cornicularius of the Prefect of Egypt, were brought through ... the horseman, 3<sup>rd</sup> hour of the day’; 1.47 ‘sealed *acta* were brought from Phoinikon’.

<sup>57</sup> O.Krok. I 30, 43-44 (ca. 109) / ἐλθὼν ἀπὸ Φοινικῶνος Κλήμης ἱπεὺς τύρμ(ης) vac. (or [ -ca.?- ]) μετὰ διπλώματο(ς) Ἀρτωρίου Πρισκ(ύλλου) ἐπάρχου περὶ ξύλων, ‘Clemens the horseman of the *turme* of ... arrived from Phoinikon with *diploma* of Artorius Priscillus the prefect about wood’.

<sup>58</sup> O.Krok. I 1, 26 (after (?) 28. March 108) δίπλωμα Ἀουεῖτου π[α]ραλημπτοῦ, ‘*diploma* of Avitus the receiver (*paralempetes*)’.

issued them and the subjects they are concerned with;<sup>59</sup> sometimes, however, they are not labelled at all, but rather said simply to be *diplomata*.<sup>60</sup> Based on the information that we do get, it seems that the *diplomata* mentioned in the daybooks are the official circulars coming from the office of the prefect or other high officials, which were meant to be circulated among the *praesidia*.<sup>61</sup>

As for the prefect's letters, there are letters of the Prefect of Egypt, which were likely circulated between the *praesidia*; P.Bagnall 8 (186-187) and O.Did. 29 (ca. Jan. - June 236) are good examples of this.<sup>62</sup> The other type is the correspondence of the prefect of the Eastern Desert. What they were about, it is not clear, since none of them were found so far, but I suppose that they were about the management and administrations of the quarries and *praesidia*, since we know that the workers at Mons Claudianus had to address their letters to the prefect of the desert and procurator together regarding their work on the columns at the quarry. On the other hand, the letters of the Prefect of Egypt have to do with matters higher than the authority of the prefect of the desert, such as the judgment of the soldiers (P.Bagnall 8) and the circulation of the news sent about the emperor (O.Did. 29).

Based on these daybooks and O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108), in particular, the process of circulating correspondence along the road between Koptos and Myos Hormos could be explained as follows: the curator of the *praesidium* managed postal activities and was responsible for ensuring that procedures ran smoothly. When a postrider arrived from the previous *praesidium* he addressed the curator and informed him about what he brought. The curator in his turn recorded this on a potsherd<sup>63</sup> and chose another postrider to take the information to the next station. The first postrider returned to his station in two or three hours; it is possible that the same rider could perform postal tasks from Krokodilo on two consecutive

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<sup>59</sup> SB XXIV 16187, 2-5 (ca. 150) ἐξέλταν (l. ἐξήλθον) μετὰ διπλομα (l. διπλώματος) περὶ Χινεδοκολπιτῶν (l. Κιναιδοκολπιτῶν), 'departed with a *diploma* about the Kinaidokolpites'. The text is published with comment about the Kinaidokolpites in Cuvigny and Robin (1996) 697-720.

<sup>60</sup> O.Did. 24, 1-2 (before (?) ca. 220-250) Κύλινδρος μονομάχος ἐλθὼν μετὰ διπλώματος, 'Kylinthros the *monomachos* arrived with a *diploma*'; see also O.Dios inv. 807, 1-3 mentioned above in note 54.

<sup>61</sup> Examples of these *diplomata* could possibly be, e.g. O.Krok. I 41 (after (?) 13. July 109); 42 (after 4. July 109); 44 (after (?) 13. July 109); 45 'latin' (after (?) 14. July 109); 47 (after (?) 11. Oct. 109); O.Krok. I 51 (27. Nov. - 26. Dec. 109); 60? (ca. 98 - 125 (?)); 62? (106 - 107 (?) or 117 - 118 (?)). See also Cuvigny (2013) where she discusses that *diplomata* could be notes of receipt, pp.421-428.

<sup>62</sup> The Prefects attested in these documents are Pomponius Faustianus (186-187) in P.Bagnall 8 and Mevius Honoratianus (231/32-236) in O.Did. 29, for a list of the Prefects of Egypt, see Jördens (2009) 528-531.

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. O.Dios inv. 807 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), published in Cuvigny (2013) 426.

days. After that the other rider took the post to the next station, as appears from O.Krok. I 30, 43-45 (ca. 109) / ἐλθὼν ἀπὸ Φοινικῶνος Κλήμηϋς ἵππευϋς τύρμ(ηϋ) vac. ? (or [ -ca.- ]) μετὰ διπλώματο(ϋ) Ἄρτωρίου Πρισκ(ίλλου) ἐπάρχου περὶ ξύλων vac. ? καὶ ἐξελθ. . . εἰς Πέρσου Κρινόλαοϋ τύρμ(ηϋ) Σατρ. . . . . , ‘arrived from Phoinikon, Klemens the horseman of the *turme* ... with *diploma* of Artorius Priscillus the prefect about the wood ... and departed ... to Persou Krinolaos, *turme* of Satr[ ]’. Or another postrider could meet his counterpart at the same station and deliver the post to the next station, as occurred on the road between Koptos and Berenike at Dios, where a postrider arrived from Kompasi to Dios and met his counterpart, who was coming from Xeron, and took the correspondence from him at once, Κέλϋοϋ, ἀπὸ πραιοιδίου Κόμπαϋι ἐνήνοχεν ἐπιϋτολὰϋ Ἐπιφ κδ ὥρα θ τῆϋ νυκτὸϋ καὶ εὐθέωϋ ἐβάϋταξεν Δίϋαλα . . ἀπὸ Ἐηροῦ, ‘Celsus from the *praesidium* Kompasi brought letters on 24 Epeiph at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the night and Disala from Xeron took them at once ...’.<sup>64</sup> So, it appears that to each *praesidium* a group of postriders was assigned, for example in Krokodilo there were three horsemen: Kaiziga, Eial and Aestivius. At Phoinikon there were Calpurnius and Ammo[ ]. In Persou there were Diza (?), Domitius, Petronius, Sabinus, and Valerius and probably one from Didymoi, Gaius Balbius. From these texts, it also appears that most of the delivery activities were done over the course of the entire day, in the morning, evening or at night, with a slight preference for the night<sup>65</sup>. Only *monomachoi* performed night deliveries, as I will discuss below. Multiple letters could be delivered by one courier, as many even as the 22 letters of the prefect delivered by a horseman from Phoinikon, O.Krok. I 30, 9-11 (ca. 109). One might suppose that couriers carried papyrus letters that were then copied on ostraca, since it is hard to transport such a large number of letters as ostraca.<sup>66</sup>

## 2.3 The horsemen or postriders

### 2.3.1 Official letter carriers

In the Eastern Desert, horsemen are the major means of circulation of letters, whether separately or accompanied with goods. They are the most common carriers attested in texts. First and foremost, they were part of the Roman army stationed in the Eastern Desert sites and performed postal missions as part of their military duties. At each station a number of soldiers

<sup>64</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 563-564.

<sup>65</sup> The percentage is 20.74% during the evening and night to 16.47% during the day, which is not a decisive percentage difference, since the discovery of new texts could easily alter the relationship.

<sup>66</sup> See Cuvigny (2003a) 267-268.

existed and postal duties were entrusted to some of them. The majority of the attestations of the horsemen as official carriers appears in the daily postal registers, or daybooks, the bulk of which were found in Krokodilo,<sup>67</sup> with others coming from Didymoi<sup>68</sup> and Dios.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, there survive individual official letters<sup>70</sup> and texts acknowledging receipt and forwarding official correspondence.<sup>71</sup>

In the Eastern Desert, the time spent to deliver letters by horsemen and transfer items between the stations differed according to the distance between them. It is known from two letters sent between the neighboring forts of Dios and Xeron that a set of correspondence could be exchanged within a week's time by a horseman. These letters were found at their respective points of destination, the forts of Dios and Xeron, which are located around 50-60 km apart along the road from Koptos to Berenike. In the first letter, which was written at Xeron on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Mesore, a soldier named Longinus asks his fellow soldier Niger, who was at Dios, to lend him an iron tool by giving it to the horseman who is delivering the letter. Niger replies on the 27<sup>th</sup> of the same month, which makes the period between writing the first letter and its response around three days.<sup>72</sup> Between other closer stations of around 25-30 km apart, the one way distance could be crossed by a horseman in 2-3 hours.<sup>73</sup>

Not only letters did the horsemen deliver; part of their responsibilities was to bring provisions<sup>74</sup> from the Nile valley to officials in the Eastern Desert, as demonstrated by the following letter, O.Claud. II 366 (2<sup>nd</sup> century), which is addressed to the *duplicarius* Annius from Teres the curator of Raima informing him that Octavius the horseman arrived from Egypt on the 27<sup>th</sup> at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the day and brought him monthly provisions so that he sends his

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<sup>67</sup> E.g. O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108).

<sup>68</sup> E.g. O.Did. 22 (before (?) ca. 220-250).

<sup>69</sup> O.Dios. inv. 986 (no date), partially published in Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 563.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 374 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 360 (137-145); 366 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>71</sup> E.g. O.Dios inv. 807 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>72</sup> See O.Dios inv. 636 and O.Xer. inv. 858 (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), published in ElMaghrabi (2012) 139-145.

<sup>73</sup> See Cuvigny (2013) 421.

<sup>74</sup> Other attestations for ἐπιμήνια, or the monthly provisions in the Eastern Desert, are in O.Petr. Mus. 154, 3 (28. Feb. 26); 155, 3 (ca. 26 CE); O.Did. 51, 1 (after? 76-77); possibly 67, 19 (before (?) ca. 125-140); O.Ber. I 4, 3; 20, 2-3; 43, 4; 78, 5; (mid 1st cent. CE). In the texts from Berenike, the provisions are attested in customs passes among other goods that were allowed to pass through the customs station at Berenike, either because their duties had been paid or they were duty-free, since they were provisions to the soldiers, see O.Ber. I intro., pp.8, 21-22 and O.Did. 52, n.l.1. In our letter O.Claud. II 366 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), it is not clear whether the horseman brought the provisions from the Nile valley to the *duplicarius* Annius only or to other people who were with him.

donkey to Octavius in order to bring it, ll.2-6 γεινώσκειν (l. γινώσκειν) σε θέλω ὅτι (l. ὅτι) Ὀκτάειος ὁ ἔππεος (l. ἵππευός) ἦλθεν ἀπὸ Αἰγύπτου ὥραν ια τῆς ἡμέρας τῆι κζ καὶ ἤνεικέν σοι ἐπιμήνεια (l. ἐπιμήνια), ‘I want you to know that Octavius the horseman arrived from Egypt at the 11th hour of the day on the 27<sup>th</sup> and brought to you the monthly provisions’. From this letter, we apparently understand that the horseman was responsible for bringing the provisions from the Nile valley to the Eastern Desert, but he was not responsible for delivering them on to the curator at Mons Claudianus.

### 2.3.2 Horsemen as unofficial carriers

Horsemen did not only serve as official carriers, but also as unofficial, as appears from O.Dios inv. 145 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a letter sent from the *praesidium* of Kompasi to the neighboring *praesidium* of Dios.<sup>75</sup> The letter was obviously written for a private matter (the sending of cabbage), and the letter writer clearly found it a good opportunity to send the cabbage to his colleague by the postrider who was going his way. It seems that the Eastern Desert inhabitants were aware of the postriders’ movements, which presented a good opportunity to send stuff with them since they were the fastest and most trustworthy deliverers, ll.1-9: Αἴλιος (Σ)αραπίων Ψεντουάσι τῷ ἀδελφῷ πλίστα (l. πλείστα) χαίριν (l. χαίρειν). τὸ προσκύνημά σου ποιῶ παρὰ τῆ κυρία Τεχόσι. κόμισαι ἀπὸ τοῦ ἵππῆος (l. ἵπέως) τοῦ προδησποσίτου τοῦ ἀναβάντος σήμερον δέσμην κράμβης· ἀπέσταλκά σοι ἄλλην καὶ ἤτηκα τὸν ἵππῆα (l. ἵπέα) τὸ κέρμα. ἐὰν εὔρω ἀναβαίοντα, πέμψω σοι πάλι, ‘Aelius Sarapion to Psentouasis, his brother, many greetings. I do obeisance for you before the lady Techosis. Receive from the horseman who was dispatched in advance to come today a bundle of cabbage. I sent you another one and I asked the horseman for the money. If I find someone coming up, I will send to you again’. προδησποσίτου is a Latin loan word from *prodisponere* and a hapax.<sup>76</sup> Originally, *equites dispositi* existed in specific regions of the Roman empire for the exchange of letters between army units and high officials and for the transmission of the internal military information between the army camps. These postriders delivered written letters with very highly speed, which helped maintain the quick postal exchange.<sup>77</sup>

It was thought that the horsemen delivered the unofficial post when they are coming back free to their stations, since they were not allowed to do so while they were on official

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<sup>75</sup> Published in Cuvigny (2013) 429-431.

<sup>76</sup> See Cuvigny (2013) 429-430.

<sup>77</sup> See Kolb (2000) 289.

duty, but this seems to be inaccurate.<sup>78</sup> It appears in the postal journal O.Krok. I 1(after (?) 28. March 108), that Eial the postrider was stationed in Krokodilo, which means that if he needed to deliver goods to anybody, he would have done so on his journey back to Krokodilo, but in the private letter, O.Krok. II 200 (ca. 108-109), the sender of the letter who most likely was in Phoinikon, informs the receiver of the letter in Krokodilo, that he received from Eial something lost in the lacuna, 1.5, ἐκομισάμην παρὰ Ἴαλος ..., ‘I received from Eial ...’,<sup>79</sup> which means that Eial delivered something to Phoinikon while he is on his way to Phoinikon on official duty.<sup>80</sup> Actually, one can easily be suspicious of the idea that they delivered goods only on their return journeys, because of the several attestations of horsemen who delivered stuff on their way and the ease with which they could have done so.

In many cases, horsemen delivered letters and other items as it was already known that they were going back to their stations.<sup>81</sup> Surely, they were not always able to do so, but when they had the chance, as appears from O.Did. 368 (possibly before 77-92), the private letter in which the sender apologizes to the addressee that he did not send him bread because the horseman departed too suddenly, ll.4-7 καὶ τῷ προτέρῳ ἵππῃ (l. ἵππεϊ) ἤθελον δοῦναι, ἀλλὰ ἐξάπινα ἀπῆλθε, ‘and I wanted to send it by the first horseman, but he left suddenly’.<sup>82</sup> But in O.Faw. 8 (1<sup>st</sup>- 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the sender of the letter, must be already aware that the horseman Albanus was going in his direction and therefore asked his colleague to send him the stuff with this horseman, specifically. He was sure that the horseman will be able to deliver either the barley or the money. Or he did not trust anybody else except him, therefore he identified him by name, in order that he brings the stuff to him, ll.8-13 εἰ πέπρακες (l. πέπρακας) τὴν κριθήν,/ εἰ δὲ μὴ [δ]ώσεις (l. δώσεις) Ἀλβανῶ ἵνα μοι οἴσι (l. οἴση) ὧδε γ[ὰ]ρ (δραχμῶν) ις ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρτάβη. εἰ δὲ ἤς πεπρακῶς τὴν κριθήν (l. κριθήν) πέμψεις ἔμοι τὸν χαλκὸν διὰ Ἀλβανοῦ τοῦ ἵππέος (l. ἵπέως), ‘if you sold the barley, (that's fine); if not, give it to Albanus so that he brings it to me. For here one artaba is worth 16 drachmas. If you have already sold the barley, send me the money through Albanus the horseman’. There is perhaps a similar case in O.Krok. II 265 (first half of the reign of Hadrian), where the sender asks the receiver to send him stuff

<sup>78</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 562.

<sup>79</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>80</sup> See O.Krok. II 200, n.5.

<sup>81</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 462.

<sup>82</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

with Serenus the horseman, ll.15-17 πέμψ[ο]ν μοι τὸ ὄστρακον τὸ ἔπεμψ[ε] 5-6 ] Σερῆνος [ὁ] ἵππεδς ὅτι... , ‘send me the ostrakon which was sent . . . Serenus the horseman, that ...’.

The fact that horsemen were trustworthy and reliable for such missions could be confirmed by a letter sent from the lady Prokla to Domitius, in which she seems to be pleased that he rendered her the service of sending her the letter with Baton the horseman whom she describes as a trustworthy man, O.Krok. II 222 (98-117), ll.4-9 ἔπεμψάς μοι Βάτονα{ν} τὸν ἵππεά· πεποίηκες τὴν χάριν τελέος (l.τελέως) πέμψαι μοι τὸ γράμμα διὰ πιστοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ‘you sent me Baton the horseman. You finally rendered the service of sending me the letter with a trustworthy man’.<sup>83</sup>

Privately, the horsemen did not only deliver written letters, but in O.Krok. II 189 (98-117), a horseman conveys a verbal message, ll.3-6 μετέλαβον παρὰ τοῦ ἵππέος ὅτι θέλει Διδύμη καταβῆναι εἰς Κόπτον καὶ λέγει ὅτι ἐκδέχεται με, ‘I heard from the horseman that Didyme wants to go down to Koptos and he says that she is waiting for me’.<sup>84</sup> Commodities of reasonable weight were also subject to delivery by horsemen. They are attested carrying bunches of cabbage<sup>85</sup> (O.Dios inv. 145; 2nd cent.); a haversack and three pairs of loaves (O.Did. 339; before (?) ca. 77-92); a tunic (O.Did. 341; before (?) ca. 77-92); three pairs of loaves (O.Did. 368; before (?) ca. 77-92); 16 lettuce and 10 apples and 10 onions and some pennyroyal and a gourd (O.Did. 376; before (?) ca. 110-115); 3 bunches of cabbage and a bunch of greenery (O.Did. 380; before (?) ca. 110-115); x jars of pickled fish (O.Did. 423; before (?) ca. 125 - 140); mulokopion; iron tool (O.Xer. inv. 858; 2nd cent.); 6 loaves (CPL 303 = O.Faw. 1; 1st-2nd cent.); a box, inside of which is a cake and .... tied in a piece of cloth (CPL 304; 1st-2nd cent.); a basket? (CPL 306; 1st-2nd cent.); money or barley (SB VI 9017 Nr. 8; 1st-2nd cent.); 8 slices of fish (SB VI 9017 Nr. 12; 1st-2nd cent.); a basket of grapes (SB XXVIII 17100; 150-175); bunches of vegetables (O.Krok. II 204; 98-117); a bunch of cabbages (O.Krok. II 260;?); 20 drachmas (O.Krok. II 275;?).

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<sup>83</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Krok. II 222 with modification.

<sup>84</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>85</sup> The δέσμη can be of 6-7 kg, see the intro. to O.Trim 1. p.41 and th intro. to O.Trim II 486. For further discussion of the δέσμη, see KAB p.50.



### 2.3.3 Forwarding letters to and from Koptos

It seems that horsemen played a fairly large role in forwarding private correspondence to and from Koptos, as in SB XXVIII 17100 (150-175).<sup>86</sup> It is a letter sent to a recipient in Maximianon that traveled in two phases, first from Koptos to Persou or a station closer to the valley and then to Maximianon. First, it was delivered by camel driver and then by horseman, [Λο]νγεινᾶς (l. Λογγεινᾶς) Διω\σ/κόρω (l. Διοσκόρω) Εἰσιδώρα (l. Ἴσιδώρου) [τ]ῷ ἀδελφῷ πλῖστα (l. πλεῖστα) χαίρειν. αἰκομεισάμην (l. ἔκομισάμην) παρὰ τοῦ καμηλίτου (l. καμηλίτου) αἰπειστολήν (l. ἐπιστολήν) καὶ κοφίνειν (l. κοφίνιον) σταφυλῶν καὶ διάπεμψά (l. διέπεμψα) σοι διὰ Πεταίχνουβις (l. Πετεχνούβιος) ἵππαιός (l. ἵππέως). ἀντίγραψον οὖν ἢ (l. εἰ) ἔκομίσαι (l. ἔκομίσω) καὶ αἰπειστολήν (l. ἐπιστολήν) εἶνα (l. ἵνα) πέμψωμεν εἰς Κόπτον, ‘Longinas to Dioskoros son of Isidoros, his brother, very many greetings. I received from the camel driver a letter and a basket of grapes and sent it on to you through Petechnoubis, the cavalryman. Please write back if you have received it and (send) a letter, in order that we can send it on to Koptos’.<sup>87</sup> Also from Aphrodites Orous, we find a soldier trying to send letters to Koptos by forwarding them with horseman from Didymoi, O.Did. 318 (possibly before 77-92), ll.2-7 ἔπεμψά [σοι ἐπι]στολὰς γ καὶ ἐκ[ομίσω τέσ]σαρες διὰ τοῦ γαλε[αρίου τ]οῦ ἐν Διδύμοις ὄ[στε] [ζ.] ταύτας εἰς ἵππέ[α] ἀναδόσις (l. ἀναδώσεις), ‘I am sending you three letters and you have received four through the *galearius* in Didymoi, total 7. Please give them to a horseman’.<sup>88</sup>

In most cases, horsemen delivered goods to military men, but they also did so to civilians and in private contexts. The civilian recipients could be either women or men, such as the well-known trader, Philokles,<sup>89</sup> and other individuals within his circle.<sup>90</sup>

In contrast to the other carriers, the names of the horsemen are usually given when they are mentioned as carriers in private correspondence; one might think that this is because of

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<sup>86</sup> Published also in Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 414-415.

<sup>87</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 415. This letter proves that forwarding the letters was the best solution to the long distance exchange of post, when there was no direct way available.

<sup>88</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>89</sup> O.Did. 376 (before (?) ca. 110-115); O.Did. 380 (before (?) ca. 110-115).

<sup>90</sup> Women’s correspondence: O.Krok. II 204; 222 (98-117).

their status as soldiers in comparison to other kinds of carriers. Out of around 21 letters they are mentioned by name in 14;<sup>91</sup> in the others they are simply said to be horsemen.<sup>92</sup>

## 2.4 *Monomachoi*

Originally, gladiators in Rome came from four groups or social strata: 1) prisoners of war, 2) slaves, 3) criminals, and 4) volunteers or freedmen who joined this rank because of their desire for the contests and the financial benefit that they could bring.<sup>93</sup> Gladiators were not only men but there were also women.<sup>94</sup> They were privately owned and split up in groups (*familiae*), were exercised by trainers (*lanistae*), and recruited in gladiatorial schools (or *ludi*).<sup>95</sup>

Early on and from the beginning, gladiators were of Roman manufacture, and the gladiatorial games in the Eastern province tended to be imported by the Romans who settled there.<sup>96</sup> A connection between the army and gladiators appears in the Ptolemaic and continues into the Roman period. The gladiators trained military men and they themselves were recruited occasionally into the army during crisis situations.<sup>97</sup> Their reward for this was freedom, which they were promised when they formed supplementary forces. In addition to these duties, they also served as guards, escorted women of high rank during travel, and occasionally were used as bodyguards by the emperors. By the reign of Augustus and during the first century CE, the

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<sup>91</sup> Doras (O.Did. 339; before (?) ca. 77-92); Herennius (O.Did. 376; before (?) ca. 110-115); Saturnilus (O.Did. 423; before (?) ca. 125-140); Lucius (O.Did. 462; 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); Albanus (SB VI 9017 Nr. 8=O.Faw. 8; 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Maximus (SB VI 9017 Nr. 12=O.Faw. 12; 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Petaichnoubis (SB XXVIII 17100; 150-175); Ammonios; Ditouporos (O.Krok. II 204; 98-117); Baton (222?; 98-117); Antonius (259; first half of the reign of Hadrian); Serenus 265? (first half of the reign of Hadrian); Bithas (275); Thaidices (CPL 303= O.Faw. 1; 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Arrianus (304 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>92</sup> O.Dios inv. 145 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 341 (before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Did. 368? (before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Did. 380 (before (?) ca. 110-115); O.Krok. II 260 (?) and possibly O.Ber. II 192 (ca. 50-75); CPL 306 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>93</sup> See Mann (2013) 36-37. Nearly constant warfare during the Republican period resulted in a large number of captives for the Romans. The advantage of these prisoners was that they were already trained in combat and needed less time to prepare for the arena, p.37.

<sup>94</sup> See Crowther (2007) 111-112. Atlanta was a renowned gladiator and sporting girl in Greece. She is mentioned in several texts and portrayed in works of art, such as the Attic black-figure amphora (inv: F1837) from Nola which is in the Staatliche Museen of Berlin, see Crowther (2007) 146-147.

<sup>95</sup> See Kyle (2007) 282.

<sup>96</sup> See Mann (2010) 130.

<sup>97</sup> See Futrell (1997) 150; for further examples of the recruitment of gladiators into the army during times of crises, see n.181. Gladiators wore equipment and received similar training to soldiers, see Kyle (2007) 283.

*familia gladiatoria* became an official institution. It is not clear how they were directed,<sup>98</sup> but there were procurators who generally oversaw them. Moreover, curators of *ludi*, were responsible for the training of gladiators.<sup>99</sup>

Attestations of gladiators in Greek literature are rare unlike in Latin. It used to be believed that among all the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire only Egypt showed a scarcity of gladiatorial references.<sup>100</sup> Inscriptions tend to support the same conclusion, but there is a reference to imperial gladiators of Alexandria and their procurator *Caesaris*, L(ucius) Bovius Celer the procurator of the *ludi famil(iae) glad(iatoriae)* in a Latin inscription, CIL X 1685 (97-110) found in Puteoli, or modern Pozzuoli in Italy. This *ludus* could be the same mentioned in the next century in a document from Hermopolis, P.Lips. I 57 r, which dates to 6 March 260. It contains an oath and appointment of a certain Aurelius Achilleus to collect and deliver garments that were requisitioned for the school of the gladiators in Alexandria, ll.8-12 [ε]ἰς ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ κατασκευὴν καὶ κατακομιδὴν δημοσίω(ν) ἱματίων λούδου μονομάχων, ‘for the oversight, preparation, and convoy of garments for the contests of fighters in single combat’.<sup>101</sup> Also in P.Flor. II 278, v (after 24. Sept. 203), a bilingual Greek-Latin papyrus related to troops of Babylon in Memphis, there are references to the presence of gladiators at the Roman *castrum* or camp there. The texts are fragmentary but they record the acts of the gladiators in the camp alongside military activities. From frags. 6 and 14, it seems that *ludi* and exercises were done by gladiators and military men: *Numer( ) famil( ) glad( ) ludi . . [-ca.?- ]familia ad arma fuit interveniente ludo Nico[-ca.?- ]*, ‘games of a number of *familiae gladiatoriae* ... the *familia* was at arms with the game intervening... by the command of Nico[?]’. Also from frag. 11 it can be said that there was a gladiatorial *ludus* or gladiatorial school, [-ca.?- ] *n ludo[-ca.?- ]*. These gladiators might also have been related to the gladiators of the camp of Alexandria.<sup>102</sup>

Unrelated to the previous examples, the Eastern Desert preserved several attestations of *monomachoi* among the soldiers stationed there. There are around 25 examples of them in

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<sup>98</sup> See Ville (1981) 273 and n.99, 279, 285, 294; Crowther (2007) 111.

<sup>99</sup> See Wiedemann (1992) 170-171.

<sup>100</sup> See Mann (2010) 127, 129.

<sup>101</sup> See Ville (1981) 284, n.136, and Johnson (1959) 632-633 and Jördens (2009) 217 and n.198 for comment on P.Lips. I 57 and a translation to the text.

<sup>102</sup> See P.Flor. II 278, pp.275-276.

ostraca in different kinds of textual material, such as inscriptions, registrations, notes of delivery, and letters.<sup>103</sup>

Half a statue of a *monomachos* is portrayed on steatite (Fig. 1), O.Did. 314 (after 219), showing part of the body of a *monomachos* and half of the face with beard and necklace around the neck. The name of the *monomachos* is inscribed around the statue and partly preserved as [-ca.?-]τιος [μο]νομάχος. *Tituli graeci*<sup>104</sup> and some other texts record names of *monomachoi*, from which it appears that they bore Greek and Latin names: (Greek) O.Did. 24, 1 (before? ca. 220-250) Κύλινδρος; O.Did. 28, 8, 13 (18. May 176-208) Χρυσοπλόκαμος, Ἴνδός; O.Did. 83, 6 (before (?) ca. 176-220) Δράκων; (Latin) O.Did. 177, 1 (before (?) ca. 100-110) Μαρίνος; O.Did. 190?, 1-2 (before (?) ca. 120-125) Ἰουλιανοῦ αμα or (μονο)μά(χου(?)); O.Did. 191?, 1-3 (before (?) ca. 115-120) Ἰουλιανοῦ αμα or (μονο)μά(χου(?)). In addition, there is evidence for a *monomachos* named Εὐκύλιστρος in O.Did. 44, 1-4 (beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); and [Εὐ]κύλισθρος in O.Did. 45, 1-2 (beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.). This name is not attested before and most likely means the person who rolls well (referring to athletic movement probably). It is probably derived from the word κύλισις (the action of rolling in the dust after being anointed with oil).<sup>105</sup>



Figure 1. O.Did. 314 (after? 219), half statue of a *monomachos* and a name inscribed on steatite. Taken from O.Did.

<sup>103</sup> See note 109 below.

<sup>104</sup> See note 109 below.

<sup>105</sup> See the intro. to O.Did. 44-45, p.111, the editor also suggests that this name could be the same as O.Did. 24 (before (?) ca. 220-250), Κύλινδρος. It is probably worth mentioning that gladiators tend to adopt pseudonyms that reflect their power and show them as heroes, see Crowther (2007) 143.

The idiosyncratic names of the *monomachoi* in the Eastern Desert show that they likely were of servile status.<sup>106</sup> They could be members of the *familia Caesaris*.<sup>107</sup> In O.Did. 31 (possibly before ca. 176-220) the sender of the letter asks the receiver to send his *monomachos* four palm-leaves, ll. 1-4 . . . .λα Κομάρω τῷ φιλάτῳ χαίρειν. καλῶς ποιήσεις ὅπως δοῖς (l. δῶς) τῷ ἐμῷ μονομάχῳ βάρια (l. βάρια) δ, ....[], ‘[ ]la to Komaros his dearest, greeting. Please, give to my *monomachos* 4 palm-leaves’. The use of the possessive pronoun could denote a relationship of subordination or master to slave. The sender of the letter is probably curator of a *praesidium* and the *monomachos* mentioned here could be at his service as one of the *familia Caesaris* whom the army or the *praefectus* of the desert subordinated to the curator.<sup>108</sup>

In O.Claud. III 618 (138-160), if the restoration of the word *monomachos* is acceptable at the beginning of the receipt, we find the *monomachos* acknowledging to a certain *oikonomos* or his representative the receipt of a ration of an artaba of some produce for the month of Mesore, ll.1-7 [- ca.12 -]τες μονο[μάχος . . . . .]μενες [. . . . . Κλα]υδιανῷ [- ca.11 - ο]ικονόμου [χαίρειν. ὁμολογῶ ἀπεσκη[κέναι] (l. ἀπεσχη[κέναι]) [παρὰ σοῦ τ]ὴν ἀρτά[βην μου ὑπὲρ Μεσ]ορη, ‘... the *monomachos* ... to Claudianus ... the *oikonomos* ... greetings. I acknowledge receiving from you my artaba for (the month of) Mesore’.

As parallels, two other receipts addressed from persons of the *familia* to the *oikonomoi*, whose appearance generally is rare, concern the receipt of their provision of rations of wheat (O.Claud. III 510; 10 Jan. 144) ll.3-5 ὁμολογῶ προκεχρήσθαι παρὰ σοῦ τ[ὴν] ἀρτάβην μου [τοῦ] σίτου ὑπὲρ μηνὸς Φαμαιν[ωθ] (l. Φαμενωθ), ‘I acknowledge borrowing (or receiving) in advance from you my *artaba* of wheat for the month of Phamenoth’; O.Claud. III 551, 6-8 (25 March 151) ὁμολογῶ ἀπέχιν μου τὸν σίτον μηνὸς Παχων, ‘I acknowledge receiving my wheat

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<sup>106</sup> See Cuvigny (2013) 422.

<sup>107</sup> The *familia Caesaris* were free persons or slaves in the service of the emperor either in Rome or the provinces belonging to the Roman authority. Generally, they were the top in the hierarchy of the freedmen and the slaves of the imperial society. They mostly occupied financial positions in regard of the administration. They appear mostly from the reign of Augustus to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, see Müller (2013) 2624-2625. For more detailed information, see also Müller (2013) 2624-2625. In Eastern Desert, at the quarry of Mons Claudianus, the *familia* mentioned in the texts should be *familia Caesaris* or imperial household, see O.Claud. III, pp.24-26.

<sup>108</sup> See O.Did. intro. p.8. The prefect of the desert was responsible for the administration of quarries. Below him, imperial freedmen as representatives of the *familia Caesaris* were in charge of serving and supplying the quarries with goods. Most likely, these operations were directed by the representatives based in a central office, see Adams (2007) 207.

of the month of Pachon'. Similar to these receipts, it seems that the *artaba* that the *monomachos* received in O.Claud. III 618 is also the provision he was given as one of the *familia*.

However, in the following receipt, O.Claud. III 593 (17. June 153), which shows in reverse order a certain *monomachos* acknowledging to a person belonging to the *familia* the borrowing of something (probably money), only the second party is described as one of the *familia* and apparently not the *monomachos*, ll.1-5 [ . . . ] .ς μονομάχος Διο[ . . . ἐκ] φαμιλίας χάρειν. [ὁμολογῶ προκ]εχρησθῆσθαί μου [ -4-5- ] . . [ . . . ]ν τοῦ ἐ[ν]περχομ[ένου] μην[ός] Ἐπειπ [ἀπὸ] παρὰ σοῦ, '[s *monomachos* to Dio[] from the *familia*, greeting. I acknowledge receiving (or borrowing) in advance ... of the coming month of Epeiph from you'. In a letter sent from a *monomachos* to a *tesserarius*, O.Did. 44 (beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), by the end of the letter he mentions that he sent a *familiaris* to the *tesserarius*. The way he describes him does not suggest that he is a fellow member of the *familia*, but as if the *monomachos* is a person of authority who could send one of the *familiares*, ll.18-19 καὶ ἔπεμψά σοι τὸν φαμελιάρην, 'and I sent you the *familiaris*'. Again in O.Did. 83 (possibly before ca. 176-220), which is probably the label of a container, one *kotyle* of oil is assigned to Drakon the *monomachos*. Could this be from the rations assigned to the *familia*, since the provisions assigned to the *familia* in the Eastern Desert are generally wheat, oil and lentil?

Finally, a list of personnel contains *familiares* and *pagani* from Mons Claudianus, O.Claud. IV 722, 34 (ca. 136-137), and *monomachoi* are mentioned at l.24 μονομά[χοι -ca.-?-]. It is not clear whether they were listed because they are part of the personnel in the camp, particularly the *familia*, and had a specific role in the quarry, or they are mentioned as messengers of something, since the context at the end of the list seems to turn to delivery of something.

#### **2.4.1 *Monomachoi* as carriers of official correspondences and goods**

The previous attestations show the *monomachoi* active in the northern part of the desert, in the quarries areas, and they do not illuminate very much their role as carriers. This role, however, was assigned to the *monomachoi* in the Eastern Desert in the context of the military forts more than in any other area of the Roman Empire. The fact that we do not have similar kinds of textual evidence from elsewhere may obscure similar involvement in other parts of the Empire. Generally speaking, the attestations of the *monomachoi* are not frequent, totalling some 25 instances, either in letters or other kinds of documents. The attestations in letters are even less, around 5, which differentiates them from attestations of other kinds of carriers who

appear mainly in letters.<sup>109</sup> References to the involvement of *monomachoi* in delivery missions take the form of notes or acknowledgments of delivery, whether that of correspondence or goods and other objects. This reflects the fact that they dealt with official correspondence and are not attested performing delivery for ordinary people. The examples mostly date to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, and rarely to the first.<sup>110</sup> Most of the attestations concerned with delivery refer to the performance of carrying correspondence on the roads of Koptos to Myos Hormos and to Berenike. They served as short distance carriers between the neighboring *praesidia* (e.g. O.Krok. I 27; after 5 Oct. 109) in the desert but also from or to Koptos (e.g. O.Did. 28; 18 May 176/208, where the correspondence was sent from Koptos to Phoinikon, and to Didymoi where the ostrakon was found). They are official carriers of delivery, in general, but they were also responsible for performing missions to persons of high rank, such as curators and *tesserarii*. Instances of these tasks have so far been found only in Didymoi and Krokodilo.

#### 2.4.2 Carriers of official correspondence

The *monomachoi* delivered officially various kinds of correspondence, occasionally accompanied by additional items. The importance attached to this correspondence is sometimes reflected in its kind. Besides normal letters or ἐπιστολαί, they delivered sealed letters and *diplomata*. In a note of delivery dated to the third century, O.Did. 23 (after? ca. 220), a certain individual whose name is not recorded acknowledges the receipt of sealed letters from a certain *monomachos*, his name lost in the lacuna. Sealed letters do not appear frequently in the Eastern Desert. The note is dated as most of the official postal records, ll.2-6, 3-4 ιζ Παχων [π]αρέλαβα παρὰ [ . ]λατᾶ . . . μονομάχου ἐπιστολὰς ἐσφραγιζμένας (l. ἐσφραγισμένας) . . . (or ἐν l. μίαν) ἐξ (or ἐξ) αὐτῶν μολύβου (or μολυβοῦ) κ[αὶ(?)] ἐξᾶντι[ς(?) -ca.?- ] ου .[ -ca.?- ], ‘... 17<sup>th</sup> of

<sup>109</sup> Letters: O.Did. 26 (before? ca. 220-250); O.Did. 31 (before? ca. 176 - 220); O.Did. 34 (before? ca. 220-250); O.Did. 44; 45 (beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); notes of delivery and registers of circulations: O.Did. 23 (after? ca. 220); O.Did. 24 (before? ca. 220-250); O.Did. 28 (18. May 176-208); O. Xer. inv. 618 + 1015; 1030; 1241; 46 (161 CE) published in Cuvigny (2019) 67-105; O.Krok. I 27 (after 5. Oct. 109); O.Krok. I 60 (ca. 98-125 (?)); O.Krok. I 63 (ca. 98-138); receipts: O.Claud. III 593 (17. June 153); O.Claud. III 618 (138-160); lists: O.Claud. IV 722 (ca.136-137); also possibly O.Did. 89; label of container?: O.Did. 83 (before? ca. 176-220); tituli graeci: O.Did. 177; 178 (before ca.100-110); 190 (before? ca. 120-125); 191 (before? ca. 115-120); inscription: O.Did. 314 (after? 219). O.Did. 178 represents the only appearance of the word in variant form μο]νομάχη[.

<sup>110</sup> The earliest attestation is CIL X 1685 (97-110); one wonders if it was an innovation of Trajan. Except for this reference to the *monomachoi*, which is not precisely dated and was found outside of Egypt, most of the attestations to the *monomachoi* that date to the first century CE are from the Eastern Desert. This might refer to the fact that the *monomachoi* appeared first in Egypt with the Roman army in the Eastern Desert.

Pachon. I received from [ ]lata the *monomachos* the sealed letters, ... sealed by lead?'. What draws the attention in this text is the mention of the word μόλυβος. It is not clear whether this is a reference to something sealed with lead, since the most common material used for sealing was mud or clay.<sup>111</sup> Lead was only used very few in Egypt during the Roman period to close receptacles or objects sent abroad from Alexandria by the imperial postal services or with the labels of the mummies.<sup>112</sup>

In another note of delivery, O.Did. 24 (before? ca. 220-250), the *monomachos* Kylindros delivered a *diploma* in addition to two loaves of bread, ll.1-2 Κύλινδρος μονομάχος ἐλθὼν μετὰ διπλώματος ἄρτων ζεύγος (1. ζεύγη) β, Φαμενωθ ιζ, 'Kylindros the *monomachos* arrived with a *diploma*; 2 loaves of bread. Phamenoth 17'. This *monomachos* is attested twice. The second occurrence appears in O.Did. 26 (before (?) ca. 220-250), in which he seems to be reporting the delivery of something, but the text is in a fragmentary condition and does not supply useful details, except that it might have been important also for the *monomachoi* to report the delivery of the parcels, as seems to be the case in O.Did. 45 (beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) which is a letter sent from the *monomachos* Eukylistros to the *tesserarius* Sarapion. It is in a fragmentary state and does not provide information except that Eukylistros probably wanted to inform Sarapion of delivery of something.

### 2.4.3 *Monomachoi* as nighttime deliverers

The hour of delivery is not always recorded in all the documents but in the four instances in which the hour of the delivery is recorded,<sup>113</sup> it is very clear that the *monomachoi* were active during the night only. This might be due to the fact that in each case the correspondence was of high importance and needed to be protected, particularly during the night, and therefore these night missions were entrusted to *monomachoi*, since they were

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<sup>111</sup> Cuvigny points out that normally the letters themselves were not sealed, but the packets in which they were carried were, see O.Did. 23 note to line 6. Official letters and *acta* are described in the texts of the Eastern Desert as sealed but what material was used is not mentioned. O.Xer. inv. 618 + 1015, col.3, 37-39 has a reference to bundle sealed by lead, "καὶ [ἔτ]ερον ἀπόδεσμον μολυβῆ ἔσ[φρ]αγισμένον".

<sup>112</sup> See Vandorpe (1995) 65-66 and (1996) 232 and 285 (appendix 1) for second-century lead seals used to close receptacles sent from Alexandria by the imperial postal service to places abroad, such as Rome and Lyon. As for the mummy labels, four were found with lead seals securing cords to the mummies, two of them in Medinet Habu in Thebes (TM Geo 1341) and two at Antinoopolis (TM Geo 2774), see Wilfong (1995) 158, n.5; Parlasca (2012) 358; <https://www.trismegistos.org/seals/index.html>

<sup>113</sup> See O.Did. 28 (18 May 176-208); O.Krok. I 27 (after 5 Oct. 109); O.Xer. inv. 618 + 1015; 1241 (161 CE).



capable of guarding it. O.Did. 28 (18 May 176-208) records details of the circulation of official correspondence between some of the *praesidia*, ll.6-9 ἔπεμψα δὲ ἀπὸ Κόπτου διὰ Χρυσοπλοκάμου μονομάχου ἕως Φοινικῶνος, ‘I sent from Koptos through the *monomachos* Chrysoplokamos to Phoinikon’, ll.12-14 ἔπεμψα τὰς ἐπιστολάς διὰ Ἴνδου μονομάχου ὥρ(α) θ τῆς ν[υκτός], ‘I sent the letters through the *monomachos* Indos at 9 o’clock at night’. This ninth hour of the night equals ca. 2-3 o’clock. In O.Krok. I 27 (after 5 Oct. 109), the context of the register is unclear but the upper part concerns night delivery and the second part concerns delivery during the day. I suppose that the delivery done by the *monomachoi* was at night since they belong to the upper part of the record, ll. 1-2 [ -ca.?- ] . vac. ? μετὰ μονομάχ(ων) . [ -ca.?- ] [ -ca.?- ] ὥρ(α) ια νυκ(τός) vac. ? Πέρσου vac. ? [ -ca.?- ], ‘with *monomachoi* .. at the 11th hour of the night .. Persou’.

#### 2.4.4 Official carriers of goods

The *monomachoi* delivered goods together with correspondence, as observed in O.Did. 24, and sometimes their deliveries contained only goods. So far, these have been almost always bread, as in O.Did. 24 (before (?) ca. 220-250), probably O.Did. 33 (before (?) ca. 220-250), and O.Did. 34 (before (?) ca. 220-250), ll.4-6 πᾶν ποιήσ[ον] διὰ τῶν (l. τῶν) δύο μονομάχων (l. μονομάχων) τῇ νο<υ>μηνία ψωμει (l. ψωμία), ‘please, do everything (to send) through the two *monomachoi* bread at the beginning of the month’. The one exception found thus far and discussed earlier is the letter O.Did. 31 (possibly before ca. 176-220), which mentions the delivery of 4 palm-leaves.

As has been seen from the previous attestations, it is not mentioned whether the *monomachoi* moved on foot or by means of transportation. We have no idea if there was a theater, even a makeshift one, in the Eastern Desert for the *monomachoi* beside the military forts there, since it is already known that amphitheaters were situated sometimes near military camps.<sup>114</sup> We also have no evidence for a gladiatorial school or *ludus* there. Finally, it is also unknown if they were under the command of a separate procurator or were associated with schools of gladiators in the valley Nile area or the delta, e.g. Memphis or Alexandria. Many questions remain unanswered.

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<sup>114</sup> See Mann (2010) 131.

## 2.5 Donkey drivers

When walking was not preferred, donkeys were the favored means of transportation for local travel. Moreover, they frequently delivered various goods and letters to acquaintances or relatives.<sup>115</sup> In the Nile valley area and the Fayum, in the context of farm work, they likely were the most important transport animal and widely used, because of their ability to move through rough terrain and narrow paths in addition to serving as a mount. They have the ability to carry a third of their own body weight, up to 150 kg. In the desert climate, donkeys could work up to 60 hours without watering. C. Adams points out D. Peacock's conclusion that in the Eastern Desert quarries donkeys must have been used for hauling quarry objects, and presumably they were preferred for hauling lighter loads as well, just not the heavy columns.<sup>116</sup> They helped in the progress of work on sites to transport water and tools. In Tiberiane, some officials corresponded with Athenodoros, the *tabularius* in Mons Claudianus, (O.Claud. IV 890; ca. 150-154), apparently asking him to supply them with two donkey-loads of water and to send whetstones (O.Claud. IV 891; ca. 150-154) immediately with the donkeys, since the work was idle.<sup>117</sup> This indicates that the animals were also suitable for urgent transportation between the neighboring *praesidia*. Moreover, they were used not only at the quarries, but also as a means of transportation (O.Krok. I 13; ca. Jan. 109) along the road between Koptos and Myos Hormos. They were part of the caravan going to Myos Hormos (O.Krok. inv. 603) with provisions from the Nile valley.<sup>118</sup> However, we do not understand the outlines of their organization. They seem to have been owned by the military or some other official organ, since they appear in official letters, or *diplomata*, of prefects of the desert and other high officials as carriers of loads and provisions moving on the road to and from Koptos and Myos Hormos, along which they mainly transported chaff and barley. In the *diplomata* of O.Krok. I 41, 35-60 (after (?) 13. July 109) and O.Krok. I 42 (after 04. July 109), they are seen being escorted on their way by horsemen and supplied with water. Also, in the official letter (or *diploma*) O.Krok. I 88 (ca. 118), they are attested traveling along with camels and escorted by horsemen, ll.9-13, ἐξ [ἐγκε]λεύσεως (l. [ἐγκε]λεύσεως) Κασσίου Τα[ύρου] ἐπάρχου ὄρου<ς> ἐξελ (or ἐξεθ) .[ -

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<sup>115</sup> See Adams and Laurence (2001, e-print 2005) 145.

<sup>116</sup> See Adams (2007) 58, 74, 202 and Bagnall (1985, repr. 2003) 5-6. For more about the donkeys in the Arsinoite nome, see Jördens (1995) 49-61.

<sup>117</sup> In O.Claud. IV 877 (ca. 150-154), it was also supposed that they would bring hammers to the quarry, but they did not since they were not informed.

<sup>118</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 401 and (2013) 565.

ca.?- ] δε οἱ <ῖ>ππίς (l. <ῖ>ππεῖς) προσπ. [ -ca.?- ] ὄνων καὶ κα[μ]ήλων [ -ca.?- ]. They might have been guided or guarded by horsemen since they are officially employed.

Most likely, they formed or were part of the caravan passing from Koptos to Myos Hormos. Since in O.Krok. I 13 (ca. Jan. 109) they are mentioned moving together with wagons, ll.1-3 [ -ca.?- ] .λος ἑπαρχος [ -ca.?- κ]ουράτορσι πραισιδίων [ -ca.?- ] διερχομένων ἀμαξῶν καὶ ὄνων, ‘the wagons and the donkeys passing through’ and in an unpublished text from Krokodilo, O.Krok. inv. 603, the sender who planned to go from Persou to Krokodilo intended to do so by the donkeys of the caravan, ἐὰν ἀναβῆ ἡ πορεία ἐλεύσομαι μετὰ τῶν ὄναρίων, ‘and if the caravan comes up, I shall come with the donkeys’.<sup>119</sup>

On the other hand, they also seem to have been privately owned, as appears from O.Claud. II 366 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), mentioned above, in which Teres the curator of Raima asks Annius the *duplicarius* in Mons Claudianus to send a donkey to Octavius to get the provision which arrived from Egypt to him, ll.6-8 λοιπὸν ο<ῦ>ν {λοιπον ον} ἔπεμσά (l. ἔπεμψά) σοι τὸν ταβελαιρεῖν (l. ταβελλάριον) εἶνα πέμσεις (l. πέμψης) ὄνον Ὀκταεῖφ εἶνα σοι πέμ[ση] (l. πέμψη), ‘so I sent you the *tabellarius* in order that you could send a donkey to Octavius, so that he could send (them) to you.’ A. Bülow-Jacobsen concludes that both arrangements existed: donkeys were both privately owned and they belonged to the army. There was probably a price for using them to transport items and goods according to their weight and volume.<sup>120</sup> He also assumes that the donkey drivers joined the πορεία when there was one, in addition to making shorter journeys independently, which allowed them to trade and carry stuff, goods and letters along the roads. But this is somewhat surprising in this military milieu, since movements were limited and seriously controlled.<sup>121</sup>

Both words ὄνος and ὄνηλάτης are attested in the Eastern Desert texts in the context of the carriage of items, but in the letters ὄνηλάτης is mainly used with reference to carriers. In fact, there are 30 attestations recorded in letters thus far. They are second to horsemen in the number of attestations. Most of these date to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, some to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE. The majority of them appear in private letters and rarely in official.<sup>122</sup> All of the attestations

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<sup>119</sup> Partially published in Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 565 and (2003b) 401.

<sup>120</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (1998) 67.

<sup>121</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 565.

<sup>122</sup> Official: O.Claud. II 366 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent. CE); O.Claud. IV 877; 890; 891 (ca. 150-154). Private: O.Claud. II 275 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 276 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 361 (1. March 77); 372 (before (?) ca. 88-96); 391 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 412 (before (?) ca. 140)?; 416 (before (?) ca. 120-150); 428 (after (?) 96); 442 (before (?) ca. 120-125); 444 (before (?) ca. 125-140); 447 (before (?) ca. 140-150); 453 (before (?) ca. 176-210); 461 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); 462 (1<sup>st</sup>

are explicitly for donkeys or donkey drivers, except O.Did. 447 (before (?) ca. 140-150), where the son of a donkey driver is mentioned delivering cabbage, ll.4-7 κώμισαι (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ Σεραπίωνος παιδὸς ὀνηλάτου (l. ὀνηλάτου) τέσμας (l. δέσμας) κράβης (l. κράμβης), ‘receive from Serapion, the son of the donkey driver, bunches of cabbage’.<sup>123</sup> From these attestations, it appears as in the previous official attestations that they moved short distances in the area of the quarries between Tiberiane or Raima and the neighboring quarry of Mons Claudianus. Not surprisingly, we also see them moving between neighboring stations on the roads of Koptos to Myos Hormos and Berenike, from Phoinikon, Aphrodites Orous and Persou to Krokodilo and Didymoi, as well as traveling from the harbor of Philoteris on the Red Sea to Maximianon.<sup>124</sup> They also performed long journeys to the Nile valley, as witnessed in the letter O.Claud. II 275 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), in which Apollinaris asks Sonsnaus to buy him slices of fish to give to Achilles the donkey driver, as he wants to send them to the Nile valley, ll.3-7, καὶ ἀγόρασόν μοι τεμάχια καὶ δὸς Ἀχιλλᾶτι ὀνηλάτῃ ἐπὶ εἰς Αἴγυπτον θέλω (l. θέλω) πέμψε (l. πέμψαι). It is worth mentioning that the letter is sent from Raima to Mons Claudianus, although Raima is nearer to the Nile valley than Mons Claudianus, but probably the donkey driver is going directly to the Nile valley from there. Another, even longer round-trip journey was arranged to be done by a donkey driver, starting probably from Phoinikon and going up to Berenike and presumably back again, O.Did. 361 (1. March 77).<sup>125</sup>

### 2.5.3 The donkey drivers as letters carriers

As letter carriers, donkeys and donkey drivers are attested in the Eastern Desert in only very few texts. Officially, in one of the daybooks from Krokodilo, there is one occurrence of a donkey being used to deliver something at the tenth hour of the day, O.Krok. I 27 (after 5. Oct. 109), l.5 [ -ca.-? - ] . κε ὄρ(α) ι ἡμ(έρας) μετὰ ὄνο(υ) Φοῖνικ( ) . . . . . [ -ca.-? - ]. What exactly was delivered, whether letters or not, is not preserved in the text. But it is most likely a daybook recording delivery of correspondence. It documents the month, the hour, the place of the deliveries, which makes it similar to the daybook of O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108).

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half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); SB XXII 15378 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 15453 (2<sup>nd</sup> century); O.Krok. II 166 (98-117/117-138); 189 (98-117); 221= SB XXVIII 17096 (98-117); 240; 244; 255; 261; 266; 272 (first half of the reign of Hadrian); 312 (98-117).

<sup>123</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O. Did. 447 with modification. For discussion of παιδὸς ὀνηλάτου, see chapter 3.

<sup>124</sup> SB XXII 15453 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>125</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 565.

They also delivered letters in private contexts, but all seem to be used as cover letters for the missions they were conducting, which seems exclusively to have been the delivery of goods or transport of persons. There are around three occurrences in private letters, two found in Didymoi, one in Krokodilo, and perhaps a fourth in Mons Claudianus. In all of these letters they were identified by the common expression ‘the donkey driver who brings this ostrakon’, which was preceded by an order to give or send him something, this also indicating that they made round trips and were going back to their points of departure. In O.Did. 361 (1. March 77) the sender asks the recipient to lend a water skin to the donkey driver who brings the ostrakon to him, until he comes back from Berenike and gives it back, ll.2-6 ἐρωτῶ σε χρῆσαι ἄσκὸν καὶ δὸς Μάρκῳ τῷ ὀνηλάτῃ τῷ κομίζοντί σοι τοῦτο τὸ ὄστρακον, ἄχρι οὗ ἀνακάμψῃ ἀπὸ Βερνίκης (l. Βερενίκης) καὶ ἀπολάβῃς αὐτόν, ‘I ask you to lend a waterskin and give it to Marcus, the donkey driver who brings this ostrakon, until such time as he comes back from Berenike and you will get it back’.<sup>126</sup> In O.Krok. II 221=SB XXVIII 17096 (98-117) the donkey driver who brought the letter was going to transport a person with him back, ll.3-12 ἐμίσθω[σα] Πρ[ό]κλαν εἰς πραισίδιον Μαξιμιανὸν (δραχμῶν) ἕξ σὺν τῇ κουιντανᾷ. διὸ καλῶς ποιήσεις πέμψαι αὐτὴν μετὰ τοῦ [ὀ]νηλάτου τοῦ δώ[σον]τός σ[ο]ι τὸ ὄστ[τ]ράκιον (l. ὄστράκιον), ‘I have (again?) rented Prokla to the *praesidium* Maximianon for 60 drachmas including the quintana. Therefore, please send her with the donkey driver who will give you the ostrakon’.<sup>127</sup> More or less it seems to be the same case in O.Did. 444 (before (?) ca. 125-140), ll.3-7 κόμισαι παρὰ [τοῦ ὀ]νηλάτου μαρσίπ<π>ια τέσσερα κ[ . . ] [. . ] φέροντός σοι [τὸ ὄστ]ρακον, ‘receive from the donkey driver who brings you this ostrakon four baskets’.<sup>128</sup> But in O.Claud. II 276 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the donkey driver is identified as the one who has the tablet(!), ll.4-8 καλῶς ποιήσεις (l. ποιήσεις) λαβὼν τὸ σουβα<λά>ριόν μου παρὰ τοῦ ὀνηλάτου τοῦ τὴν πινακίδαν<sup>129</sup> ἔχοντος καὶ πλῆ/σόν μοι αὐτὸ ὑδάτους, ‘please when you receive my subalare from the donkey driver who is carrying the tablet fill it with water for me.’ Although the expression is unusual, it follows the basic pattern observed in the the previous attestations of referring to the donkey driver who brings the letter to the receiver.

<sup>126</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Did. 361, with modification.

<sup>127</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>128</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Did. 444 with modification.

<sup>129</sup> For πινακίδαν, see O.Claud. II 276, n.7.

#### 2.5.4 Donkey drivers as carriers of goods

In contrast with the delivery of letters, donkey drivers were the perfect choice for delivering items and different foodstuffs, as appears from O.Did. 412 (before (?) ca. 140), where the sender asks the recipient if he has a donkey that could bring a jar of wine with him, ll.7-9 καὶ ἐὰν ἔρχῃ καὶ ὄνον ἔχῃς καὶ δύνη ἡμεῖν (l. ἡμῖν) τῆς τειμῆς (l. τιμῆς) [.] ὕλιστόν ἐνένκαι (l. ἐνεγκεῖν) λαδικηνοῦ (l. λαοδικηνοῦ), καλῶς ποιήσεις (l. ποιήσεις), ‘and if you come, and if you have a donkey, please if you can, bring a jar of a filtered Laodicean wine – you will be reimbursed’.<sup>130</sup> Donkey drivers delivered either light or heavy loads, and they would refuse to transfer a load if it was deemed too heavy for carriage, as appears from O.Did. 416, 2-6 (before (?) ca. 120-150, where the sender informs the recipient that he did not neglect to send the stone plates,<sup>131</sup> but no donkey driver would take them, and he will send them through with the camels, ll. 2-4 μὴ νομίσης ὅτι ἡμέλησα περὶ τῶν πλακίων· οὐδὲς (l. οὐδεὶς) ὀνηλάτης ἠθέλησε αὐτὰ ἔριν (l. αἴρειν). διὰ τῶν καμηλίων πέμσω (l. πέμψω) σοι αὐτά, ‘Do not think that I have been neglectful concerning the plates, but no donkey driver would take them. I shall send them with the camels’.<sup>132</sup> Also, in O.Krok. II 166 (98-117/117-138) Philokles informs his receiver that he intended to send the jar of oil with the donkeys, but they said that the jar is too big, ll.4-7 πολλὰ παρεκάλεσον τὸς (l. τοὺς) ὀνηλάτας ὅπως ἄρωσιν τὸ ἔλεν (l. ἔλαιον) καὶ λέγουσιν ὅτι “τὸ ἀνγῆν (l. ἀγγεῖον) μέγα ἐστίν”, ‘I entreated the donkey drivers many times to take the oil and they say ‘the jar is (too) big’.<sup>133</sup>

Donkey drivers transferred different commodities, such as vegetables (O.Did. 453 (before (?) ca. 176-210); O.Krok. II 166? (98-117/117-138); 255; 266; 272 (first half of the reign of Hadrian), and in particular cabbage, O.Did. 391 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 428? (after (?) 96); 447 (before (?) ca. 140-150); 461 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 189? (98-117);

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<sup>130</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. The Laodicean wine is frequently attested in the Berenike texts. Likely it is a kind of wine measured in *ladikena keramia* and imported from Laodicea ad Mare in Syria. According to Strabo (16.2.9), Laodicea was a prolific producer of wine and exported the majority of it to Alexandria. As the editors of O.Ber. I point out (pp. 16-18), archeology has produced little evidence for it at Alexandria, but in the Eastern Desert, jars (the Dressel 2-4) have been found in Mons Claudinaus (frequently), Mons Porphyrites, Myos Hormos, Berenike and other locations that seem to correspond to *ladikena keramia*; see the intro. to O.Ber. I, pp. 16-18 and Tomber (1998) 213-214, 216.

<sup>131</sup> *πλάκια* could be stone plates used e.g. for paving floors, so they are too heavy for a donkey, see Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 566.

<sup>132</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>133</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Krok. 166, with modification.

244 (first half of the reign of Hadrian), fruits (dates: O.Claud. II 276; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), fish (τεμάχια or slices of fish: O.Claud. II 275; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), oil (O.Krok. II 261; first half of the reign of Hadrian, 312; 98-117) and jars filled with liquids (a jar of filtered Laodicean wine: O.Did. 412?; before (?) ca. 140, of fish sauce: SB XXII 15453; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), money (O.Did. 462; 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent., O.Krok. II 221; 98-117), water skins (O.Did. 361; 1. March 77), baskets and sacks (O.Did. 444; before (?) ca. 125-140, SB XXII 15378; 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) sometimes along with other heavy loads like furniture (table: O.Did. 442; before (?) ca. 120-125) and grain (artaba of grain, table bedstead and mat: O.Did. 372; before (?) ca. 88-96).

However, if the donkey driver was not familiar and known, he would not be entrusted to deliver something. In O.Krok. II 240 (first half of the reign of Hadrian) the sender of the letter informs the recipient that he did not send him the money since he does not know the donkey driver, ll.2-7 ἐ[κομισάμην] τὸν χοῦν τοῦ ἐλέου (l.ἐλαίου) καὶ εὐθέως [ἔδωκα] αὐτῷ (l.αὐτὸν) Πρόκλος (l. Πρόκλω)· οὐκ ἔπεμψά σοι χ[αλκὸν ὅτι] οὐκ ὕτα (l. οἶδα) τὸν ὠνηλάτην (l. ὠνηλάτην)· ἐπὶ (l. ἐπεὶ) ἤτηκ[ας] (δρ.) θ (τετρώβολον) εὐθέως ἐὰν εὔρω τινὰ πιστὸν ἐκ[ώ] (l. ἐγώ) σοι πέμψω τὴν τιμὴν, ‘I received the chous of the oil and immediately gave it to Proklos. I did not send you the money because I did not know the donkey driver, for you asked for 9 drachmas and 4 obols; as soon as I find trustworthy one I will send you the payment’.

Moreover, donkey drivers were used for the transfer of people and people used them to move through the desert to perform basic tasks. For example,<sup>134</sup> in O.Ber. II 195 (ca. 50-75) the sender asks the addressee to come by night if his she-donkey became better so that he could get the transport money, ll.8-11 ἢ (l. εἰ) οὖν κομψῶς ἔσχε σου ἡ ὄνος [ὕ]πὸ νύκτα εἴσελθε, ἵνα κατ[α]βῆς φόρετρον λαβῖν (l. λαβεῖν), ‘If your she-donkey has got better, come by night, so that you may go down to get the transport money’.<sup>135</sup> The donkey caravan also appears to have been known as a way to move in the desert from station to another, probably offering a measure of security the travelers. As seen in O.Did. 462 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), the caravan was one of the choices to Lucius, the soldier, ll.9-13, ἐὰν μέλλῃ ἀ[ναβῆν]αι Λούκις ὁ συστρα[τιώτης] ἐκ τοῦ πραισιδίου(ν) μου [ἢ τε με]τὰ ὄνων ἢ τε με[τὰ προ]βολῆς, ‘if Lucius, a fellow soldier of my *praesidium*, is about to come down here, whether with the donkeys or with the horse patrol’.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>134</sup> See also O.Did. 400 (before (?) ca. 120-125); O.Krok. I 97 (ca. 117-125), II 207 (98-117) for similar tasks in private letters.

<sup>135</sup> Trans. Bagnall et al.

<sup>136</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

From the previous attestations, it may sound as if donkey drivers do not tend to be named on letters and in fact very few are known by names. These names are either Greek: Achillas (O.Claud. II 275; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Ammonios, donkey owner? (O.Did. 412; before (?) ca. 140); Serapion, the son of the donkey driver (O.Did. 447; before (?) ca. 140-150). Also in the receipt O.Did. 62 (end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.-1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), the donkey driver holds a Greek name, Ζώσιμος. Additionally, there are occasional Latin names: Marcus, the donkey driver (O.Did. 361; 1. March 77); Titus, the donkey driver (O.Did. 372; before (?) ca. 88-96); Claudius, the donkey driver (O.Did. 428; after (?) 96); while in O.Did. 461, 5 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) the donkey driver's name is lost in the lacuna.

It is also clear that either civilians or military men used donkey drivers, either officially or privately. Of civilians we know about the well-known trader Philokles and other people from his circle.<sup>137</sup> Philokles used them in his trade; he sent vegetables and bunches of cabbages occasionally (O.Did. 391; before (?) ca. 110-115, O.Krok. II 166?; 98-117/117-138) to his correspondents by donkey drivers.

## 2.6 Camel drivers

Very widespread use of camels in Egypt began in the Roman period.<sup>138</sup> They commonly were employed for desert travel and gradually came to be used extensively in the desert, but were very slowly integrated into the economic life of the Nile valley.<sup>139</sup> They could not adapt easily in this highly irrigated environment, where short and local trips could be done by donkeys.<sup>140</sup> But as R.S. Bagnall notes, they were supreme in the cross-desert trade, including that from the Memphite Nome to the Arsinoite, for the long-distances. In the Arsinoite nome, C. Adams pointed out that they were preferred in the desert fringes (Soknopaïou Nesos and Dionysias) but they were not regularly used for transport and even their role in the transfer of grain was very minor.<sup>141</sup>

In the Eastern Desert, and unlike their role in the Nile valley, they notably occupied an integral part of the local transport system. They were used in the caravans from the city of

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<sup>137</sup> See e.g. O.Krok. II 166 (98-138) and 189 (98-117).

<sup>138</sup> For more detailed information about camels, their origin, types and uses, see Bulliet (1975); Nachtergaele (1989) 287-336.

<sup>139</sup> Adams and Laurence (2001, e-print 2005) 45. For more about the camel owners, breeding, and the trade of camels in the Arsinoite nome, see Jördens (1995) 62-79.

<sup>140</sup> Adams (2007) 50.

<sup>141</sup> Bagnall (1985, repr. 2003) 6 and Adams (2007) 56.



Koptos to the Red Sea and for fast transfer as postal camels.<sup>142</sup> There were commercial caravans, such as that of Nikanor, which must have consisted of camels and military caravans that provided various provisions to the stations. From O.Did. 53 (before (?) ca. 76-92) it is also known that the camel drivers had a secretary, γραμματεὺς τῶν καμηλιτῶν,<sup>143</sup> which might refer to the existence of a guild of camel drivers, but there is no other evidence to confirm that.

In the northern part of the desert (Mons Claudianus and Umm Balad), in Didymoi and in the area of Berenike, camel drivers are quite often attested. They were clearly organized in units, called *dekaniai*, being led by *dekanoi* and were mainly employed to transport water and occasionally some loads. From their names, it appears that they are mostly Egyptians. In the area of Berenike, they bore Latin and Greek names, but Egyptian names have a strong representation, too.<sup>144</sup> What is interesting is that 4 or 5 of the persons appearing in the texts of Berenike are identified in the texts of O.Did, which suggests that the *dekaniai* were in the area for an extended period.<sup>145</sup> In the water receipts of Berenike, 24 *dekanoi* and dozens of camel drivers are recognized, including a woman.<sup>146</sup>

At Mons Claudianus and the *praesidia* on the road between Koptos and Myos Hormos, the camels and the camel drivers helped officially in the progress of the work at the quarries. They delivered various items and provisions<sup>147</sup> and distributed water loads. They seem to have been the best means for water distribution as appears from the several missions made or

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<sup>142</sup> Köpp (2013) 5 and Adams (2007) 52.

<sup>143</sup> Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 564.

<sup>144</sup> See the intro. in O.Did. p.59, 68 and the intro. to O.Ber. III, p.10. See also the list of the *dekaniai* in O.Ber. III, pp.24-29. *Dekanoi* seem to have secretary, too, O.Did. 1 (before (?) ca. 77-92) 1 Ψενόσιρις γραμματεὺς(?) δεκανίης(?) (or δεκανός(?)) [ -ca.-? ]. For an example where a *dekanos* was involved in transferring loads, see O.Claud. IV 884 (ca.150-154).

<sup>145</sup> See the intro. to O.Ber. III, p.24.

<sup>146</sup> See Ast (2018) 3, 23, 25. The *dekanoi* and camel drivers were discussed by Ast in 2016 at a symposium at the Collège de France; the talk is available online at: <https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/en-jean-pierre-brun/symposium-2016-03-31-16h15.htm> (accessed 27 May 2018). For examples of the water receipts see e.g. O.Ber. III 274-453.

<sup>147</sup> O.Claud. IV 866, 6-7 (beg. -mid. 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. (?)) καὶ λέγει εἰληφέ[ναι τὸ]ν ζῦτον τὸν καμηλείτην, ‘and he says that the camel driver has taken the beer’ trans. Bülow-Jacobsen; O.Krok. I 86, 4-7 (ca. 98-138) συντρέψεις (l. συστρέψεις) μετὰ τῶν καμήλων εἰς Φοινικῶνα καὶ παραλήμψη κιβάρια, ‘return with the camels to Phoinikon and receive the provisions’, ll.10-11 κόμεισε (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ τοῦ καμηλίτου ζευκτηρίας τέσσαρες (l. τέσσαρας), ‘receive from the camel driver 4 yoke-straps’.

entrusted to them.<sup>148</sup> To Mons Claudianus they also transferred various tools and materials as illustrated from a group of orders from Mons Claudianus, in most of them the items were iron tools.<sup>149</sup>

Camel drivers also performed carriage service in private contexts over short distances between the neighboring stations both for heavy<sup>150</sup> and lighter objects.<sup>151</sup> What is not very clear is if the camel drivers did these services separately, or privately in particular when the carrier is identified as a camel driver in the letter, or as part of the caravans. In some cases it seems likely, that they delivered objects privately when they are moving with the caravan, such as O.Claud. II 248 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) in which Petenophotes in Tiberiane tells his brother Valerius to receive from Maronas the camel driver a bundle of bags. Most likely the caravan coming from the Nile valley passed by Tiberiane after arriving at Mons Claudianus, and returned back from there. Therefore, Petenophotes might have sent the stuff with one of the caravan's camel drivers, particularly when we find again in another letter Petenophotes asking Valerius to send him 4 large jars with the camels when they leave; most likely the caravan is meant there.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, in three letters sent from Norbanus in Raima to Taurinus in Mons Claudianus, he twice informs Taurinus, (O.Claud. II 268-269; ca. 140), to receive items from the camel drivers and in the third letter (267; ca. 140) he acknowledges receipt of stuff from the camel driver. Raima is also on the caravan's way to Mons Claudianus. This does not mean that the camel drivers always belonged to the caravan, since there must have been camels with drivers left

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<sup>148</sup> E.g. O.Claud. IV 787, 2-5 (ca. 98-117) δὸς τοῖς εἰ[ . . ] . . . γου σκληρουργ(οῖς) ἀνδ(ράσιν) οἱ κα[μ]ήλους τρεῖς, 'give to the stone-masons in ..., 78 men, three camels (of water)', trans. Bülow-Jacobsen; SB XVIII 13336, 7-11 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) σπου[δ]αίως δὲ (l. δὴ) τοὺς καμηλίτας μοι πέμσον (l. πέμψον) τῆς ὑδροφορίας, 'send me without delay the camel drivers for the water carrying'; O.Claud. II 362, 5-8 (sent from Raima; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ἔπεμψα κα[μ]ήλους κ[υ]ριακοὺς εἰς Ἄκανθα [ἵνα ἀ]νεγκώσω ἡμεῖν (l. ἡμῖν) [ὔδωρ καὶ] μὴ κολαζώμεθα, 'I sent the imperial camels to Akantha (or Akanthion) so that they bring to us water and we do not suffer'; SB XXVIII 17098, 3-8 (117-138) *camellos (l. camelos) quattuor misi at (l. ad) te. tu cura ut quam primum aquae onerentur et oneratos expelle eos ut hora frugda (l. frigida) per noctem revertantur. eosdem camellos (l. camelos) iube adaquentur et r[eve(?)]niant*, 'I send you four camels. Take care that they are charged with water as soon as possible and when they are charged, send them on their way so that they come back in the cold hours of the night. Also command that the said camels be given water and come back', trans. Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 406 with modification.

<sup>149</sup> E.g. O.Claud. I 27-34 (ca. 113-117).

<sup>150</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 243 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 416 (before (?) ca. 120-150).

<sup>151</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 248 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>152</sup> See the argument of Bülow-Jacobsen in (2013) 564 concerning the camels in caravans.

around Mons Claudianus for the performance of transport tasks at the quarries and for other necessities.

Circulating these letters to and from Mons Claudians elucidate that the traffic and connection to Mons Claudianus were quite available and thus the postal service. What is also notable about these communications is that when the matter is related to the caravan, there is little precision in the timeline of the caravan's travel, and no precise information is given about the arrival time of the caravan, as in O.Krok. II 189 (98-117) where Monatus mentions his intention to go to the Nile valley from Persou together with the piglets that he has if the camels come up, ll.7-9 ἐὰν τὰ καμήλι<α> ἀναβῆ, εὐθέως καταβαίνω μεθ' ὧν ἔχω χαιριδίωγ (l. χαιριδίωγ), 'if the camels come up I shall come down with them straight away along with piglets I have'.<sup>153</sup> This may refer that the inhabitants of the desert, were not aware of the precise timeline of the caravan.

Two types of camels are attested in the Eastern Desert texts, the κάμηλος (the freight camel) and δρομάς (the dromedary or trotting camel). Both served for carriage and transportation, but the latter is rarely attested. It is found so far in three texts from Krokodilo, K450; SB XXVIII 17090 (27. March - 25. Apr. 116); O.Krok. I 47 (after (?) 11. Oct. 109), being performed by either the δρομάδες or the δρομαδάριοι.<sup>154</sup>

### 2.6.1 The camel drivers as letter carriers

Attestations of camels (κάμηλοι) or camel drivers (καμηλάται) in connection with delivery are more frequent. There are around 23 attestations so far in the letters of the Eastern Desert, either in official or unofficial letters, in which their role differs from cases involving the transport of persons, transfer of goods and the delivery of letters. This number puts them second to the donkey drivers in number of attestations. These letters date mainly to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE,<sup>155</sup> and most of them come from the context of the quarries at Mons Claudianus.

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<sup>153</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. Camel caravans attested on the road between Koptos and Myos Hormos escorted by horsemen, see e.g. O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108), l.9, ἡ ὁμοίως β κλ(ῆρος) [- ca.7 - κατ]αστήσαι τὰς καμήλ(ους) Εἰαλ, Αἴ[στις.], (day) 18, 2nd tour .... to escort the camels, Eial and Aestivius. These camel caravans are also attested in official letters (or *diplomata*), see O.Krok. I 88, 13 (ca. 118); O.Krok. I 47, 44 (after (?) 11. Oct. 109).

<sup>154</sup> Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 52 and (2003b) 406.

<sup>155</sup> Official letters: O.Claud. IV 787? (ca. 98-117); 866? (beg. -mid. 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. (?)); O.Krok. I 86 (ca. 98-138); Unofficial letters: O.Claud. I 140 (ca. 110); O.Claud. I 142 (ca. 109-110); O.Claud. I 162 (ca. 100-120); O.Claud. II 224; 243; 248 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 267; 268; 269 (ca. 140); 274; 300 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 152; O.Krok. II 189

There are also letters from the *praesidia* of the roads from Koptos to the Red Sea and some from the port of Berenike. From this it appears that camel drivers were used by both the military men<sup>156</sup> and civilians, such as the trader Philokles and people from his circle.<sup>157</sup>

Rarely, in fact only in two private letters so far, they are attested as letter carriers. In O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92) the sender of the letter informs the receiver that he sent him a letter with the camel drivers who came with provisions, ll.7-10 ἐὺθέως ἔγραψα καὶ ἔπεμψά σοι ἀντιφώνησιν διὰ τῶν καμηλιτῶν τῶν μετὰ τῶν κιβαρίων ἀναβεβηκότων, ‘I wrote at once and sent you a reply through the camel-drivers who have come up with provisions’.<sup>158</sup> This is likely the caravan which brought provisions to the stations from Koptos and now it is on its way back, because ἀναβαίνω consistently refers to the movement from the Nile into the desert.<sup>159</sup> A similar situation is documented along the road between Koptos and Myos Hormos, in SB XXVIII 17100 (150-175); Longinus, who is closer to the valley at Persou, informs Dioskoros at Maximianon that he received from the camel driver a letter and a basket of grapes.

In the private letter O.Claud. I 142 (ca. 109-110), there is a reference to post camels, ll.6-8 προσδέχομαι τοὺς καμήλους ἀγγαρίους ἕως ἐξέλθωσιν, ‘I am waiting for the post-camel until they come out...’.<sup>160</sup> Whether this is a reference to official postal camels is not certain. The reading of ἀγγαρίους is not secure, and the combination of the καμήλους ἀγγαρίους is nowhere attested before. Still, this could be a reference to the imperial postal system in the Eastern Desert,<sup>161</sup> however, this is highly speculated. Beside this, there is a reference to imperial camels mentioned in O.Claud. II 362, 9-10 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) [ἔπεμψά σοι καμήλους

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(98-117); O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Did. 416 (before (?) ca. 120-150); O.Ber. II 189 (ca. 50-75); O.Ber. III 474 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); SB XVIII 13336?; 13337 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent. CE); SB XXVIII 17100 (150-175).

<sup>156</sup> E.g. O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92).

<sup>157</sup> E.g. O.Claud. II 243; 248 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 189 (98-117).

<sup>158</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>159</sup> For the translation and the comment, see Bülow-Jacobsen O.Did. 343 and n.9-10. The letter was supposed to be sent to Numerius at Phoinikon, but it was not, since it has been found in Didymoi.

<sup>160</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>161</sup> For the translation and commentary, see O.Claud. I 142. In a Latin document, O.Claud. II 304 (ca.150), there are attestations of angl(=)angaria, where the editor links it to ἀγγαρεία which is often presented as the equivalent in Greek of the *cursus publicus*, see the intro. to chapter VI in O.Claud. II, pp.148-151. In another fragmentary letter from Mons Claudianus, which belongs to the correspondence of Dioskoros, O.Claud. II 235 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), there is reference to the ἀγγαρεία, ll.18-20 τας ἐνγα[ρείας] (l. ἀγγα[ρείας]) [ ποι]οῦμεν τα [ -ca.-? ]υσαται ἴνα. Also in the unpublished text inv. 7298: ἐξερχόμενοι εἰς ἐνγαρίαν εἰς πραισίδιον Ῥαιμα, see O.Claud. II 235, note to l.18.

κυρια[κούς], ‘I sent you the imperial camels’, but the text is fragmentary, which prevents effective conclusions.

### 2.6.2 Camel drivers as carriers of goods

It is well recognized that when the loads were very heavy, the tendency was to send them with camels, which most likely traveled mainly in caravans. This finds the most direct confirmation in O.Did. 416 (before (?) ca. 120-150), in which the donkey drivers are said to have refused to deliver heavy stone plates, and the sender therefore sent them with the camels. Similarly, in O.Claud. II 243 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) Petenephtes in Tiberiane asked his brother in Mons Claudianus to send him 4 *taskou* when the camels leave; these jars are large and heavy.<sup>162</sup> As for attestations of camel drivers as goods carriers, most of the loads were in containers of different kinds, such as 4 pots of some no longer extant commodity (χύτρας: O.Claud. I 140; ca. 110); a triple jar (τρεικέ[ραμο]ν: O.Claud. II 224; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); a bundle of 4 bags and a label inscribed "to Dioskoros" (μαρ<σ>ίππια: O.Claud. II 248; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); a basket of meat and one liver (σφυρίδιν: O.Claud. I 162; ca. 100-120); a basket of grapes (κοφίνιον; SB XXVIII 17100; 150-175). They also delivered *matia* of cereals and loaves (2 *matia* of lentils: O.Claud. II 269; ca. 140, 2 *matia* of wheat and probably slices of fish: O.Claud. II 274; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent., 3 *matia* of bread: SB XVIII 13337; 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). On the other hand, they were subjected to delivering minor things of minimal weight, such as two slices of fish (O.Claud. II 267; ca. 140); camel-meat, four bunches of beets (O.Krok. II 152; 98-117); bunch of [...] (O.Ber. II 189; ca. 50-75); cabbage, twenty bundles? (O.Ber. III 474; 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); 6 obols (O.Claud. II 300; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and 20 sticks (O.Claud. II 268; ca. 140).

In the Eastern Desert letters, references to transport by camels normally involves camel drivers, but in O.Ber. III 474 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.) the sender informs the recipient that he sent him twenty bundles of cabbage through Herakles, the camel-keeper of Valerius, ll.2-6 ἔπεμψά σοι τὰ λάχανα διὰ Ἡρακλ[ή]ου καμηλοβοσκού Οὐαλερίου δέσματος εἴκοσι καμηλοβοσκός is not attested elsewhere in the papyri except in another unpublished ostrakon from Maximianon dating probably to the reign of Domitian, O.Xer. inv. 665.<sup>163</sup> Valerius is presumably a soldier and apparently the owner of camels, of which Herakles was the keeper (if he had a camel keeper in his employ).

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<sup>162</sup> The *taskou* is a jar likely used for wine, and larger than the κεράμιον in size, see O.Claud. II 243, note to l.8.

<sup>163</sup> See O.Ber. III 474, n.4.

Lastly, camel drivers attested in letter as carriers of items were occasionally mentioned by name. In most cases, they carried Greek names: Artemidoros (O.Claud. II 224; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Maronas (O.Claud. II 248; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Serapion (O.Claud. II 268; ca. 140, O.Claud. II 274?; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Apollos (SB XVIII 13337; 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and Herakles, the camel keeper of Valerius (O.Ber. III 474; 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.) and occasionally Egyptian names Psenosiris, (O.Claud. II 300; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Chennamis (O.Claud. I 162; ca. 100-120).

## 2.7 Wagons and wagoners

The wagons and the wagoners have appeared in a number of the Eastern Desert texts, the majority of them being letters concerning the transportation of goods either in official or unofficial contexts. Wagons played a fairly large role in land transportation in the Eastern Desert, unlike in the Nile valley area, where land transportation was secondary and long-distance transportation relied mainly on the Nile River and the use of boats.<sup>164</sup> It was not a dominant role perhaps because of the high cost of wagon construction and the shortage of timber in Egypt, but on the other hand it was the preferred method because of the terrain of the Eastern Desert, in addition to the need for using wagons for transporting heavy loads over a long distance.<sup>165</sup>

Wagons appear in around 20 letters from Umm Balad, Mons Claudianus, Krokodilo, Persou, and Maximianon. All of them date to the Roman period.<sup>166</sup> The majority of the

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<sup>164</sup> Bagnall (1985, repr. 2003) 5.

<sup>165</sup> Adams (2007) 65, 69. For further discussion of the use of wagons in Egypt, see Adams (2007) 65-69, where he shows that the attestations of wagons spread from the early Ptolemaic period to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The majority come from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and are mainly from the Thebaid and Fayum.

<sup>166</sup> The wagoner, ὁ ἀμαξηλάτης or ἀμαξεύς, (official letters): O.Krok. I 41, col.2, 22 (Krokodilo; after? 13. July 109). (unofficial letters) O.Claud. I 177, 3 (Mons Claudianus; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 276, 6 (Krokodilo; first half of the reign of Hadrian); O.Krok. II 277, 3 (Krokodilo; first half of the reign of Hadrian); O.Faw. 9=SB VI 9017 Nr.9, 5 also the wagons in ll.4-5 (Maximianon; I-II cent.); O.Krok. II 315, 13 (Krokodilo; 98-117). Latin Letters: CPL 303=O.Faw. 1, 6 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

The wagon, ἡ ἄμαξα, (official letters): O.Krok. I 13, 3 (copies of official correspondence; Krokodilo; ca. Jan. 109); O.Krok. I 47, col.2, 44 (after (?) 11. Oct. 10); O.Claud. II 362, 3 (Mons Claudianus; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. IV 871, 5,10 (Mons Claudianus; 138-161); 880, 6; 884, 6 (Mons Claudianus; ca. 150-154); P.Worp. 50, 10 (Umm Balad; end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. - beg. of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Faw. 17=SB VI 9017 Nr.17 (Maximianon; I-II cent.). Latin letters: SB XXVIII 17099, 3 (Maximianon; end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.-early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). (unofficial letters): O.Krok. II 168, 13 (Krokodilo; 98-117/117-138); O.Krok. II 216, 10-11 (Krokodilo; 98-117); O.Krok. II 254, 4 (Krokodilo; first half of the reign of Hadrian); Inv. K93 in Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 409. Other kinds of texts mentioned the

attestations point out that they have been moving mainly in two directions: along the road of Koptos to Myos Hormos and in the northern part of the desert to Mons Claudianus and Umm Balad.<sup>167</sup> They were mostly used for heavy loads and for transportation over long distances between the Nile valley and the Eastern Desert.

Officially, they appear in the scope of the quarry work at Mons Claudianus and are attested in the letters concerned with transporting materials and other loads.<sup>168</sup> They also transported people and large numbers of the *familia* coming to Mons Claudianus from the Nile valley area.<sup>169</sup> In Umm Balad (Kaine Latomia or Domitian), wagons were used for transporting quarry tools, as well (P.Worp. 50; end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. - beg. of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent). Along the road from Koptos to Myos Hormos, wagons served to bring wood for ship-building at Myos Hormos and to serve the quarry needs at Wadi Hammamat.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, they were used for the transportation of water, as attested in letters from Maximianon, SB XXVIII 17099 (end 1<sup>st</sup> cent.-early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), and Mons Claudianus, O.Claud. II 362, 3-6 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) [γιγνώσκειν] σε θέλω ὅτι τῆς ἀμάξης [ἐλθούσης ἐ]πάνω μου καὶ κολάζε[ται (?) -ca.-?] ὕδατος ἔπεμψα κα[μήλους κ]υριακοὺς εἰς Ἄκανθα, ‘I want you to know that when my wagon was going ... and is hindered ... of water, I sent the imperial camels to Akantha (or Akanthion)’.

The kind and number of wagons employed are in most instances not specified, but in the letter in which the wagon was used for transporting 39 men of the *familia* from the Nile valley to Mons Claudianus, the wagon used is said to have twelve wheels (O.Claud. IV 871; 138-161).<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, one could imagine that this kind of wagon was used by the

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wagons: Postal register: O.Krok. I 1, 41 (Krokodilo; after (?) 28. March 108); Accounts: O.Claud. IV 697, 3 (Mons Claudianus; ca. 98-117); O.Claud. IV 698, 12 (Mons Claudianus; ca. 98-117); O.Claud. IV 699, 11 (Mons Claudianus; ca. 98-117 (?)); Lists: O.Claud. IV 756, 3 (Mons Claudianus; ca. 138-161); O.Petr. Mus. 434, 2-6 (Unknown; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. CE), the abbreviation could stand also for wagoner.

<sup>167</sup> See also Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 557 where he refers to the lack of the wagons on the road to Berenike.

<sup>168</sup> O.Claud. IV 880, 6; 884, 6 (Mons Claudianus; ca. 150-154), these two letters belong to the official correspondences of Sokrates the *ergodotes* or foreman and Athenodoros the *tabularius*, and are concerned with quarry work. They are sent from Tiberiane to Mons Claudianus; see also the account of O.Claud. IV 756, 2-4 (ca. 138-161) in which the wagons mentioned with loadings, ἀπογόμεσις τῆς ἐν τῇ ἀμάξει ἐπιχρείας καὶ ἐμβολῆ πλακ(ῶν), ‘unloading of the tackle in the wagon and loading of plates’, Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>169</sup> O.Claud. IV 871 (138-161).

<sup>170</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 408-9, where he also suggests that the wagons in O.Faw. 9 (I-II cent.), which were perhaps coming from the Nile valley, were providing supplies and serving the quarries of Wadi Hammamat.

<sup>171</sup> The most common term used for the ‘wagon’ in the Eastern Desert is ἡ ἄμαξα, but there are different kinds of wagons used there, such as the two- and four-wheel wagons. They are also used both for heavy loads such as

administration for big loads and in service of the quarries. But on the other hand there must have been other kinds of wagons used for smaller loads and for unofficial purposes.<sup>172</sup>

### 2.7.1 Carriers of unofficial items

While performing their intended duties, wagons were apparently used also to carry items and correspondence for individuals. They are attested delivering large volumes of foodstuff and other items in large numbers, in most cases along the road from Koptos to Myos Hormos.<sup>173</sup> Generally, they served to bring provisions from the direction of the Nile valley. It certainly gave them the opportunity to transport large quantities of supplies, as seen in a letter sent from Koptos or probably Phoinikon, O.Krok. II 216 (98-117), in which the sender informs the recipient that he can send him through the wagons what he needs, ll. 6-11: ὅν τινος χρίαν (l. χρείαν) ἔχητε, ἢ φακοῦ ἢ ἐλαίου, πέμπετε ὡς παρὰ ἀδελφὸν ἀ<ὐ>τῶν, καὶ {α} ἐμοὶ μελήσει δι' ἀ<μ>αξῶν πέμπιν ἡμῖν (l. πέμπειν ὑμῖν), 'if you need anything, either lentils or oil, send for them as you would to a brother, and I shall take care to send it to you through the wagons'.<sup>174</sup>

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stones and for smaller loads. They are identified by different terms: the adjective τετράτροχος and δρομικός, cf. O.Claud. IV 874, 4-8 (ca.138-161) φορὰς δρομικῶν δύο καὶ τετρατρόχου μιᾶς ἰσερχ[ομέ]νων (l. εἰσερχ[ομέ]νων) ἰς (l. εἰς) Κλαυ[διανὸν] εὖ ποιήσεις (l. ποιήσεις) φρον[τίσα]ς, 'please take care of the shipments of the two two-wheel carts and the one four-wheel cart that are coming to Mons Claudianus', O.Claud. IV 896, 4-5 (ca. 150-154) γράφεις (l. γράφεις) μοι περὶ γόμου δρομικῆς εἰ ἓν, 'write to me about the load (of stone) for a two-wheel cart, whether there is one'; O.Claud. IV 758, 2-5 (ca. 138-161) ἀσκοφορία καὶ κάθαρσις τοῦ στύλου καὶ ὀπισθεν τοῦ πραισιδίου τετρατροχ( ) , 'carrying of water-skins and cleaning of the column and behind the *praesidium* plates (into) the four-wheel wagon by the loading-ramp'. Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Claud. IV 874, 896, 758.

<sup>172</sup> As appears from the edict of Hadrian, the state transporter did not have to pay transit charges, but the private transporters do, see Adams (2007) 68.

<sup>173</sup> O.Faw. 1= CPL 303, 6-7 (1st-2nd cent.) *item · per Draconem · amaxitem (l. hamaxitem) · panes · XV · \ε\ε\ γασυ(m)/*, 'also by Drakon, the wagoner, fifteen loaves and a vase'; O.Krok. II 254, 3-4 (first half of the reign of Hadrian; sent from Persou to Krokodilo) ἢ (l. εἶ) τι ἔλαβες π[αρὰ] [τῶν ἀμα]ξῶν (l. ἀμα]ξῶν) γράφον [μοι], 'if you received something from the wagons, write to me'; O.Krok. II 276-277 (two letters sent from the same sender Priscus to the same receiver Maximus), 276, 5-11 (first half of the reign of Hadrian) ἐκομισάμην παρὰ τοῦ ἀμαξηλάτου λ̄ξ ζ̄..... (probably ζεύγην) ἄρτων (l. ἄρτων) καὶ μάτιν (l. μάτιον) \παρὰ τρίτον μέρος/ ἐρεγμὸν (l. ἐρεγμοῦ) καὶ ἡμιμάτιν (l. ἡμιμάτιον) σκόρτα (l. σκόρδου) καὶ λουπάτιν (l. λαπάθου) καὶ τῆλιν (l. τήλεως), 'I received from the wagoner 35 (or 15?) pairs of loaves and a *mation* of broken beans, less than a third share, a half-*mation* of garlic, lupine and fenugreek', trans. Bélangère Redon O.Krok. II 276; 277, 2-5 (first half of the reign of Hadrian) ἐκομ[ισά]μην παρὰ τοῦ ἀμαξηλά[του] ι ζεύγην ἄρτου (l. ἄρτων) καὶ ἡμι[άτιον] ἐρεγμοῦ, 'I received from the wagoner 10 pairs of bread and a half-*mation* of broken beans'.

<sup>174</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.



Bread and oil are frequently recorded among the supplies brought by the wagoners and wagons. One can imagine that these constituted routine shipments from the Nile valley.<sup>175</sup>

In some cases, the wagoner was well known to the persons dealing with him. In a letter sent from Maximianon to Persou, O.Faw. 9 (I-II cent.), we find oil being transported by a wagoner who is well known to the sender and the receiver of the letter. The sender writes the carrier's name, his alias, and the father's name, although it is not common in the Eastern Desert letters to have the carrier's full name. Moreover, he knows him since he has dealt with him before, ll.4-9 ἐὰν ἀναβῶσιν αἱ ἄμαξαι, ἐρίς (l. ἐρεῖς) Ψεντφοῦτι ἀμαξηλάτη λεγομενος (l. λεγομένῳ) Σαμης (l. Σαμη) υἱος (l. υἱῶ) Σάμου (l. Σαμου) χραοβ δι' οὗ σοι ἀπέστιλα (l. ἀπέστ<ε>ίλα) τὰ ἀστίλια τοῖς ἐμοῖς λόγοις ἵνα σοι ἀνεύγκη ἔλαιον ὅπως μοι ἀποστίλης (l. ἀποστ<ε>ίλης), 'if the wagons come up from the valley, tell the wagoner Psentphous called Sames son of Sames Chraob(?), through whom I sent you the spear-shafts from me that he must bring oil so that you can send it to me'.<sup>176</sup>

It seems that these wagons or wagoners were part of a group or caravan of wagons that came from the Nile valley for official matters,<sup>177</sup> as suggested also by the previous letter (O.Faw. 9; I-II cent.) in which the sender points out, again, that the wagons did not pass through for a long time, ll.12-14 ἐπὶ γὰρ πολυς (l. πολὺν) χρόνος (l. χρόνον) οὐ διεβήσαν τὰ ὧδε.

## 2.7.2 Carriers of unofficial correspondence

Just as they delivered goods to individuals along the way, the wagoners also carried unofficial correspondence, although there survives only one piece of evidence for this so far, a letter that likely served as a cover letter (O.Claud. I 177, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).<sup>178</sup> In it, Lukas, who was in

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<sup>175</sup> For the oil cf. also O.Faw. 9, 4-9 (I-II cent.); O.Krok. II 276, 5-7 (first half of the reign of Hadrian). For the bread cf. O.Krok. II 277, 2-4 (first half of the reign of Hadrian); O.Krok. II 315, 11-15 (98-117); O.Faw. 1, 6-7 (1st-2nd cent.).

<sup>176</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 408.

<sup>177</sup> In the official postal register of Krokodilo (O.Krok. I 1; after (?) 28. March 108), there is another reference to wagons moving to Persou mostly accompanied by two horsemen, l.41 β καὶ γ· ἰς (l. εἰς) Πέρσ[ο]υ τὰ[ς] ἄμαξας Εἰαλ, [Αἴστις], for which the editor suggests that καταστήσαι has to be implied, '2nd and 3rd tours to Persou to escort the wagons: Eial, Aestiv(i)us'.

<sup>178</sup> In my opinion, in the letter of Umm Balad, P.Worp. 50, (end 1<sup>st</sup> cent. - beg. 2<sup>nd</sup> cent; sent from Sokrates the architect to Hieronymos, the person responsible for the logistics, see the intro. to P.Worp. 50), the real sense behind the sentence, ll.8-10 [ποιήσεις πέμ]ψας μοι τοῦ[ς] δέκα δακτυλίους [- ca.4 -] ξ̄ (or [- ca.4 -]ξ) ἐμὸν (l. ἐμοῖ) γὰρ ἠνέ[κ]χθη δι' ἐπιστολῆς(ῆς) Ρούφου Φαουστίνου σὺν σανδάλ(οις) διὰ τῆς ἀμάξης, 'Please then, send me the ten rings, for ? has been brought to me through a letter of Rufus Faustinus along with runners by wagon' is that

the Nile valley or at a closer station, sent to Herianus at Mons Claudianus a blanket, chiton and pallium together likely with the present ostrakon letter by the wagoner Kol, ll.2-5, κόμισαι παρὰ Κωλ τὸν ἀμαξέα τὴν λώδικαν (l. λώδικα) καὶ [κ( )] \κί/θωνιν (l. χιτώνιον) καὶ πάλλιν (l. πάλλιον), ‘receive from the wagoner Kol the blanket and a chiton and pallium’. Clearly, the receiver is a military man, ll.6-8 ἀπόδος ἰς (l. εἰς) Κλαυδιανὸν Οὐαλερίῳ Ἑριανῶ ἱππῆι (l. ἱππεῖ) τύρμης Ἰουλιανοῦ, ‘delivered to Valerius Herianus, cavalryman in the turma of Iulianus, at Claudianus’.<sup>179</sup>

The kind of animals that drew the wagons are also not mentioned in the texts, but in O.Krok. I 13 (ca. Jan. 109), wagons and donkeys are mentioned together, which could mean at least that the wagons here are not drawn by donkeys, but by different kind of animals,<sup>180</sup> 1.3 [-ca.?- ] διερχομένων ἀμαξῶν καὶ ὄνων, ‘the wagons and donkeys coming through’.<sup>181</sup>

As for the names of the wagoners, their names are usually not mentioned, but the few that we do get tend to be Egyptian (Κωλ: O.Claud. I 177; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent., Psentphous called Sames son of Sames Chraob?: SB VI 9017= O.Faw. 9; I-II cent.), although the latter’s alias and grandfather’s names are of unknown origin. They bore Greek names, too (Drakon: O.Faw. 1= CPL 303; I-II cent.).

## 2.8 The *tabellarius* (tabletman)

During the late Republican period, three types of *tabellarii* (*tabella* being the Latin term for a small writing tablet or board) have been identified: private *tabellarii*, who were known to be either freedmen or slaves and employed to deliver private correspondence for a fee; *tabellarii publicanorum*, who conveyed letters and various documents for companies of *publicani*; and *tabellarii publici*, who transferred official correspondence for the state. In the Roman period, only the *tabellarii publici* remained,<sup>182</sup> since evidence refers only to them. They belonged to the *cursus publicus* and were now known as *Augusti* or *Caesaris tabellarii* or *tabellarii diplomarii*.<sup>183</sup> While the role of the *cursus publicus* was mainly to transfer official

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what is lost in the lacuna was sent with the runners by the wagon; what is meant by δι’ ἐπιστολῶν(ης) Ρούφου Φαουστίνου, is that the stuff which is lost in the lacuna was sent by order of Rufus Faustinus.

<sup>179</sup> Trans. Rubinstein.

<sup>180</sup> See O.Claud. IV Appendix 3, where Bülow-Jacobsen contends that camels drew large wagons with big loads.

<sup>181</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 409.

<sup>182</sup> I thank Andrea Jördens for pointing out to me that the imperial *tabellarii publici* appear also to remain during the imperial period.

<sup>183</sup> See Blumell (2014) 52, n.89; Kolb (2000) 275; Holmberg (1933) 35-52.

correspondence of the military and to support administrative communication of authorities at Rome, private correspondence was likely conducted by the private *tabellarii* and, during the Imperial period, they were employed to convey important correspondence of companies and important private citizens.<sup>184</sup> Friends also shared this service occasionally to reduce the expenses.<sup>185</sup> Moreover, the magistrates in Rome used them for normal and unimportant correspondence. We know that Cicero used them to transfer correspondence. As for the speed of the *tabellarii*, a private one could cover a distance of around 37-47 miles per day. But people had to send their parcels whenever there was an available messenger, since couriers were not always available and delays were always expected.<sup>186</sup>

The *tabellarii* were mainly slaves rather than freed-men and remained so during the period of their service, from the age of 20 to 40. During the imperial period, they were part of the sub-clerical workers in the *familia Caesaris*, and chances of promotion to higher and more advanced clerical grades were limited.<sup>187</sup> In the papyri and ostraca, attestations of the *tabellarii* of the first couple centuries are mainly connected with military correspondence. The reason behind this could be that *tabellarii* frequently worked in a military milieu.<sup>188</sup>

In Egypt, from the Nile valley area, there are rare attestations to the *tabellarii* in documents date to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE.<sup>189</sup> They are accounts and lists, which do not record the movements and destinations of the *tabellarii*.

The Eastern Desert texts provide the best references to the activities of the *tabellarii*. Could this also relate to the fact that they appeared and came to Egypt firstly in the Eastern Desert with the Roman army just like the *monomachoi*, where they were employed for transferring duties and escorting officials? They are more frequent and all date to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE.<sup>190</sup> They come second to camel drivers in number of attestations. Generally, they

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<sup>184</sup> See Wilcox (2012) 18.

<sup>185</sup> See White (1986) 215.

<sup>186</sup> See Van Dongen (2014) 102-103 and n.17; Rankov (2006) 129; Cicero, Att. I.13.1 and V.15.3.

<sup>187</sup> See Llewelyn (1995) 344; Kolb (2000) 275-276; Schroff (1932) 1845, Van Dongen (2014) 102; Meyers (2013) 6498.

<sup>188</sup> Blumell (2014) 52 and n.89.

<sup>189</sup> BGU 13 2355 (Unknown; 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); P.Cair. Preis. (2) 11 (Bakchias; 163-164 (?)).

<sup>190</sup> O.Claud. I 76, 4 (98-117); O.Claud. I 145, 9 (ca 100-120); O.Claud. I 157, 6 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. I 161, 8 (ca 100-120); O.Claud. I 170, 6-7 (ca 100-120); O.Claud. I 176, 4 (98-117); O.Claud. II 250, 6 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 282, 7 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 287, 6-7 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 290, 3 (ca 140); O.Claud. II 408, 4 (first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 53, 6 (before (?) ca. 76-92). Official letters: O.Claud. II 357, 5 (late 2<sup>nd</sup>

are attested around eighteen times, but only ten attestations expose *tabellarii* as carriers and they all occur in letters. They have been employed for these missions either in official or private contexts, and are documented as carriers of both letters and goods. Three or probably four attestations in official letters reflect extra duty of the *tabellarii* in the Eastern Desert and show them as guides accompanying and helping soldiers to arrive at their destinations to Kaine or to the Nile valley area.<sup>191</sup> They also guided travelers, caravans and accompanied workers to their destination.<sup>192</sup> All the attestations of the *tabellarii* are written on ostraca found in Mons Claudianus except one ostrakon from Didymoi, O.Did. 53 (before (?) ca. 76-92), which is an order from the secretary of the camel driver to the curator of Didymoi to give an artaba of something lost to a *tabellarius*, ll.4-5 δὸς Πετεμίνι ταβέλλα[ -4-5- ]υ (ἀρτάβην) α || -3-4- ||, ‘give to Peteminis the carrier ... artaba’. All the other texts are letters except O.Claud. I 76 (98-117), which is an order to let a *tabellarius* pass. All the texts are written in Greek except O.Claud. II 367 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). As has been discussed earlier, *tabellarii* in the Eastern Desert belonged to the layer of the *familia Caesaria*.<sup>193</sup>

### 2.8.1 *Tabellarii* as carriers of letters and goods

In two official letters sent from Raima to Mons Claudianus, each likely addressed from the same sender to the same recipient, *tabellarii* are employed to deliver the respective letter among other things. In the first letter (O.Claud. II 366, 2-8; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), discussed above, a certain *tabellarius* could be the carrier of the letter, which is addressed from Teres the curator of Raima to Annus, the *duplicarius*. In the second letter, O.Claud. II 367 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the same curator informs Annus Rogatus, who is probably same *duplicarius*, that he sent to him through a *tabellarius* a key, ll.4-6 *misi tibi per tabellarium st[ -ca.?- ] ut clavem . . [ -ca.?- ]*, ‘I sent you by *tabellarius* ... a key’.

The attestations of the *tabellarii* as carriers in private contexts are more common than in official contexts, and in the cases when they carried letters they also delivered other things to the recipients. In O.Claud. I 145 (ca 100-120) the sender of the letter asks the receiver to pay

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cent.); O.Claud. II 358, 8 (138-161); O.Claud. II 363, 5 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 366, 7 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 367, 4-5 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 380, 3 (138-161).

<sup>191</sup> O.Claud. II 357 (late 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 358 (138-161); O.Claud. II 363 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 359? (98-117). O.Claud. II 287-288 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) might also show a *tabellarius* accompanying a stonemason, who is being sent to Mons Claudianus to dress a millstone.

<sup>192</sup> Hirt (2010) 156-157.

<sup>193</sup> See O.Claud. III, p.30.

the price of the meat to the *tabellarius* who brings the ostrakon to him, ll.7-11 γράψον μοι καὶ δώσεις τὴν τιμὴν (l. τιμὴν) τῷ ταβελλαρίῳ τῷ κομίζοντί σοι τὸ ὄστρακον, ‘write to me and pay the price to the *tabellarius* who brings you the ostrakon’.<sup>194</sup> Another *tabellarius* might have been the carrier of the letter and money sent to Tryphon in O.Claud. I 161 (ca 100-120). In these two letters the *tabellarii* made the journeys between Mons Claudianus and the Nile valley. Petenephotos in Tiberiane asks his brother Valerius in Mons Claudianus to receive from Heraiscus two letters tied together in order to send them to Egypt if he finds a *tabellarius* who can do it, O.Claud. II 250, 3-6 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) κόμισσον (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ Ἡραΐσκο[υ] ἐπιστόλια δύο [ . . ] δεῦ[ε]να ἵνα, ἐὰν εὔρη[ς τινὰ] ταβελ<λάρ>ιον εἰς Ἔγυ[πτον].

These *tabellarii* seem always to be responsible for the accomplishment of the entire procedure of delivery between the two parties, and they made multiple rounds in order to accomplish the mission, as if they were subject to one of the parties (either the sender or receiver) and were under his command to finish what he demanded. In O.Claud. II 290 (ca. 140), the *tabellarius* who was sent to Heron the sender of the letter should go back to Hareotes the recipient with a response, which is the current letter, about the matter of the money and oil; then he should come back to Heron immediately with a letter from Hareotes in response, probably also accompanied by the oil that he needs, ll.3-7 ἐγὼ τῷ ταβελλαρίῳ στατήρα οὐκ ἔδωκα, ἀλλ’ ἔγραψά σοι δι’ αὐτοῦ λαβόντι παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἄκερμα/ ἀγοράσαι κοτύλην ἐλαίου καὶ ἔδει σέ μοι εὐθέως γράψαι δι’ αὐτοῦ ἵν’ αὐτὸν ἀπαιτήσω, ‘I did not give the stater to the *tabellarius*, but I wrote to you through him that once you had taken the money from him you should buy a *kotyle* of oil; you should write to me immediately through him so that I can request it (the oil)’.

Except for in the previous letter all the other goods the *tabellarii* delivered are of light weight; they were mostly money: O.Claud. I 145 (ca 100-120) the price (money?); O.Claud. I 161 (ca 100-120) 4 drachmas; O.Claud. I 170 (ca 100-120) money?; sometimes single tools: O.Claud. II 408 (first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) medicine, a knife and a scalpel; and vegetables: O.Claud. II 282 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent) bundles of vegetables. One reason for this might be because they moved on foot. Furthermore, the distance they covered was often not very great, for example between Tiberiane,<sup>195</sup> Raima<sup>196</sup> and Mons Claudianus, and could have been crossed on foot. For longer journeys, as seen in O.Claud. I 145 (ca 100-120), where the sender is

<sup>194</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>195</sup> O.Claud. II 250 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent).

<sup>196</sup> O.Claud. II 366-367; 282? (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

supposed to be resident in the Nile valley and trading in the Eastern Desert, the *tabellarius* used some sort of transportation, probably a horse, to move between the Nile valley and the quarries. The long journeys to the Nile valley are frequent, as in O.Claud. I 161 (ca 100-120); O.Claud. II 250 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent) and probably O.Claud. II 408 (first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

The *tabellarii* conveyed correspondence and goods between both soldiers, e.g. O.Claud. II 290 (ca 140), and civilians, such as Petenephtes and his brother (O.Claud. II 250; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and Serenus the trader and Casianus (O.Claud. I 145; ca 100-120). In only one letter, O.Claud. II 408 (first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), is the *tabellarius* named, ll. 3-4 δέξε (l. δέξα) παρὰ Οὔεσπασιανοῦ τοῦ ταβελαρίου (l. ταβελλαρίου), ‘receive from Vespasianus the *tabellarius*’. This Latin cognomen is quite rare, being attested to a few senators and the emperor.<sup>197</sup>

## 2.9 The *kibariator* and *kibariates*

The *kibariates/ kibariator*, or quartermaster is one of the officials who appears delivering items in private contexts to people in the desert. He belongs to the *familia* in the Eastern Desert.<sup>198</sup> In the group of the military receipts of Pselkis the *kibariator* was responsible for the administration of provisions; he issued receipts for grain, oil, lentil, wine, salt and vinegar.<sup>199</sup> In Mons Claudianus, this official was responsible for the same and, furthermore, he administered the provisions and wages of the workers and the salaries of the soldiers.<sup>200</sup> The receipts that were issued were generally for wheat, oil, and lentils. The *kibariates* was also the representative to whom the *entolae* of the *pagani* had to be addressed. The *entolae* are orders or instructions concerning the *pagani* workers’ wages and provisions. They had to be addressed every month from each *paganus*-worker to the quartermaster, the *kibariates*. The *pagani* were the local free skilled workers who came most likely from Syene, Alexandria and Thebes.<sup>201</sup>

The attestations of the official in the letters are relatively few. He appears in around 11 letters, most of them from the Eastern Desert (8 letters),<sup>202</sup> and three from other regions of

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<sup>197</sup> See O.Claud. II 408 n.3-4.

<sup>198</sup> See O.Claud. III, p.30.

<sup>199</sup> See Fink (1971) 311, no.78.

<sup>200</sup> See the intro. in O.Claud. III, p.59 and Mitthof (2001) 312.

<sup>201</sup> See Cuvigny (1996) 139-140 and (2018b) 197-198.

<sup>202</sup> As *kibariator* in O.Florida 16, 6; and perhaps 19, 3 (Maximianon; mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); as *kibariates* in O.Claud. I 155, 3 (Mons Claudianus; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 156, 3 (Mons Claudianus; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); II 365, 4 (Mons Claudianus; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 382, 11 (Mons Claudianus; 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Ber. III 350, 5 (Berenike; 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); SB

Egypt.<sup>203</sup> The title appears in two variant spellings κιβαριάτης and κιβαριάτωρ. The former is the most common form and occurs in Mons Claudianus in a large number of receipts for advances on pay of the *familia* that were addressed to κιβαριάτης. The latter was the common form used in a group of ostraca receipts from Pselkis, Nubia. Generally, all the attestations come either from the Eastern Desert or the upper region of Egypt, and one from Karanis.<sup>204</sup>

P.Worp. 52 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) from Karanis shows the *kibariates principalis* in the position of deliverer of provisions. It is a letter addressed from Crispus to Niger about the purchase of a pig for a festival and the delivery of *kibaria* or provisions by the *principalis* or the *kibariates principalis*, ll.7-9 ἵνα ἐὰν ἀναβῆ τὰ κιβάρια, ἐμβάληται αὐτὸ ὁ πριγκιπάλις (l. πριγκιπάλιος) καὶ ἐνέγκῃ, ‘in order that, if the provisions come up, the *principalis* may put it on board and carry (it)’, and ll.11-13 καὶ δώσομεν τῷ κιβαριάτῃ πριγκιπαρίῳι (l. πριγκιπαλίῳι) καὶ οἴσῃ αὐτό, ‘and we will give it to the *kibariates principalis* and he will carry it’.<sup>205</sup> The editor of the letter suggests that the context is military. This is possible since the names of the sender and the recipient are both Latin and familiar in a military milieu. What draws one’s attention is the combination of the *kibariates* and *principalis*. Does this combination show that the official is certainly military?<sup>206</sup> Rom.Mil.Rec. 78, no. 23 (26. July 175 or 207) shows an *optio* distributing wine as exactly the *kibariator* does; therefore, Fink concluded that the title *kibariator* is probably given to anyone who performed this duty and it is not a permanent rank or specific post. The appearance of the title *kibariates* and *principalis* together seems to be the first of its kind. *Principalis* which means officer is a military rank. They are the principal soldiers who have obtained privileges. The title has appeared in P.Mich. VIII 465, 16 (108 CE) where the military man Gaius Iulius Apollinarius referred to himself as a *principalis* when he was

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XXIV 16060= SB XX 14899=O.Baharia 20, published also in Cuvigny (1997b) 114-117 (Mons Claudianus; 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), it is one of the *entolae* written in form of a letter, and addressed to two *kibariates* together.

<sup>203</sup> As *kibariator* in P.Athen. 64, 13 (unknown place; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); as *kibariates* in P.Sijp. 9 d, 3 (Thebes; 2<sup>nd</sup> century); P.Worp. 52, 12 (Karanis; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>204</sup> See the table below. The receipts of Mons Claudianus are combined in the O.Claud. III. The receipts of Pselkis are e.g. in Fink (1971) 310-313 no. 78= O.Wilck. 1129, also a Pselkis wine receipts addressed to the *kibariator*, published in La'da and Rubinstein (1996) 135-155.

<sup>205</sup> Trans. Verhoogt.

<sup>206</sup> See O.Florida, p.18 and n.35 and Fink (1971) 311 and n.46, Gilliam (1953) 145, where they argue that the title could be given to military and civilian men. Also Mitthof (2001) 312, discusses that he could be civilian or trader authorized by the state to transfer the provision.

promoted and transferred to Bostra, in Arabia.<sup>207</sup> For these reasons, P.Worp. 52 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) could belong to a military context and the mentioned *kibariates principalis* could be a military man.

### 2.9.1 *kibariator* or *kibariates* as carriers of correspondence and other items

In addition to being overseers of provisions and salaries, in the Eastern Desert at least, the *kibariator* or *kibariates* acted as private carriers of both goods and documents. These activities seem to have been limited to closed circles. For example, in O.Claud. I 156 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a private letter from Mons Claudianus, the sender Antigonus informs Marion the receiver that he sent him a document through Calpurnius, the *kibariates*, whom he also called their co-citizen, which may signal a close relationship or close social bond between them, ll.2-5 ἔπεμψά σοι διὰ Κ[α]λ[α]ρπουννίου (l. Καρπουννίου) τοῦ συμπολείτου (l. συμπολίτου) ἡμῶν τοῦ κιβαριάτου τὸ χειρόγραφον Ῥουτίλιου (l. Ῥο<υ>τιλίου), ‘I sent you through Calpurnius? our co-citizen, the *kibariates*, the contract (cheirograph) of Rutilius’.<sup>208</sup> Here, the *kibariates* delivers the document from the valley to Mons Claudianus, since Antigonus was supposed to be in the valley, ll.5-6 ἐρωτῶ σε, ἄδελφε, ὡς ἠρώτησά σε εἰς Ἔγυπτον (l. Αἴγυπτον), ‘I ask you, brother, as I asked you (when you were) in Egypt’.<sup>209</sup> It seems that the *kibariates* would combine distributing provisions brought from the Nile valley with the delivery of unrelated items to close individuals. This is also seen in O.Claud. I 155 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which was sent from Kampe to Mons Claudianus, in which Ammonius informs Apollonius (also identified as a συμπολίτης) that Harpaesios the *kibariates* told him he got a letter from his wife, who is apparently in the Nile valley. Most likely, the *kibariates* had been in Egypt and knew about the letter; he might be the person who delivers it, too.

In O.Florida 16 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a letter found at Maximianon that appears to have been exchanged between military men,<sup>210</sup> the *kibariator* serves as a carrier of wool, but it is not clear from where the letter was sent. This is the only letter in which the name of the *kibariator* is not mentioned, ll. 5-7 πέμψω σοι διὰ τοῦ κιβαριάτορος τὸ ἐρίδιον (l. ἐρίδιον), ‘I

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<sup>207</sup> See Claytor and Feucht, ArchID 116 (2013) 5 and P.Mich. VIII 465, n.16.

<sup>208</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Claud. I 156 with modification.

<sup>209</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>210</sup> Since the sender whose name is Latin informs the recipient whose name is Egyptian that he sent to him stuff through a horseman, κομίσει παρὰ Ἀμμωνιανοῦ ἱππῆξ (l. ἱππέως) τὸ πορφύριν ὄλκῆς, ‘get from the Ammonianus the cavalryman the purple’, trans. Bagnall.



will send you through the *kibariator* the bit of wool’.<sup>211</sup> The last example is O.Ber. III 350 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.) which is a letter exchanged between two persons whose names are not preserved since the top of the letter is missing. The sender informs the addressee that they asked the *kibariates* Petosiris to take the jar, ll.4-7 ἠρώ[τ]ήκαμεν τὸν κιβαριάτην Πητοσίριν ἵν’ ἄρῃ τὸ κεράμιον, ‘we asked the *kibariates* Petosiris to take the jar’.<sup>212</sup> However, the verb αἶρω is not the verb commonly used in the letters of the Eastern Desert to refer to delivery. The verb αἶρω could give the sense of carrying, bringing or conveying of stuff,<sup>213</sup> also in P.Worp.52 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) we encounter a similar case, where φέρω is used to refer to delivery.

We can see from the previous letters, that the name of the *kibariates/kibariator* has been mentioned in all the letters except O.Florida 16 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). In two of these the names are Egyptian (Petosiris, Harpaesios) and in only one it is Latin (Calpurnius), but generally the context of the letters in which they are mentioned reflects a military environment. The manner in which these officials traveled is not mentioned in the texts, but in O.Florida 14 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) the sender of the letter, Maximus,<sup>214</sup> who was likely in Maximianon, tells the recipient Tinarsieges, who was possibly in Karanis, that he can come to her in the boat carrying the provisions, which presumably refers to transportation on the Nile,<sup>215</sup> ll.6-7 καὶ γράψης μοι εἶνα (l. ἵνα) εἰσέλθω ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ τῶν κιβαρίων, ‘and write to me so that I would come in the provisions-boat’.<sup>216</sup> It would be impossible to go from the Nile to Maximianon by boat, of course. If we imagine that the provisions were really large (and thus needed transport by boat instead of by donkey, for instance), then it would be natural for the quartermasters to accompany them to the stations in the desert in camel-led caravans.

The geographical division of the *kibariator* and *kibariates* in all extant documents (Table 3):

<i>Kibariates</i>	
Berenike	O.Ber. III 350 (2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.)

<sup>211</sup> Trans. Bagnall O.Florida 16 with modification.

<sup>212</sup> Trans. Ast.

<sup>213</sup> LSJ, s.v.

<sup>214</sup> For discussion of whether this person is a woman or a man, see Thomas (1978) 142-144; Bagnall and Criboire (2006) 167-168.

<sup>215</sup> See Mitthof (2001) 326.

<sup>216</sup> Trans. Bagnall.

Mons Claudianus	O.Claud. I 3-5 (31. Oct. 110); 6 (ca. 110-111); O.Claud. I 155-156 (2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 244 (mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.), 365 (2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.); 382 (2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. III 417= SB VI 9457 (28. Oct. - 26. Nov.? 136); 418-421 (27. Dec. 136 - 25. Jan.? 137); 422 (136-137); 423 (136-138); 424 (before (?) 28. Oct. - 26. Nov. 136-137?); 425 (ca. 28. Sept. - 27. Oct. 136-137?); 426 (before (?) 25. July - 23. Aug. 137?); 427-431 (137?); 433 (137-138); 434 (before (?) 26. May - 24. June 137-138?); 436 (137 (?)); 437 (136-138); 438 (after (?) 27. Nov. - 26. Dec. 137-138?); 439-448 (28. Sept. - 27. Oct.? 137); 450 (28. Sept. - 27. Oct.? 137); 451 (28. Oct. - 27. Nov.? 137); 452 (28. Oct. - 26. Nov.? 137); 453 (ca. 137); 455 (138 - Nov. 139 (?)); 470 (28. Nov. - 27. Dec. 139); 474 (ca. 140); 486-487 (ca. 141-142); 489 (25. Febr. - 26. March 141?); 490 (141 (?)); 491 (27. Nov. - 26. Dec. 141-142?); 492-493 (1. Jan. 141); 497 (ca.142-145); 518 (ca. 142-143); 519 (ca. 145); 520 (14. Jan. 145); 521 (19. March 145); 522 (14. Aug. 145); 523 (144-145); 524 (145); 526 (27. Dec. 144 - 25. Jan.? 145); 527 (5. Febr. 146); 530 (15. May 145-146); 531 (144-146); 533 (145); 534 (144-145); 535 (ca. 144-146); 539 (5. Dec. 147); 558 (137-138); 562 (136-138); 570 (25. July - 28. Aug.? 139); 572 (2. Jan. 140); 577 (27. Dec. 142 - 25. Jan.? 143); 601? (ca. 142-143); 602 (ca. 143); O.Claud. IV 700 (ca. 98-117); 709-710; 712 (ca. 98-117); 722 (ca. 136-137); SB XXIV 16060 (1 <sup>st</sup> half of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.)
Thebes	P.Sijp. 9 d (2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.)
Karanis	P.Worp. 52 (2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.)

<i>Kibariator</i>	
Maximianon	O.Florida16; 19 (mid-end 2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.)
Unknown	P.Athen. 64 (2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.)
Syene?	SB VI 9230 (end 3 <sup>rd</sup> cent.)
Pselkis	Rom.Mil.Rec. I no.78 (157 to 187 or 217); SB XXIV 16233 (6. July 174-206); 16234-16238; 16240-16243 (2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.-early 3 <sup>rd</sup> cent.); 16244 (1. Febr. 178-210?); 16246-16247; 16249 (2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> cent.-early 3 <sup>rd</sup> cent.)

## 2.10 The *galearius*

Attestations of the title *galearius* appear in a small number of documents from Egypt and rarely outside Egypt.<sup>217</sup> The majority of the texts are from the Eastern Desert, specifically from Didymoi, Mons Claudianus and, most likely, Maximianon. All date to the imperial period, except for P.Lips. I 40, which dates to the 4th cent. Most are private letters, but there is a receipt, label, report, and protocol for a criminal case.<sup>218</sup> Only two texts are written in Latin or partly in Latin<sup>219</sup> and all the rest are in Greek.

The real status and role of the *galearius* is still unclear. Definitely, they were servants belonging to the army or to individual soldiers.<sup>220</sup> One uncertainty is whether they were personal slaves of the soldiers or slaves with official roles in the units of the army. As the term indicates, they were helmet-wearers (*galea* ‘helmet’).<sup>221</sup> They might be the *calones galearii* who participated in campaigns and therefore were allowed to wear helmets.<sup>222</sup> In the Roman army, generally, it seems that they were trained and armed to guard the camp and also assisted carriage of the baggage on the campaigns.<sup>223</sup> A Latin papyrus from an unknown place in Egypt, P.Gen. Lat. 1, verso, part V (90-96 CE), records a duty roster of the *legio III Cyrenaica*,<sup>224</sup> a soldier was doing duty at the arena, *balneum* (bath), *armamentarium* (armory), and in the

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<sup>217</sup> The word is attested with various readings: *γαλέαριος* in O.Did. 318; 319 (before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Florida 18 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. III 627 (138-161 (?)); SB XIV 11581 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); SEG XIX 787 (No date). *γαλιάριος* in O.Did. 103 (before (?) ca. 77-92); SB XII 11256 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). With double *lambda* *γαλλι[αρι-]* in O.Florida 21 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and the plural form *γαλλιάριοι* in P.Lips. I 40 (before 381?). The Latin form *galliarum* occurs in ChLA X 409 (2nd-3rd cent.).

<sup>218</sup> From the Eastern Desert: O.Did. 318, 4; 319, 6 (private letters; before (?) ca. 77 - 92); 103, 4 (label?; before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Claud. III 627, 2 (receipt?; 138-161 (?)); from Maximianon: O.Florida 18, 7; 21, 12 (private letters; mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); SB XIV 11581, 2 (private letter; mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); SB XXII 11256, 5 (private letter; mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). Outside of the Eastern Desert: P.Lips. I 40, col. 2, 10 (protocol for criminal case, Hermopolis; before 381?); ChLA X 409, col.1 and 2, 6 (daily report of personnel and legionary work; unknown place, 2nd-3rd cent.); perhaps also BGU VII 1614 fr. C1, 5 (list of payment, Philadelphia; 27 March-25 Apr. 70); Outside Egypt: SEG XIX 787, 2-3 (dedication; Pisidia; unknown date), see also comment in SEG XXVI 1391.

<sup>219</sup> ChLA X 409, 6 (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent.). P.Lips. I 40 (before 381?) is a bilingual text.

<sup>220</sup> DGE, s.v. and Silver (2016) 208.

<sup>221</sup> See Rouland (1977) 38.

<sup>222</sup> See Petrikovits (1975) 58 and Silver (2016) 209. The *calones* were servants in the army, L&S, s.v. For more about the soldiers’ servants and the *calones*, see Speidel (1989) 342-352.

<sup>223</sup> See Speidel (1989) 245.

<sup>224</sup> = Rom. Mil. Rec. 9 (90-96), text published also in CPL 106 pp.212-215.

*galeariato*, probably a training place or building in the legionary camp assigned to the *galearii* or else an officium *galearii* for housing or training.<sup>225</sup> A daily report of work, also from an unknown place, ChLA X 409 (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), shows civilians and soldiers, e.g. *galearii*, *pagani* (civils), *custodiae* (prisoners) and heavy armed soldiers, doing work for the month of May.<sup>226</sup> From Hermopolis there survives a protocol of a trial (P.Lips. I 40; before 381?), in which a person complains that he has been beaten by slaves, the *galearii*.

Outside Egypt, from Olbasa in Pisidia, a region of Asia Minor,<sup>227</sup> the title appears in an inscription, SEG XIX 787 (no date), dedicated to the soldier Herakles from Neon son of Termilos the *galearius*: Ἡρακλεῖ εὐχὴν Νέων Τερμίλου γαλαρίου, ‘Neon son of Termilas the *galearius* (does) obeisance to Herakles’.

In the Eastern Desert, where the majority of the documents were found, the attestations show the *galearii* participating in a variety of activities, some of which are not seen in attestations from elsewhere. They are active in the desert along with the soldiers stationed in *praesidia* or quarries. In O.Did. 103 (before? ca. 77-92), Sophron the *galearius* is attested together with the soldier Bassus from the turma of Paulinus on a label or ticket for barley, ll.1-3 τούρμης Παυλ[ίνου -ca.?- ] Βάσσου Βαραδάδ[ου -ca.?- ] Σώφρωνος γαλι[ -ca.?- ]. Here, Sophron seems likely to have been the slave of Bassus. In a fragment of a receipt from Mons Claudianus, O.Claud. III 627 (138-161), another *galearius* stationed in the quarry appears to be a member of the *familia*; he belongs to a specific *arithmos*<sup>228</sup> of Mons Porphyrites.

### 2.10.1 The role of the *galearius* as carrier of goods

The Eastern Desert letters are unique in showing *galearii* acting as carriers. They appear in private correspondence delivering letters and other items for soldiers, in private contexts. Bagnall suggests that the *galearius* attested in Egypt in O.Florida 18 served as a groom to his master, a horseman, who was able to have a servant because of his higher income.<sup>229</sup> O.Florida 18 is a letter addressed to the horseman by someone who asks him to send his *galearius* to take

<sup>225</sup> Speidel (1989) 245, n.30 opts for the former interpretation and Fink (1971), 112, n.4 for the latter.

<sup>226</sup> Col.2, 6-9 *galliarii fic* [ -ca.?- ] *pagani* [ -ca.?- ] *custodiae* [ -ca.?- ] *scuta talaria* [ -ca.?- ].

<sup>227</sup> For Pisidia, see Mitchell (2012) 5337-5338.

<sup>228</sup> These numbers reflect toponymic features; members of the *familia* who were working in the area of Mons Porphyrites were identified by numeri and arithmoi. What is meant by Porphyrites is the great area around and including the quarries of Mons Claudianus, Tiberiane and probably further, see the intro. in O.Claud. III, pp.30, 36-37.

<sup>229</sup> See the intro. to O.Florida, p.18.

the barley, since he did not find someone else to do so, ll.6-8 οὐχ εὔρον των (l. τὸν) φέροντά σοι κριθήν. ἐὰν θέλῃς πέμψον σου τὸν γαλεάριν (l. γαλεάριον) καὶ λάβῃ, ‘I did not find someone to bring the barley to you. If you wish, send your servant and let him get it’.<sup>230</sup> One might really think that the use of the pronoun here could refer to a personal slave. Also in O.Florida 21, which is about fodder and freight, the *galearius* seems to be serving as a carrier, as suggested by the fact that at the end of the letter there is the occurrence of, l.12 [ ]. γαλλ.[ ] preceded by l.11 [ ]ον κομ- in the previous line. In two other letters, likely from Maximianon (the same place that the O.Florida letters are now thought to come from)<sup>231</sup> there are further references to *galearii*. The letters reflect a military context, but they are in a condition that does not provide useful details, SB XII 11256, 5 [ -ca.?- ]τῷ γαλιαρίῳ τισαι[ -ca.?- ] and SB XIV 11581, 2 ὁ γαλεάρι[ος -ca.?- ].

### 2.10.2 *Galearius* as carrier of correspondence

The title also appears in two letters from Didymoi (O.Did. 318-319; (before (?) ca. 77 - 92) written by the soldier Iulius, who was at Aphroditis Orous,<sup>232</sup> to Valerius in order to inform him that he dispatched letters with two *galearii*. He once earlier sent 4 letters through a *galearius* from Didymoi and once again three others through the *galearius* Cornelius from Aphroditis, ll. 2-7 ἔπεμψά σοι ἐπιστολάς τέσσαρες (l. τέσσαρας) διὰ τοῦ γαλε<a>ρίου τοῦ ἐκῆ[ι]θεν (l. ἐκεῖθεν) ἀπὸ Διδύμων (l. Διδύμων) καὶ διὰ Κορνηλίου γαλεαρίου ἄλλας γ ὥστε ζ, ‘I have sent you four letters through the *galearius* from down there at Didymoi and another 3 through the *galearius* Cornelius, so 7’.<sup>233</sup> In O.Did. 318 Iulius mentions that he meant to send these letters so that Iulius could give them to the horseman, which might mean that they would be forwarded with the horseman probably to Koptos, ll.6-7 ταύτας εἰς ἵππέ[α] ἀναδόσις (l. ἀναδόσεις), ‘give these to a horseman’.<sup>234</sup> That the *galearii* enjoyed some mobility seems clear from these examples, but the degree to which they could travel around is uncertain. Whether they moved on foot or by transportation has not been clarified by the letters. In all the letters they are unnamed and treated as anonymous, except in O.Did. 319 (before (?) ca. 77-92). The

<sup>230</sup> Trans. Bagnall.

<sup>231</sup> For Maximianon as the provenance of the 4 letters, see Bagnall and Crihiore (2010) 221- 223 and (2006) 164. For more discussion concerning their provenance, see P.Hombert 2, pp. 9-13, BL 9, p.272, 385, Clarysse and Sijpesteijn (1988) 90 and Trismegistos Texts: <https://www.trismegistos.org/tm/search.php>.

<sup>232</sup> See the intro. to O.Did. 318.

<sup>233</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>234</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen with modification.

names that are attested for these slaves are either Latin (Cornelius: O.Did. 319, Neon: SEG 19 787) or Greek (Sophron: O.Did. 103; before (?) ca. 77-92).

## 2.11 The emerald workers

The references to the emerald work in the Eastern Desert mines are very rare. There are three attestations in two lists of tools from Mons Claudianus, so far.<sup>235</sup> The emerald workers (miners) functioned as carriers in rare cases. They are attested delivering items between different stations on the road from Koptos to Berenike. These deliveries must have occurred when they were on their way to or from the emerald mines in Mons Smaragdus, the region of the beryl or emerald mines. Mons Smaragdus is located about 120 km northwest of Berenike. It is a huge settlement and does not designate a single mountain, but a series of mountains and wadis extending over the area. It represents the greater area around Sikait, but was known as Mons Smaragdus to the Romans (Fig. 2). The mines are one of the few emerald sources in the world and were active from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>236</sup>

The attestations of the emerald workers occur only so far in three letters found in Didymoi,<sup>237</sup> and in one unpublished letter from Dios.<sup>238</sup> The Didymoi texts date to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. or beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. In two instances the workers were men and in one a woman. The deliveries took place in unofficial contexts involving soldiers and civilians and concerning vegetables, fruits and once a letter.

The well-known trader, Philokles, relied on the female emerald worker when he was in Phoinikon to deliver to his friend Kapparis at Didymoi a jar full of fruit in which there were 20 apples and 2 gourds.<sup>239</sup> In a letter involving soldiers, Longinus, who was also at Didymoi,

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<sup>235</sup> O.Claud. IV 797, 7 (ca. 98-117) ζμαραγδαρι (l. σμαραγδαρι) vac. ? α; O.Claud. IV 799, col.1, 3 (ca. 138-161) ζμαραδιδικ( ) (l. σμαραγδιδικ( )) [[β]]α; col.2, 14 ζμαραδιδ (l. σμαραγδιδ( )) β, these attestations refer to unknown kind of tools probably used for polishing the granite or pounding the emerald, as the editor suggests.

<sup>236</sup> See Sidebotham (forthcoming) 2, 55 and Sidebotham, Hense and Nouwens (2008) 286-7 (for discussion of the five beryl or emerald mining settlements in particular, see pp. 288-299); Sidebotham and Wendrich (2007) 299, 305-6; for a general survey of the area of the emerald mines in the region, see pp.295-303.

<sup>237</sup> O.Did. 343= P.Thomas 9 (before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Did. 347 (before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Did. 376 (before (?) ca. 110-115).

<sup>238</sup> O.Dios, inv.1002, see O.Did. 343, n.5.

<sup>239</sup> O.Did. 376, 4-10 (before (?) ca. 110-115) ἔπενψόν (l. ἔπεμψά) συ (l. σοι) διέ (l. διὰ) τῆς σμαραγδαρίας βαυκάλιν (l. βαυκάλιον) μεσστόν (l. μεσστόν) πτωμάτων ὄ{ο}πο (l. ὄ{ο}πο<υ>) ἔνι μῆλα κ καὶ κολοκύνθι{θι}α β.

acknowledges to Numerius at Phoinikon that he received his ostrakon (the letter of O.Did. 342) from the emerald-worker.<sup>240</sup> Writing from Aphroditis Orous, Gaius Terentius acknowledges to Marcus Longinus, who is at Didymoi, the receipt of 3 gourds and a bunch of cabbage which he sent him via an emerald worker.<sup>241</sup> In all the three instances, we are struck by the fact that the emerald workers were anonymous. They also do not show how these emerald workers moved about. The idea that they traveled to the emerald mines on foot can be excluded. Moreover, they did not move without baggage, but carried things with them. Therefore, they must have traveled by some means of transportation.

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<sup>240</sup> O.Did. 343, 4-5 (before (?) ca. 77-92) λαβὼν τὸ ὄστρακον παρὰ τοῦ ζμαρακταρίου (l. σμαραγδαρίου). The ostrakon meant here is the letter of O.Did. 342 (before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Did. 343, in which the reference to the emerald worker occurs, was supposed to be sent in response to it. It was sent from the soldier Longinus to Numerius as a reply to Numerius's dispute in 342 about a loan of money, in addition to the delivery of other items. O.Did. 343 was never sent, as we know from the fact that it was found in Didymoi.

<sup>241</sup> O.Did. 347, 3-4 (before (?) ca. 77-92) ἔκομισάμην παρὰ τοῦ ζμαραγδαρίου κολοκύνθας γ καὶ κρανβίου (l. κραμβίου) δέσμην.

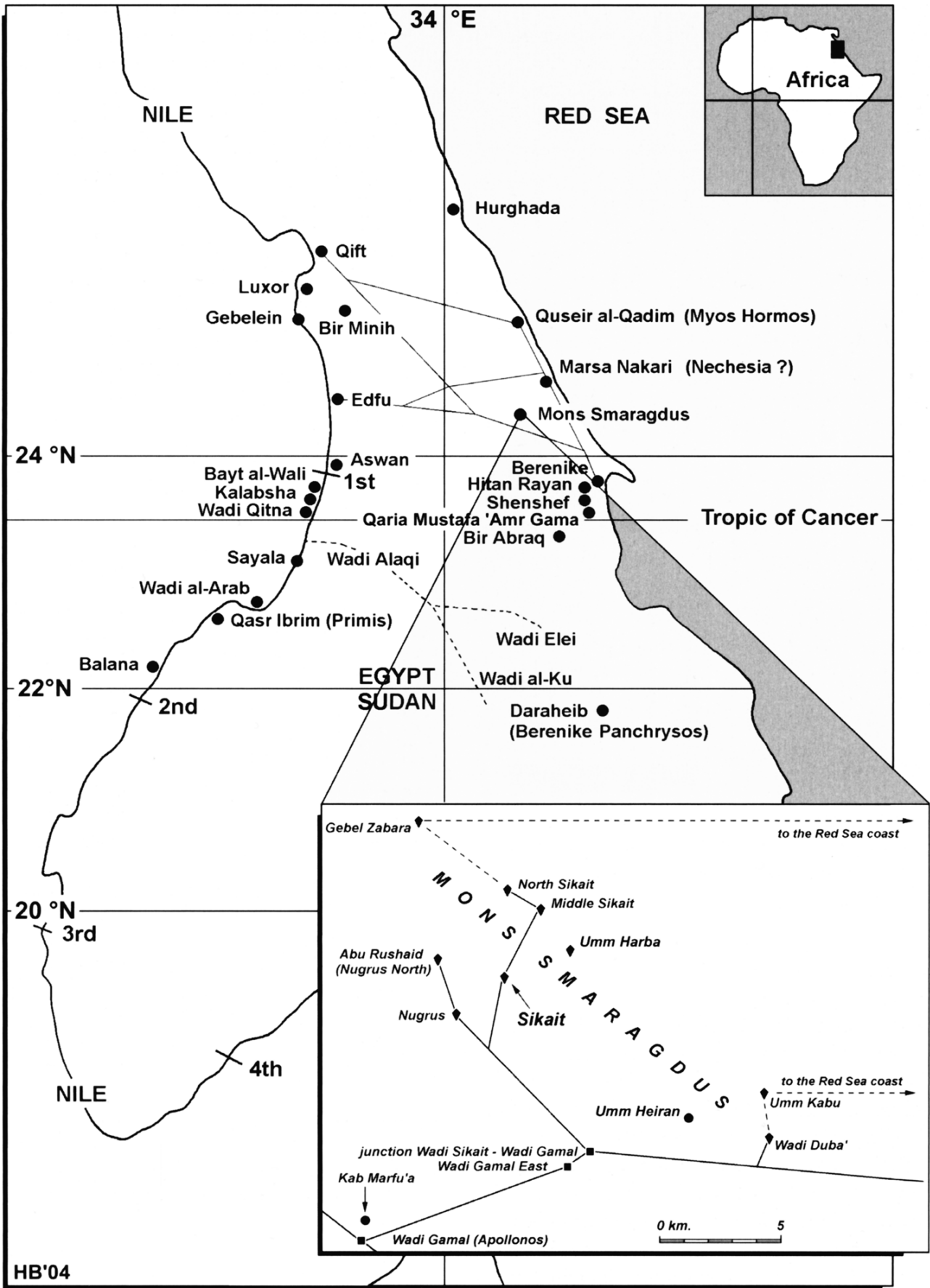


Figure 2. Map of Mons Smaragdus or the region of Sikait. Taken from Sidebotham and Wendrich (2007) 296.



### 3 Single Carriers, and other means of circulation and transportation

In the previous chapter, we have seen that there is variety and diversity to the types of carriers and means of circulation of letters and other items in the Eastern Desert. Despite this variation, the highest number of attestations of letter carriers belongs in reality to single individuals who are not identified as donkey drivers, or camel drivers, or by any other title, particularly in the case of unofficial correspondence.<sup>1</sup> These individuals could be identified by name, or remain anonymous, or it could be understood from the context of the letter that the person who carried goods and other objects between the correspondents brought the letter as well and probably carried a response back to the person who sent him, as I will discuss later. It is not always specified whether they moved on foot or by means of transportation, but sometimes it could be understood implicitly that they used transportation. The long distance between the sender and the receiver could also confirm that they must have had some means of travel. These attestations of single individuals are around 38, which represents 56.2 % of the total of letter carriers.<sup>2</sup> From them there are around 24<sup>3</sup> letters that refer to the carrier simply as ‘the person who brings you the letter’.<sup>4</sup>

#### 3.1 “The person who brings the letter”

In the Eastern Desert letters, the expression ‘the person who brings the letter’ is found almost exclusively in unofficial correspondence, rarely in official; of the latter, I am aware of two letters. In these two letters, the carriers who delivered the letters were employed by the senders to deliver or receive from the recipient other items. The letters in these cases were used to supplement the carriers’ missions. Namely, letters were sent to the addressees in order to convey messages about the items being delivered or requested. For example: in O.Krok. I 78

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<sup>1</sup> I should make clear that I am not dealing here with the horsemen or any of the carriers mentioned in the daybooks. They are identified mainly in the daybooks and I treat them in ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Attestations are included in note 3 and 19 below.

<sup>3</sup> Official correspondence: O.Claud. IV 818 (ca. 109-110); O.Krok. I 78 (ca. 98-117); Unofficial correspondence: O.Claud. I 149, 171 (ca. 100-120); O.Claud. II 239 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 344? (before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Did. 345 (before (?) ca. 78-85); O.Did. 359 (before (?) ca. 88-92); O.Did. 374 (before (?) ca. 88-96); O.Did. 409 (before (?) ca. 110-115); O.Florida 14 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 153, 167, 189 (ca. 98-117); O.Krok. II 201 (ca. 98-138); O.Krok. II 217; O.Krok. II 322 (98-117); O.Krok. II 278; O.Krok. II 304 ca. 98-117); SB VI 9017=O.Faw. 25 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); SB VI 9549 (1) (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); SB XXVIII 17095 (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 17113 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. -beg. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); SB XXVIII 17114 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>4</sup> For discussion about ‘the person who brings you the letter’, see Fournet (2003) 474-475.

(ca. 98-117), addressed from N.N. to the curator of the *praesidium* of Krokodilo, there is an apparent request to supply the messenger who brings the letter with water, ll.6-8 [- ca.15 -] τῷ ἀναδιδόντι σοι τὸ ὄστρακον [- ca.8 -] ὕδατους (l. ὕδατος) ἀσκούς [- ca.8 -], ‘to the one who brings you the ostrakon, water skins...’. The second letter which comes from the quarry of Mons Claudianus concerns the requisition of tools. These tools have to be given to the person who brought the ostrakon, O.Claud. IV 818, 2-4 (ca. 109-110) δώσις εἰς τὸν [-ca.?- σιδή]ρια κς τῷ φέ[ροντί σοι] τὸ ὄστρακον (l. ὄστρακον) vac. ?, ‘please give to the (*place of work*) 26 irons to the one who brings you the ostrakon’.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, in the unofficial correspondence, where the expression is used widely, it mostly refers to objects that the deliverer of the letter is expected to give to or take from the recipient.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.1.1 Round-trip deliveries

Obviously, when the sender of the letter asks the receiver to send him items back with the bearer of the letter, it means that the bearer was making a round-trip delivery and would return to wherever the sender of the letter was.<sup>7</sup> This provided a perfect opportunity for the recipient to write a letter back to the sender and dispatch items with the carrier, as well. For example, in O.Florida 14 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the sender of the letter informs the receiver that the man who is bringing the ostrakon will return to him so that he<sup>8</sup> can write reply to him about a matter of concern, ll. 13-15 ὁ φέρων σοι τὸ ὄστρακον συνστρέφει (l. συστρέφει) [. . .] πρὸς ἐμέ. διὰ αὐτοῦ μὴ ἀμελήσης γράψαι περὶ τῆς κατ’ οἰκίας ἀπογραφῆς, ‘the man who is bringing you the ostrakon is returning to me; do not neglect to write by way of him about the house-by-house census’.<sup>9</sup> In O.Claud. II 239 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Pison the sender requests some items from the receiver of the letter and asks him to send them with the person who brings the letter, ll.7-8 πέμπων μοι διὰ τοῦ ἀναδίδοντός σοι τὴν ἐπιστολήν.

<sup>5</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. O.Claud. I 171 (ca. 100-120); O.Claud. II 239 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 322 (98-117); SB VI 9549 (1) (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.).

<sup>7</sup> Unless he will go somewhere else first, such as the donkey driver in O.Did. 361 (1 March 77) who stops off in Didymoi to get a waterskin, which he takes to Berenike and presumably returns to Didymoi on his way back Phoinikon, the starting point of his journey.

<sup>8</sup> On the question of gender of the sender of the letter, see Thomas (1978) 142-144; Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 167-168, as well as chapters 1 and 2 above.

<sup>9</sup> Trans. Bagnall.

### 3.1.2 Carriers of letters and other items

As appears from the previous examples, the expression ‘the person who brings the letter’ is mostly used to refer to carriers conveying letters along with other items or carriers will take items from the receivers by means of the letters they delivered. However, sometimes they were employed to deliver only letters. This appears to be the case when the expression is used in recommendation letters, e.g. O.Did. 345, 4-7 (before (?) ca. 78-85) Δωράτι τῷ φέροντί σοι τὸ ὄστρακον, ὃ τι ἂν παρ[ά]σχῃ, νόμιζε ἐμοὶ πα[ρ]έχεσθαι, ‘whatever you give to Doras, who is bringing this ostrakon, consider that you are entrusting to me’.<sup>10</sup> Here, the carrier of the letter is the person being recommended by the sender, and this recommendation is the sole purpose of this letter. This also might be the case with the carrier in O.Florida 14 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), who will bring a response back to the sender. There is no reference in the letter to items being sent back to the sender.

### 3.1.3 The formulas of expression

The formula of expression could vary. The reference to the message itself was either contained in the word ‘ostrakon’ (ὄστρακον), the material on which the letter was written, or in the words ἐπιστόλιον or ἐπιστολή. As for the person who transferred the letter, several participles were used to denote the act of delivery:

φέρω<sup>11</sup> which is most common, e.g. SB XXVIII 17113, 3-6 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. - beg. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) κόμ[ι]σαι παρὰ τοῦ φέροντός σου (l. σοι) τὸ ὄστρακον δέσμας δύο (l. δύο) καυλίον (l. καυλίων), ‘receive from the one who brings the ostrakon to you two bundles of cabbages’.

δίδωμι,<sup>12</sup> e.g. O.Claud. I 149, 6-9 (ca. 100-120) δώσις (l. δώσεις) τὸν χαλκὸν τῷ διδόντι σοι τὸ ἐπιστόλιν, ‘please, give the money to the one who gives you the letter’.<sup>13</sup>

ἀναδίδωμι,<sup>14</sup> e.g. O.Claud. II 239, 7-8 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) πέμψον μοι διὰ τοῦ ἀναδίδοντός σοι τὴν ἐπιστολήν, ‘send it to me by the person who brings you this letter’.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>11</sup> See also O.Claud. IV 818 (ca. 109-110); O.Did. 345 (before (?) ca. 78-85); O.Did. 359 (before (?) ca. 88-92); O.Did. 409 (before (?) ca. 110-115); SB VI 9017 Nr. 25 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 153 (98-117); O.Krok. II 167 (ca. 98-117); O.Krok. II 201 (ca. 98-138); O.Krok. II 217 (98-117).

<sup>12</sup> See also SB XXVIII 17114 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 374 (before (?) ca. 88-96); O.Did. 344 (before (?) ca. 77-92).

<sup>13</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>14</sup> See also O.Krok. I 78 (ca. 98-117); SB VI 9549 (1) (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.).

<sup>15</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

κομίζω,<sup>16</sup> e.g. O.Claud. I 171, 8-10 (ca. 100-120) δώσις (l. δώσεις) δὲ το (l. τῷ) κομίζοντί (l. κομίζοντί) σοι τὴν ἐπιστολήν (l. ἐπιστολήν), ‘give it to the one who brings you the letter’.<sup>17</sup>

Carriers identified by these expressions are mostly anonymous and are not identified by names. Names are mentioned in only a few examples, where they are seen to have Greek names: Kallion (SB VI 9549 (1); 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); Doras (O.Did. 345; before (?) ca. 78-85; recommendation letter) and Ammon (O.Krok. II 153, 4-7, 98-117).

It is not clear in unofficial letters how single individuals traveled from one site to another, since such details are often omitted. They are described very simply as ‘the person who brings the letter’.<sup>18</sup> One expects that they should have moved on feet. It would be the normal way of getting from one station to the neighboring one, in particular when the items transferred were light, such as money (O.Claud. I 149; ca. 100-120, O.Krok. II 167; ca. 98-117); a bit of papyrus and some string (O.Claud. II 239; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); a garment (O.Did. 359; before (?) ca. 88-92). But even in the case of light objects, we often do not know the quantity or weight of the deliveries, such as the number of bunches of cabbages and vegetables (SB XXVIII 17113; 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. -beg. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent., O.Did. 344; before (?) ca. 77-92); the size and weight of a basket (O.Did. 374; before (?) ca. 88-96); or even the amount of oil (SB XXVIII 17114; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). However, in other cases, it is nearly certain that they used some means of transportation, even if it is not mentioned in the letter. For example, in O.Krok. II 153 (98-117) the sender of the letter asks the receiver to give the carrier of the letter two artabas of malt, ll. 4-7 δώσις Ἀμμωνι τῷ σοι φέροντι τὴν ἐπιστολήν βύνι [[αρτ]] ἀρτάρας δύο. This would have been a lot to carry on foot; common sense dictates that the carrier traveled by some means of transportation. This is also likely the case in the two official letters mentioned

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<sup>16</sup> See also O.Krok. II 322 (98-117).

<sup>17</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>18</sup> It is already known that the expression is also used by another way, e.g. the horseman, the donkey driver or the *tabellarius* who brings the letter. In such cases the means of the transportation is clear, see e.g. O.Claud. I 145 (ca. 100-120); O.Did. 361 (1 March 77); O.Did. 444 (before (?) ca. 125-140); O.Dios inv. 636 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) published in ElMaghrabi (2012) 139-145; SB XXVIII 17096 (98-117); O.Krok. II 221 (98-117/117-138). Also the reference in O.Claud. II 276 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) to the donkey driver who has the tablet, may have been used to refer to the same matter, ll. 4-8 καλῶς ποιήσις (l. ποιήσεις) λαβὼν τὸ σουβα<λά>ριόν μου παρὰ τοῦ ὄνηλάτου τοῦ τὴν πινακίδα ἔχοντος καὶ πλῆ/σόν μοι αὐτὸ ὑδάτους, ‘please when you receive my subalare from the donkey driver who is carrying the tablet fill it with water for me’.

earlier, O.Krok. I 78 (ca. 98-117) and O.Claud. IV 818 (ca. 109-110). Both the waterskins and the irons in these letters needed a means of transportation. In addition, the transfer probably should have been quick, since the items were required for work purposes. A slow transfer would have delayed the progress of the work.

For items that were conveyed between the Nile valley and the desert we can assume that some means of transportation was used. For example, if O.Did. 374 (before (?) ca. 88-96) was sent to Didymoi from Koptos rather than from Phoinikon, as the editor suggests, the carrier surely used some means of transportation to convey the requested basket. It was a long way to walk.

### 3.2 Individual carriers

Another way for senders to identify carriers in letters is simply to refer to them by name. The carriers could serve either of three functions: they could deliver only letters; they could deliver letters accompanied with other goods; they could deliver goods only. I will primarily address the carriers who are attested delivering letters or letters along with other goods. I address the carriers of goods only secondarily.

In around 14 letters,<sup>19</sup> the carriers are identified by their names alone, and not by a title, such as donkey driver or *tabellarius*, as, for example, in O.Claud. II 250, 3-4 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) κόμισον (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ Ἡραΐσκο[υ] ἐπιστόλια δύο, ‘receive from Heraiscus two letters’.<sup>20</sup> This is typical of unofficial correspondence, and rarely found in official correspondence. An exception is O.Claud. IV 868 (ca. 138-161), which is addressed from [ ]on son of Ptolemaios, the stone mason, to Terentius, the *beneficiarius* of the prefect. In this letter the stone mason asks the *beneficiarius* to take the petition that he sent him through the centurion Plotinus and give it to the prefect, ll.6-10 ἀξιῶ σαι (l. σε), κύριε, λαβόντα διὰ Πλωτίνου (ἐκατοντάρχου) τὸν λίβελλόν μου ἵνα δῶναι (l. δοῦναι) τῷ κ[υ]ρίῳ μου ἡγεμόνι, ‘I ask you, sir, to take my petition (which I send you) through the centurion Plotinus and give it to my lord the prefect’.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Official correspondence: O.Claud. IV 868 (ca. 138-161); Unofficial correspondence: O.Claud. I 158 (ca. 110); O.Claud. II 249?; 250 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 292? (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); SB XXII 15380? (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. I 95 (ca. 108-115); Objects with letters as understood from the context: O.Krok. II 155 (98-117/117-138); 156 (ca. 98-117); 168; 180 (98-117/117-138); 200 (ca. 108-9); 209? (ca. 98-117); SB VI 9017 Nr. 11= O.Faw. 11 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>20</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>21</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

### 3.2.1 Some Females

Occasionally females occur as carriers. There are two attestations to a woman called Tiberia. She is supposed to be the daughter of Philokles and Sknips and might have delivered items as part of her role in the family business.<sup>22</sup> In O.Krok. II 168 (98-117/117-138), she delivers some drachmas, together with a letter as can be understood from the context of the letter, ll.9-10 [ c. 4-5 ] κόμισε (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ Τι[βερία]ς (δραχμὰς) ἡ εἰς λόγον, ‘receive 8 drachmas from Tiberia on account...’.<sup>23</sup> This letter was supposed to have been sent from Phoinikon to Krokodilo. In O.Krok. II 180, a letter addressed from Sknips to Philokles and probably sent from Maximianon to Krokodilo, Sknips asks Philokles at the end of the letter to write what they want with Tiberia, ll.10-11 καὶ γράψον περὶ Τιβερίας τί βο(ύ)λετε.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2.2 Carriers of letters along with other goods

Often the individual carriers delivered letters along with goods, but this is not always clearly mentioned in letters. For example, in O.Krok. II 155, 14-17 (98-117/117-138), Philokles asks Kapparis to receive from a certain Maximus a bunch of cabbage, κόμισε (l. κόμισαι) δέσμην χράνβης (l. κράμβης) ἀπὸ Μαξίμω (l. Μαξίμου). Philokles does not say that he sent this letter with the vegetables through Maximus, but the direct imperative used in the letter makes it likely that Maximus is the person who brought the letter, as well.<sup>25</sup>

Like the previous type of carriers ‘the person who brings this letter’, it is not mentioned in letters how the single individual carriers moved from station to the next. They likely moved on feet, when they delivered light things such as the letters (e.g. O.Claud. II 250; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent, O.Krok. II 180?; 98-117/117-138) or when they delivered letters along with light stuff (e.g. O.Krok. II 168; 98-117/117-138, letter and 8 drachmas). But in cases such as O.Claud. II 292 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent), where the sender informs the receiver that he sent him through Laberas five *matias* of malt, ll. 3-4 ἔπεμψά σοι διὰ Λαβηρᾶ μάτια πέντε βύνης, it is expected that transportation must have been used, although it is not mentioned in the letter.

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<sup>22</sup> See the note to line 8 of O.Krok. II 181 and the introduction to O.Krok. II, p.38. Also Didyme who is attested in O.Krok. II 156 (ca. 98-117) could be considered as carrier of the letter; however, I am not sure because it is not said in which direction she has been released, ll.4-5 καθὼς μοι ἐνετύλου ἀπέλυσσον Διδύμην, ‘as you told me, I have released Didyme’. Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>23</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>24</sup> I thank Andrea Jördens for suggesting to me that βο(ύ)λετε can be better βούλεται, ‘what she wants’.

<sup>25</sup> O.Claud. II 249 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) represents another example for the same practice.

### 3.2.3 Goods carriers

Goods carriers are also mentioned in letters by name, as in O.Did. 353, 3-4 (before (?) ca. 77-92) δέξαι τὸν γαυνάκην παρὰ Λογγεῖνου, ‘receive this cloak from Longinus’.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, they are identified by names and professions, from which it appears that they were military men similar to Maximus, the *optio* in O.Did. 349, 6-7 (before (?) ca. 77-96) δώσω {ι} (l. δώσω) Μαξί<μ>ωι τῶι ὀπτίῳ καὶ ἐνέγκει (l. ἐνέγκη?) σοι, ‘I shall give it to Maximus, the *optio*, and he will bring it to you’, and the soldier Ptolemaios in O.Claud. II 294, 2-5 (ca. 142-143) καλῶς ποιήσεις (l. ποιήσεις) δοῦς Πτολεμαίῳ στρατιώτῃ τὸ λυχνῆν (l. λυχνεῖον) καὶ λαβὼν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ δραχμὰς γ, ‘please, give to Ptolemaios, the soldier, the lamp stand and take from him 3 drachmas’. But they could also be civilians, such as Quintus the veterinarian in O.Florida 15, 3-5 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ἔπεμψά σοι διὰ Κουίντου ἰπποιατροῦ τὸν ἀνδρόμαχα καὶ τὴν ὄρνειθαν (l. ὄρνιθαν) ὑλήαν (l. ὑλαίαν) ἠψημένην, ‘I sent you via Quintus the veterinarian the andromax and the boiled wood-bird’.<sup>27</sup> They can also be identified merely by their professions, as in O.Claud. IV 803, 2-4 (ca. 98-111) εὖ ποιήσεις διὰ τινος τῶν ἀκοαρίων πέμψα μοι τὸ πινάκιον καὶ τὰ ἀστέρια, ‘please send me through one of the water carriers the ‘tablet’ and the ‘starry’’.<sup>28</sup>

Females also participated in delivering goods. Sknips, the wife of Philokles, informs a certain Domittius in a letter addressed from her to him to expect her soon with oil and lentils, O.Krok. II 192, 7-10 (98-117) προσδέχου με εὐθέως ἔχουσαν ἔλεν (l. ἔλαιον) καὶ φακόν.

### 3.2.4 Round-trip deliveries

The individual carriers were employed to perform round trips, as well. For example, in O.Claud. II 249 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Petenephotos the sender of the letter tells his brother Valerius, the receiver of the letter, to take from Longinas a basket to give it to certain person. In addition, he asks him to convey a message to Apollonius instructing him to send some items to Petenephotos through the same carrier Longinas.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, at the end of the letter he asks his brother to send him a little nose-smart, again through Longinas. Ll.1-8 Πετενεφώτης Οὐαλερίῳ τῶι ἀδελφῷ πολλὰ χαίρειν. κομισεν (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ Λογγινάτι (l. Λογγινάτος) τὸ

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<sup>26</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>27</sup> Trans. Bagnall. According to the editor, the ἀνδρομαξ could be a fowl, see O.Florida 15, note to l.4.

<sup>28</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. The ἀστέριον is presumably some star-shaped object, perhaps a clamp, see O.Claud. IV 803, note to l.4. The *aquarii* are personnel of the quarriers and were members of the *familia*, see the intro. to O.Claud. IV 803.

<sup>29</sup> Likely, he is the same carrier, see O.Claud. II 249, n.3.

σφυρίδιον καὶ δώσις αὐτῶι (l. αὐτὸ) τῶι ἀνθρώπου (l. ἀνθρώπω). ἐρίς (l. ἐρεῖς) Ἀπολλωνίωι ὄτι ἔρωτητίς (l. ἐρωτηθεῖς) ποιήσόν μοι τὸ τοῦτωι (l. τοῦτο) καὶ πέμψων (l. πέμψον) μοι αὐτῶ (l. αὐτὸ) διὰ Λογγάτι (l. Λογγάτος) ἐπὶ χρίαν (l. χρείαν) αὐτῶι (l. αὐτοῦ) ἔχω. γράψων (l. γράψον) περὶ τῆς σοτηρίας (l. σωτηρίας) σου. ἐρρῶσθέ σε εὔχ[ομαι.] πέμψων (l. πέμψον) μοι μικκὸν κάρδαμων (l. κάρδαμον) διὰ Λογ[γάτος.], ‘Petenephotos to Valerius his brother many greetings. Receive the basket from Longinas and give it to the man. Say to Apollonius: “I ask you, please do this for me and send it to me through Longas, for I need it”. Write to me about your health. I hope you are well. Send me a little nose smart through Longas’.<sup>30</sup> In this letter, Longas (or Longinas) seems most likely to be the person who brought the letter to Valerius and will take the stuff back to Petenephotos.

As appears from the previous attestations, the carriers employed were both military men (e.g. O.Claud. I 158; ca. 110) and civilians (e.g. O.Claud. II 250; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). They bore Greek names (Heraiskos: O.Claud. II 250; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent, Didyme: O.Krok. II 156; ca. 98-117, Philokles: O.Krok. II 200; ca. 108-109, O.Krok. II 209; ca. 98-117, Didymos: SB VI 9017 Nr. 11=O.Faw. 11; 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and Latin names (Octavius: O.Claud. I 158; ca. 110, Longinus: O.Krok. I 95; ca. 108-115, Petronius: SB XXII 15380; 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent., Maximus: O.Krok. II 155; 98-117/117-138, Tiberia: O.Krok. II 168; 180; 98-117/117-138, Plotinus: O.Claud. IV 868; ca. 138-161).

### 3.3 Some aspects pertaining to individual carriers

#### 3.3.1 Social networks

The carriers who are mentioned by name in the correspondence generally appear to be familiar to both corresponding parties. We can imagine, in fact, that they belong to a network of individuals. They could be relatives, friends, colleagues or simply acquaintances. Take for example the case of the well-known Philokles, the writer of the biggest group of letters in the Eastern Desert corpus. He himself conveyed correspondence between people belonging to his circle. For example, a certain Nemesas sent a letter (O.Krok. II 200; ca. 108-109) to Philotera, the daughter of Kapparis, a close friend of Philokles, to inform her about the reception of her letter from Philokles, ll.3-4 ἐκομισάμην σοῦ [τὴν ἐπ]ιστολὴν παρὰ Φιλοκλήος. In addition, he transferred some onions between them, ll.6-7 κόμισαι παρὰ Φιλο[κλήος ] ca.20 ν κρομβύων (l.

<sup>30</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. For discussion of τοῦτο instead of τοῦτωι, see Bagnall (1997) 341-342.



κρομμύων).<sup>31</sup> What is also interesting is that Nemesas tells Philotera about receiving things from Eial, ll. 5-6 ἐκομισάμην παρὰ Ἰαλοῦ [.?] ..να καὶ ca.9. Eial was a post rider and horseman stationed in Krokodilo who delivered official post. Now, it appears that he was also known to individuals from the circle of Philokles and presumably to Philokles himself, since they are mentioned together in the daybook of Krokodilo, O.Krok. I 1, 18 (after (?) 28. March 108) Φαμενωθ α β κλη(ρος)· ἰς (l. εἰς) Κόπ(τον) ἐπὶ Ἡρακλῆν Ἰαλλ[ . . . ] σὺν Φιλοκλήρῳ (l. Φιλοκλεῖ). vac. In another letter, O.Krok. II 209 (ca. 98-117), Diodotos the sender asks Syra the receiver to give to Philokles two staters since he has borrowed them from him. This makes it likely that Philokles, who wrote the letter (as it is in his hand), delivered it too to Syra,<sup>32</sup> ll.2-4 καλῶς ποεῖς (l. ποιήσεις) δώσις (l. δώσεις) Φιλοκλ[ή]τι τῆς (i.e. τοῦς) δύο στατήρας ἐπὶ (l. ἐπεὶ) ἐγὼ ἔλ[α]βον ἀπὸ αὐτοῦ ὧδε.

Similarly, however not certainly, Dioskoros, the soldier who sends letters and vegetables to his fellow soldiers (e.g. O.Claud. II 224-234; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), is attested as carrier of 3 bundles of vegetables in one of the letters, which was written by him, O.Claud. II 238, 3-4 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) κομισον (l. κομίσασθε) παρὰ Διοσκορος (l. Διοσκόρου) δεσμην (l. δέσμας) γλαχα . . . It was known that Dioskoros planted vegetables and likely conducted a small business in the Eastern Desert. It would be better if this sentence understood that Dioskoros forwarded these vegetables to Petosiris and Paniskos, as the editor suggests, or another person wrote this letter and all the correspondence of Dioskoros on behalf of him.<sup>33</sup> However, what supports the idea that Dioskoros was the carrier is that this is the normal formula used by the writers of the letters in the Eastern Desert instructing the recipients to receive items from specific carriers. It can not be excluded that Dioskoros was literate to be able to manage his small local trade. In addition, we have seen before that Philokles wrote a letter on behalf of Diodotos and delivered it himself to Syra, the recipient (O.Krok. II 209; ca. 98-117). Similarly, he himself delivers things between the correspondents in O.Krok. II 200 (ca. 108-109). Moreover, it is not very surprising that Dioskoros delivered these vegetables to Mons Claudianus, where he used to send his goods to his colleagues. If we supposed that he was going there on official duty, it would not have been a problem. We have seen before that Eial, the soldier and post rider,

<sup>31</sup> See the intro. to O.Krok. II 200 and note to l.4.

<sup>32</sup> See the introduction to O.Krok. II 209.

<sup>33</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. II 238 and the note to line 3. Not much is known about the sender of the letter (Eponychus), except that he might be from Pselkis and mentioned also in O.Claud. II 279 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), see O.Claud. II 238, n.1.

carried goods while he was on official duty and not while coming back from duty (O.Krok. II 200; ca. 108-109).

A certain Ailouras represents a member of yet another network. He is the sender of two letters (O.Claud. I 161; ca. 100-120; and the unpublished letter inv.1049) written in the same hand and might have been the carrier mentioned in another unpublished letter (inv. 2062), where it is said that he was supposed to deliver a κεράμιον, but it was never transferred.<sup>34</sup>

Nemesion, who is the sender of the private letter O.Claud. II 297 (mid or 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and the sender of the official letter O.Claud. IV 874 (138-161 CE), both are written by the same hand, is likely the same *familiaris* who delivered in an unofficial context from Raima to Mons Claudianus 16 obols sent from Patrempabathes to Apollinaris (O.Claud. II 270; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), and likely the letter, as well. He is also known to be the carrier of the official correspondence of Ulpus Dios, the curator of Raima, from the Nile valley through to Raima. It is unclear if there was more than one Nemesion in Mons Claudianus.<sup>35</sup> But since most of the attestations associate him with transferring items (from O.Claud. IV 874 it seems that he was involved in the quarry work), he could be the same person.

### 3.3.2 Same carriers and same correspondents

To elucidate more the idea that the carriers who are mentioned by name in the correspondence must have been familiar to the correspondents, let us consider some further examples. There are some carriers who serve the same correspondents on multiple occasions. The soldier Dioskoros (Fig. 1) sent the same carrier twice to the same receivers at Mons Claudianus. In O.Claud. II 229 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) he sent cabbage to Draco, Eremesis and Ammonianus by way of Pouonsis. Similarly, in O.Claud. II 226 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) he sent again to the same people, as well as to Petosiris and Paniscus, bundles of various vegetables by way of the same Pouonsis, who is styled this time as *familiaris*.

Not only Dioskoros involved the same carriers; Libianus (Fig. 2) also sent the same carrier (Januarius) twice (O.Claud. II 255-256; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) from Raima to Mons Claudianus in order to deliver to Sarapammon bundles of cabbage. It is not stated explicitly that they delivered the letters together with the cabbages, but it can be understood implicitly from the

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<sup>34</sup> See O.Claud. I 161, note to l.1.

<sup>35</sup> See O.Claud. II 270, note to line 9 and O.Claud. IV 874, note to line 1.

context, O.Claud. II 255, 5-7 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) κόμεισεν (l. κόμισον) παρὰ Ἰανουάρις δῆσμην (l. δέσμην) καυλέων, ‘receive from Ianouarius bundle of cabbages’.

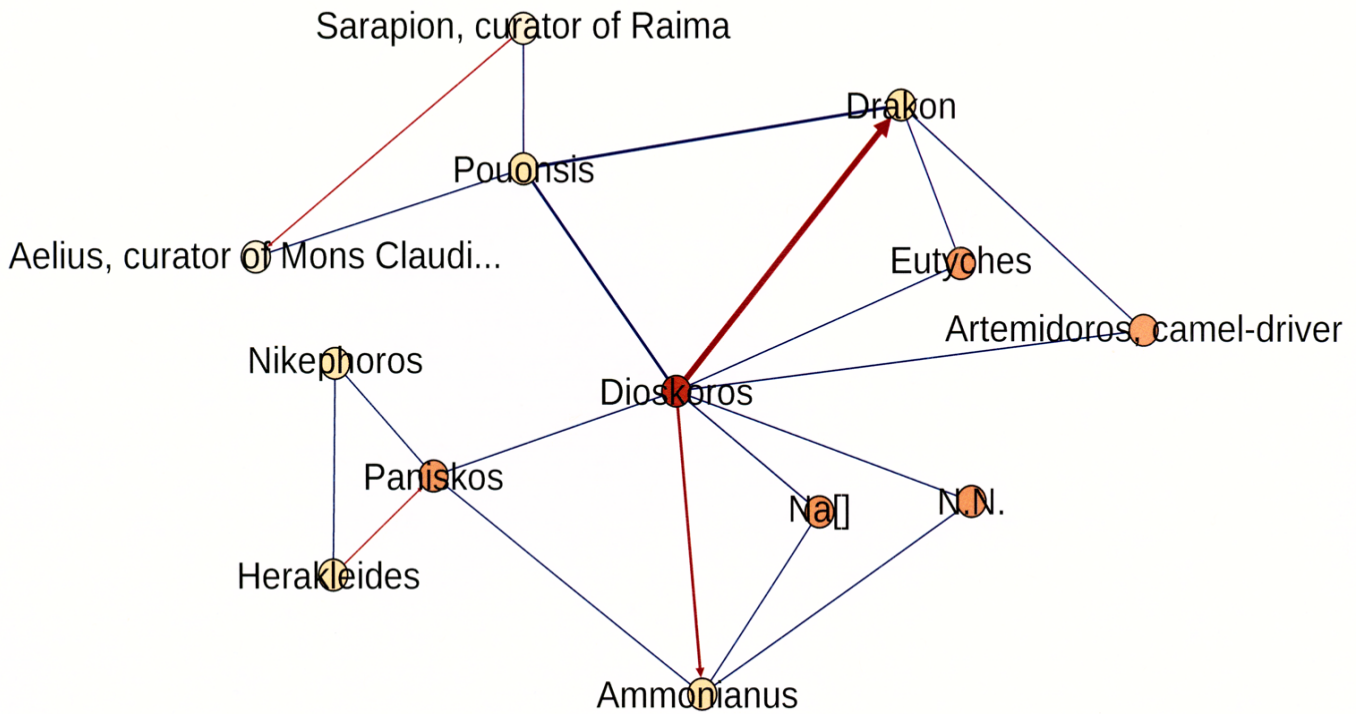


Figure 1. Dioskoros network.

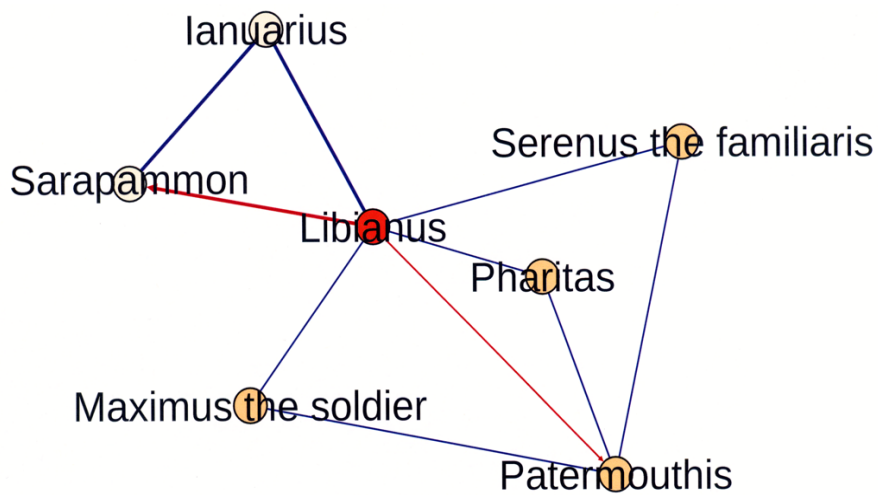


Figure 2. Libianus network.

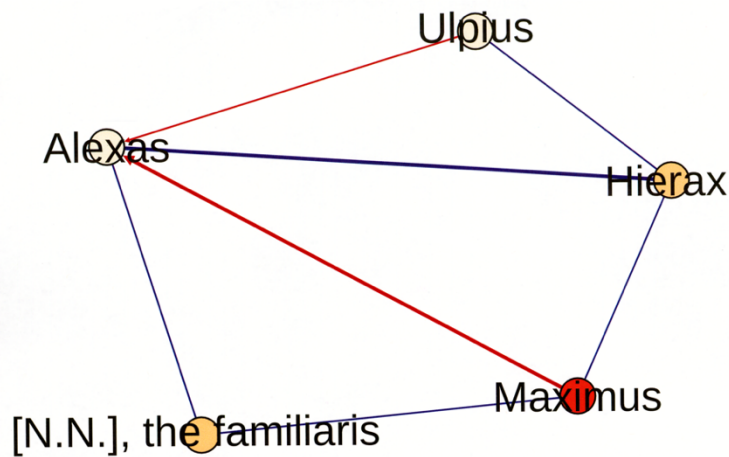


Figure 3. Hierax network.

Notes to the figures:

Red lines refer to the correspondents

The head of the arrows points to the receiver of the letter

Blue lines refer to the carriers

Bold lines refer to multiple deliveries

Sometimes it appears that the carrier is one of the colleagues of the correspondents. In O.Did. 355 (before (?) ca. 77-92), Maximus, the sender of the letter, asks the receiver M[ ] to send him through Iustus (who has a Latin name) money if Iustus is coming up to his place, O.Did. 355, 3-5 καὶ ἂν ἀναβαίνει Ἰούστος, δὲς αὐτῷ καὶ οἴσει μοι. In O.Did. 356 (before (?) ca. 77-92), Maximus acknowledges to Menn[ ] that he received the money from Iustus and asks him to send money again through him if he collects it, ll. 4-10 ἔλαβα ἀπὸ Ἰούστου (δραχμὰς) δ. καλῶς ἐποίησες (l. ἐποίησας), ἀδελφε, ὅτι ἐμέλησέ σοι πῶς κομίση αὐτὸν καὶ τὸν ἄλλον. ἦ ἂν (l. ἐὰν) λάβῃ[τ]ε πάλι δι' αὐτοῦ μο[ι] πένψον (l. πέμψον, or ἀναπέμψον), 'I received through Iustus 4 drachmas. You did well, brother, in taking care how you received it and the other one. If you receive again, send me through him'.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. For more examples of the same carriers serving the same correspondents, see e.g., the carrier Hierax (Fig.3) in O.Claud. II 262 and 263 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

### 3.3.3 Same carriers between different correspondents

On the other hand, the same carriers were employed to deliver items between different persons in both official and unofficial circumstances. The carrier Pouonsis Πουώνσιος mentioned above in the correspondence of Dioskoros is attested again as a carrier but this time officially in letter coming from the context of quarry work at Mons Claudianus. In O.Claud. II 376 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) Sarapion son of Apollonios, curator of the *praesidium* of Raima (Fig. 1) asks the curator Aelius Serenus, curator of the *praesidium* of Mons Claudianus, to send through Pouonsis the *familiaris* whom he has released some work stuff, ll.6-9 καλῶς ποιήσις πέμψας διὰ Πουώνσιος δύο κομα (l. κόμματα) σχοινίον εἰς τὴν ἐπιχρῆν τοῦ πρεσιδίου (l. πραισιδίου). As the editor suggests, Pouonsis could be identical with two other carriers with similar names mentioned in O.Claud. II 272 and 274 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). In O.Claud. 272 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) a certain Pousis delivers vegetables from Raima, which were sent by Patrempabathes to his correspondents Besarion, -emon, and Herminos. In O.Claud. 274 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a certain Pousis transfers slices of fish sent from Menodoros to Lucius from Raima to Mons Claudianus.<sup>37</sup> Unlike in the correspondence of Dioskoros, Pouonsis is explicitly said to operate in the last three examples between Raima and Mons Claudianus, but Dioskoros sends vegetables with him from somewhere to Mons Claudianus. Based on this, one might suppose that Dioskoros was stationed at Raima.<sup>38</sup> It is also known that Raima was the source of various vegetables.<sup>39</sup>

Another carrier, called Rufus, is attested delivering from Raima to Mon Claudianus bundles of vegetables from Patrempabathes to the same Apollinaris mentioned above (O.Claud. II 271; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). Likely, he is identical with the *familiaris* that was sent with imperial letters from Raima by the curator Serapion to Serenus, the curator of the quarry of Claudianus, in O.Claud. II 374, 2-4 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ἀπέλυσσα Ὠρίωνα στρατιώτην μετὰ δύο φαμηλιαριους (l. φαμηλιαρίων) [Ἐρ]μαπολων (l. Ἐρμαπόλλωνος) καὶ Ρούφου μετ' ἐπιστολῶν

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<sup>37</sup> For more examples, see e.g. Serenus in O.Krok. II 249 and 258 (first half of the reign of Hadrian), who was employed as carrier between Chairemon from Persou and Domitius from Krokodilo in O.Krok. II 249 and between Iulius Apollinaris (= Apollinaris II) and Priscus son of Maximianon in O.Krok. II 258. He is probably identical with Serenus, the horseman, who is attested in the circle of certain Longinus Apollinaris, in O.Krok. II 265 and 266 (first half of the reign of Hadrian), see the introduction to O.Krok. II, p.153 and also the introduction to O.Krok. II 266.

<sup>38</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. II 224-242, 45-46 where Bülow-Jacobsen discussed other reasons and variants possibilities to the location of Dioskoros.

<sup>39</sup> See chapter 4.

κυριακα (l. κυριακῶν) (Fig. 4).<sup>40</sup>

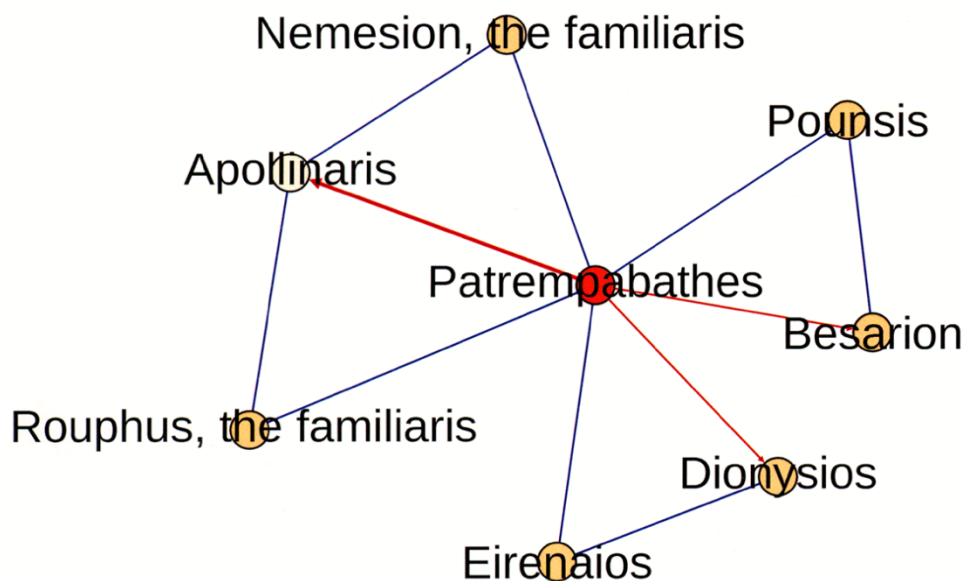


Figure 4. The network of Patrempabathes

Lastly, based on what is discussed above, sometimes even if the name of the carrier is not mentioned, we can suspect that he could be identical with another carrier used by the same correspondents. For example, in O.Krok. II 260, a letter addressed from Germanus Priscus and Iulius Apollinaris to Marcus and Apollinaris, Germanus tells the recipients to receive from the horseman cabbage. The editor suggests that he could be the same horseman attested in O.Krok. II 259 (first half of the reign of Hadrian), since it is also a letter circulated between the same correspondents.

The fact that the correspondents and carriers were often known to one another could be one of the reasons why the Eastern Desert letters do not contain addresses, except in very few cases.<sup>41</sup> In these cases, there was no need to provide the carrier with an address. By nature, ostraca do not provide privacy to the message; they can be read by anyone.<sup>42</sup> This makes the initial address available to the carrier, and he can know from whom and to whom the letter is

<sup>40</sup> See O.Claud. II 271 note to line 11.

<sup>41</sup> This is not saying that there were never addresses provided or that attempts were not made to verify the identity of the sender, such as through the use of the *σημείον ὅτι* clause; discussion of these issues can be found in chapter 4.

<sup>42</sup> For discussion of the lack of privacy in letters written on ostraca, in comparison to the letters written on papyri, see Sarri (2018) 79.

addressed just from its heading. In addition, word of mouth could be enough when people were known to each other. And if he was frequently employed for delivery between the same people, he would have known where to go and whom to look for. Providing him with an address in such cases was not necessary.

### 3.3.4 Identifying multiple carriers

Senders could involve multiple carriers. Several carriers might be used to deliver items to a single recipient, or several recipients could receive goods from a sender via multiple carriers. The use of multiple carriers in these examples could be a sign of larger scale commercial activities. For example, in a letter (O.Krok. II 199; 98-117) to Moukakinthos at Krokodilo, Philotera asks him to receive from [ ] on his vessel full of oil, from Pouaris the ox-head, and from Aulzanos a basket containing cheese and onions, ll. 3-11, κόμισαι πα[ρ . . . ]ωνος τὸ ἀγγεῖ[όν] σου ἐλαίου μεστέν (l. μεστόν), καὶ παρὰ Πούαρις τὸ βουκρά[νιν] καὶ παρὰ Αὐλοζά[νου] μαρσίππιν (l. μαρσίππιον) ὄπο[υ εἰ]σὶ τοιροῖ (l. τυροί) [±6] κρομ[μυ]. On the other hand, in O.Claud. II 257 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Libianus acknowledges to three different recipients in three letters written and compiled on one ostrakon that he received different goods from different carriers. The ostrakon was sent from Libianus in Raima to Mons Claudianus. The first one is addressed to Paternouthis in which he acknowledges the receipt of fish, ll.3-4 καικόμισμε (l. κεκόμισμαι) παρὰ Σερήνου φαμελειαρικοῦ δεμάχιν (l. τεμάχιον). The second is addressed to Diogenes and it is also about the receipt of fish, l.5 καικόμισμε (l. κεκόμισμαι) παρὰ Σερήνος (l. Σερήνου) τεμάχιν (l. τεμάχιον) ὄψαρ(ίδι) (l. ὄψαρ(ιδίου)). The last is addressed to Titioes, again about receiving fish, ll. 7-8 καικόμισμε (l. κεκόμισμαι) παρὰ Μαξίμου σ[τρατ]ι[ώτου (?)] τεμάχιν (l. τεμάχιον) ὄψαριδί (l. ὄψαριδίου). Writing three letters on the same ostrakon means that the receivers were located all together,<sup>43</sup> but to Paternouthis and Diogenes Libianus acknowledges receiving fish from the same carrier, Serenus the *familiaris*, whereas to Titioes he acknowledges getting the fish from Maximus (Fig. 2). One could think that the letter is part of a local trade operation and that fish is one of the goods that is often paid in letters; thus, Libianus had to be precise and accurate in acknowledging to each person by which carrier the fish was received. In addition to this, by the end of the letter Libianus informs them that he will send them cabbages through Pharitas.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Fournet (2003) 478.

<sup>44</sup> Pharitas is also known from unpublished documents belong to certain Alexas, see O.Claud. II 257, note to line 9.

We have seen before that Dioskoros, who sent vegetables to his fellow soldiers, would mention the carriers of the goods by name and ask his correspondents not to hesitate to acknowledge to him the receipt of these goods.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, he blamed them in cases where they did not acknowledge that they received the goods.<sup>46</sup>

Philokles the trader used the same practice in his local trade. In O.Did. 377 (before (?) ca. 110-115), he sent several commodities to one person by different carriers. In this letter, he informs his close friend Kapparis that he sent him through Serapion two gourds and through Ammonios a jar in which there are 20 apples filled with windfalls (πτώματα), in order to distribute them between other persons, ll.3-9 ἔπενψόν (l. ἔπεμψά) συ (l. σοι) διέ{ι} (l. διὰ) Σεραπίωνος κολοκύνθια δύο (l. δύο) καὶ διέ (l. διὰ) Ἀμμωνίου βαυκάλιν (l. βαυκάλιον) ὅπο<υ> ἔνι μῆλα κ καὶ πτώματα μεσστόν (l. μεστόν).<sup>47</sup>

Following such a practice implies, on the one hand, that finding a carrier was relatively easy. On the other hand, the care taken to mention the name of the carrier of each item could have been for the security of the delivery. It is well known that sending things by a trustworthy person is more secure than sending them by just any messenger.<sup>48</sup> Specifying the names of more than one carrier in one letter might reflect business practice and the necessity of providing precise and accurate information of transactional matters. Therefore, messages sometimes contained only information about the goods and by whom they were carried. The correspondence of Philokles and Dioskoros illustrate this best. Philokles was certainly heading

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<sup>45</sup> In O.Claud. II 233 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which is in his hand, he names the carriers, ll.5-7 ἐκομι]σάμην δεμάχ(ια) (l. τεμάχια) ε̅ ἀπὸ Να[ . . . . . ] ις ἐκομισάμ(ην) δεμά[χια] (l. τεμά[χια]) [ . παρ]ὰ Πανίσκου. For an example of a text in which he tells the recipient not to hesitate responding, see O.Claud. II 228, 13-16 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) μὴ ὀγνήσεται (l. ὀκνήσητε) ὃ λαμβάνεται (l. λαμβάνετε) γράψον μοι ἵνα καὶ ἐγὼ μάθω ὅτι ἔλαβα (l. ἔλαβον) τὸ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ, 'Do not hesitate but write to me what you receive so that I, too, may know that you have received what he carried, trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>46</sup> O.Claud. II 226, 13-16 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ἔπεμψα ἡμιν (l. ὑμῖν) τριθε ἡμερας (l. τριθημέρη) καυλίων δέσμας γ καὶ οὐκ ἔγραψες (l. ἔγραψάς) μου (l. μοι) τὸ ἀντίγραφον ὅτι ἔλαβα (l. ἔλαβον) ἢ οὐκ ἔλαβα (l. ἔλαβον), 'I sent you 3 bunches of cabbage three days ago and you did not write me an answer 'I have received' or 'I have not received', trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>47</sup> From this letter, one can get the impression that Kapparis was an agent that Philokles relied to distribute goods as part of his local trade. For more examples where the same practice was used, see: O.Did. 397 (before (?) ca. 110-115); O.Krok. II 204; 215 (98-117); 239; 241; 259; 261 (first half of the reign of Hadrian); 306 (98-117; CPL 303= O.Faw. 1 (1st-2nd cent.).

<sup>48</sup> See Fournet (2003) 477.



a large local trade operation in the area, but Dioskoros and probably other figures such as Libianus and Patrempabathes might have conducted small operations.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.3.5 Carriers with no reference in letters

Sometimes the carriers of letters or other items are not mentioned in letters, but the context could refer to them, as in SB VI 9017 Nr. 31= O.Faw. 31, 19-21 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) [.] κόμισαι ἕξ ὀβολοὺς τῶν λαχάνων ὧν μοι ἔπεμψας, ‘receive the six obols of the vegetables which you sent to me’. It could be understood from the use of the imperative mood that the reference is to an unnamed carrier, from whom the vegetables are to be taken.

### 3.3.6 Writers of letters who are involved in deliveries

Ammonios writes a letter to Hermaiskos asking him to send a sack, which he will fill with one artaba of wheat and bring to him at Mons Claudianus, O.Claud. IV 870 + 895 (ca. 150-154), 14-16 πέμψον σάκκον που μίαν καὶ σὺν ἐμοὶ κατανεχθήσεται (l. κατενηχθήσεται) vac.<sup>50</sup> Another example is found in a letter from Sknips the wife of Philokles, who informs a certain Domittius to expect her soon with oil and lentils, O.Krok. II 192, 7-10 (98-117) προσδέχου με εὐθέως ἔχουσαν ἔλεν (l. ἔλαιον) καὶ φακόν.

### 3.3.7 On my shoulder

In a private letter sent from Raima to Mons Claudianus, a certain Apollinaris tells Sonsnaus that he brought him dates which he carried on his shoulder as far as Raima, O.Claud. II 276, 4-11 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) καλῶς ποιήσις (l. ποιήσεις) λαβὼν τὸ σουβα<λά>ριόν μου παρὰ τοῦ ὄνηλάτου τοῦ τὴν πινακίδα<sup>51</sup> (l. πινακίδα) ἔχοντος καὶ πλῆ/σόν μοι αὐτὸ ὑδάτους. εὐρεῖς δὲ ἐν τῇ σαργάνῃ πεταλίαν φοινικίων ο (l. ἦν) ἐβάσταξα το (l. τῷ) ὄμφ μου ἰς (l. εἰς) Ραιμια, ‘please when you receive my subalare from the donkey driver who is carrying the tablet fill it with water for me. You will find in the basket a crate of dates which I carried on my shoulder to Raima’. It is not clear from where the sender of the letter brought the dates to Raima on his shoulder.

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<sup>49</sup> Dioskoros in particular likely had gardens to cultivate vegetables, see the introduction to O.Claud. II 224-242, pp.44-46. For soldiers acting as farmers, see MacMullen (1967) 1-22.

<sup>50</sup> The text is joined in a new edition in Bülow-Jacobsen (2012) 219-221.

<sup>51</sup> See O.Claud. II 276, n.7 and Ch. 2.

### 3.4 Slaves

Slaves are attested as carriers of both letters and other items. In K666 (an unpublished letter) the sender informs the receiver that he sent him a letter through the servant of the curator, Antonas, ἔπεμψά σοι ἐπιστολὴν διὰ τοῦ παιδαρίου τοῦ κουράτορος Ἀντωνάτος.<sup>52</sup> In O.Ber. II 193 (ca. 50-75), Herennios tells Satornilos to give to Stichus the slave of Narcissus his little shield and collect from him perhaps two shirts and the incense, ll.3-7 [καλ]ῶς ποιήσεις (l. ποιήσεις) δούς Στύχῳι (l. Στίχῳι) Ναρκίσσου τὸ ἀσπιδίσκιν (l. ἀσπιδίσκιον) αὐτοῦ καὶ αἰτήσας αὐτὸν ἅ μοι ὁμολόγησεν μαλθακτέρια (l. μαλθακτήρια) δύο καὶ λιβάνιν (l. λιβάνιον). The editors suggest that Narcissus could be the known freedman of the emperor Claudius who was owner of property in Egypt. Narcissus was known to be the person in charge of all official correspondence of Claudius.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.5 Boats

There is limited evidence for the use of boats to deliver letters.<sup>54</sup> Two letters in an imperfect condition are interesting because they report the usage of boats in the Red Sea to deliver correspondence and other items, most likely between Berenike and Myos Hormos.

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<sup>52</sup> See Cuvigny (2003b) 370 and Fournet (2003) 477 for more attestations and different terms used in reference to slaves in the Eastern Desert, but not as carriers.

<sup>53</sup> See Wells (1995) 115; Bruce (1985) 260; more details in Gibson (2013) 4697-4698 and Stein (1935) 1701-1705. The reference to Serapion the παῖς of the donkey driver who delivered cabbage in O.Did. 447 (before (?) ca. 140 -150) between Harpokras (who was in Phoinikon) to Damas, Athenodoros, and all the friends (who are likely military men in Didymoi) might be taken as the son of the donkey driver, ll.4-7 κώμισαι (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ Σεραπίωνος παιδὸς ὄνηλάτου (l. ὄνηλάτου) τέσμας (l. δέσμας) κράβης (l. κράμβης) and not the slave.

<sup>54</sup> There is a reference in a letter from Maximianon (for discussion of the provenance of the ostraca in O.Florida, see chapter 1) to a soldier who is meant to use the provisions-boat to get to his wife in the Arsinoite, O.Florida 14 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). In it, Maximus, the sender of the letter, tells his wife, the receiver, that he would come to her in the provisions-boat, ll.6-7 εἶνα (l. ἴνα) εἰσέλθῳ ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ τῶν κιβαρίων. This means that he will move from Maximianon to either Koptos or Kaine in order to take the provisions-boat to the Arsinoite nome. However, finding this letter in Maximianon implies that it was never sent. Before concluding that the ostraca of Florida were found in Maximianon, Adams thought that the letter is addressed from a soldier stationed in Upper Egypt and was sent to his wife who was perhaps living in the Arsinoite nome. He also mentioned that the boat “refers to a provisions- boat, which, it is implied, travelled regularly between the Arsinoite nome and the soldier’s station. It is likely that such a boat would have been a civilian vessel requisitioned by the state, perhaps under similar arrangements to those requisitioned for the transport of the *annona*”. See Adams (2007) 208 and n.49. For discussion of whether the sender of O.Florida 14 is a woman or a man, see Thomas (1978) 142-144; Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 167-168

There was no coastal road at the time of our texts between these two ports. Therefore, it makes sense that boats carried letters and other items between them. Of the two letters, the first is from Berenike. It appears never to have been sent since it was found there. In it, a mother (in Berenike) writes to her son blaming him for his neglect to write to her. She proceeds to say to him that she thought it necessary to write since a boat was putting out to sea, P.Ber. II 129 (ca. 50-75), 1-3 [Ἰκάνη] Ἰσιδώ[ρω τῷ υἱῷ χαίρειν· πρὸ μὲν πάντων ἀναγκαῖ]ον ἠγησάμην ἐφολκίου ἀναγομένου γρά[ψαι - ca.14 -] ἐμέ. [ἐ]ν [Βε]ρνίκη εἰμί. ἐγὼ (l. ἐγὼ) μὲν σοι ἐπιστολὴν γεγράφηκα [. . .] [.] [.] [.] [.] [.] [.] ἐπιστολὴν. The verso of the letter contains the following address, ἀπόδ(ος) Εἰκάνη Ἰσιδώρω τῷ υἱῷ ὄρμιτω (l. ὄρμιτη), ‘Deliver: Hikane to Isidoros her son, harborman’. As the editor indicates, the title comes from ὄρμος with the ending of -ιτης, which might connect it to Myos Hormos, the only other major Egyptian port on the Red Sea.<sup>55</sup> In such a case, one would suppose that the letter was sent from Berenike to Myos Hormos up the Red Sea coast by boat. Another letter also from Berenike, P.Ber. II 130 (ca. 50-75), refers to the transfer of utensils likely by sea. It is addressed from a woman called Aphrodite to Lucius her husband. The letter is very fragmentary but in line 3-4 there is reference to utensils likely having been delivered by sea, β . . . κε[ . . . ] ἀναβέβη[κεν] ὦ[ -ca.?- ] ἴνα παρ’ ἐμοῦ τὰ σκεοῦη (l. σκεύη), ‘have boarded . . . the utensils from me’.<sup>56</sup>

The Latin names of the people mentioned in the second letter (besides Lucius, there is also Valerius and Antonius) place it in a military milieu. The type of ship used for the delivery is not known as it is not mentioned. The boat or ἐφόλκιον<sup>57</sup> used in the first letter is attested before but during the Ptolemaic period and is in fact rare. The first attestation is in a fragment of a letter or memorandum from Philadelphia (P.Cair. Zen. IV 59648; mid 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE) where there is talk of building a boat, ll. 7-8 ποιήσουσι δὲ τὸ ἐφόλ[κιον τοῦ] μήκους ἑξάπηχυν, ‘they will build boat of six cubit length’. And the second reference is in a very fragmentary official letter from the Arsinoite, P.Haun. I 12, 9 (162-161 BCE) ἐφόλκιον.

ἐφόλκιον or ἐφολκίς is mentioned in the *Odyssey* of Homer (*Odyssey* XIV 350) and was known to be a small boat dragged by big ship and similar to the λέμβος.<sup>58</sup> We do not know if the boat in our text was towed after a military ship or not, and it is hard to judge because our

<sup>55</sup> Trans. (eds.) Bagnall et al.. See the note to verso for the discussion about this line.

<sup>56</sup> Trans. (eds.) Bagnall et al., and see P.Ber. II 130, note to line 3.

<sup>57</sup> Literary towing boat, for several terms of this boat, see Casson (1971) 248, n. 93.

<sup>58</sup> Assmann (1905) 2860, LSJ, s.v. and P.Ber. II 129 note to line 2. It is also listed in the index of Casson (1959) 265 where it refers to ship’s boat towed astern.

letter is private and the conveyance of it has been done presumably in an unofficial context. The Roman milieu suggested by the names makes it not impossible, however.

But we do know about the existence of at least one Roman military dispatch boat in the port of Myos Hormos from a papyrus preserving a loan of money dating to 25 March 93, probably around the time of the Berenike letters. The lender of the money in this loan is a soldier or sailor named Lucius Longinus who served in the Roman fleet and belonged to the dispatch ship, or *tessaria navis*, Hippokamos (the “seahorse”). The fact that the loan has to be repaid after a period of five months means that the ship might have been available long-term in the Red Sea. The ship to which the soldier belongs might have been part of a unit of the Roman navy in the Red Sea that was responsible for protecting international commercial activities.<sup>59</sup>

The existence of these references in the letters of Berenike, from a private context, or the loan of Myos Hormos, an official one, raises the question of the existence of an official maritime postal service in the Red Sea,<sup>60</sup> which might have been used to deliver items in unofficial contexts, too. We have seen that the horsemen who transferred the official correspondence also delivered unofficial letters. By analogy, soldiers in the fleet might have delivered items unofficially, as well.

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<sup>59</sup> See Van Rengen (2011) 336, 338. There is more evidence of the existence of the Roman fleet in the Red Sea during the Roman period, particularly during the 1st century. This could be confirmed by two texts belong to the archive of Nikanor. The first (O.Petr.296= O.Petr.Mus.197; 6-50 CE) mentions the trierarchos who is a captain of a trireme, which is a warship used by the Roman army. The second (O.Petr.279= O.Petr.Mus.142; 52 CE) mentions the *tesserarius* of a liburna. The liburna was a warship also adopted by the Roman army, which confirms that the *tesserarius* or the watch commander here is an officer in the Roman army. This supports the existence of the Roman fleet either near Myos Hormos or Berenike or maybe the fleet split at the two ports. The existence of this fleet must have been connected to international trade (probably its protection) in the Red Sea, see Nappo (2013) 57-58, 60-62; Sidebotham (1986) 68-71; Speidel (2015) 95. Moreover, two Latin inscriptions, AE 2005, 1640=AE 2007, 1659 (117-138?); AE 2004, 1643=AE 2005, 1639=AE 2007, 1659 (140 CE), from the main island of the Farasan archipelago, which is located near to the coast of Saudi Arabia south of the Red Sea, provide evidence of the existence of the Roman navy in the Red Sea during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century; for more discussion, see Jördens (2018) 86-87 and Speidel (2015) 89-94, 96; (2007) 297-301.

<sup>60</sup> See Van Rengen (2011) 336-338, where he discusses the existence of a naval *cursus publicus* and the use of ships for official postal service in the Red Sea.

### 3.6 The caravan (πορεία)

I cannot leave this chapter without mentioning three other possible ways used for transporting goods: by camel driver, donkey driver, or a chance person going the way of the addressee.

Most of the attestations of the caravan in letters are in unofficial contexts.<sup>61</sup> As I mentioned earlier, they were basically used for the transportation of goods, but one reference may represent evidence for using it to circulate letters, even if this letter was never sent (it was found in Didymoi in the place where it was composed): in O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92), Longinus informs Numerius that he sent him a reply through the camel drivers, ll.7-10 εὐθέως ἔγραψα καὶ ἔπεμψά σοι ἀντιφώνησιν διὰ τῶν καμηλιτῶν τῶν μετὰ τῶν κιβαρίων ἀναβεβηκότων, ‘I write at once and send you a reply through the camel drivers who have come up with provisions’.<sup>62</sup> Likely, this is the caravan which came up with provisions to the stations on the road to Berenike.

In official contexts, the caravan is also mentioned. In a copy of a postal daybook from Krokodilo, a caravan is mentioned pertaining to the transfer of something. Unfortunately, the items transferred are lost in the lacuna; nevertheless, it is interesting because it refers to using the caravan officially to circulate items, O.Krok. I 27 (after 5. Oct. 109) γ ὄρ(α) α ἡμ(έρα)ς μετὰ πορίας (l. πορείας) [ . . . ] . . . . . ρα [ -ca.?- ].

In O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92), the caravan that is mentioned in the text seems also to be the one that came up with provisions from Koptos to the desert, despite it is not being identified as a πορεία. The evidence for this caravan appears also on the road to Myos Hormos in unofficial letters from Krokodilo.<sup>63</sup> Basically, Koptos was the caravan hub; from it departed caravans of camels and donkeys heading toward the Red Sea ports of Myos Hormos and Berenike.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Official: O.Krok. I 75 (ca. 117-125); daybooks: O.Krok. I 4 (after (?) 21. June 108); O.Krok. I 27 (after 5. Oct. 109). Unofficial: O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92); 345 (before (?) ca. 78-85); 402 (before (?) ca. 110-115); 404 (before (?) ca. 140-150); 419 (before (?) ca. 115-120); O.Claud. II 243; 245; 273; 278 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Krok. II 272 (first half of the reign of Hadrian); 282; 316 (98-117).

<sup>62</sup> Trans Bülow-Jacobsen. For discussion of this letter, see also chapter 2.

<sup>63</sup> See O.Krok. II 272 (first half of the reign of Hadrian); 282; 316 (98-117).

<sup>64</sup> See Bagnall (2004) 281. The πορεία likely contained camels and donkeys together. In K603 the writer mentions that ‘if the caravan came out I shall come with the donkeys’, καὶ ἐὰν ἀναβῆ ἡ πορεία ἐλεύσομαι μετὰ τῶν ὄναρίων. In O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92) the sender informs the receiver that he sent him a reply through the camel drivers who came up with provisions, καὶ ἔπεμψά σοι ἀντιφώνησιν διὰ τῶν καμηλιτῶν τῶν μετὰ τῶν κιβαρίων

The caravan went also regularly to Mons Claudianus from Kainopolis.<sup>65</sup> It passed by Raima, Mons Claudianus and arrived at Tiberiane before turning back. This appears from the letters of Petenephotos. He was stationed in Tiberiane and used to exchange various things with his brother Valerius, who was in Mons Claudianus, by way of the caravan. Petenephotos once identified the caravan by the word πορεία, O.Claud. II 245, 2-12 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) [καλῶς] πυήσις (l. ποιήσεις), ἄδελφε, ἐὰν ἔλθῃ ἡ πορήε (l. πορεία) τῆ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ ἴπεμψας μοι/ τρία ζεύγη ἄρτων ἐπὶ (l. ἐπεὶ) οὐκ ἔχο (l. ἔχω) ἄρτους καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἡ πορήα (l. πορεία) πέμψω σοι (l. σοι) αὐτά. ἀσπάζομε (l. ἀσπάζομαι) Κολοφονήν. καλῶς πυης (l. ποιήσεις), ἄδελφε, ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἡ πορήα (l. πορεία) ἔτησον (l. αἴτησον) τῶν (l. τὸν) χαλκῶν τῶν (l. τῶν) τασκου καὶ πέμψης (l. πέμψεις) με (l. μοι) τὰς ἄλλα(ς) (δραχμὰς) θ, ‘Please brother, if the caravan arrives tonight, send me three pairs of bread as I do not have any bread and when the caravan arrives I shall send them to you. I greet Kolophonos. Please, brother, when the caravan arrives demand the money for the *taskou* and send me the remaining 9 drachmas’.<sup>66</sup> And in another letter, he identified the caravan by using the word ‘camels’, O.Claud. II 243, 9-12 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) καλῶς οἰ[ῶν] ποι<ή>σις, ἐὰν ἐξέλθῃ καμ[ή]λια, πέμψον μοι [τ]ὰ τέσσερα (l. τέσσαρα) τασκο[υ.], ‘so please whenever camels leave, send me the four *taskou*’.<sup>67</sup> From these examples it is clear that the caravan arrived first at Mons Claudianus, then to Tiberiane, and then went back again.

As for Raima, in a letter addressed from a certain Apollos to Ammonios and sent from Raima to Mons Claudianus, Apollos informs his correspondent that he sent him vegetables with the caravan (O.Claud. II 278; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), 15-16 ἔπεμψά σοι (l. σοι) μετὰ τῆς πορίας (l. πορίας) λάχανα. From the previous two letters, it clearly appears that the caravan can transfer both light stuff like bread or heavy items like the *taskou*. It has also transferred vegetables (O.Claud. II 278; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); oil? (O.Krok. II 272; first half of the reign of Hadrian); *matia* of lentils (O.Krok. II 282; 98-117); money in addition to wheat (O.Krok. II 316; 98-117).

The caravan also accompanied people to their destination. People must have made use of it both for the company and for protection. In O.Did. 402 (before (?) ca. 110-115), Veturius informs Theanous who has recently given birth that if she wants to come to him with the

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ἀναβεβηκότων, see Kaper (1998) 69 and note 10, the introduction to O.Did., p.10 and Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 401.

<sup>65</sup> See Adams (2007) 208.

<sup>66</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>67</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. For discussion of *taskou*, see chapter 2.

caravan, she will not be distressed, ll. 7-8 *ἐάν σὺ (l. σοι) φανῆ ἔλθῃν (l. ἐλθεῖν) ὄτῃ (l. ὄδε) τῆ πορεία (l. πορείᾳ) οὐ λυπήθησε (l. λυπηθήσει)*, ‘if you want to come here with the caravan, you will not be distressed’.<sup>68</sup> Veturius is likely in Koptos and Theanous was in Didymoi which means that she would join the caravan on its way back to Koptos.<sup>69</sup> Claudius, who writes a letter in Latin to Numosis, simply informs him that he will come to him with the caravan, O.Did. 419, 4-5 (before (?) ca. 115-120) *qum (l. cum) poria uenio at (l. ad) te*.<sup>70</sup>

The πορεία or the supply caravan visited the desert frequently.<sup>71</sup> It supplied the stations along both of the roads, to Myos Hormos and Berenike, and returned empty or presumably with imported goods and products acquired in these ports.<sup>72</sup> The frequency and the regularity of it are not known, but people stationed in the desert seems to have been aware of this and have expected the caravan at specific times. This appears from O.Did. 404 (before (?) ca. 140-150), a letter addressed from Theophilos to his sister Theanous, the woman who gave birth and was going to the place of Veturius. Theophilos writes from Aphroditis Orous to warn his sister at Didymoi that the caravan is approaching and that she should get ready, ll.3-8 *γινώσκειν (l. γινώσκειν) [Θ] σε θέλω ὅτι ἡ πορεία (l. πορεία) ἔρχεται εἰς Διδύμους τῆ ἐβδόμη (l. ἐβδόμη) καὶ εἰκάδι. διὸ ἔγραψά σοι ἵνα ἐτοιμάσεις (l. ἐτοιμάσης) τὰ σά*, ‘I wish you to know that the caravan comes to Didymoi on the twenty-seventh. So, I write to you in order that you get your things ready’.<sup>73</sup> A certain Numerius was also waiting for the arrival of the caravan in one or two days, as appears from his letter (O.Did 345; before (?) ca. 78-85) to his fellow soldier Longinus.

In O.Did. 136, which is a loan dating to 14 May 215, a debtor relied on the arrival of the πορεία to cancel his debt. The deadline for the repayment was apparently when the caravan

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<sup>68</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>69</sup> See the introduction to O.Did. 402-405.

<sup>70</sup> In O.Krok. II 316 (98-117) Zosime was going also with the caravan on the road between Koptos and Myos Hormos.

<sup>71</sup> This is different from the commercial caravan such as that of Nikanor; for discussion of the Nikanor archive and his commercial activities, see Ast (2018) 4-13, Kruse (2018) 370-379 and Ruffing (1993) 1-26.

<sup>72</sup> See the introduction to O.Did. pp.10-11 and Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 564. For discussion of the expected number of camel loads that might have been provisioned to Berenike each month and other sites such as Mons Claudianus, see Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 564; Adams (2007) 209; Adams and Laurence (2001, e-print 2005) 184-188.

<sup>73</sup> Trans Bülow-Jacobsen.

arrives,<sup>74</sup> ll. 1-5 [ -ca.?- ] . . . [ -ca.?- ] θω πορεία χωρὶς πάσης ἀ<v>τιλογί<a>ς καὶ πάσης μάχης, ‘the caravan without any argument or any dispute’. The caravan which set out to Berenike must have taken around three weeks to go from Didymoi to Berenike and came back, again.<sup>75</sup> The daybook of O.Krok. I 4 (after (?) 21. June 108) records the passage of the πορεία by Krokodilo on the morning of the 7th of Pauni and its return on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> of the same month, ll. 4-5 ζ ἡ πορία (l. πορεία) ἐγγέγυτο ἰς (l. εἰς) πραισίδ(ιον) ὄραγ (l. ὄραν) [ -ca.?- ] καὶ συνέστρεψε τῆ ιγ ὄραγ (l. ὄραν) γ ἡμ[έρας -ca.?- ]. This implies that the caravan took to arrive to Myos Hormos and to come back to Krokodilo around 6-7 days.<sup>76</sup> As for the caravan to Mons Claudianus, it might have taken around 10 days to do round trip starting from the Nile valley.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.7 The προβολή (*probole*)

There are few attestations to the προβολή concerning the delivery of letters. In fact, there is still debate about what is meant by the word προβολή. In the LSJ, one of the meanings listed for it is ‘advanced body of cavalry’. This is the meaning which has been adopted for the word in the texts published from the Eastern Desert early on, e.g., O.Claud. II 227 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), 279 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), 375, 376 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and 380 (138-161). Bülow-Jacobsen took it to mean ‘advanced cavalry party’ or ‘horse patrol’.<sup>78</sup> Cuvigny argued that the προβολή is probably a general term and could refer to a local shuttle consisting of riders between two

<sup>74</sup> See the introduction to O.Did. p.10 and the introduction to O.Did. 136. The importance of expecting the caravan might be because it brings supplies to the *praesidia*. O.Did. 84 (before (?) ca. 230-240) is an account of caravan records for provisions to high officials, military men and civilians.

<sup>75</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 565.

<sup>76</sup> Passing by Krokodilo to Myos Hormos and going back to Krokodilo in seven days covering around 222 km implies walking 7 hours per day at 4.5 km/h which means 31.7 km per day, see Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 406. Strabo also mentions that camel journey from Koptos to Myos Hormos could take 6 or 7 days (Geo. 17.1.45). As for the journey from Koptos to Berenike, Pliny informs us that it takes 12 days, with 257 miles distance from Koptos to Berenike (NH. 6.26.102-104). What is also interesting in O.Krok. I 4 (after (?) 21. June 108) is the mention of the small caravan, l. 7 ο . . . μικρὰ (l. μικρὰ) πορία (l. πορεία): Παυνι ιε διὰ Α[ -ca.?- ] it might have destined to supply only Myos Hormos and might mean that small caravan might have only supplied one station, see the introduction to O.Did. p.11.

<sup>77</sup> See Adams (2007) 209.

<sup>78</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 403.



neighboring sites.<sup>79</sup> Bülow-Jacobsen concluded that *προβολή* and *πορεία* are likely equivalent. On the one hand, the *προβολή* probably consisted of donkeys; on the other, it was organized in a different way to the donkeys (*οἱ ὄνοι*) and their drivers (*ὄνηλάται*), who might have enjoyed more freedom of movement and choice when it came to transport. He also states that ‘[p]erhaps the *probolē* was a military donkey-caravan, somehow different from the *πορεία*, while ‘the donkeys’ refer to the more private donkey-drivers that appear to have plied their trade between the *praesidia*’.<sup>80</sup> I agree that the *προβολή* seems to be an alternative to the *πορεία*; it has an official military function but was used in unofficial contexts to transfer items, as I will discuss.

What suggests that the *probole* had an official function similar to the *poreia* is a passage in a daybook, but the text is in bad condition and does not provide good details, O.Krok. I 14, 11 (after (?) 21. June 108) [ -ca.?- π]ροβολή( ) πορίας (l. πορείας) . . [ -ca.?- ]. Moreover, in the official letter O.Claud. II 375 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which is addressed from Sarapion the curator of the *praesidium* of Raima to Aelius Serenus, the curator of the quarry of Mons Claudianus, Sarapion asks Aelius to send at once two *familiares*, should the *πορεία* or the *προβολή* not come up to them. This supports the hypothesis that the *πορεία* and *προβολή* are essentially synonymous, ll.8-11, ἐξαυτῆς πέμψον αὐτοὺς μὴ ἐξάφιν ἔλθῃ ἐπάνω ἡμῖν ἢ πορία ἢ προβολή, ‘immediately send them as soon as either the caravan or the *probole* do not come up to us’.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, what is interesting about the texts concerning the *προβολή* is the close interlinking between it and the transporting or accompaniment of individuals to their destinations, often together with goods. In O.Claud. II 279 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the sender of the letter informs the receiver that he will bring the price of something when he comes with the *προβολή*, ll. 9-11 τὴν τιμὴν αὐτοῦ φέρω σοι ἐρχόμενος μετὰ τῆς προβολῆς. Also in the unpublished letter (O.Max. inv. 89) the sender informs the receiver that he will come with the *probole*,<sup>82</sup> τῇ προβολῇ ἐλεύσομαι, ἐγὼ δὲ οὐχ οὕτως σπουδαῖός εἰμι, ‘I shall come with the *probole*, for I am not that pressed for time’. The military men have also got the advantage of moving with the *προβολή*, as in O.Did. 462 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century), which is a letter sent from Aphroditēs Orous to Didymoi, ll.9-15, κα[λῶς πο]ιήσεις, ἐὰν μέλλῃ ἀ[ναβῆν]αι Λούκις ὁ συστρα[τιώτης] ἐκ τοῦ πραισιδίου(υ) μου [ἢ τε με]τὰ ὄνων ἢ τε με[τὰ προ]βολῆς, ἵνα δοῖς αὐ[τῷ τ]ὰς (δραχμάς)

<sup>79</sup> See O.Did. p.10. Adams in (2007) 210 discusses that the *προβολή* had military function for protection from bandits and risks on the desert roads.

<sup>80</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 566-567.

<sup>81</sup> See also O.Claud. II 376 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which is a letter between the same two officials, l.10 τὴν πορίαν ἢ π[ροβολήν].

<sup>82</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 566.

κς τοῦ κιθῶ[νος ἴ]γα ἐνέγκη μοι. ‘Please, if Lucius, fellow soldier of my *praesidium*, is about to come down here, whether with the donkeys or with the *probole*, give him the 26 drachmas for the chiton so that he can bring them to me’.<sup>83</sup> This could imply that, as with the caravan, these people joined the *προβολή* for reasons of protection as well as a means of transportation.

As for delivering goods unofficially by means of the *probole*, in SB XXVIII 17101 (150-175), an unofficial letter from Maximianon, the sender asks the receiver to do all he can to send him half an artaba of barley until the *προβολή* arrives, ll. 4-7 πᾶν οὖν ποιήσον πέμψαι εἰμιαρτάβιν (l. ἡμιαρτάβιον) κριθῆς εἶνα (l. ἴνα) σχῆ ἕως τῆς προβολῆς, ‘Please, therefore, do all you can to send half an artaba of barley, so that it has (something to eat) until the *probole* (arrives)’.<sup>84</sup> From this letter, one gets the impression that the *προβολή* was also a way of supplying provisions to the sites. The *προβολή* transferred also 2 suckle pigs (O.Did. 416; before (?) ca. 120-150); a jar (O.Claud. II 227; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); grain (O.Dios inv. 106); ropes (O.Claud. II 376; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); and clothes (O.Dios inv. 382).<sup>85</sup>

### 3.8 The *conductor*

The identity of the *conductor* is also not known certainly. However, the meaning of the word has been taken in the earlier published texts of the Eastern Desert to be ‘driver’, or ‘guide, escort’.<sup>86</sup> But from the appearance of new texts and the appearance of the ‘quintana’ tax in the texts of Berenike,<sup>87</sup> Cuvigny discussed in the introduction to O.Did. that the word could also refer to a tax collector.<sup>88</sup> This is what Bülow-Jacobsen tended to, later. He also suggested that the *conductors* could transfer things as they moved around.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen with modification.

<sup>84</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 422.

<sup>85</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 566.

<sup>86</sup> For detailed discussion of the ‘*conductor*’ and the word’s general meaning, see Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 410-412 where he also ponders the function of the *conductor* in the Eastern Desert: if the word is a synonym for ἀμαξεύς or ἀμαξηλάτης, it may refer to the soldier who was in charge of the train of wagons or the guide who knew the way, but the second possibility is less likely.

<sup>87</sup> For the tax of Quintana, see the introduction to O.Ber. II pp. 5-7.

<sup>88</sup> See the introduction to O.Did. pp.27-28. As for, the feminine form κονδοκτρία, according to the earlier suggestions it might be as in the middle ages, madame or likely, the wife of the *conductor*, see O.Did. 401, n.7. Or it could be the way by which women accompanied κοράσιον in their journeys from site to other, see the introduction to O.Did. p.28

<sup>89</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 567.

As for the *conductors* as carriers, they are attested in the forthcoming volume of O.Krok. II as carriers of goods (e.g., O. Krok. II 239; first half of the reign of Hadrian, with Arianus the *conductor* carrying a bunch of beets; O.Krok. II 259; first half of the reign of Hadrian, with Herakleides the *conductor*; *mation* of salt). In other unpublished texts, they delivered light weight items, such as money (M46); fish (M176), a pair of scissors (M 769), and vegetables (M869).<sup>90</sup>

In addition to this, we see a person planning to go away with the *conductors*, probably toward the valley in M362, ἵν' ἀπέλω μετὰ τῶν κονδουκτόρων, 'so that I can go away together with the *conductores*'.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 410.

<sup>91</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 410.

## 4 Communication and the circulation of letters and goods

### 4.1 Official correspondence

#### 4.1.1 Organization of the circulation of official correspondence and goods

By the end of O.Claud. II 376 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the sender of this official letter, Sarapion, curator of the *praesidium* of Raima, mentions that he released the carrier Pouonsis at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour.<sup>1</sup> In official daybooks such as O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108),<sup>2</sup> we find details about the delivery of official correspondence (e.g. the exact times and days on which letters were delivered; the names of the deliverers; the places between which correspondence traveled).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in the acknowledgments and records that were kept by the curators of the *praesidia*, times and dates of the circulation of correspondence were recorded.<sup>4</sup> This was likely an oversight measure intended to keep the postal system functioning relatively smoothly: Cases of delay or neglect would be reported, as observed in P.Worp. 51 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which reports the delay of Herakles, the horseman, because of what was deemed to be an unacceptable reason, ll. 6-10 Ἡρακλῆς ἰππεὺς [[δ]] λαβὼν (added at left: τὰς) ἐπιστολὰς ὥραν ι τῆς νυκτὸς (added at left: ἡϋρ(ον?)) ἐξῆλθε, ὃ καὶ δύνασαι ἐπιγνῶναι, μετὰ γυναικὸς κοιμώμενος, ‘Herakles the horseman who took the letters, left at the 10<sup>th</sup> hour of the night, which you also can observe, because he was lying with a woman’.

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<sup>1</sup> Ll. 5-12 ἀπέλυσα Πουωνσιος (l. Πουῶνσιν) φαμηλιαριου (l. φαμηλιάριον). καλῶς ποιήσις πέμψας διὰ Πουόνσιος δύο κομα (l. κόμματα) σχοινίον εἰς τὴν ἐπιχρῆν τοῦ πραισιδίου (l. πραισιδίου) ἐπὶ ἀναε[ -ca.?- ] τὴν πορίαν ἢ π[ροβολήν.] ἐπέλυσα (l. ἀπέλυσα) ἀπ[τὸν -ca.?- ] ὥρα θ.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. O.Krok. I 1, 17 (ca. 108-109) α κλ(ῆρος) λ· ἐπιστολαὶ ἀπὸ Μυσόρμου/ [ῆ]νέκθ(ησαν) (l. [ῆ]νέχθ(ησαν)) ἀπὸ Πέρσου διὰ Δομ(ιττίου) ἰπέ(ως) ὥραν (l. ὥραν) γ ἡμ(έρας)· ἰς (l. εἰς) Φοι(νικῶνα) Καιγιζα, ‘tour 1, date (30), letters from Myos Hormos were brought from Persou through Domittius the horseman, at hour 3 of the day, Kaigiza (delivered them) to Phoinikon. For another example, see also the daybook of O.Krok. I 27 (after 5 Oct. 109).

<sup>3</sup> Details about controls on the movement of carriers are unclear. It is known that a pass document (πιττάκιον) was required by travelers to pass from one station to the next, as appears from the letter (O.Claud. II 246; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) of Petenephotes, who was in Tiberiane, to his brother Valerius who was in Mons Claudianus, in which he asks his brother to send four drachmas for a pass (πιττάκιον), see Hirt (2010) 181. See also O.Claud. II 247 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) regarding the same πιττάκιον and Jördens (2009) 387 for the πιττάκιον on travelers in the Eastern Desert.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. O.Dios inv. 807, published in Cuvigny (2013) 426.

#### 4.1.2 Official circulars

Official circulars or *diplomata* sent from the prefect of the desert in Koptos and other high commanders were dispatched from one station to the next and were likely copied down at each station before they were sent further.<sup>5</sup> This is supported by the fact that they are addressed to all the curators of the *praesidia* of one specific road and not to one single curator. They contain important demands and information concerning logistics, which had to be spread to officials and soldiers in the stations, such as a letter addressed from the prefect of the desert Artorius Priscillus to the curators of the *praesidia* of the road of Myos Hormos concerning accounts of wheat, barley and chaff, O.Krok. I 44, 10-12 (after (?) 13. July 10) Ἐφίπ ιη [Ἄρ]τώρις (l. [Ἄρ]τώριος) Πρίσκ(ιλλος) κ[ουράτ]ορσι πρα<ι>σιδ(ίων) ὁδοῦ Μυσορμ(ιτικῆς) χαίρειν). Similarly, the *diploma* sent from Cassius Victor, a centurion, was addressed to the prefects, centurions, decurions, *duplicarii* and curators of the *praesidia* of the road of Myos Hormos, warning them of an attack of barbarians. In this text the *diploma* is explicitly said to be a copy, O.Krok. I 87, 14-18 (after (?) 15. March. 118) ἀντίγραφον (l. ἀντίγραφον) διπλώματος· ἐπάρχοις, (ἐκατοντάρχαις), (δεκαδάρχαις), δουλικά{ι}ρίοις, κουράτορσι πραισιδείων (l. πραισιδίων) ὁδοῦ Μυσόρμου Κάσσειος (l. Κάσσιος) Οὐείκτωρ (l. Οὐίκτωρ) (ἐκατοντάρχης) σπείρης δευτέρας Εἰτουραίων (l. Ἴτουραίων) χαίρειν).

#### 4.1.3 Obstacles and dangers hampering the carriers

Roads between the sites were not very safe and travelers faced problems. For example, while the *monomachoi* were moving on the roads between the *praesidia* to perform their missions they encountered the danger of the barbarians. This appears from a letter addressed from Eukylistros, the *monomachos*, to the *tesserarius* Sarapion, who sent him on a mission to Koptos. In the letter, Eukylistros informs him that they were subject to attack by some barbarians. They were isolated and the barbarians attacked them with sticks, O.Did. 44, 1-19 (beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), “Ἐκύλιστρος [μ] μονομάχος Σαραπίωνι θεσσαλαρίῳ (l. τεσσεραρίῳ). γινώσκεις <σε> θέλω ὅτι ὡς ἐντέταρσέ (l. ἐντέταλσαι) μοι ἐποίησα καὶ παρὰ τήν σου διαταγὴν οὐκ ἐμένηκα (l. μεμένηκα) εἰς Κόπτον μείαν (l. μίαν) ὥραν ἀλλὰ ἦρθον (l. ἦλθον) ἐν τῷ πραισιδεῖῳ (l. πραισιδίῳ). Ἰεκουν δὲ καταβὰς μετὰ τῶν βαρβάρων ξυλοκρουστοὺς<sup>6</sup> ἡμᾶς ἐποίησεν, μόνους ἡμᾶς εὐρών, καὶ ἐφύγαμεν (l. ἐφύγομεν) ὡς ἐπὶ μείλειν (l. μίλιον) καὶ

<sup>5</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (1998) 68.

<sup>6</sup> ξυλοκρουστοὺς is a hapax, see O.Did. 44 note to ll.13-14. It consists of τὸ ξύλον (wood) and κρουστός, ἦ, ὄν, (played by striking) and most likely refers to being beaten by a wooden stick.

ἀνεκά<μ>ψαμεν καὶ ἔπεμψά σοι τὸν φαμελιάρην (l. φαμιλιάριον), ‘Eukylistros *monomachos* to Sarapion, the *tesserarius*. I want you to know that as you ordered me I did and I did not act contrary to your order by remaining in Koptos one hour but I went to the *praesidium*. Iekoun who went down with the barbarians attacked us with wood when he found us alone, we fled for a mile and then returned back and sent you the *familiaris*’. This also seems to be the case in a letter from the prefect of the desert, Cassius Taurinus, to the curators of the *praesidia* of the road of Berenike, O.Krok. I 60 (ca. 98-125?), in which he reports the death of 3 *monomachoi*, most likely as the result of barbarian attack, 1.5 [- ca.6 -] . . . ς ἀποκτείναντες μονομάχας γ ; ‘3 killed *monomachoi*’.

#### 4.1.4 Drafts of official correspondence from Mons Claudianus

O.Claud. IV 848-860 is a group of official correspondence consisting of thirteen letters from the second century CE.<sup>7</sup> They are collective letters,<sup>8</sup> generally addressed from foremen, stonemasons, and the workers of the quarries at Mons Claudianus (and Porphyrites? perhaps in 854), who generally remain anonymous, with the exception of O.Claud. IV 856, which is addressed from Tithoes, whose title is unknown, and the foremen, 11.2-3 [[παρὰ] Τιθοῦ[ῆς καὶ ἐργοδό]ται μετὰλλ[ου Κλαυδιανοῦ]. They are mainly addressed to two high officials: the prefect Antonius Flavianus (849-852) and the procurator Probus (853-857;<sup>9</sup> 859-860). The Mons Claudianus ostraca show that Antonius Flavianus is the prefect overseeing Mons Claudianus; however, an ostrakon from Dios suggests that he was also prefect of the desert of Berenike, although his title is not given in that ostrakon. It is a fragmentary copy of letter addressed to him from the curator of Dios.<sup>10</sup> Probus, the procurator, is an imperial freedman responsible for the quarries and supposed to be stationed at Kaine or most likely Koptos, the nearest two points

<sup>7</sup> O.Claud. IV 848 (109-111); 849-851 (late 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 852 (ca. 138-161); 853-860 (ca.186-187). I suggest dating 852 to the late second century CE, too. It belongs to the same type of letters as 849-851 and is addressed to the prefect from the stone masons and the foremen working at the quarry of Mons Claudianus. It is written by the same hand as 849-851 (see the intro. to O.Claud. IV 849) and most likely reports on the same matter, the completion of the columns.

<sup>8</sup> O.Claud. IV 848 has neither address nor initial greeting, but belong to this kind of letter.

<sup>9</sup> O.Claud. IV 858 is written by the same hand as 853-860; therefore, it most likely belongs to this group of letters and was addressed to Probus, as well.

<sup>10</sup> See Cuvigny (2018a) 9; the introduction to O.Claud. IV 849, and n. 19, where the editor discussed that Antonius Flavianus could also be prefect alae who has military responsibility for the region. For the prefect and the administration; see Maxfield (2001) 147, with general discussion of the administration of the quarries, 147-54.

at the Nile valley to the quarries. He is also known from another official letter (P.Bagnall 8; 186-187) from Mons Claudianus, which is addressed to him from the Prefect of Egypt, Pomponius Faustianus.

The letters addressed to the prefect, 849-852, are written by the same hand and those addressed to the procurator, 853-860, are written by another. They all concern quarry affairs and with the exception of a few,<sup>11</sup> most have to do with the completion of two columns.<sup>12</sup> Other topics include tools and security against barbarians.<sup>13</sup> Some potsherds contain more than one text written by the same hand, such as O.Claud. IV 849,<sup>14</sup> whereas other potsherds contain one text with some lines written by a different hand. For example: O.Claud. IV 855 contains a letter with four lines written by another hand at the top and bottom of the sherd, for which the editor supposed that this letter is not a draft and these lines are the response that was written on the same sherd when the letter arrived to the procurator. O.Claud. IV 860 also contains a letter with one line at the top of the sherd in a different hand, while O.Claud. IV 856 contains a letter and another, highly fragmentary text written by the same hand on the same potsherd.<sup>15</sup>

The opening formulas of the letters follow the form ‘To B from A’, as the recipients are higher in the hierarchy.<sup>16</sup> What is interesting, however, is that the letters appear to be drafts, as suggested by the editors.<sup>17</sup> Reasons for thinking this are the fact they were found in Mons

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<sup>11</sup> O.Claud. IV 851; 854; 855, 856 (text 2); 858.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. to the prefect: 849, 3-7; 850, 4-10; 852, 5-6. To the procurator: 853, 5-11 εὐαγγελιζόμεθά (I. εὐαγγελιζόμεθά) σοι, κοίριε (I. κύριε), ἰλαρὰν φάσιν τοῦ Σεράπιδος θέλ[ο]ντες (I. θέλ[ο]ντος) καὶ τῆς Τύχης τοῦ [Κλαυδιανοῦ] καὶ τῆς Τύχης σου συνεπ[ισχυσάσης] ἀπηρικέναι τὸν πρῶτον [κίονα] ἄχρι τῆς κς τοῦ ἐνεστῶ[τος] Ἀθῦρ] μηνός, ‘We announce to you, Sir, the good tidings that Sarapis willing and with the help of the Tyche of Claudianus and your Tyche, we have accomplished the first column by the 26 of the current month Hathyr’, trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Claud. IV 853; 856, 4-8; 857, 5-10; 859, 3-7; 860, 6-11.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. 850, 13-15 εἰάν] ἐν τάχι (I. τάχει) πεμφθῆ] ἡμῖν [στο]μῶμα καὶ ἄνθραξ ἵνα ταχύ[τερ]ον (I. τάχιον) τὸν ἄλλον ἀπαρτίσωμεν, ‘if steel and charcoal be sent to us, we shall finish the other one faster’, trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. O.Claud. IV 849, 20-23 ἀφό]βως ἔχοντες [-ca.?- μακρόθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ] πραισιδίου ἐργα[ζ -ca.?- οὐκ ἔχον]τες παραφυλακή[v], ‘without having fear ... working? far from the *praesidium* ... having no garrison’.

<sup>14</sup> See also the introduction to O.Claud. IV 849 for discussion of this text.

<sup>15</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. IV 856.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. O.Claud. IV 849, 1-3 Ἀντ(ωνίω) Φλα[ουιανῶ] ἐ]πάρχ(ω) [παρὰ τῶν] ἐργαζομέ[v]ων ἐν [μετάλλω] Κλαυδια]νῶ [τῶ] κυρίω and O.Claud. IV 853, ll.1-4 Πρόβω ἐπιτρόπω τοῦ κυρίου Καίσαρος παρὰ σκληρουργῶν καὶ ἐργοδοτῶν καὶ χαλκέων ἐργαζομένων ἐν μετάλλω Κλαυδιανοῦ τῶ κυρίω. For this formula in official correspondence, see Exler (1923) 65.

<sup>17</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. IV 848-863, where the editor contends that these letters are probably all drafts.

Claudianus, from which they were sent; the absence in some of them of an opening formula and final greeting<sup>18</sup> or the brief form of the opening formula;<sup>19</sup> various cancellations and insertions.<sup>20</sup> Because it is quite uncommon to find such a large number of drafts in the same place addressed from the same senders to the same recipients (and written in the same hands), it makes sense to take a deeper look at the contexts of these letters. As stated earlier, the majority of the letters are concerned with the same matter of announcing the completion of the columns.<sup>21</sup> Obviously, the workers had to report on the progress of their work to both the prefect and the procurator. In the letters addressed to the prefect (849-852), they reported to him the accomplishment of the first column on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Hathyr, as observed in 850. In 851, I assume that lines 10-14 make reference to the second column, which they are not able to finish because of the danger of the barbarians ἵνα δυ[νηθῶμεν τὸν δεύ]τερον ἀπαρτίσαν[ -ca.?- ] διὰ τὸν φόβον [ -ca.?- τῶ]ν βαρβάρων, ‘so that we be able to finish? the second (column) ... because of the fear ... from the barbarians’. In 849 and 852, they also announce the accomplishment of something, but the letters are fragmentary and do not preserve clear reference to the columns.

As for the letters sent to the procurator (853-860), 858 and 859 are also in a bad condition and do not preserve references to the columns, but in 853 and 857 the workers announce the completion of the 1<sup>st</sup> column on the same day, the 26<sup>th</sup> of Hathyr.<sup>22</sup> And they accomplished the second column on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Choiak, as mentioned in 856 and most likely again in 860.<sup>23</sup> Reporting the news to both the prefect and the procurator results in a certain amount of repetition, but presumably both officials had to be informed. This recalls the practice

<sup>18</sup> See O.Claud. IV 848. It is fragment of letter written without sender or receiver names, although there is vacant before and after the text. The editor suggests that the real letter was written on papyrus and sent to perhaps Koptos.

<sup>19</sup> See O.Claud. IV 857.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. O.Claud. IV 850, which have three cancellations at ll.2, 17, 19, two insertions before l.8, and after l.17.

<sup>21</sup> See note 12 above.

<sup>22</sup> O.Claud. IV 857, 5-10 (ca. 186-187) preserves the following: τοῦ κυρίου Σεράπιδ(ος) θελήσαντος καὶ τῆς τύχ(ης) τοῦ Κλαυδιανοῦ καὶ τῆς [σ]ῆς τύχης συνεπιχυ[σά]σης εὐαγγελιζόμε[θά σοι, κύριε, ἐπὶ τῆς κς, ‘we announce you the good tidings, Sir, the lord Serapis willing and with the help of the Tyche of Claudianus and your Tyche, that upon the 26<sup>th</sup> ...’, trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. But as the editor mentions in the note to l.10, the text perhaps went on in the next line [τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος μηνὸς Ἀθύρ κτλ. announcing the completion of the first column.

<sup>23</sup> See ll.4-8 of O.Claud. IV 856 εὐαγγελιζόμεθά σοι ἰλαρὰν φάσιν] τὸν δεύτερον [ -ca.?- ] καὶ ἔξ ποδῶν [ -ca.?- ] ρες καὶ δεκ[άτης τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος μηνὸς Χοιάκ . . . [ -ca.?- ], for which the editor suggests that the reading could be τὸν δεύτερον τῶν δύο κίωνων τῶν εἴκοσι] καὶ ἔξ ποδῶν ἀπηρτικέναι ἄχρι τῆς τέσσα]ρες, see note to ll. 5-6. I thank Andrea Jördens for suggesting τεσσα]ρεσκαίδεκ[άτης instead of τέσσα]ρες καὶ δεκ[άτης.



attested in two letters from Mons Claudianus of reporting an absent worker twice, to both civilian and military officials. Both of these texts were written in the same hand: the first is addressed from Demetras to Publius, the *decurio* (O.Claud. II 383; ca. 98-117), and the second from the same Demetras to N.N. (O.Claud. IV 864; ca. 98-117). In these two ostraca, Demetras reports the absence of Nemonas, the stonemason, who did not come to work at the well.<sup>24</sup>

So, why is there more than one letter reporting the completion of each column to the procurator? Are they really drafts of the same letter?<sup>25</sup> First of all, the verb used to declare the completion of the columns is ἀπαρτίζω. In most preserved instances the perfect infinitive ἀπηρτικέναι is used after the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι,<sup>26</sup> but in 859,7 the verb is in the present tense, ἀπ]αρτίζωμε[ν (l. ἀπ]αρτίζομε[ν]. The use of the present tense suggests that the column (if that is what is being talked about; the object of the verb is not preserved in the text) has just been finished or is about to be finished.<sup>27</sup> If this is right, we might conclude that the letters are not drafts of one letter but rather are drafts or copies of letters gradually reporting the progress of making the columns. One can also imagine that the different use of the preposition before the date of the accomplishment of the column could support this, that ἄχρι (meaning on or by) is twice used in O.Claud. IV 850, 10 [ἄχρι τῆς κς τοῦ Ἀθύρ and 853, 10-11 ἄχρι τῆς κς τοῦ ἐνεστώ[τος Ἀθύρ] μηνός, while ἐπὶ (upon) is used in 857, 10 ἐπὶ τῆς κς and probably ἐπὶ τῆς [ ] in 849, 11 should be followed by date, too.

The last point I would like to discuss is the order of the text in O.Claud. IV 849. It consists of two pieces of a vessel that do not directly join, in which there are two texts written by the same hand. The first fragment (Fr. a) contains the first part of the letter, which is written in two parts, but in reversed order: the end of a letter precedes the beginning of another, with a blank space separating the two; the body of the letter, which is very fragmentary, preserves reference to the completion of something consisting of 21 units (των κᾱ, line 10). The second fragment (Fr. B) is part of the same pot and has the same curvature, as the editor mentioned.

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<sup>24</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. IV 864.

<sup>25</sup> See the introductions to O.Claud. 857-859, where the editor suggests that these letters are perhaps drafts of O.Claud. IV 853. 853 is the most complete letter and written in good handwriting, with two lines written in the left side and one correction in l.16. 857 seems to be a draft because of the short form of the initial address. It is just addressed 'to Probus' without his title, unlike the other letters. The texts 858 and 859 have no corrections, but they are fragments; 859 recalls phrases from 853.

<sup>26</sup> 850, 11; 853, 9; 856, 5?. For the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι, see LSJ, s.v.

<sup>27</sup> See O.Claud. IV 859 note to l.7, where the editor suggests that the present form would mean 'we are about to finish'.

The text is in bad condition but it contains reference to a *diploma* and mentions a fear of working far from the *praesidium* without having garrison; to this it then adds information concerning the horsemen at the quarry. I guess that the two parts do not actually belong to the same letter, because in the first fragment there are greetings towards the body of the pot, 1.14 (ἐπρωσθαί . . . [ -ca.?- ]) and it seems to me that the writer changed his pen in the second sherd since the ink is thicker or bolder than the ink in the first sherd. It is more similar to the ink in 850. Presumably, the writers used the sherds to copy letters from the papyri without taking care to keep them in order. This might explain why there are separate texts that seem to belong to each other, although they are written in different potsherds, it also explains why there are different texts written in the same potsherds. That O.Claud. IV 851 is an unfinished letter, without final greetings, that seems to be part of 850.<sup>28</sup> Whereas O.Claud. IV 856 contains a letter and other texts on the same potsherds written by the same hand. Both of the texts date to 186-187 CE.

Generally, it is hard to imagine that this large a number of official letters on ostraca were supposed to be sent far to the prefect or the procurator in Koptos. Anything written on ostraca were heavy and did not travel far. In our case, however, the texts are fragmentary and they are written on relatively big pieces of potsherds. For example, O.Claud IV 850 measures 17.9 x 21.5 cm and 854 measures 23 x 18 cm.<sup>29</sup> So, one explanation for this is that they were copied from the ostraca to papyri (which will have been sent to its destination), while the surviving letters on the ostraca were kept as copies in (perhaps) a register or archive for internal office use at Mons Claudianus.<sup>30</sup>

Such kind of practice is not uncommon in a military milieu. There is a group of receipts issued to members of a cohort for food and wine or money equivalents from Pselkis, which date to the Roman period. The editor of them states the following, ‘I cannot guess why they were not entered in a papyrus roll unless it was because of the small sums of the money involved, usually only two or three denarii, eight and a fraction at the most. These ostraca are

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<sup>28</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. IV 851.

<sup>29</sup> O.Claud. IV 848 (3.7x8.5 cm); 849 (16.5x23.8 - 10.5x13 cm); 851(13.6x11.6 cm); 852 (8x8 cm); 853 (16x24 cm); 855 (9.1x11.8 cm); 856 (11x15-12x17 cm); 857 (13.5x11.8 cm); 858 (9.5x10 cm); 859 (6.2x6 cm); 860 (15.5x22 cm).

<sup>30</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. IV 848, where Bülow-Jacobsen assumed that the text is a draft and the real letter was written on papyrus and sent away from Mons Claudianus. For discussion of Mons Claudianus’s central office, see ch.5.

probably best understood as temporary records which would be restored out at intervals, daily or monthly, and entered on a roll which constituted the permanent account'.<sup>31</sup>

## 4.2 Unofficial and official correspondence

### 4.2.1 The use of γράμμα in the Eastern Desert documents

The word γράμμα is used in a fairly small number of texts. They are from different stations in the Eastern Desert. All of them are from the Roman period and the majority date to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The word is attested in around 11 texts; in five of them it appears in a financial context referring to a note, written document, contract of loan or receipt.<sup>32</sup>

In some other official letters, it is used in the sense of 'letters'.<sup>33</sup> So, what kind of letters does it refer to in the official correspondence? In O.Did. 29, 5 (ca. Jan.- June 236) προτεταγμένων θείων γ[ρ]α[μ]μάτων is technical language denoting an imperial letter that the Prefect of Egypt forwards to the curators of the *praesidia* along the road from Phoinikon to

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<sup>31</sup> See Fink (1971) 310-311. A similar practice of drafting communications for internal office use is attested during the Ptolemaic period by the *basilikos grammateus* Dionysios in Herakleopolites; for more details, see the discussion of Dionysios and Pesouris, the *basilikoí grammateis* of Herakleopolites (159-155 BCE and 150-137 BCE) in Mirizio (2018) 377-395 and particularly pp.380, 388.

<sup>32</sup> SB VI 9017= O.Faw. 22, 2-4 (I – II) κοιμισάμενος τὰ γράμματα [ -ca.-? - ] δώσ<ε>ις (l. δώσεις) Παπυρίωι στρατ(ιώτη) οἶνον ὅσον ἐὰν χρίαν (l. χρ<ε>ίαν) ἔχη, 'after you receive the document/note you will give to Papyrus the soldier wine as much as he needs'; P.Bagnall 12, 2-4 (Xeron Pelagos; ca. 115-130) 'καθὼς ἠρώτηκά σε περὶ τῶν γραμματίων, 'as I asked you about the document'; O.Did. 390, 19-23 (before? ca. 125-140) λοιπὸν οὖν οἶδες (l. οἶδας, i.e. οἶσθα) πῶς μετὰ ἀλλήλων σύμφωνοι (l. σύμφωνοι) γεγόναμεν διὰ γραμμάτων, 'you further know how we have entered into written agreement' trans. Bülow-Jacobsen; O.Claud. III 622, 7-9 (139-160) Κορνήλιος Μάρκος ἔγραψα περὶ αὐτοῦ, αὐτοῦ ὑπογράφοντος τὸ γράμ<μ>α, 'I, Kornelius Marcus wrote in his behalf, and he himself subscribe the document'; O.Claud. I 156, 9-10 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ὑπονοεῖ ὡς σὸν εἶναι τὸ γράμμα, 'he suspects that the writing is yours' trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. In only P.Bagnall 12 (ca. 115-130) is the diminutive form used, which is rarely attested before the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE in papyri, and usually refers to a loan contract, particularly in the Eastern Desert texts as in O.Did. 390 (before? ca. 125-140), see P.Bagnall 12, n. to ll.3-4, see also Sarri (2018) 23, for the meaning of this word.

<sup>33</sup> O.Krok. I 13 (ca. Jan. 109); O.Claud. IV 885 (c.150-154); 854, 855, 856 (ca. 186-187); O.Did. 29 (ca. Jan.-June 236). The context in O.Krok. I 13, 10-11 is not very clear, because the letter is fragmentary, but γράμμα might refer to a written document [ -ca.-? - ] γράμ<μ>ατα \αὐτοῦ/ (l. αὐτοῖς) δώσετε εἶνα (l. ἴνα) μεῖ (l. μὴ) [ -ca.-? - ]. λήνψετε (l. λήμψετε) ὅταν ὑποστρεψαν[, 'you will give them documents so that you receive ...'. The plural form of γράμμα means letter, LSJ, s.v.

Berenike.<sup>34</sup> The missive asks for the content of the letter to be circulated among the soldiers.<sup>35</sup> Without a doubt, the original letter must have been written on papyrus. In the official letters of Mons Claudianus, O.Claud. IV 854 and 855, discussed above, γράμμα is also used to refer to letters sent from the procurator Probus to the workers at Mons Claudianus; this is contrary to the usual employment of ἐπιστόλιον or even ὄστρακον for Eastern Desert letters.<sup>36</sup> From these examples, it is obvious that the word γράμμα refers to high official correspondence. Moreover, it is used to imply long-distance correspondence originating in the valley and further off.<sup>37</sup>

Since potsherds were not the material of long-distance correspondence and letters coming from high officials were likely first written on papyrus, one wonders if the word γράμμα did not suggest a papyrus letter. If so, should one suppose that γράμμα in O.Claud. IV 885 (c.150-154) is used to refer to a letter written on papyrus, too? It concerns official business (the number of stones on hand at Mons Claudianus), which was to be reported to the procurator Ulpius Himerus. In it, his *tabularius* Athenodoros asks the foreman Sokrates to tell him about the remaining stones in the quarry, so that he can write to the procurator with Sokrates's response, ll.8-11 εὖ οὖν ποιήσεις καὶ ἐμοὶ ἐνγραφῶς (l. ἐγγραφῶς) δηλώσας ἴν[α] ἀκολουθῶς σου τοῖς γράμ[μασ]ιν ἐπισταλῆ αὐτῷ [γρα .], 'please, therefore, also inform me in writing, so that word may be sent to him in accordance with your letter'.<sup>38</sup> One might think that τοῖς γράμ[μασ]ιν could refer to a papyrus letter being sent to the procurator; however, the word can also have the general sense of 'word' or 'writing'.

<sup>34</sup> For προτεταγμένων θείων γραμμάτων, see O.Did. 29, note to l.5 and also Rea (1993) 128-129.

<sup>35</sup> O.Did. 29, 1-6 (ca. Jan.-June 236) [A]ὐρήλιος Σαραπάμμων δεκατάρχῳ ὀρτινιάτῳ (l. ὀρδινάτος, i.e. δεκάδαρχος, or [A]ὐρηλίῳ Σαραπάμμων<ι> δεκατάρχῳ (l. δεκαδάρχῳ) ὀρτινιάτῳ (l. ὀρδινάτῳ)) κουράτωρσιν (l. κουράτορσι) τοῖς ἀπὸ Φοινί[κ]ῶν(ος) μέχρι [.] Βερ[ε]νίκης vac. ? χαίρειν. vac. ? lines τίνα μοι ἔγραψεν ὁ λαμπρό[τατος] ἡγεμῶν Μήουιος Ὀνωρατιανὸς -ca.?- ] προτεταγμένον (l. προτεταγμένων) θείων γ[ρ]α[μ]μάτων ὑπὸ τοῦ κ[υ]ρίου ἡμῶν Αὐτοκράτορος] Καίσαρος Γαίου Ἰουλίου Οὐή[ρ]ου Μαξιμίνου θείων.

<sup>36</sup> O.Claud. IV 854, 4 (ca. 186-187) ἐλάβαμέν σου γράμματα, κύριε, 'we received your letter, Sir', ll.6-7 ἡμεῖς μὲν μαθόντες (l. μαθόντες) διὰ τῶν σῶν γραμμάτων, 'However, as we (had learnt) from your letter'; O.Claud IV 855, 5 (c.150-154) ἐλάβαμεν σοῦ γράμματα -ca.?- ], 'we received your letter', trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Claud. IV 854, 855. For the distinction between the word ἐπιστολή and γράμμα in the use and the meaning, see Ceccarelli (2013) 13-19.

<sup>37</sup> Based on this, one could think that γράμματά μου ... [in the second text of O.Claud. IV 856b, 15 (ca.186-187) refers to the letter of the procurator, and that the text is perhaps a copy of the document sent from the procurator.

<sup>38</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

#### 4.2.2 Verbal messages and the herald

During the Roman period, verbal messages were also conveyed by letter carriers. Written messages were supplemented by oral ones, as instructions or clarifications that could be provided at the time of the delivery of the letter. Referring to the system of the *cursus publicus* under Augustus, Suetonius explains that since the letter carrier had received the letter by himself from the sender and was aware of more details, he could, when the need arose, answer the inquiries of the receiver and provide him with those additional details. In instances of letters in papyri from the Roman and Byzantine periods (e.g. P.Mert. II 80, 7-10; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.; P.Brem. 52, 2-5; 113-120; P.Oxy. XLVI 3313, 12, 25-27; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.; P.Oxy. LVI 3865, 27-33; late 5<sup>th</sup> cent.), Blumell noted that if the carrier of the letter had a verbal message for the receiver, it might imply that he was a trustworthy friend or agent who was conveying the message faithfully. It also seems that in such cases the conveyance of the verbal message was preferred, since the carrier would be able to expand on and represent the source of the message. Besides, the transfer of the message verbally would carry more authority.<sup>39</sup>

As for the Eastern Desert, there are few attestations in the letters that refer to the use of the verbal message among the Eastern Desert inhabitants. These verbal messages were given by both civilians and military men inside the desert itself or even across long distances, as far as to the Nile valley. In O.Claud. I 161, 3-6 (ca. 100-120) a certain Tryphon, who was in the Nile valley, sent Panekosis to Ailouras to tell him that he has taken his bread and impounded the chiton,<sup>40</sup> ἔπεμψάς \μ/οι Πανεκῶσιν λεγων (l. λέγοντα) ὅτι ἦρκας μου τ[οῦς] ἄρτους καὶ τὸν κιθῶνα (l. χιτῶνα) τέ[θηκας] ἐνέχυρον. In O.Claud. II 249 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Petenephotos the sender of the letter supplemented his written statement to Valerius with an oral message for a certain Apollonius. Despite the message being written in the letter, Valerius likely would convey it to Apollonius verbally, ll.4-6 κομισεν (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ Λογγινати (l. Λογγινᾶτος) τὸ σφυρίδιον καὶ δώσις (l. δώσεις) αὐτῶι (l. αὐτὸ) τῶι ἀνθρώπῳ (l. ἀνθρώπῳ). ἐρίς (l. ἐρεῖς) Ἀπολλωνίῳ ὅτι ἐρωτητῆς (l. ἐρωτηθεῖς) ποιήσόν μοι τὸ τοῦτωι (l. τοῦτο) καὶ πέμψων (l. πέμψον) μοι αὐτῶ (l. αὐτὸ) διὰ Λογγάτι (l. Λογγᾶτος) ἐπὶ χρίαν (l. χρείαν) αὐτῶι (l. αὐτοῦ) ἔχω', 'receive the basket from Longinas and give it to the man. Say to Apollonius, "I ask you, please do this for me and send it to me through Longas, for I need it."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> See Blumell (2014) 60, 64-65 and Suet., Aug. 49.3.

<sup>40</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. I 166. Another example of a verbal message is in O.Krok. II 189 (98-117).

<sup>41</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. One might guess that Apollonius is the same person identified by ἄνθρωπος in the letter. He might be the person who should take the basket.

The previous attestations appear in private letters; however, there is an uncertain attestation of the position of κήρυξ, or herald, in a list from Mons Claudianus (O.Claud. IV 722), which dates to ca. 136-137. If the reading of the word is right (the line in question—l. 10—has κήρυξ vac. ? α), it suggests that a herald was officially used in the area of the quarries. It is a list recording the total number of personnel (both of the *familiaris* and the *pagani*) who were in Mons Claudianus at a certain time of operations or during extensive work in the quarry.<sup>42</sup>

However, the preference was to the written messages. Most of the unofficial correspondence of the soldiers survived from Egypt, in addition to some examples from Vindolanda and other places. They record minor personal affairs which refers that this was the popular way of the unofficial communication throughout the army. They also prove that the preference was to the written messages and even short invitation to a nearby correspondent could be conveyed in written way.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Privacy and the authentication of letters

Privacy is an important element of both official and unofficial letters. If letters are written on pottery sherds, they are by nature open and legible to anybody. While, if they are written in papyri, privacy can be preserved until the letters are opened. Sinthonis refers to this in a letter to Harpochras where it is said that that they did not open a letter sent to him and do not know what is written in it, P.Oxy XXII 2353, 9-11 (4. Sept. 32) ἀπέσταλκέ σοι ὁ ἀδελφὸς ἀπὸ Κόπτου· ἀπόστειλον Ἄρποχράτι τῷ ἀδελφῷ· οὐ λελύκαμεν αὐτά. οὐκ οἶδαμεν τί ἐκεῖ γέγραπται, ‘your brother has sent a letter from Koptos: ‘send the letter to my brother Harpochras’. We have not opened it. We do not know what is written there’.<sup>44</sup> But the Eastern Desert letters, which are almost all preserved in ostraca (even if they were originally on papyrus, as in some cases), can easily be read even by their carrier, unless he is illiterate. In an official letter from Krokodilo, the sender states the following to the receiver, O.Krok. I 84, 10-13 (ca. 98-117) ἀσπα[- ca.15 - ἀνα]γνοῦναι τὰς ἐπιστολὰς τὰς ὑπαγούσας εἰς Βερενίκην καὶ εἰς Μύσορμον· αὐτὰς ἀπεστίλας (l. ἀπέστειλας) καὶ οὐ μέλι (l. μέλει) σοι ἀναγνοῦναι. vac. ?, ‘... read the letters going to Berenike and Myos Hormos. Send them and do not worry about reading them’. Although, the sentence is somewhat ambiguous, it clearly hints to the lack of

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<sup>42</sup> For more about this list, see the introduction to O.Claud. IV 722.

<sup>43</sup> See Speidel (2018) 184.

<sup>44</sup> Trans. Lobel and Roberts.

privacy even in official correspondence, unless if the documents were e.g. official circulars and were intended for the public.

Authenticating letters in antiquity was done by various methods, such as ending the letter with a ‘farewell’ written by the hand of the sender and not by the person who penned the entire letter on behalf of the sender. High official letters could have been subscribed by the official himself, as a sign of authentication, in addition to being sealed with signet rings.<sup>45</sup> In the Eastern Desert, sealed official letters on papyrus are attested,<sup>46</sup> but in unofficial correspondence, privacy did not exist and there was no way to seal letters to maintain their privacy, since the bulk of the letters were written on potsherds. For authentication, similar customs such as signatures and greetings written in the hand of the sender had to be used.<sup>47</sup> But using these customs was done occasionally and authenticating the unofficial letters was not common. An example is O.Claud. II 258 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); the final wishes or greetings were written by a hand different from the hand that wrote the entire letter. It may well have belonged to Titianus, the sender of the letter himself, 1.10 (hand 2) ἐρρῶσθαι ὑμ(ᾶς εὐχομαι).

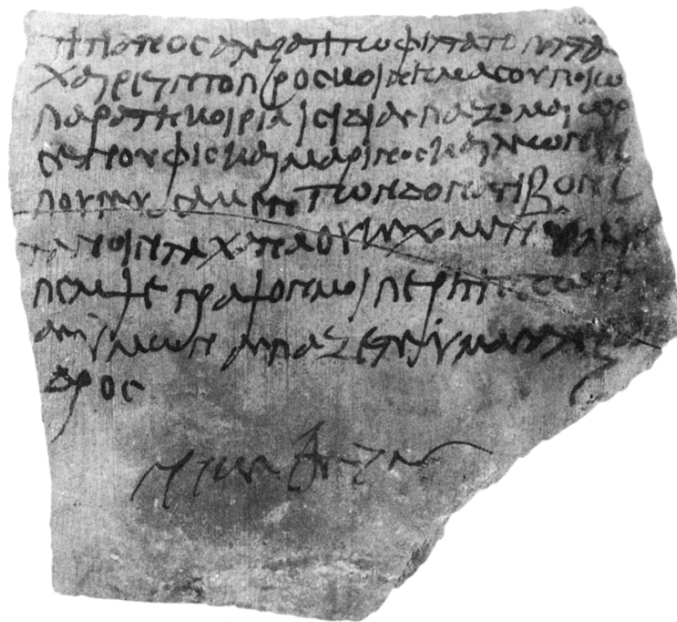


Figure 1. O.Claud. II 258. Taken from O.Claud. II

<sup>45</sup> See Radner (2014) 194-200 where she discusses methods of authenticating and sealing official letters in antiquity. See also Sarri (2018) 125ff for the authentication of letters, both officially and unofficially.

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. O.Krok. I 39, 3 (after (?) 28. March 108) [-ca.-? ἐπιστο]λὰς ἐσφραγισμένας; O.Dios inv. 807, 2-3 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Did. 23, 4-6 (after (?) ca. 220).

<sup>47</sup> For the ostraca as material of writing and particularly letters, without possibility to keep the text private since it can not be folded, see Sarri (2018) 78-79.

#### 4.2.4 The sign of authentication (σημεῖον)

Few letters have preserved signs of authentication. One way to authenticate was to employ the so-called σημεῖον ὅτι clause. It occurs in letters not only from the Eastern Desert but also from the Nile valley.<sup>48</sup> It has appeared particularly in letters regarding important matters, such as money matters and financial transactions, as attested in P.Oxy. LIX 3979 (25. March 267? or 26. Sept. 266?).<sup>49</sup> The σημεῖον clause is an epistolary custom whereby the sender includes some verbal sign that will identify him or her to the recipient, in order to authenticate letters. This sign might refer to an experience that only the sender and receiver would be aware of, and not any outsiders.<sup>50</sup> The purpose of it is to maintain privacy. One example is in SB V 8005, 8-13 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the provenance of which is unknown: [π]άντως οὐν ἀπαρε[ν]όχλητον αὐτὸν [π]οίησον, ἐμοὶ χαριζόμενος. σημεῖον, ὅτι ἡ προθεσμία σου ἐνέστηκεν, ‘do your utmost to keep him free of annoyance, as a favor to me. A sign (that this letter truly comes from me is my knowledge of the fact) that your appointed day is at hand’.<sup>51</sup>

Among the Eastern Desert letters, there are at least four instances of the σημεῖον clause. Three of them occur in letters found in the *praesidium* of Didymoi and the fourth in a letter from Mons Claudianus.<sup>52</sup> All of these letters are private and contain names of sender and receiver, except the letter of Mons Claudianus. In this letter, the sender and the receiver are not mentioned, O.Claud. I 120, 1-6 (ca. 100-120), πέμψεις <εἰς>? τὸ τραῦμα διαστολείδην (l. διαστολίδιον), or τραυμαδιαστολείδην (l. τραυματοδιαστολίδιον)· σημῆν (l. σημεῖον) ὅτι εἰπά σοι· ἔπεχε τὰ (l. τοῖς) εἰς οἶκον· πρὸς Ἀμολήιν/ δειπνῶ. (hand 2) ἔρρωσο, ‘please send the small spreading device for the wound. A sign (that I am really the one saying this): “take care of the people in the house; I dine with Amoleios.” Farewell’. We do not know the correspondents, but such a sign and the request to take care of the people in the house indicates that they must have been close. One can also imagine that the mention of the secret sign in this

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<sup>48</sup> For previous studies of the σημεῖον clause in documentary or literary texts, see Youtie (1970); Rea (1974); (1976); (1977); Koenen (1975); Daniel (1984); Fowler (1985); Gascou (2012).

<sup>49</sup> See Parsons (2007) 126.

<sup>50</sup> See Rea (1974) 14.

<sup>51</sup> Trans. Rea (1974) 14.

<sup>52</sup> O.Did. 361 (1. March 77); O.Did. 364 (before (?) ca. 88-96); O.Did. 464 (early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. I 120 (ca. 100-120). The context in O.Did. 464 is not clear, ll. 5-8 ἐπέγνωιν (l. ἐπέγνωον) ἀκούων καὶ ἴρηκα (l. εἴρηκα) ἀκούσας σοῦ τὰ σημῖα (l. σημεία) ὅτι ἴ (l. εἶ) ἡ ἀδερφή (l. ἀδελφή) μου, ‘I recognized when I heard, and when I heard your signs, I said ‘you are my sister’, trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. It is rather a report from the sender to the receiver about sign he mentioned to him before in previous letter, see the introduction to O.Did. 464.



letter compensates for the lacking mention of the correspondents' names, since the receiver will understand who the sender is by it. It is possible, but less likely, that the correspondents' names were on another sherd.<sup>53</sup>

In the Eastern Desert, the σημεῖον clause was used in letters mainly related to requests for items of some value to someone, as in O.Did. 361, 2-8 (1 March 77), which is concerned with a waterskin, ἐρωτῶ σε χρῆσαι ἄσκον καὶ δὸς Μάρκῳ τῷ ὀνηλάτῃ τῷ κομίζοντί σοι τοῦτο τὸ ὄστρακον, ἄχρι οὗ ἀνακάμψῃ ἀπὸ Βερνίκης (l. Βερενίκης) καὶ ἀπολάβῃς αὐτόν. σημήν (l. σημεῖον) ὅτι ἦκεις (l. ἦκεις) καλῶν με καὶ τὸν γαμβρὸν καὶ λέγω σοι ὅτι ὀφθαλμιᾶ, 'I ask you to lend a waterskin and give it to Marcus, the donkey driver who brings you this ostrakon, until such time as he comes back from Berenike and you will get it back. The sign (of authenticity) is that you come to call on me and (your?) son-in-law, and I told you that he was suffering from eye-disease';<sup>54</sup> and O.Did. 364 (before (?) ca. 88-96), in which the sender asks the receiver to give jars of wine that he sent to him to Celsus, ll.3-6 καλῶς ποιήσεις (l. ποιήσ<ε>ις) κεράμια ἅ σοι ἀφίκα (l. ἀφίωκα) τοῦ οἴνου δοῦς αὐτὰ Κέλσῳ (l. Κέλσῳ).

The verbal signs that are used do not usually refer to specific matters, but are rather ambiguous, as they revolve around secret matters, such as the sign in O.Did. 361, 6-8 (1 March 77). Also O.Did. 364, 6-10 (before (?) ca. 88-96) ἐπὶ σημέρ (l. σημεῖον) ὅτι σοι ἀφίκα (l. ἀφίωκα) χοῦν ἐλαίου καὶ μάτιν (l. μάτιον) πιπέρεος (l. πιπέρεως) εἶνα (l. ἴνα) παραδοῖς (l. παραδῶς) Καρίλα, 'the sign (of authentication) being that I sent you a *chous* of oil and a *mation* of pepper in order that you give them to Karila'.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.2.5 The address

The address is usually supplied to letters in order to help the carrier to find his way easily and secure safe arrival of the letter to the receiver. Most often it is very simple and merely contains the names of the correspondents and the destination. It could also contain very detailed directions, which are sometimes referred to as σημασία. The σημασία is not very common in letters and seems to be familiar starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. It might have been known in the Ptolemaic period as the ὑπόμνημα.<sup>56</sup> The σημασία could be written on the verso of the letter

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<sup>53</sup> For discussion of the use of multiple sherds for single letters, see ch. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>55</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>56</sup> An example of it can be found in P.Cair. Zen. IV 59653. See Llewelyn (1994a) 33-34 and Kat Eliassen (1981) 103.

or it could be given on a separate sheet of papyrus. For example, P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719 (3rd cent.) contains 15 lines of very detailed directions for the carrier of the letter; it says: σημασία τῶν ἐπιστολίων Ῥούφου [ἀπ]ὸ τῆς πύλης τῆς Σεληνιακῆς περι[πά]τησον ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ[ς] θησαυροῦς καὶ ἐὰν [θέλ]ῃς εἰς τὴν πρώτην ῥύμην ἀριστε[ρᾶ] κάμψον ὀπίσω τῶν θερμῶν οὐ[ . . . ]ος καὶ ἐλθὲ εἰς τὸ λιβυς· κατάβα τὰ [κλι]μάκια καὶ τ[ . . . ]α ἀνάβα καὶ κάμψον [δε]ξιαν (l. [δε]ξιᾶ) καὶ μετ[ὰ τὸ] περίβολον τοῦ [ . . . ]ου ἐκ δεξιῶν οἰκία ἐπτάστεγός [ἐστ]ῆν καὶ ἐπάνω τοῦ πυλῶν[ο]ς . . . χη [καὶ] καταντικρὸν κυ[ρ]τοπλόκιον. αὐτοῦ [πυ]θοῦ ἢ τῆς θυρουρ[ο]ῦ καὶ μαγ[θ]ά[ν]ει[ς]· βάλε δὲ φωνὴν σὺν ολουσι[[-ca.?- ] (or ὁ Λούσσι[ος -ca.?- ])<sup>57</sup> [δὲ] ὑπακούει σοι ε . . . . ιαπ . . . ει [ . . . ] ἄζονται, ‘Consignment of Rufus’ letters: [From] the Moon gate walk as if towards the granaries and when you [come] to the first street turn left behind the thermae, where (there is) a [shrine], and go westwards. Go down the steps and up [the others] and turn right and after [the] precinct of the [temple] on the right side there [is] a seven-storey house and on top of the gatehouse (a statue of) Fortune [and] opposite a basket-weaving shop. Enquire there or from the concierge and you will be informed. And shout yourself; Lusius(?) will answer you [...].’<sup>58</sup>

The σημασία is normally written on the verso of the letter in the same hand as the text on the recto; rarely it is in a different hand, as in P.Meyer 20, verso, 1-5 (Antinoopolis (?)); 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century). Directions for the delivery of return letters could be given in the body of a letter, e.g. P.Lond III 897, 16-19 (Alexandria; 29. March 84) ἐὰν δέ μοι ἐπιστολὰ[ς] πέμπης, πέμψεις εἰς τὸ Θεῶνος τραγηματοπωλίων (l. τραγηματοπωλεῖον) ἐπὶ τὸ Χαριδήμου βαλανεῖον καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐργαστηρίῳ εὐρήσει Δεῖον τὸν τοῦ Σύρου καὶ αὐτός μοι ἀναδώσει (l. ἀναδώσει) ἢ (l. ἢ) παρὰ Ἡρακλειδίωνα τὸν τοῦ Ἄβα, ‘if you send letters to me, send (them) to Theon’s confectionery shop beside Charidemos’ bath and in the shop he (the courier) will find Dios, the son of Syros, and he will give (them) to me, or to Herakleidion, the son of Abas’.<sup>59</sup>

Such examples of detailed directions are not found in the Eastern Desert letters. Few letters contain addresses and only sometimes was an address provided for future correspondence. For example, in an official letter from Mons Claudianus, the writer of the

<sup>57</sup> I thank Rodney Ast for suggesting to me that the reading can also be Οὐολουσσί[ω?], but the termination is uncertain. The name normally has one *sigma*, but see P.Mich. 8.466, 49 (Bostra; 26. March 107) “ἐὐχαριστῶ Οὐολουσσίω καὶ Λονγεῖνω τῷ Βαρβάρῳ”.

<sup>58</sup> See Llewelyn (1994a) 31-32.

<sup>59</sup> See Llewelyn (1994a) 36-38, 42.

letter specifies the station to which he wants the letter to be sent. He asks the receiver to let him know of any news and concludes by saying to send the letter to the quarry of Apollo, O.Claud. IV 867, 4-6 (ca. 98-117) [-ca.?- εἴ τι κα]ινότερον, δήλωσόν [μοι . . . πέμ]ψαι ἰς (l. εἰς) λατομίαν Ἀπόλ(λωνος) τὸ ἐπι[στόλι]ον vac. ?.

One reason for the lack of an address was likely the fact that letters on ostraca were open and the initial greeting of the letter was legible. In addition, word of mouth must have been used. Another reason for the lack of the address could be that the carrier was familiar to the correspondents, since he could have been the same carrier between the same correspondents or a friend, relative or acquaintance from the circle of the correspondents, as discussed in the previous chapter. On the other hand, the address was perhaps helpful when the carrier of the letter had to deliver several messages to several correspondents at several stations.<sup>60</sup>

As for the form of the address in the Eastern Desert letters, it was simple, as in the following two examples where the address was written at the top of the letter, O.Krok. II 267, 1 (end of the reign of Trajan) ἀπόδος Ἀπολιναρίῳ; O.Krok. II 268, 1 (end of the reign of Trajan) [ἀπό]δος Ἀπολιναρίῳ. Or it could just contain the name of the destination, e.g. O.Did. 418, 1 (before (?) ca. 120-125) [ἀπόδος] εἰς Διδύμους; O.Did. 370, 1 (before (?) ca. 88-92) εἰς Κάνοπον.

#### 4.2.6 Forwarding letters

In some cases, intermediaries were used for the sending of correspondence, perhaps because it was easier or safer. That is to say, that a sender would forward a letter or package to another person who then would send it on. In a letter (PSI IX 1080; 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.?) from the Oxyrhynchite nome addressed from Diogenis to Alexandros, Diogenis informs him that she delivered the letter that he forwarded to her before, ll.10-11 ἃ δὲ διεπέμψω [μ]οι γράμματα δῶναι (l. δοῦναι) Βολφίῳ, δέδωκα, ‘the letter which you forwarded to me to deliver to Bolphios, I have delivered’.<sup>61</sup> Forwarding letters to a third party could facilitate the arrival of the letter at its destination. Llewelyn discusses such a practice and mentions that forwarding letters to third parties could happen when the addressee was away, had left his home and was staying with another person, if the addressee was female and the third party was a close relative, if the third party located at a place that was easy to find, or if the sender of the letter was away

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<sup>60</sup> For more examples, see SB XXVIII 17100, 12-13 (150-175) ἀπόδος εἰς Μαξιμανόν (l. Μαξιμιανόν), where the address is at the end of the letter.

<sup>61</sup> Trans. Bagnall (2006) 301.

and sent the letter first to his own house. For example, in P.Mich. VIII 493 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent), Sabinus the sender who was away from home addressed his letter to his house at Karanis, more specifically to his wife, l. 26, εἰς Καρανίδα εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν Σαβεῖν[ου] τοῦ Δη[μητρ]οῦτος, ‘To Karanis, to the house of Sabinus, the (husband) of Demetrous’.<sup>62</sup> Another way was to send the letter to a building or place where the addressee was likely to be. This building could be, e.g., a temple, as in P.Oxy. VIII 1155 (26. Apr. 104) and BGU I 37 (12. Sept. 50), or a market (BGU IV 1079, 38-39; 4. Aug. 41) [ἀπόδος εἰς] Ἀλεξά(νδρειαν) εἰς Σεβα(στὴν) Ἀγορὰ(ν) εἰς τ[ὴν] . . . . Moreover, the letter could be sent to a third party at a public place, as appears from P.Oxy. II 300, 12 (late 1<sup>st</sup> cent.), εἰς τὸ γυμνάσι(ον) Θέωνι, ‘to Theon at the gymnasium’.<sup>63</sup>

As for the Eastern Desert, normally unofficial correspondence was sent from one station to either of the next two neighboring stations; it rarely went further than two direct stations. In case it had to be sent further, letters were entrusted with donkey or camel drivers who covered longer distances, or persons had to request that a comrade in the neighboring station forward their letters on with a carrier or trustworthy person.<sup>64</sup> For example, in O.Did. 326 (before (?) ca. 75-85), the sender of the letter, Iulius, informs the receiver, Gaius Valerius Iustus, that he included a letter to Sabinus, the horseman, ll.7-9: *est epistula · Sabino · equiti Com<m>ageno*, ‘there is (i.e. I include) a letter to Sabinus the horseman from Commagene’.<sup>65</sup>

Obviously, forwarding letters was affected by various factors, such as the distance between the stations. Sending them from a station in the East to the Nile valley and Koptos seems to have been a harder matter. For example, SB XXVIII 17100 (150-175) is a letter that was sent from Longinas in Persou to Dioskoros in Maximianon, confirming a separate delivery. In it, Longinas says that he received from the camel driver a letter and basket of grapes that originated in Koptos, which he has sent to Dioskoros through Petechnoubis, the horseman. Longinas asks for Dioskoros to confirm the arrival of the letter and grapes, and requests that Dioskoros send a letter in response, which he will forward to Koptos. It seems that sending the letter and the grapes from one station to the next over such a long distance was not easy; therefore Longinas requested confirmation from Dioskoros that he received the items.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter. For the formula of εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν, see Llewelyn (1994b) 71-78.

<sup>63</sup> See Llewelyn (1994a) 39-41.

<sup>64</sup> See Cuvigny (2013) 410.

<sup>65</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>66</sup> For this letter, see ch. 2.

Similarly, Petenephotos, who was in Tiberiane, sent to his brother Valerius in Mons Claudianus two letters tied together, in order for Valerius to forward them to a certain Hierax in the Nile valley if he found a letter carrier, O.Claud. II 250, 3-7 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) κόμισον (l. κόμισαι) παρὰ Ἡραΐσκο[υ] ἐπιστόλια δύο [ . . . ] δεδ[εμέ]να ἵνα, ἐὰν εὕρη[ς τινὰ] ταβελ<λάρ>ιον εἰς Ἑγυ[πτου] (l. Αἴγυπτον), πέμψης αὐτὰ Ἰέρακ[ι -ca.?- ] .

Delivering letters over long distances could be burdensome and finding carriers going to Koptos was not easy. This appears from the calls in letters encouraging people to prepare any letters they had for Koptos because someone was going there, such as O.Faw. 10, 4-7 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) εἰ θέλης (l. θέλεις) γράψον ἐπιστόλιον ἰς (l.<ε>ἰς) Κόπτον, ἐπεὶ ὧδε ὁ πορευόμενος. Also in M680, the sender informs the receiver that it is no trouble if he wants to write a letter to someone in Koptos, since a certain Margaris is going there and can take it, ἐὰν θέλης ἐπιστολὴν εἰς Κόπτον πέμψαι Μαργάρις ὑπάγει, οὐ πρᾶγμα ἐὰν γράψης ἐπιστολὴν. It is obvious that people did not travel to and from Koptos every day. Thus, they had to take advantage of any opportunity to send letter or items with people going there; cf. SB VI 9017 Nr. 33=O.Faw. 33, 2-5 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), [κ]αὶ γράψον μοι ἀνακ [ -ca.?- ] .εν τις εἰς Κόπτον [ -ca.?- ]ν διὰ σοῦ ἵνα ἐπιστο[λ -ca.?- ] .<sup>67</sup>

People also would inform each other of the arrival or anticipated arrival of letters conveyed to them from the Nile valley, or would ask people who had them to forward them to their stations. For example, in O.Claud. II 252 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a letter sent from Petenephotos to Sarapion, Petenephotos who was in Tiberiane asks Sarapion to forward the letters that arrived for him from the Nile valley. Sarapion was at Mons Claudianus and it was easier to deliver the letter of Petenephotos there, ll.2-7 ἐπιε (l. ἐπεὶ) λέγουσιν ἔχιν (l. ἔχειν) σε ἐπιστολὰς ὑμῶν (l. ἡμῶν) ἀπὸ Αἰγύπτου, εὖ ποιήσεις (l. ποιήσεις), ἐὰν ἔχῃς μου ἐπιστόλια, πέμψον μοι, ἐπὶ (l. ἐπεὶ) ανακκέως (l. ἀναγκαῖα) εἰσίν, ‘Since they say that you have letters for us from Egypt, please, if you have letters for me, send them to me since I need them’.<sup>68</sup> In O.Claud. I 155 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a certain Ammonius tells Apollonius who is in Mons Claudianus that he has been informed by the *kibariator* Harpaesius that his wife has sent him a letter; therefore, he asks him to send it to him. ll.3-6 Ἀρπαήσιος ὁ κιβαριάτης εἴρηκέ μοι ὅτι ἐπιστολὴν ἔλαβα ἀπὸ τῆς γυναικός μου. ἐρωτῶ σε πέμψεις μοι αὐτήν.

<sup>67</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 414-415 and Fournet (2003) 478.

<sup>68</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

### 4.3 Unofficial correspondence

#### 4.3.1 Mons Claudianus as central station

Mons Claudianus played a dynamic and significant role during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century between three main neighboring stations: Tiberiane, Raima, and Kampe. It connected the Eastern Desert, at least the part along Koptos-Myos Hormos road, to the Nile valley, and it played the role of intermediate with regard to forwarding letters and other items to and from the Nile valley. It also connected these stations to the Red Sea, providing Raima and other stations with fresh fish from there.<sup>69</sup>

The central place of Mons Claudianus, particularly in relation to the Nile valley, is clear from a number of examples of unofficial correspondence.

In O.Claud. I 174 (early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) a father named Isidoros asks his sons to forward him letters that have come to him from the Nile valley. The sons are in Mons Claudianus, while the location of the father is unknown.

##### 4.3.1.1 Kampe and the Nile valley:

The exact location of Kampe is not precisely known. It is supposed to be somewhere near Raima and Mons Claudianus. This could be confirmed by the fact that letters from the Nile valley that were destined for Kampe were forwarded from Mons Claudianus. In O.Claud. I 155 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a certain Ammonios, who is in Kampe, sends a letter to Apollonios at Mons Claudianus asking him to forward a letter that has arrived from his wife, who most likely was in the Nile valley, to Kampe; on the verso we read ll. 10-11 εἰς τὴν Καμπὴν μοι πέμψεις.

##### 4.3.1.2 Tiberiane and the Nile valley:

It seems clear that, for correspondence conducted between the Nile valley and Tiberiane, Mons Claudianus was the easiest and safest forwarding station. Petenophotes, a civilian living in Tiberiane, relied on his brother Valerius, who was in Mons Claudianus, to forward his letters and parcels to the Nile valley, as seen in O.Claud. II 250 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). It seems that he maintained a steady connection with his family in the Nile valley, as appears from O.Claud. II 248 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) as well, in which he sends via Valerius bags with perhaps cakes and a tablet or label (πινακίδιον) inscribed with the statement (for Dioskoros), who is most likely his wife. Petenophotes asks Valerius to give them to Phthaus to deliver them to his house. In these cases, the presence of Petenophotes' brother at Mons Claudianus, as a trustworthy person, encourages him to send there the items he needs to deliver to the Nile

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<sup>69</sup> This role appears from O.Claud. I 155 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); O.Claud. II 225; 227; 241 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 242 (ca. 144-145); 248; 250; 252; 257; 271; 275; 278 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

valley. But in O.Claud. II 252 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the letters were sent from the Nile valley to Mons Claudianus to a different person, named Sarapion, and not his brother, in order that they be forwarded to Petenophotes in Tiberiane. We do not know Petenophotes's exact relation to Sarapion.

These examples illustrate the use that was made of Mons Claudianus as forwarding station for letters and goods that came to and from the Nile valley. This also proves that the connection between the Nile valley and Mons Claudianus was steadier and perhaps easier to maintain than with the other stations. This is probably because there was greater traffic to Mons Claudianus.

#### 4.3.1.3 Raima and the Nile valley:

In O.Claud. II 275 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the sender Apollinaris, who was at Raima, asks Sonsnaus the receiver at Mons Claudianus to buy him slices of τεμάχια and give them to Achillas the donkey driver so that he can take them to the Nile valley. In the previous instances, it is reasonable that stuff could be forwarded from Mons Claudianus to or from the surrounding stations, such as Tiberiane, since Mons Claudianus was nearer to the Nile valley. However, Raima is nearer to the Nile valley than Mons Claudianus. So, why was fish sent even to the Nile valley from Mons Claudianus and not from Raima to the Nile valley directly? Mons Claudianus was closer to the sea and therefore to the fish. It was a source for fish to the surrounding *praesidia*, in particular the fresh fish coming from the Red Sea.<sup>70</sup> We might also presume that Mons Claudianus was better equipped to handle deliveries, which would confirm our general assessment of Mons Claudianus's central mediating role between the surrounding stations.

#### **4.3.2 Mons Claudianus, a provider of fish from the Red Sea**

As we have seen, Mons Claudianus played an important intermediate role as a junction serving neighboring *praesidia*, both in terms of local trade and as a supply of fresh fish from

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<sup>70</sup> See O.Claud. II 241, 3-9 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 242, 3-4 (ca. 144-145). Fresh fish could spoil after around 4-5 days. It could take 2 days to import fish from the Red Sea to Mons Claudianus, as the trip could take two days' camel journey from the nearest point to the Red Sea near modern Hurghada. It is about 70 km with a stop over the station in Wadi Umm Dalfa, see the introduction to O.Claud. II 241. For the remains of the fish bone in Mons Claudianus, see Bingen (1990) 76-77. In the majority of the letters regarding fish, the sender had to pay the price in advance before he receives the fish; see e.g. O.Claud. II 225, 14-16; 227, 12-14; 241, 4-5; 275, 2-4; 278, 5-7 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

the Red Sea. Attestations and requests of fish occur in around 7 letters, of which three are from Raima and the others are from unknown surrounding places.<sup>71</sup> The species of the fish mentioned in the letters that are sent from unknown stations are ὀψαρίδια (O.Claud. II 225; 227; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); ὀψάρια (O.Claud. II 241; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); ἰχθύδια νηρά (O.Claud. II 242; ca. 144-145). While the kinds of fish attested in the letters sent from Raima are τεμάχιον (O.Claud. II 257; 275; 278; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) and τεμάχιον ὀψαριδίου (O.Claud. II 257; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) which are likely pickled or salted fish.<sup>72</sup> In O.Claud. II 257 the writer added τεμάχιον to ὀψάριον to identify it as a pickled fish; therefore, in O.Claud. II 225; 227; 241 the ὀψαρίδια and ὀψάρια are likely fresh.<sup>73</sup> O.Claud. II 225 and 227 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) are letters belonging to the correspondence of the soldier Dioskoros who had to pay for the fish in advance in *denarii*. This coin was likely used between the soldiers and the fishermen on the Red Sea coast, therefore the fish is likely from the Red Sea.<sup>74</sup>

### 4.3.3 Provenance and the direction in which goods traveled

#### 4.3.3.1 Proskynema:

The *proskynema* was a religious expression that informed the addressee that the sender was doing obeisance before a deity (or several deities) on behalf of the addressee for his continuous welfare. They are found in letters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries and disappeared after

<sup>71</sup> From Raima: O.Claud. II, 257; 275; 278 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). From unknown places: O.Claud. II 225; 227; 241 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); 242 (ca. 144-145).

<sup>72</sup> For other attestations to the τεμάχιον as pickled fish; see τεμάχιον in P.Cair. Zen. I 59082, 10 (Alexandria; before 21. July 257 BCE); P.Lond. III 1171, col. 4, 72 (unknown; after 2. Sept. 8 BCE); P.Flor. III 388 col. 8, 74=SB XXIV 15920 (Hermopolis; 87?); SB VI 9165, 6 (El-Heita; 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.); SB XX 15081, 7 (Thebes; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); SB VI 9249, 10 (Syene (?); II-III). There are other attestations to the salty fish in letters from Didymoi: O.Did 442 (before (?) ca. 120-125); 383 (before (?) ca. 110-115), and jar of pickled fish in O.Did.423 (before (?) ca. 125-140), from Krokodilo: O.Krok. II 265 (first half of the reign of Hadrian) and from Maximianon: SB XXII 15454 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). There are two other different kinds of fish mentioned in O.Krok. I 1, 22, 24, 29 (after (?) 28. March 108), which are the: κεστρεύς (or mullet) and the σκάρος (or parrot-wrasse).

<sup>73</sup> See also Bülow-Jacobsen, Cuvigny, Fournet (1994) 30 note to 1.5.

<sup>74</sup> See O.Claud. II 225, note to line 15, where the editor mentions that “the use of *denarii* in accounting for fish begs the question whether they were real *denarii*, not tetradrachms, and whether the fishermen on the coast demanded payment in hard currency. I have discussed this possibility with Dr. E. Christiansen, Aarhus, who thinks it quite likely that some real *denarii* circulated among soldiers inside military areas and could be used as payment to the fishermen who might have occasion to spend money outside Egypt. The tradition seems to have been maintained and even today foreign currency is very popular in the coastal area close to Mons Claudianus”.



the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Typically, the formula of the *proskynema* was τὸ προσκύνημά σου ποιῶ καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν. But this was not the standard and some variations existed.<sup>75</sup> As appears from the attestations of this expression in the letters of the Eastern Desert, the practice was popular among Roman soldiers.<sup>76</sup>

The *proskynema* formula in letters appears earlier in the area of the desert of Berenike than north in the area of the quarry of Mons Claudianus and Umm Balad.<sup>77</sup> But it was more popular in letters from Mons Claudianus and the stations on the road to Myos Hormos.<sup>78</sup>

A large number of the Eastern Desert unofficial letters contain the *proskynema*. By virtue of these *proskynemata*, and since the unofficial correspondence of the Eastern Desert is normally sent to the next direct neighboring station, the provenance or the place from which the letter was sent can often be recognized, because the *proskynemata* were performed by the sender of the letter on behalf of the addressee before the tutelary deity of the place in which the sender is.<sup>79</sup> Some of these tutelary gods were popular and familiar, such as Athena, Techosis, Sarapis and Philotera while some have quite few attestations, such as Pan, Apollo and Dioskouroi, as appears from the table below.

route de Bérénice			route de Myos Hormos		
Didymoi	Dios	Xéron	Krokodilô	Persou	Maximianon
Aphrodite: 11	Techôsis: 60	Zeus: 23	Athéna: 32	Sarapis: 1	Athéna: 62
Pan: 4	Athéna: 42	Athéna: 9	Apollon: 1	Athéna: 1	Sarapis: 30
Dioscures: 1	Zeus: 16	Apollon: 2	Philôtera: 1	ἐνθάδε θεοί: 3	Philôtera: 17
ἐνθάδε θεοί: 3	Apollon: 2	Techôsis: 2	Pan: 1		Tychè de Simiou: 2
	Aphrodite: 2	Pan: 1	Dioscures: 1		ἐνθάδε θεοί: 22
	Dioscures: 1	ἐνθάδε θεοί: 5	ἐνθάδε θεοί: 20		πάντες οἱ θεοί: 1
	ἐνθάδε θεοί: 9		πάντες οἱ θεοί: 7		

Table 1. Table of the *proskynemata* of the corpus of the Eastern Desert from the road to Berenike and the road to Myos Hormos. Taken from Cuvigny (2013) 414.

<sup>75</sup> See Blumell (2012) 53-54 and the note 127. For more discussion of the *proskynema*, see Koskenniemi (1956) 139-145; Geraci (1971) 3-211; Tibiletti (1979) 53-58; Aly (1994) 107-118; Bernard (1994) 43-60; Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 89-90; Tallet (2013) 5587-5588. As for *proskynema* in the the Eastern Desert see O.Claud. I, pp.65-68; O.Did. pp.5-6; Cuvigny (1997a) 139-147; (2013) 409-416; Fournet (2003) 483-485.

<sup>76</sup> See Sarri (2018) 49.

<sup>77</sup> See Cuvigny (2013) 414.

<sup>78</sup> This assertion relies on information gathered from HGV through a search conducted on 28 July 2018, from which it appears that the *proskynema* appeared in texts from Mons Claudianus, Mons Porphrites, Raima, Wadi Hammamat and the sites on the road to Myos Hormos, which are Maximianon and Wadi Fawakhir. Attestations for the *proskynema* in texts from Krokodilo also occur in O.Krok. II, in addition to Didymoi, on the road to Berenike. Berenike can hardly be compared, because there are far fewer letters from there.

<sup>79</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003a) 52 and (1998) 70.

Sometimes, the *proskynema* is not helpful, particularly when it contains a generic reference to “the gods here” or “all the gods.” In such cases, it does not help us know the provenance of the letter, as we see in O.Claud. II 227, 3-5 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) τὸ προσκύν[η]μα ὑμῶν ποιῶ παρὰ τοῖς ἐνθάδ[ε] θεοῖς. It is worth mentioning here that the formula addressed to “the gods” was more common in letters from the station on the road to Myos Hormos.<sup>80</sup> Typically, the formula of the *proskynema* in the Eastern Desert letters is τὸ προσκύνημά σου ποιῶ παρά, followed by the name of the god or the goddess, as in SB VI 9017 Nr. 24=O.Faw. 24, 4-5 (1st-2nd cent.) τὸ προσκύνημά [σου ποιῶ παρὰ τῷ] Σεράπιδι, ‘I do obeisance on behalf of you before Sarapis’; O.Did. 458, 1-3 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) τὸ προσκύνημά σου ποιῶ παρὰ] τοῖς κυρίοις Διοσκούροις, ‘I make obeisance for you to the Lords Dioscuri’<sup>81</sup>. However, there are variant formulas, such as the one attested in O.Did. 353, 2 (before ca. 77-92) εὐχαριστῶ (l. εὐχαριστῶ) σοι πολλὰ π[αρὰ τ]ῷ θεῷ, ‘I thank you very much before the god’.<sup>82</sup> The *proskynema* could also be done on behalf of more than one person as in O.Claud. II 259, 3-4 (Raima; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) τὸ προσκύνημα [σο] ὑμῶν ποιῶ παρὰ τῇ κυρία Ἰσιδι, ‘I do obeisance on behalf of you before lady Isis’. Longer expressions could contain references to doing this practice every day on behalf of the receiver, as in SB VI 9164, 3-5 (Wadi Fawakhir; 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) τὸ προσκύνημά σου ποιῶ καθ’ ἡμέραν] παρὰ τῇ κυρία Ἀθηνᾶ, ‘I do obeisance on behalf of you everyday before lady Athena’.

The *proskynema* is very helpful for recognizing the provenance of a letter when it contains the deity worshiped at the place, as in O.Claud. II 255, 3-5 (Raima; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) τὸ προσκύνημά σου ποιῶ παρὰ τῇ κυρεία (l. κυρία) Ἰσιδι ἐν Ῥαιεμα (l. Ῥαιεμα), ‘I do obeisance on behalf of you before lady Isis in Raima’; O.Claud. II 237, 405 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) τὸ προσκύνημα ἡμῶν (l. ὑμῶν) ποιῶ παρὰ τῇ Τύχη Καμπήτος, ‘I pray on your behalf to the Tyche of Kampe’.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See Cuvigny (2013) 414.

<sup>81</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>82</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>83</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. For more attestations, see O.Claud. II 225, 5-7 (Mons Claudianus; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) τὸ προ(σ)κύνημα ἡμῶν/ (l. ὑμῶν) {σφ[υ]} ποιῶ παρὰ τῇ Τύχ[η τοῦ] πρεσιδίου (l. πραισιδίου); O.Claud. II 256, 3-5 (Raima; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) τὸ προσκύνημά (l. προσκύνημά) σου πῶ (l. ποιῶ) παρὰ τῇ κυρεία Ἰσιδι ἐν Ῥαιεμα (l. Ῥαιεμα); O.Claud. II 302, 3-5 (Mons Porphyrites; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) [τὸ προσκύνημά σοι ποιῶ [παρὰ τῇ Τ]ύχη Πορφυρ[ίτου].

#### 4.3.3.2 Commodities:

Commodities mentioned in the letters can also say something about the provenance of a letter. For example, some sites were rich in vegetables, such as Persou.<sup>84</sup> We have also seen that fresh fish came from the Red Sea or was forwarded from stations near the Red Sea because it could become bad after 4-5 days.<sup>85</sup> However, this applies to private, local provisions. As for the huge provisions needed for the military, they had to come from the Nile valley to the desert by wagons and cattle.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, the type of station, whether quarry or *praesidium*, helps estimate the direction from which the goods were sent. For example, in O.Did. 323 (before (?) ca. 125-140), a letter found in Didymoi, Iulius the sender informs Antonius that he has sent him a small grindstone, but that he can send him a bigger one if he needs it. Grindstones could come from the quarries at Persou, but Iulius mentions again in the letter that he wrote to Kompasi; in that case, this Iulius was probably in Aphrodites Orous, the station next to Didymoi on the road to Berenike, where there are also mines and quarries.<sup>87</sup>

The following tables created by Bülow-Jacobsen represent items that typically identify the direction from which the letter is addressed.

From the Nile valley:

ἄρτος	bread (mostly in the form of wheat, but often sent from Krokodilo to Persou in the form of baked bread because, for a time, there was a problem with the oven at Persou, cf. K585, K623, and <i>O.Fawâkhîr</i> 1 (= SB VI 9017 Nr. 1)
ἄχυρον	chaff
βουκρ<ε>ά[διον	beef, or perhaps βουκρά[νιον, ‘oxhead’
ἐλαία	olive

<sup>84</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (1998) 70, 73.

<sup>85</sup> See the introduction to O.Claud. II 241 and Bülow-Jacobsen (1998) 69-70. See also O.Krok. II 265 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the reign of Hadrian) and SB XXII 15452 (Maximianon; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) in which the sender, who is in Myos Hormos, says that he could not send fish to the recipient because the boats had not come there, ll. 3-5 ὅτι οὐκ εἰσῆλθαν αἱ σχεδία ὄντος μου εἰς Μυὸς Ὅρμον, ἡμελλὰ γὰρ σοι πέμπειν τὰ ὀψάρια, ‘that the boats did not come (back) to Myos Hormos while I was there. I was going to send you the fish’, trans. (eds.) Bülow-Jacobsen, Cuvigny, Fournet (1994) 30.

<sup>86</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 419.

<sup>87</sup> See the introduction to O.Did. 323.

ἔλαιον ῥαφάνινον	radish-oil
ἔλαιον χρηστόν	olive-oil
κίτριον	lemon
κολοκύνθιον	bottle gourd, or more likely squash (vegetable marrow)
κριθή	barley (mostly mentioned to feed pigs)
κρόμμυον	onion
λαδικηνόν	κεράμιον from Laodicea, presumably containing wine (M313)
λουπάτιον	? (K599)
ξύλον	wood for ship-building in Myos Hormos ( <i>O.Krok.</i> 41)
οἶνος	wine (one letter, M151, seems to indicate wine and oil from Simiou, but this must be a mistake due to the fragmentary state of the text)
ὄξος	vinegar
σκόρδον (σκόροδον)	garlic
σταφυλή	grape
τῆλις	fenugreek (K599)
τυρίον	cheese (sent from Persou to Maximianon along with olives, but presumably originates from the valley, M574, M1139)
φακός	lentils
φοῖνιξ	dates
χόρτος	hay

From the sea:

ἄληξ (Lat. <i>allec, allex</i> )	fish-sauce (M279)
βάλανος	a kind of shell-fish ('acorn')
γλαυκισκάριν	a kind of fish
ὄψαριν	fish
σκάρος	parrot-fish
τεμάχιον	slice of dried or salted fish
τρίγλη	red mullet ( <i>Mullus barbatus</i> )

From Persou:

ἀσπάραγος	asparagus, or fresh shoots of cabbage or other plants, cf. LSJ <i>s.v.</i> ἀσφάραγος
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ἀμμωνιακή	<i>ferula marmarica</i>
ἀνδράχνη	purslane
γλήχων	penny-royal
γογγύλη	turnip
θρίδαξ	lettuce
καύλιον	cabbage
κεφαλωτόν (sc. πράσον)	leek
κράμβη	cabbage
κρόκη	saffron (M1040)
λάχανα (plur.)	vegetables
πράσον	leek
ῥαφάνιον	radish
σέρις	endive/chicory
σεῦτλον	beet
σπέρματα ἀνήθιν	dill-seed
συρμάδιον	horse-radish (purge-plant)
τρώξιμον	endive/chicory
φασήλια (plur.)	beans
χοιρίδιον	suckling pig
ὄκιμον	basil

Items that are not provenance indicators:

κρέας	meat
μολόχη	<i>mulûkhiyya</i> (M598)
ῶον	egg (hens could be kept on any dung-hill)

Table 2. Items refer to the direction from which the letter is addressed.<sup>88</sup>

Raima and Phoinikon were also richer in vegetables and victuals than other sites.

Raima was quite often the source for the following commodities (Table 3):

Cabbage	O.Claud. II 255; 256; 257; 262; 263; 272; 273
Vegetables	O.Claud. II 265; 271; 278

<sup>88</sup> The tables are taken from Bülow-Jacobsen (2003b) 420-421.

Various victuals	O.Claud. II 370 (x bundles of cabbage and an asparagus, 2 bundles of lettuce)
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Phoinikon was the source for the following victuals (definitely some of which arrived to it from the Nile valley) (Table 4):<sup>89</sup>

Cabbage	O.Did. 447; O.Did. 428 bunch of cabbage consisting of 9 broccoli and 8 lettuces; O.Did. 461: x bunches of cabbages and four of leeks; O.Did. 344: a bunch of cabbage, purslane, basil and rue; 381; O.Krok. II 155; 192
Vegetables	O.Did. 453; O.Did. 453; O.Krok. II 204
Asparagus and various victuals	O.Did. 379; O.Did. 328: bunch of asparagus and two radishes; O.Krok. II 215?: a bunch of asparagus, a bunch of pennyroyal and a bunch of purge-pants
Onion	O.Did. 376; O.Krok. II 158; 199; 200
Oil	O.Krok. II 156; 192; 199; 216
Bread	O.Did. 368; O.Krok. II 215

Salt supposedly originated in the Red Sea (Table 5):

Salt	O.Krok. II 168; 215; 259; O.Did. 320; 321; 384
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Stones are likely to have come from the nearest quarry site (Table 6):

Whetstones	from Mons Claudinaus: O.Claud. IV 891; from Persou: O.Krok. II 193
Grindstone	from Aphrodites Orous: O.Did. 323

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<sup>89</sup> Philokles dispatched many commodities from Phoinikon when he was there, e.g. in O.Did. 376 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.): a jar full of windfalls in which there are 20 apples and 2 gourds, 16 lettuces and 10 apples and 10 onions and some pennyroyal and a gourd, a bunch of cabbage; O.Krok. II 152 (98-117): camel meat, four bunches of beets, fallen (fruit); O.Did. 381 (before (?) ca. 110-115): a half *mation* of salt and two bunches of cabbages.

#### 4.3.4 Complaints due to lack of correspondence

References to the number of times one has gone unanswered are very common in private letters from Egypt.<sup>90</sup> The highest number encountered is apparently twenty, as found in a letter belonging to the archive of the soldier Gaius Iulius Apollinarius. In it, he writes from Arabia complaining that it is the twentieth time he is writing to his mother.<sup>91</sup> This was not the first time he complains about the difficulty to correspond with his family in Egypt. In P.Mich. VIII 465 (20. Febr. 108?), he writes while at Bostra (Arabia) to inform his mother Tasoucharion, who was in Karanis, that he did not send her some items since the way is long and he could not find anybody to conduct such a mission, ll. 17-28 καὶ χαλκὸν [ἀ]πέσχον, καὶ ἠθέλησα ὑμῖν πέμψαι θαλλὸν ἐκ τῶν Τυρίων, κα[ὶ] διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀντιγράψαι ὑ[μᾶς οὐ] πε[πί]στευκα οὐθενὶ διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς ὁδοῦ. ὦδε γὰρ ἱμάτια καλὰ καὶ ἔβ[ε]τος καὶ πινάρια καὶ μύρα ἀγ[ά]γετα[ι] [εὐ]πόρος (l. εὐπόρως). διὸ ἐρωτῶ [σε τὴ]ν κυρ[ί]αν μου . . .] .χωσ καὶ ἰλαρῶς εὐφραί[ν]εσθαι. καὶ γὰρ ὦ[δ]ε καλῶς ἐστίν. ἐὰν γὰρ ὑμῖς (l. ὑμεῖς) λυπησθε ἐγὼ ἀδημονῶ. ἐργασίαν οὖν δώσις (l. δώσεις) ἐρωτήσαι φίλον μου ἐπ’ Ἀλεξανδρείας εἶνα (l. ἵνα) δι’ αὐτοῦ μοι πέμψης λίνα στυ[π]έα, ‘and I received some money and wanted to send you a gift of Tyrian wares; and since you did not reply, I have not entrusted it to anyone on account of the length of the journey. For fine garments and ebony (?) and pearls and unguents are brought here in abundance(?). Therefore I ask you, my lady, to be . . . and merrily joyful; for this is a good place. For if you are grieved, I am uneasy. Do you now give yourself the trouble to make inquiry of a friend of mine at Alexandria, so that you may send to me through him coarse-fibered linens’.<sup>92</sup>

Such complaints are often attested in the Eastern Desert letters.<sup>93</sup> Take for example the complaint of the sender of O.Claud. I 154, 3-4 (ca. 100-120) ἤδη πεντάκις σοι φάσ[ι]ν ἔπεμψα καὶ οὐκ] ἀντέγραψας, ‘five times already I have sent word to you, but you have not answered’.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> However, the problem was not always due to the lack of carriers; for how easy it was to find carrier in the area of the Nile valley, see Llewelyn (1994a) 27-28.

<sup>91</sup> The letter was discussed by Verhoogt on behalf of Claytor in 2017 at the 28<sup>th</sup> Congress of Papyrology. In another letter from Oxyrhynchus, P.Oxy. XIV 1765 (3rd cent.), there is a reference to sending 8 letters to the addressee without any reply from him, ll.3-7 ὀκτώ σοι ἐπιστολάς, καὶ οὐδὲ ἅπαξ ἠξίωσάς μοι γράφειν περὶ ὧν ἔλαβες, διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔπεμψά σοι τὰ δεύτερα, ‘eight letters to you, and not once did you deign to write to me about what you received. Because of this I did not send you the second (shipment)’, trans. Bagnall (2006) 298.

<sup>92</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

<sup>93</sup> For this kind of complaint with regard to the conveyance of letters, see Fournet (2003) 477.

<sup>94</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

Another instance is the complaint of Dioskoros in O.Claud. II 228 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), in which he says to the addressees that he often writes to them without one of them writing to him, ll.7-9 ποσάκεις (l. ποσάκις) ἔγραψα ὑμῖν οὐδε ενα (l. οὐδεὶς) ὑμῶν {ε} γράψας μοι, ‘How often have I written to you, without one of you writing to me?’<sup>95</sup>

References to problems and expressions of complaint can take other forms as well. For example, in O.Did. 399 (before (?) ca. 120-125), the sender says to the receiver that it should not be a big deal for him to write a letter, ll. 6-7 οὐκ ἦν μέγα πρᾶγμα εἴ μοι ἔγραψες (l. ἔγραψας) ἐπιστολήν.<sup>96</sup> In a letter from Berenike, a mother complains about her son not writing in very expressive sentences, P.Berenike II 129, 1-5 (ca. 50-75) πρὸ μὲν πάντων ἀναγκαῖον ἠγησάμην ἐφορκίου ἀναγομένου γρά[ψαι - ca.14 -] ἐμέ. [ἐ]γ[Βε]ρνίκη εἰμί. ἐγὼ (l. ἐγὼ) μὲν σοι ἐπιστολήν γεγράφηκα [. . .] [. . .] [. . . . .] ἐπιστολήν. διὰ [τ]οῦτο σὲ ἐβάσταζον δέξα μῆνες (l. μῆνας) καὶ τρία ἔτη σε ἐθήλαζον εἶνα (l. ἵνα) μὴ εἰ[δ]ῆς μου μνημονεῦσαι δι’ ἐπιστολῆς, ‘[first of all] I thought it necessary, since the packet boat was putting out to sea, to write . . . me. I am in Berenike. I wrote you a letter [?but did not receive a] letter. Was it for this that I carried you for ten months and nursed you for three years, so that you would be incapable of remembering me by letter?’<sup>97</sup>

These expressions extend also to the neglect of sending goods and other victuals, as in O.Did. 317 (before (?) ca. 77-92) 2-10 ἐροτῶ (l. ἐρωτῶ) σε, πέμψον μοι τὰς (δραχμὰς) δ καὶ τὸ καλαμάριν (l. καλαμάριον) διὰ τοῦ ἐρχομένου. εἴρηκέ σοι καὶ Κρίσπος κοῦκ (l. καὶ οὐκ) ἔδοκες (l. ἔδωκες) αὐτῷ (l. αὐτῷ). λοιπόν, ἀδελφε, ταχέως (l. τάχως) μοι πέμψον ἐπιδὴ (l. ἐπειδὴ) κολάζομαι τοῦ καλαμαρίου καὶ σὺ ἐπίτασσε ἄν τινος χρήσης, ‘I ask you, send me the four drachmas and the pen-case by (the first one) coming (here). Crispus also told you and you did not give them to him. Further, brother, send me it quickly for I badly need the pen-case, and you just tell me if you need anything’.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen. I thank Frau Jördens who suggested that οὐδε ενα ὑμῶν could be read οὐδὲ εἷς ὑμῶν, meaning that the translation of the line is ‘not even one of you did write to me’.

<sup>96</sup> See also O.Krok. I 96, 5 (ca. 98-138) οὐκ ἦν γὰρ μέγα πρᾶγμα πέμψαι, ‘for it was no great matter to send (letter).

<sup>97</sup> Trans. (eds.) Bagnall et al.

<sup>98</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.



#### 4.3.5 Trouble sending letters and goods due to a lack of carriers

It is not uncommon in letters from Egypt for the lack of carriers and other logistic constraints to be cited as an obstacle to exchanging items.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, in the Eastern Desert, we hear these same excuses. For example, a certain Pathermoutis informs Lucius Longinus that he did not find someone to send wood, O.Claud. II 298, 3-4 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) οὐχ εὔρηκα διὰ τίνος σοι πέμψω ξύλα. Sending items might also be delayed until a carrier is available, as occurs in O.Krok. II 265 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the reign of Hadrian), in which the sender promised to send things once he found a carrier going to the way of the addressee, 11-13 ἐκώ (l. ἐγώ) σοι [πέμψω] αὐτὰ ἂν [εὔ]ρω τινὰ ἐρχόμενον π[ρ]ός σε. Furthermore, correspondents have to be sure that their items will be delivered by trustworthy persons, as appears from O.Did. 402, 9-11 (before (?) ca. 110-115) ὕσις (l. οἷσις) μοι [αὐ]τὴ τὸ τετράτερμα (l. τετράδεσμα), εἰ τὲ (l. δὲ) μή, πέμψι<ς> (l. πέμψει<ς>) μὲν (l. μοι) διὰ πιστόν (l. πιστοῦ) τινα (l. τινος), ‘please bring me the leather ground sheet yourself, if not to send it with someone trustworthy for I cannot stay without it’.<sup>100</sup> The lack of a trustworthy person also hampered the conveyance of goods in SB XXVIII 17114 (Maximianon; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), in which the sender tells the receiver not to send oil with a certain Donatus, but rather with a trustworthy person, should he find one, ll.7-11 βλέπε Δωνάτω (l. Δονάτω) μὴ δοῖς. ἢ ἂν (l. ἐὰν) δὲ σὺ εὔρης ἀσφαλῆν (l. ἀσφαλῆ), δός, ‘be careful not to give (them) to Donatus. If you find trustworthy (person) give (them to him)’. It is precisely such difficulties that compel senders to request from the receivers acknowledgement of the reception of a letter or parcel.<sup>101</sup> It could also be one of the reasons behind identifying the name of the carrier.<sup>102</sup> O.Did. 368 (possibly before 77-92) shows a remarkable situation in which the sender of the letter apologizes to the receiver for not sending him bread because the horseman departed suddenly, ll.4-7 καὶ τῷ προτέρῳ ἵππῃ (l. ἵππεϊ) ἤθελον δοῦναι, ἀλλὰ ἐξάπινα ἀπῆλθε, ‘and I wanted to send it by the first horseman, but he left suddenly’.<sup>103</sup>

#### 4.3.6 The direction of travel

To refer to the direction of travel in the Eastern Desert, verbs such as ἀναβαίνω and καταβαίνω are used in letters. As Adams mentioned that Bülow-Jacobsen pointed out to him

<sup>99</sup> See for example P.CtYBR inv. 1678 (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> cent), published in Peppard (2008) 162-166.

<sup>100</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>101</sup> See Fournet (2003) 475-477.

<sup>102</sup> For identifying multiple carriers, see also ch. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Trans. Bülow-Jacobsen, see also ch.2.

“the use of the composite or prefix *κατα* denotes ‘downriver’ when used in the Nile valley, and down from the mountains or desert toward the Nile valley when used elsewhere”.<sup>104</sup> Also *ἀναβαίνω* normally means that an item moves from the Nile to the desert in the direction of the sea.<sup>105</sup> However, in the area of the Nile valley, *ἀναβαίνω* refers to movement ‘upriver’ toward the south.

Other verbs such as *ἀναδίδωμι* (O.Claud. II 239, 6-7), *καθίστημι* (O.Krok. I 1, e.g. 9, 22) and *καταφέρω* (O.Claud. IV 870 + 895, 15-16) are likely used similarly. As with boats, *ἀνάγω*, which is used in O.Ber. II 129 might have been used similarly, as well, but the boat was most likely sailing north from Berenike to Myos Hormos. This seems to be totally opposite to the valley. This could simply reflect the current of the water.

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<sup>104</sup> Adams (2007) 202.

<sup>105</sup> See O.Did. 343, note to ll.9-10, and Bülow-Jacobsen (2003) 401, n. 10.

## 5 Letter Writers of the Eastern Desert

One of the prominent features of Eastern Desert letters is the handwriting. From around 930 official and unofficial letters and postal records the handwriting of ca. 373 texts has been studied. The hands preserved in these texts are attested in two or more letters, and each hand has been assigned to a specific person. This hand might have written for himself or on behalf of other people, and in certain cases the identification of the hands has not been easy.<sup>1</sup> In total, no less than 80 hands can be recognized. The number of recognized hands corresponds approximately to the following rates: thirty-four hands from Mons Claudianus, twenty-two from Krokodilo, seventeen from Didymoi, around three from Maximianon, two from Berenike, one from Abu Sha'ar and one from Umm Balad, so far. The majority of them dates to the second century CE. In this chapter, I will try to illustrate the most prominent hands. Since the majority of them date to the second century CE, the main focus will be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> century texts.

### 5.1 The first century

#### 5.1.1 Unofficial letters

One of the characteristic hands from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE is that of Cutus (Figure 1), who is likely a Thracian soldier who wrote three Latin letters dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> century addressed to a group of Thracian soldiers and other persons, who bore Roman names (O.Did. 334-335; before 88-96 and 336 (desc.); 77-92 CE). He did not write only these letters; there is a list of names from Didymoi (O.Did. 63; before (?) ca. 88-96), also in Latin, that is in his hand. The list mostly contains Thracian soldiers' names.<sup>2</sup> Some of them are identical with the soldiers of the letters. Cutus is interesting because he represents a literate Thracian writing to other Thracians. Moreover, the fact that he was Thracian suggests that Latin was not his mother tongue, something that is supported by his unprofessional-looking hand and by his use of the Greek-loan word *semiaphori* (Gr. σημειοφόροι) instead of the Latin *signiferi* in O.Did. 334, 4.<sup>3</sup> The number of Thracians in the Roman army was numerous and they must have been

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<sup>1</sup> I have therefore had to apply certain rules in ambiguous cases. For example, if there are 5 letters sent by a single person and 4 are in a single hand but the 5th is in a clearly different one, I tend to assume that the writer and sender are a single person. If, however, the split is 3 to 2, or even 2 to 2, I take a more case-by-case approach.

<sup>2</sup> P.Lond. 482 is a receipt for wheat for cavalrymen and infantry, published in Fink (1971) 333-335 no. 80, and also in Speidel (1982) 333-335. The receipt lists a group of ten military men who bore Thracian names. It dates to 130 CE. What is interesting that the receipt is written in Latin unlike most of the receipts of this kind, as Fink has pointed out, like our texts.

<sup>3</sup> See the intro. to O.Did. 334.

learning Latin during their time of service,<sup>4</sup> or they had picked it up elsewhere, before coming to Egypt. Therefore, it might not actually be surprising that Cutus wrote in Latin.<sup>5</sup>

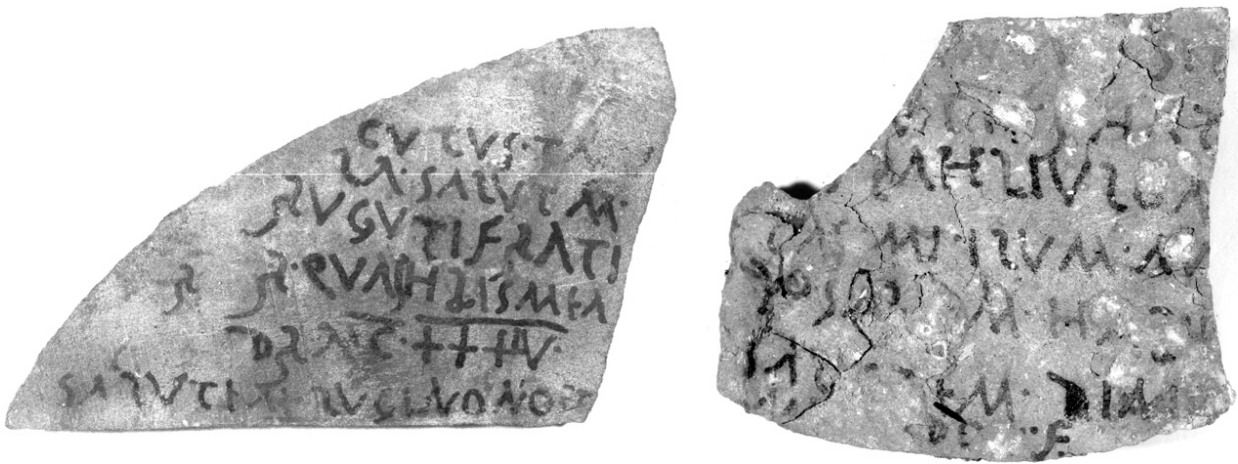


Figure 1. O.Did. 335 and 336. Photos by Bülow-Jacobsen.

In Berenike we also find two private letters (O.Ber. II 195-196; ca. 50-75) that seem to be written by the same hand and both have references to cats (Figure 2). One of them, O.Ber. II 195, is addressed from Herennius to Saturnilus, and the other (196) has lost the names of the individuals involved in the correspondence. After comparing both hands of the letters, especially some letters such as the detached *rho*, the way of writing the *upsilon*, *epsilon*, *alpha*, and the small *omicron*, besides the ligatures style of the hand, I found that they were written by the same person.

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<sup>4</sup> See Adams (2003) 283. There are arguments around the number of the Thracians in Egypt and in the army, in particular. Speidel states that Thracian soldiers were few in the Roman army in Egypt, see Speidel (1982) 333. Zahariade (2009) 94 similarly contends that ‘Although farmers, other civilians, bureaucrats, and high ranking officials of Thracian origin are extensive in number, the records of the Thracians in the *auxilia* are surprisingly reduced’. However, ongoing excavations in the Eastern Desert may change this view of Thracians in Egypt. There are at least 40 names of Thracian soldiers presented in the Eastern Desert material, ca. 10 from Mons Claudianus and the surroundings stations, ca. 15 from Maximianon, ca. 15 from Didymoi, ca. 10 from Krokodilo and ca. 2 from Kaine Latomia, see Dana (2003) 182 and note 77 and (2012) 227. It was known that, Thracian soldiers were occasionally used in the quarries, either as administrative personnel or directly in quarries, as appears from an inscription (CIL III 75=6630=ILS 4424) dates to 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, in which a detachment from the Thracians helped to transport big blocks, columns and pillars, see Zahariade (2009) 198.

<sup>5</sup> For more about conditions for the use of the Latin language by military individuals, see Fournet (2009) 423-424.

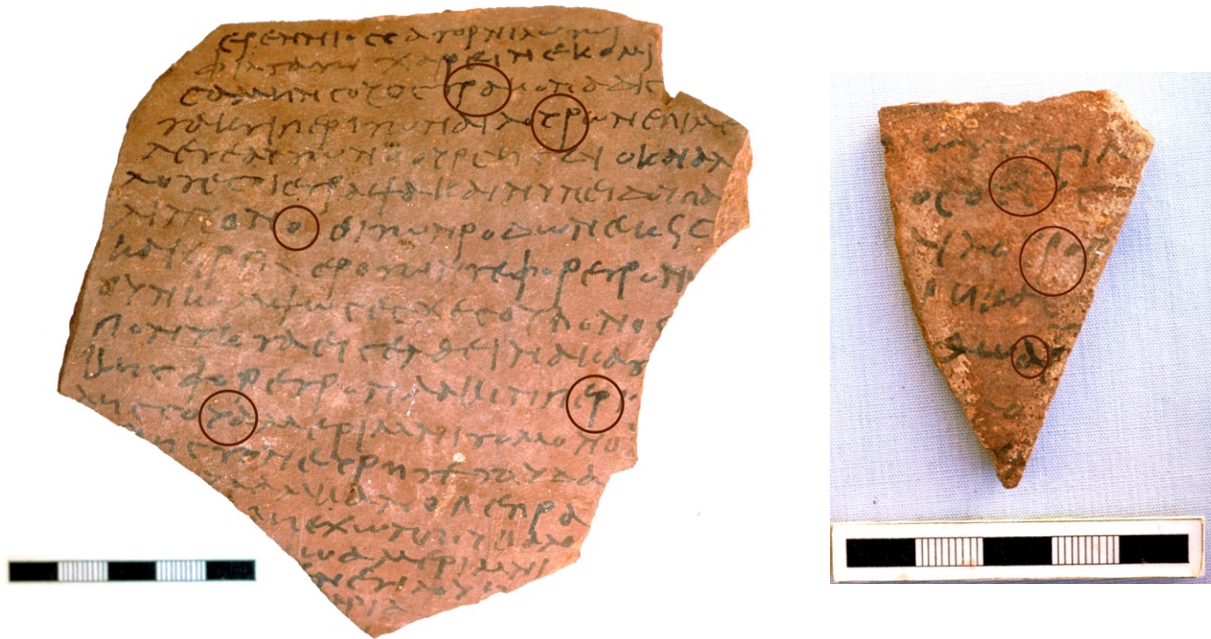


Figure 2. O.Ber. II 195 and O.Ber. II 196. Photos by Sidebotham.

In O.Ber. II 196, the editors mention that the name of the recipient could be restored to Saturnilus, the same person as the recipient of 195. There are two reasons for this. First of all, there are traces before the omega that could belong to *lambda*, 1.1 [ -ca.-? ] . ω τῷ φιλ-; secondly, the letter is concerned with the topic of cats, as in 195. I would suggest that, in addition to this, the sender might be restored to Herennius, because they are written by the same hand, not to mention the fact that they are the only two letters concerning cats that have been found at Berenike so far.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the address of O.Ber. II 193 (ca. 50-75), which was sent to Saturnilus, has been supplemented with the name Herennius, since he is the same sender of 195, but the hands of the letters are not really that similar, which makes this supplement doubtful.

There are two other private letters (Figure 3) from Berenike (O.Ber. III 360, O.Ber. III 476; second half of the first century CE), that appear to be in a single hand. Each is addressed from Campanus, one to Petronius (360) and the other to Niger (476). Niger is also mentioned in 360, which supports the idea that we are dealing with the same three people. In addition, I

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<sup>6</sup> Many cat remains (some with collars around the neck) have been found at Berenike in recent excavations in 2018, more detailed information about these discoveries are discussed in the report from the 2018 season in Sidebothman et al. (forthcoming).

have serious doubt that both of the letters are written by the same hand, in such case it could be the hand of Campanus himself.

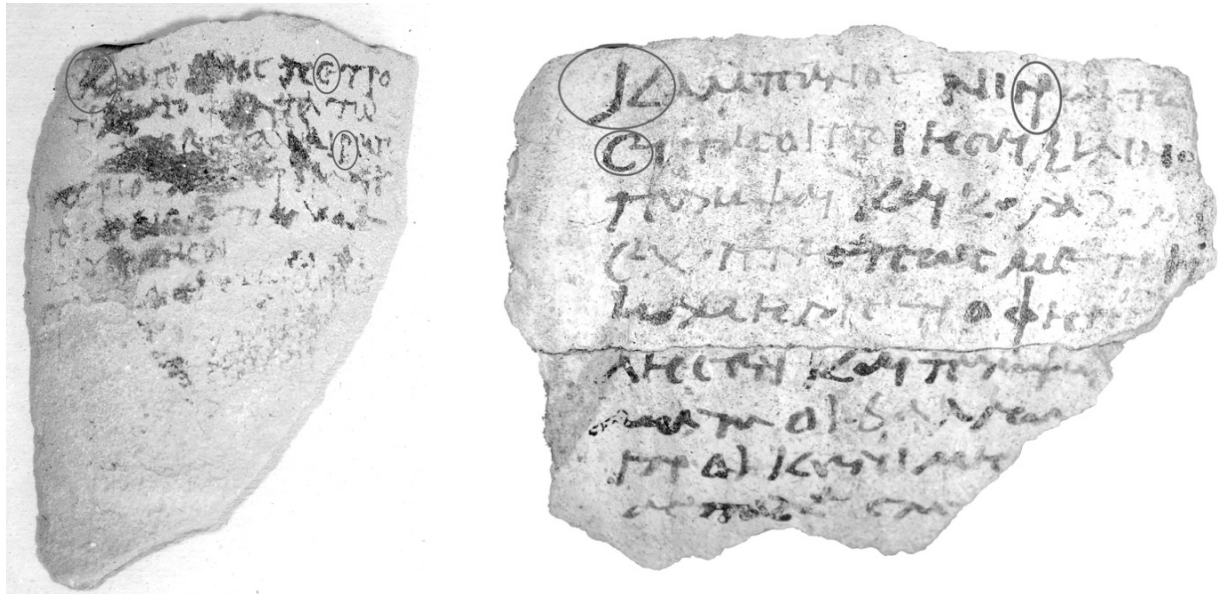


Figure 3. O.Ber. III 360 and O.Ber. III 476. Photos by Ast.

Generally, when multiple letters are addressed by the same person in a single hand, it likely means that the sender and the writer are the same person, as in the case of the letters of Maximus, who was possibly an *optio* and penned around six letters for himself and on behalf of other acquaintances (O.Did. 355-360; before (?) ca. 77-92).<sup>7</sup> There are exceptions to this, however. For example, O.Did. 343 (before (?) ca. 77-92) and 346 (Figure 4) are two letters sent from two different people but written by the same hand. The first, O.Did. 343, which never reached its destination, is addressed from Longinus the soldier—who was at Didymoi—to Numerius—whose hand is already known from the letters 342, 344 and 345. The second letter O.Did. 346 is addressed from Narcissus to Lucia the wife of Longinus the soldier. Since Longinus is known to have been in Didymoi, this copy of the letter was probably also not sent. As for the author of the letter, Longinus may well have penned the letter to his wife on behalf of Narcissus so that his wife, who is likely to have been in Koptos (as mentioned in 342) could send him some items. Another interpretation could be that Narcissus penned both of letters, 346 for himself and 343 on behalf of Longinus. Alternatively, a third person might have written on behalf of both of them, as the editor suggests.

<sup>7</sup> See the introduction to O.Did. 355-360. This is the operating assumption for the Eastern Desert. Certainly, there are plenty of examples of papyrus letters from Egypt written by someone other than the sender of the letter.



Figure 4. O.Did. 343 and 346. Taken from O.Did.

It is not inevitable that letters addressed from the same person are always in the same hand. Moreover, when one person writes on behalf of others, it can be very difficult to determine who the author is. For example, two of three letters addressed from a soldier called Gaius Antonius to his fellow soldier Longinus Crispus, (O.Did. 340-341; before ca. 77-92) are written by the same hand and one is by a different person (O.Did. 339; before ca. 77-92), which makes it uncertain if the sender is the person who penned the two letters, while another one wrote the third, or whether the sender always used surrogate writers, two of which appear in the cited ostraca. These several examples of such practice could reflect a situation where it was not hard to find a person to pen correspondence, be it official or unofficial correspondence.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> There are several such examples in the Eastern Desert letters during the Roman period, e.g. Norbanus (and Herakleides in O.Claud. II 267) sent three letters to Taurinos (O.Claud. II 267-269; ca 140 CE) from Raima to Mons Claudianus. Only 267 and 269 are written by the same hand and 268 is in a different one. Herennius (O.Did. 353-354) is a soldier writing two letters to Libo (353; before ca. 77-92) and Gaius Silvanus (354; before ca. 88-96). One of these, O.Did. 354, is written by the same hand as O.Did. 359, which is a hand that has been assigned to a certain Maximus; see the introductions to O.Did 353 and 359. Another example is the hands appeared in letters of the soldier Iulius (O.Did. 317-324; 326?) discussed below.

## 5.2 The first to second century

### 5.2.1 Unofficial letters

Among the Eastern Desert recognized hands, the best represented and most remarkable is the so-called hand of Philokles. Philokles was a trader and his correspondence (O.Did. 376-399) is the most abundant from the Eastern Desert.<sup>9</sup> More than one hundred (ca. 106) letters (published in O.Did II; O.Krok. II and O.Faw.35) are addressed from or to him or connected in some way with him.<sup>10</sup> He is the sender of forty-eight letters, either to Didymoi or Krokodilo, which is nearly half of all of the letters (ca. 106) written in his hand. These letters date to the first-second century CE, more specifically ca.96-150 CE. Most of them are addressed to his friend Kapparis, some to his wife Sknips, in addition to other individuals. The letters were found mainly in Didymoi and Krokodilo. In the letters that were found in Krokodilo, there are ca. 10 letters addressed to him while he was there. He was also likely stationed for a while in Phoinikon and probably Persou. Hence, and unlike the majority of other writers, Philokles's hand is attested in documents discovered at several stations. Philokles moved between different sites. This could be due to the fact that Philokles was a civilian trader and his movement was more flexible than that of the soldiers who were under military control and whose movements were limited, or rather supervised by the military.

Philokles did not only pen his own letters<sup>11</sup> but he also penned letters on behalf of other people.<sup>12</sup> Among the letters that are said to be written by Philokles (Fig. no.9), only one sent from him was not written by him (O.Did. 390; before (?) ca. 125-140)<sup>13</sup> and very few (around 12) are in hands only resembling Philokles's, but not certainly his,<sup>14</sup> which raises the question whether he was always writing for himself, or someone else wrote on his behalf occasionally. Or could this hand belong to someone close to Philokles whom he taught to write? This would

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<sup>9</sup> See e.g. O.Did. 390; for more on Philokles, his local trade and activities, see Cuvigny (2003c) 376-382; the intro. to O.Did. pp.295-298 and Broux (2017) 137-146.

<sup>10</sup> See the intro. to O.Did. 376-399, p.295.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. O.Did. 376-383; O.Did. 387-391; O.Did. 393; SB VI 9017= O.Faw. 35, see the intro. to O.Krok. II (forthcoming), p.37; O.Krok. II 152-169.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. O.Did. 394-399; O.Krok. II 225-334.

<sup>13</sup> See the intro. to O.Krok. II (forthcoming), pp.30-31.

<sup>14</sup> O.Krok. II 170, 179, 180, 183, 185, 192, 202, 205, 219, 232, and 234, see the intro. to O.Krok. II (forthcoming), p.33. Perhaps also O.Krok. II 172.



at any rate explain why the hands are so strikingly similar.<sup>15</sup> Bülow-Jacobsen tends to believe that Philokles was the writer of the majority of his correspondence, and that someone else wrote these few letters, because the number of anomalous letters is very small in comparison to the large group of letters he wrote. I agree with Bülow-Jacobsen's theory. Philokles has likely relied on himself to write his correspondence. But since he used another person to write O.Did. 390, we can conclude that he occasionally had other persons to write on his behalf, as in the case of the other people discussed earlier.<sup>16</sup>

After Philokles comes Ischyras, who belongs to the network of Philokles. He was stationed in Persou and most of his correspondence is about the exchange of foodstuffs and other items. He penned around 50 letters on 49 ostraca, published in the forthcoming corpus of O.Krok. II. From these letters he sends around 39 on his own behalf.<sup>17</sup>

Another sender of letters, albeit less prolific than Philokles and Ischyras, during this same period is a soldier named Iulius. He addresses eight private letters to some of his fellow soldiers:<sup>18</sup> Valerius (318, 319), Antonius (320- 324) and Dolens (317). In addition, there is a letter, O.Did. 326 (before (?) ca. 75-85), sent from a Iulius to Gaius Valerius Iustus, but written in Latin, which makes it doubtful whether this Iulius is the same as ours or not. According to the editor, the letters are written by two hands for sure,<sup>19</sup> and perhaps a third (O.Did. 319). The second hand did not write only on behalf of Iulius, but also for Sertorius, O.Did. 325, one of the persons mentioned in Iulius's letters. The fact that two to three hands appear in 8 letters addressed from the same person makes it questionable whether he is the real writer of these letters. Or could he be the person who penned the Latin letter, O.Did. 326?<sup>20</sup> While such discrepancies illustrate how difficult it can be to identify the actual writers of the letters, they

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<sup>15</sup> Aurelia Charite's hand (a wealthy metropolitan woman and landowner who prospered in the city of Hermopolis between 320-350 CE) was very similar to her mother's hand, Demetria. She might have been who taught her daughter the writing, too, see Sheridan (1998) 191, 196.

<sup>16</sup> The hand of O.Did. 390 resembles that of O.Krok. II 180, which is a letter sent from Sknips to Philokles himself.

<sup>17</sup> See Cuvigny (2018b) 212 and O.Krok. II (forthcoming) p.224.

<sup>18</sup> (O.Did. 317-319; before (?) ca. 77-92); (O.Did. 320-221; before (?) ca. 76-77); (O.Did. 322; before (?) ca. 77-92); O.Did. 323 (before (?) ca. 125-140); O.Did. 324 (before (?) ca. 77-92).

<sup>19</sup> First hand appeared in: O.Did. 320-323; Second hand: O.Did. 317-319; 324-325.

<sup>20</sup> But the content of the letter does not encourage this, as Iulius, the sender, was likely at Phoinikon, to where he encouraged the addressee Gaius Valerius Iustus to come, claiming it is a better *praesidium*. However, Iulius in the other letters was at Aphroditos Orous, which is not a much better *praesidium* and was further from the valley; for more discussion, see the intro. to O.Did. 326, p.244.

also, as mentioned earlier, point up the fact that it was probably not too hard to find letter writers in the Eastern Desert. Alone one soldier could find two or three writers to pen his unofficial correspondence.

In the current case of Iulius, the writer was at the *praesidium* of Aphroditis Orous. In the case of the soldier discussed earlier, Gaius Antonius, the writer might have been in Aphroditis Orous or in Phoinikon, as the editors suggest. As for Norbanus, he was writing from the *praesidium* at Raima. This supports the idea that it was possible to find letter writers at most sites, and that they did not occupy only the main sites.

### 5.2.2 Official letters

The examples discussed earlier appeared in unofficial correspondence, but hands in official correspondence are few during the first to the second centuries CE. One of these hands<sup>21</sup> appears in letters from Mons Claudianus. It is that of Fabricius, curator of the *praesidium* of Raima, who wrote three letters to the centurions Lurius (O.Claud. II 368-369; 98-117 CE) and Iulius Aquila (O.Claud. II 370; 98-117 CE). He likely was the writer of his own correspondence, since his official letters (O.Claud. II 368-369) and a private one from him (370) are in the same hand. Also Leontas, who must be the person of the same name involved in the quarry work and who wrote three letters, seems likely to have been an official, because the letters are concerned with the acquisition of water skins and tools. One of these, O.Claud. IV 824 (ca. 98-117), is addressed to Epaphroditos, the superior of Successus, and two (O.Claud. I 128, 129; ca. 107) are addressed to Successus himself, who was responsible for keeping tools and materials for the quarry work in Mons Claudianus.<sup>22</sup> He was probably *caesarianus*<sup>23</sup> and the slave or freedman of Epaphroditos. All of the three letters of Leontas are written in the same hand.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See also the hand in O.Claud. II 383 and IV 864, two letters sent by Demetras and written by the same person; see the intro. to O.Claud. IV 864, p.198.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. O.Claud. I 125, 129, 131, 132, see also the intro. to O.Claud. I 124-136, p.111.

<sup>23</sup> See O.Claud. I 125, 2 and the intro. to O.Claud. I 124-125, p.111. He likely belongs to the *familia Caesaris*, see O.Claud. III, p.30.

<sup>24</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen, O.Claud. IV 824, p.145.

## 5.3 The second century

### 5.3.1 Official letters

Very similar hands appear in official letters found in Mons Claudianus. The first is the hand of the writer of P.Bagnall 8 (Figure 5). It is a copy of a Greek translation of a Latin letter addressed from the Prefect of Egypt, Pomponius Faustus, to the procurator Probus. It accompanied the Prefect's verdict concerning two soldiers who had abandoned their comrades in the face of an attack by a small group of barbarians. The Prefect orders Probus to hang up copies of the verdict as a warning against such behavior. The same hand appears in a group of official letters, O.Claud. IV 849-852 (Figure 6), some of which were probably drafts that were never sent or they perhaps were copied from ostraca to papyri. They are addressed from a group of workers of the quarry of Mons Claudianus to Antonius Flavianus, the prefect of the desert, concerning the progress of the work at the quarry.

Bülow-Jacobsen suggests that the hands are of the same type, but slight differences in the *ductus* prevent him from saying it is the very same hand.<sup>25</sup> I tend to think that they belong to the same writer. The reasons for this are that the hand of this writer is characterized by some specific features. He generally tends to write the letters separately, however his hand is characterized by distinctive *sigma* ligatures e.g.  $\sigma\nu$ ,  $\sigma\tau$ ; and by ligatures of *epsilon*, e.g.  $\epsilon\nu$ ,  $\epsilon\rho$ ; curved lunar *sigmas*; a *rho* that is distinguished by a circle that often goes up; an *upsilon* in the shape of  $\nu$  in both texts; similar shapes for *nu*, *delta*, *lambda*, and *gamma*; an *eta* that is formed like the Latin *h*. Both of the hands are not very elegant, but the style of P.Bagnall 8, seems to be more upright, slow and careful. The writer has also the tendency to keep the *ductus* in straight lines, as far as possible. Note also the type and the quality of the ostrakon; its shape and cut seem to be better than the workers' letters. This might suggest that there was a tendency to write the copies of the Prefect's letter with more care, which caused the slight difference between the hands in the texts. Moreover, perhaps P.Bagnall 8 is flat and neat because it was intended also for display, along with the verdict.

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<sup>25</sup> See the intro. to P.Bagnall 8, p.47.

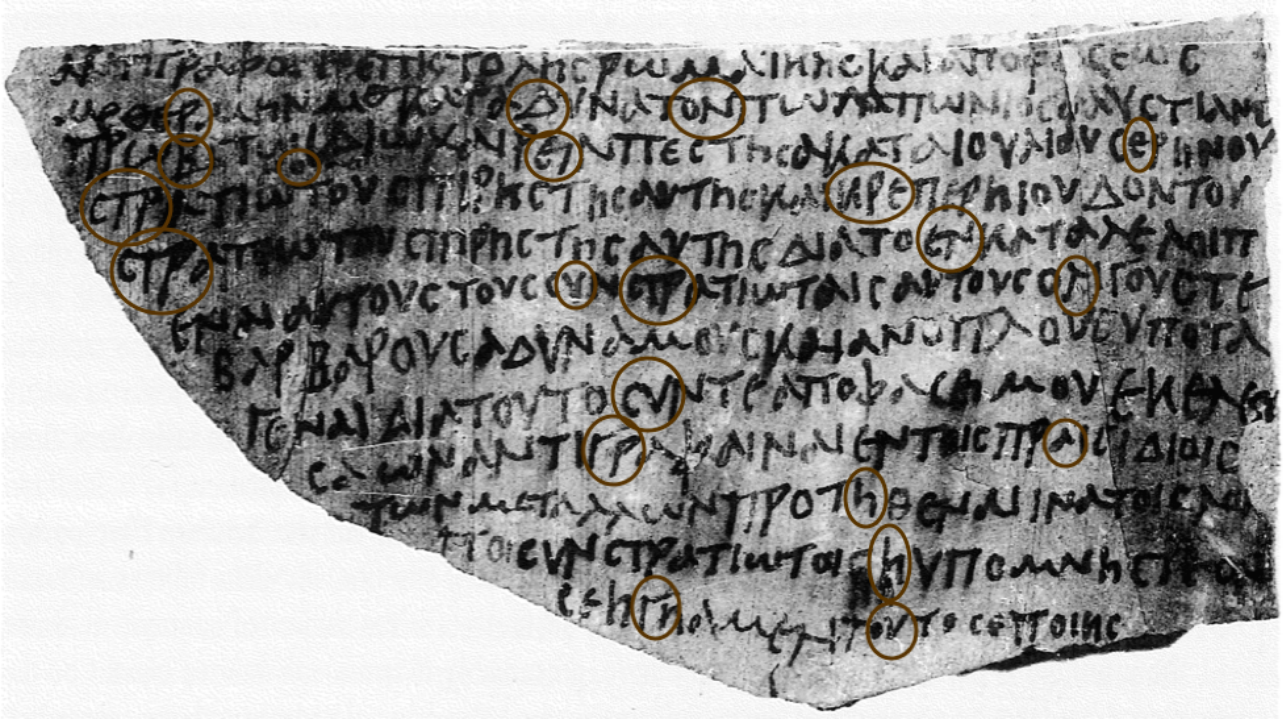
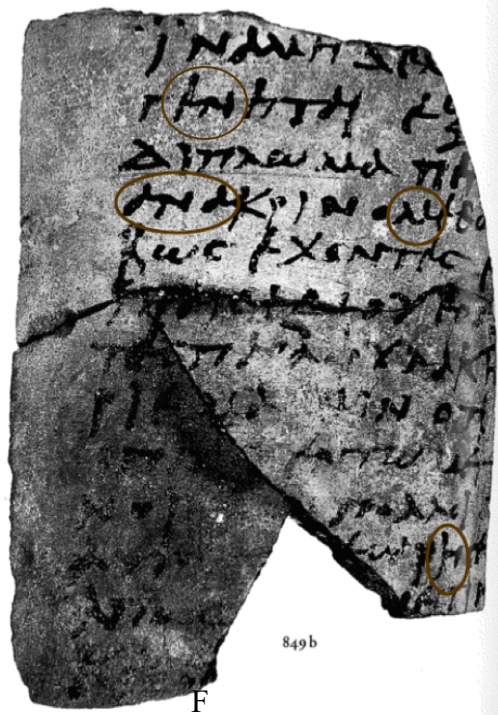


Figure 5. P.Bagnall. 8. Photo by Bülow-Jacobsen.

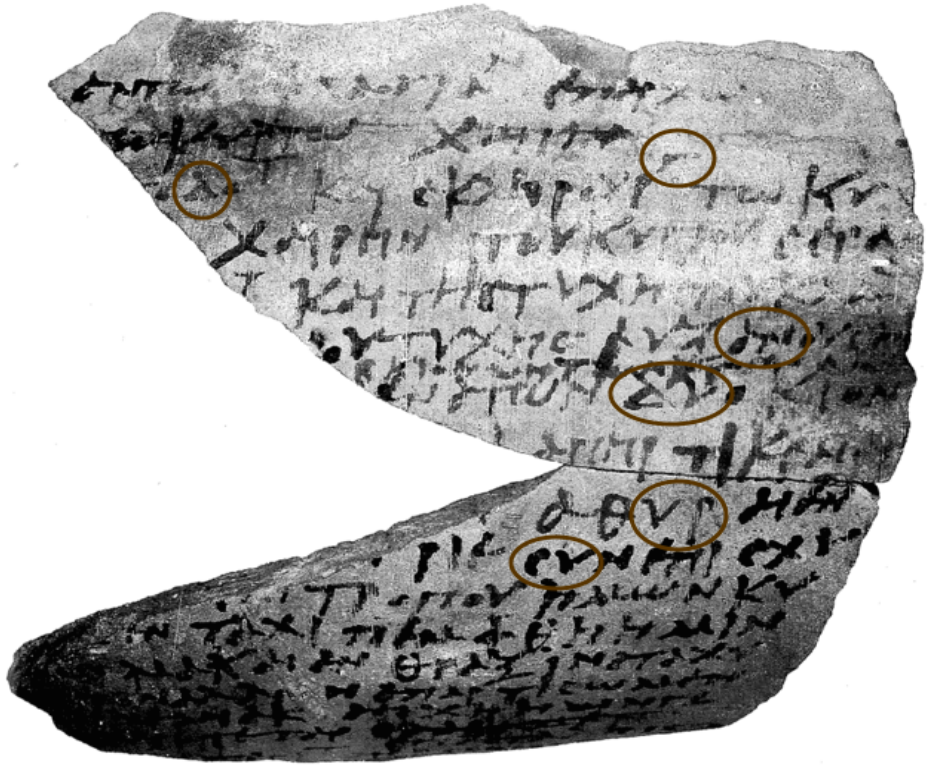
Based on the appearance of the hand in all of these letters, one can establish that this writer was an official scribe at Mons Claudianus. What this means is that the Prefect of Egypt's original correspondence arrived from Alexandria to Koptos on papyrus, and was then most likely sent out to the stations in the desert where it was copied to ostraca. The alternative would be that the correspondence was copied on ostraca in Koptos and then sent to the stations, but this would not explain as well the fact that hand is observed in the letters that were drafted in Mons Claudianus. Why we do not find duplicates of prefectural letters at other stations must be the result of the preservation of the correspondence: so much of the correspondence simply does not survive.

On the other hand, there exists another group of official letters from Mons Claudianus that are also addressed from the workers of the quarry of Mons Claudianus to Probus, the same procurator encountered in P.Bagnall 8 (O.Claud. IV 853-860; ca. 186-187). All of these letters are also written by a single hand, although it is different from that of the ostraca previously discussed. One could imagine that this is another official writer of Mons Claudianus. If true, it would mean that there was more than one official scribe at Mons Claudianus to whom the workers went to write their messages.

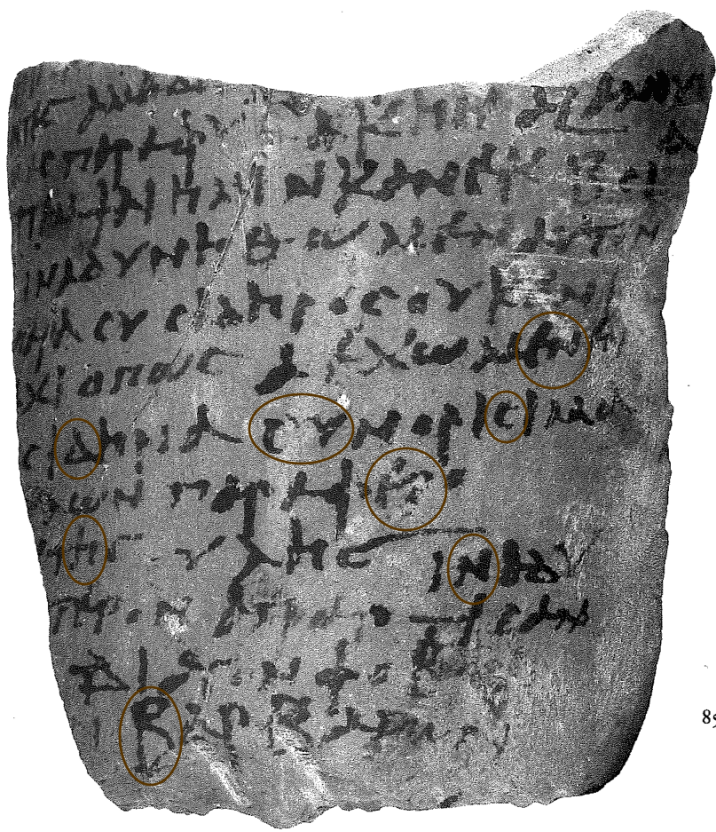


849b

F



850a



851b

Figure 6. O.Claud. IV 849, 850, 851. Photos by Bülow-Jacobsen.

### 5.3.2 Official scribes of Krokodilo

Official scribes are known from Krokodilo as well. One of these drew up the large record of official correspondence, O.Krok. I 87 (after (?) 9 March 118) (Figure 7), which shows several copies of circulars, or what are called *diplomata*, between *praefecti*, other high officials and the curators of the *praesidia*. Copies of these correspondence might have also existed on papyri, which were sent back to the Valley perhaps to be archived in central offices. What is remarkable about this hand is that it is cursive and shows Latin influence.<sup>26</sup>

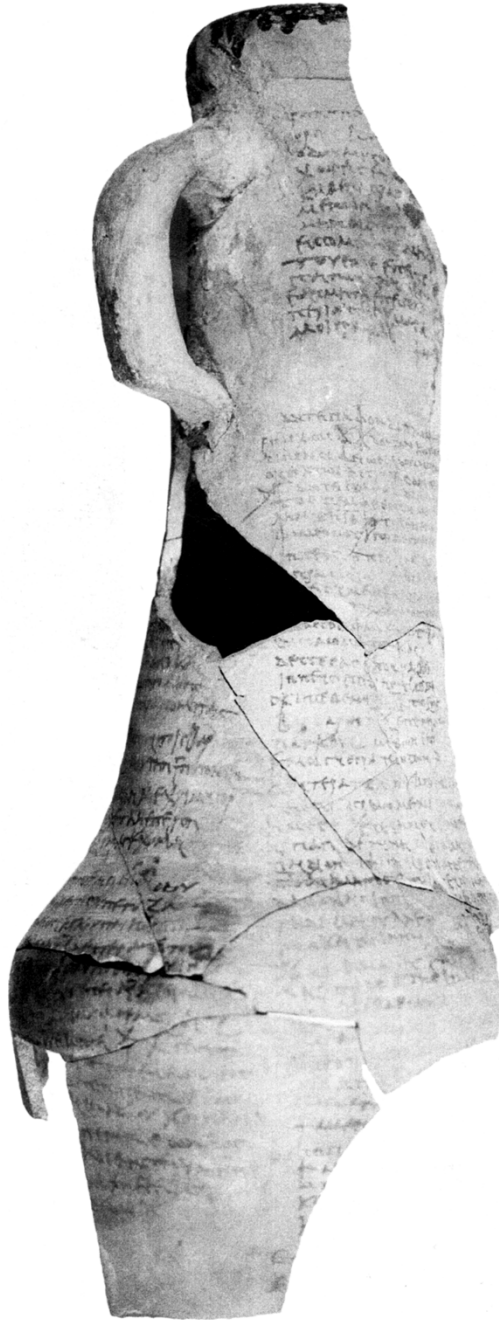


Figure 7. O.Krok. I 87a. Col.I. Taken from O.Krok I.

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<sup>26</sup> See the intro. to O.Krok. I 87, p.145.

This was not the only official scribe of Krokodilo; in fact, Krokodilo shows more official hands than any other site. One of these is the hand of the large postal journal, O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108) and that of the so-called ‘Ephip’ as the editor calls the unnamed writer because he spells the Egyptian month Epeiph in the form of Ephip. This hand appears in ca. 24 texts, which is quite a large number. They range from daily postal journals, O.Krok. I 24-38,<sup>27</sup> to *diplomata* or official correspondence, (O.Krok. I 41-46<sup>28</sup> also probably O.Krok. I 56-58), which were written by Artorius Priscillus the prefect of the desert to curators of the *praesidia* along the road of Myos Hormos.<sup>29</sup> The hands of these scribes are distinguished by their small, fairly cursive character.

As for the *diplomata*, in particular, it seems that they were drawn up by specific individuals, summarized on large pieces of ostraca<sup>30</sup> and kept in Krokodilo. They generally were addressed from the prefect of the desert or high officials to the curators of the *praesidia* on the road to Myos Hormos. The original documents, which came from the Nile valley, were probably written on papyri and then transferred to ostraca in the desert. The fact that Krokodilo preserves large jars with copies of the correspondence suggests that Krokodilo perhaps served as a central office where the texts were archived<sup>31</sup>. What may support this idea is the daybook of O.Krok. I 1 (after (?) 28. March 108): in it we see that correspondence and *diplomata* that were transferred between Phoinikon and Persou stopped off in Krokodilo, where their delivery was documented. This daybook was presumably created at the *praesidium* by the same scribes who also copied the prefect’s correspondence and *diplomata*, such as O.Krok. I 87 (118). On the road from Koptos to Berenike there is little evidence for such *diplomata* (mentioned e.g. in

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<sup>27</sup> See the introductions to O.Krok. I 24-38.

<sup>28</sup> See the introductions to O.Krok. I 41-46.

<sup>29</sup> According to the editor, these texts were not always single and separate complete texts, they might be several broken fragments of one text, namely several fragments belong to each other.

<sup>30</sup> See also the hands of O.Krok. I 47-55 and O.Krok. I 39-40.

<sup>31</sup> The significance of Krokodilo appears also from copies of *diplomata* on O.Krok. I 78 (after (?) 9. March 118) that report incidents happening in the southern part of Egypt, which apparently needed to be circulated among the officials and military men along the road to Myos Hormos, ll.18-19 ἀντείγραφον (l. ἀντίγραφον) διπλώματος πεμφθέντος {πεμφθέντος} μου (l. μοι) εἰς Παρεμβολήν (l. Παρεμβολήν), ‘copy of a *diploma* sent to me to Parembolē’; ll.66-68 ἀ[ντείγραφον] (l. ἀ[ντίγραφον]) [διπλώματος πεμ]φθέν[τος] ὑπὸ Παπει[ρείου] (l. Παπι[ρίου]) [Βάσσου κουράτορος] πραισι[δίου] Νειτριῶν (l. Νιτριῶν), ‘copy of *diploma* sent by Papiarius son of Bassus the curator of the *praesidium* of Nitriai’.

O.Did. 24; before (?) ca. 220-250) and daybooks. Nevertheless, the fact that a daybook survives from Dios might suggest that it was the station on the road between Koptos and Berenike that served a similar function to Krokodilo of documenting and archiving official correspondence.<sup>32</sup>

The evidence from Mons Claudianus, Krokodilo, and elsewhere make it clear that there were official scribes at least at some of the main sites in the Eastern Desert, who were responsible for copying incoming messages and to whom it was possible to go to write official correspondence. Inscriptional evidence mentions such scribes (and interpreters) (table 1). Having these officials on site no doubt facilitated the progress of the work at the quarries. Moreover, it seems that one of the duties of these writers was to draw up copies from the official correspondence on large pieces of ostraca, as in the case of the letters of Mons Claudianus. The number of these scribes might have varied according to the need of each site and the activities of the official writing on sites. Lastly, it seems that there was a central office at each area or road, e.g. at Mons Claudianus, Krokodilo and likely Dios.

Table 1. List of attestations of γραμματεὺς and ἑρμηνεύς

O.Claud. I 9, 1	106 - 107	Ἄμμων γραμματεὺ [ς -ca.?- ]
O.Claud. I 22, 2	ca. 107	[γρα]μματέως .[ -ca.?- ]
O.Did.1, 1	Before (?) ca. 77-92	Ψενόσιρις γρ(αμματεὺς(?)) δεκανί(α)ς(?)(or δεκανός(?)) [ -ca.?- ]
O.Did. 53, 1-2	Before (?) ca. 76 - 92	[Ἰού]λιος Σωτήριχος [γρα]μματ(εὺς) καμηλιτῶν
O.Did. 84, 12	Before (?) ca. 230-240	Ἡρακλείδης<ς> γραμματεὺ<ς>
O.Did. 249, 1	Before (?) ca. 220-250	Σέντις γραμ<μ>α(τεὺς)
O.Krok. I, 27?	after (?) 28. March 108	see the note to line 27
I.Ber. II 121, 3	113-117	[. . . . .] . . . Παπίρειος ἑρμηνεὺς καὶ γρα[μματεὺς

<sup>32</sup> See O.Dios. inv. 986 (no date) Κέλσος, ἀπὸ πραισιδίου| Κόμπασι ἐνήνοχεν ἐπιστολὰς Ἐπιφ κδ ὥρα θ| τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ εὐθέως | ἐβάσταξεν Δίσαλα .. | ἀπὸ Ξηροῦ, ‘Celsus from the *praesidium* Kompasi brought letters on 24 Epeiph at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the night and Disala from Xeron took them at once ...’; it is a post register published partially in Bülow-Jacobsen (2013) 563-564.



O.Ber. 3 278, 3	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.	γραμματ(ε)ς Δομιττ(ίου) (Ι. Δομιτ(ίου)) Σεουήρου
O.Ber. 3 464, 10?	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the 1 <sup>st</sup> cent.	[ -ca.?- ] . . . γραμματέως . [ -ca.?- ]
I.Ber. 1.3-4. Published in Ast- Bagnall (2018) 172.	24 June 49	Εἰρηναῖος Ἄρποκρατίωνος γραμματεὺς παραλήμψεως
I.Ber., 1.3-5. Published in Ast- Bagnall (2018) 174.	25 July 112	Γάιος Ἰούλιος Εὐχάριστος γραμματεὺς ἀποθήκης ἀρωματικῆς
SB XX 15652= SEG 43 1152 (Graffito)	28. May 32 (Wadi Hammamat)	τὸ προσκύνημα Τίτου Πετιλλίου γραμματέως (Ι. γραμματέως)
SB XX 15658= SEG 43 1158 (Graffito)	14-37 (Wadi Hammamat)	Ἄρνώθης Φατρήους γραμματεὺς

### 5.3.3 Officials as letter writers

Curators who oversaw the *praesidia* in the Eastern Desert often likely penned their own correspondence. For example Fabricius, the curator of the *praesidium* of Raima wrote his official and private letters (O.Claud. II 368-370; 98-117 CE);<sup>33</sup> Capito, the earliest known curator of Krokodilo, also penned official letters (O.Krok. I 10-11?, 14; 108-109) to Cosconius the prefect of the desert in the same hand, which is probably his, since his private letter (O.Krok. I 15; 108-109) addressed to a certain Cornelius is also in the same hand. He did not only pen his own letters, but also a copy of a circular addressed most likely from the prefect Cosconius to curators of the *praesidia* concerning the provision of supplies (O.Krok. I 13; ca. Jan. 109) was in Capito's hand.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, O.Krok. I 17, which could be either a list or a letter, is written in the same hand, too. Such examples of similar hands in either official or unofficial correspondence written by curators during the second century could also be found

<sup>33</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. II 368-370, p.210.

<sup>34</sup> He is also known from the postal registers of O.Krok. I 1-4, see Cuvigny (2003b) 317-318.

in the correspondence of Germanus the curator of the *praesidium* of Persou, who addresses three official letters to Silvanus the curator of the *praesidium* of Krokodilo in the same hand (O.Krok. I 74-76; ca. 117-125).

Turning to Mons Claudianus and the environment of the quarries, officials there may have also written letters by themselves. Ammonios, the *tabularius* or assistant sends two official letters in the same hand once to Hermaiskos (O.Claud. IV 870+895; Antoninus or ca 150) the *tabularius* of Athenodoros<sup>35</sup> and he addresses the other letter (892) to Athenodoros, the person accountable for the book-keeping and all the resources and stores at Mons Claudianus, who was *tabularius* of Himeros, the imperial procurator.<sup>36</sup>

Sokrates, the *ergodotes* or the foreman,<sup>37</sup> more frequently wrote official correspondence. There are around 12 letters that might be in his own hand (O.Claud. IV 743?, 875-876?, 882, 884?, 886-887, also perhaps 877?-879?, 883?, 896?).<sup>38</sup> Nearly all are addressed from him, except two (O.Claud. IV 743; 879), in which the sender's names are lost in the lacuna. As we have seen before, not all the letters addressed from Sokrates are written in the same hand, however. There are couple of letters (O.Claud. IV 880-881) sent by him that are probably in different hands.

Skilled workers and people involved in the mines also wrote their own letters.<sup>39</sup> For example, the letters of Sokrates, the architect who wrote dozens of letters, such as P.Worp 50, by the same hand. They are mainly addressed to a certain Hieronymos concerning demand of tools and equipment.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Hermaiskos or Hermaiskas, is titled *tabularius* in O.Claud. IV 896, 886 and the complete title 'tabularius of Athenodors' appeared in 894.

<sup>36</sup> See O.Claud. IV 886, ll.1-3, and the intro. to O.Claud. IV 886, p.219.

<sup>37</sup> See O.Claud IV 881, 1; 896, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Question marks indicate uncertain about the identification. The hand of O.Claud. IV 896 resembles O.Claud. IV 894, although 894 is supposed to be by Hieronymos, the sender of the letter.

<sup>39</sup> A certain Nemesion likely writes two letters in the same hand, (the official letter O.Claud. IV 874; 138-161 and the private letter O.Claud. II 297; mid or 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), from the first letters it seems that he was involved in the quarry work, in particular the transport of the charges. In O.Claud. II 270 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) a certain Nemesion, who is styled *familiaris*, was the carrier of items sent from Patrempabathes, who is discussed later. He is also known as the carrier of the official correspondence from the valley through Raima, see the note to line 1 of O.Claud. IV 874, and the *familiaris*, the carrier of the correspondence of Ulpius Dios, the curator of Raima; see the note to line 9 of O.Claud. II 270.

<sup>40</sup> See the intro. to P.Worp. 50, p.312.

### 5.3.4 Unofficial letters

The majority of examples that were just discussed illustrate hands in official correspondence and their frequency during the second century in comparison to the number of hands in the first century. However, the reason behind this may be that the number of texts of the second century is larger. This frequency in hands appears also in unofficial correspondence where the number of similar hands attested in private and business correspondence during the second century CE is fairly large. These hands are mainly assigned to soldiers.

One of these well-recognized hands belongs to Dioskoros (O.Claud. II 224-234; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), a soldier who bears a Greek name and is most likely the writer of a group of business correspondences found at Mons Claudianus.<sup>41</sup> Almost thirteen letters are written in his hand, eleven of them addressed from him to three close comrades, Drakon and Eremesis who are military men, and Ammonianus, the curator of Mons Claudianus. The other two letters (O.Claud. II 238; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. and O.Claud. II 381; 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) are written in his hand but addressed from other persons,<sup>42</sup> which suggests that he also wrote on behalf of others from his own circle. One of these letters (O.Claud. II 238) is concerned with a delivery (likely by Dioskoros) of vegetables to persons (Paniscus and Patosiris) already mentioned in the correspondence of Dioskoros and includes a request of fish slices, while the second letter is sent to Ammonianus, the curator of Mons Claudianus, but it is fragmentary and mentions only a seal.

The following groups of letters, the hands of which have not previously been identified, seem to me to have been written by specific individuals. O.Claud. II 275-276 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) (Figure 8), for example, are probably in the hand of Apollinaris, the sender of the letters. In addition to general visual similarities, the abbreviated form of  $\chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$  is similar in both texts. The hand is also characterized by a disjointed two-part *sigma*. Other remarkable letters are the looped *alpha*, the *epsilon*, the triangular *delta*, the *pi* and the *omicron*, which is sometimes open above. O.Claud. II 300-301 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) (Figure 9) were probably written by Alexandros, the sender of both letters. Alexandros' hand is distinguished by disjointed letterforms, serifs,

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<sup>41</sup> See also the hand of Firmus, the soldier (O.Claud. I 143-144; ca. 100-120), see Bülow-Jacobsen O.Claud. I 143-144 (1992) 131; Piso, the soldier (O.Claud. II 239, 240, mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Libianus (O.Claud. II 255-257; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Herakleides (O.Claud. II 279; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. and 280; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.); Terentius (O.Did. 347; before (?) ca. 77-92 and 441; before (?) ca. 120-125).

<sup>42</sup> See Bülow-Jacobsen O.Claud. II 224-242 (1997) 43.

and hooks. For example, the *tau* is written with a hook at the bottom, while the left leg of *eta* and the *delta* have a serif-like strokes on top. The *mu* is wide and the *alpha* is remarkable, too.

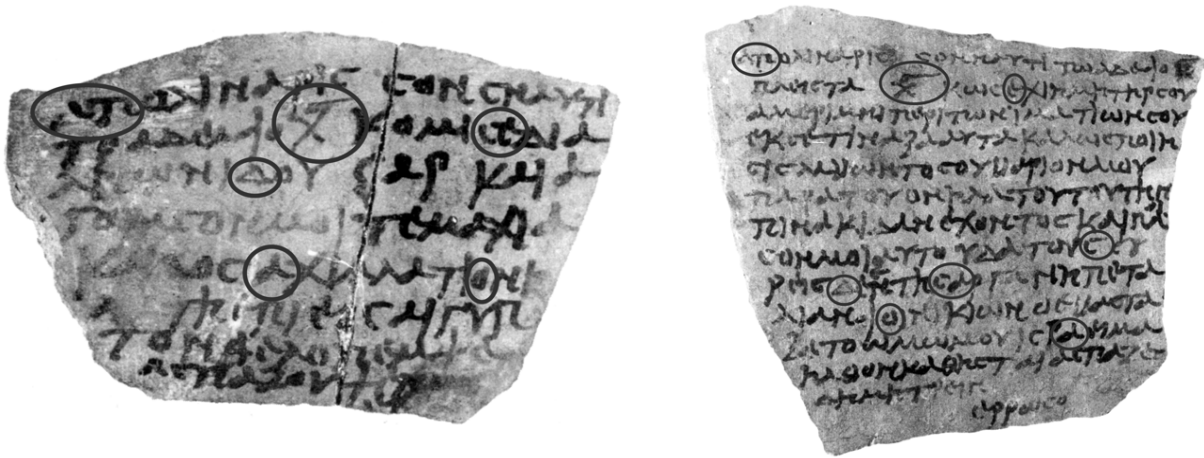


Figure 8. O.Claud. II 275-276. Taken from O.Claud. II.

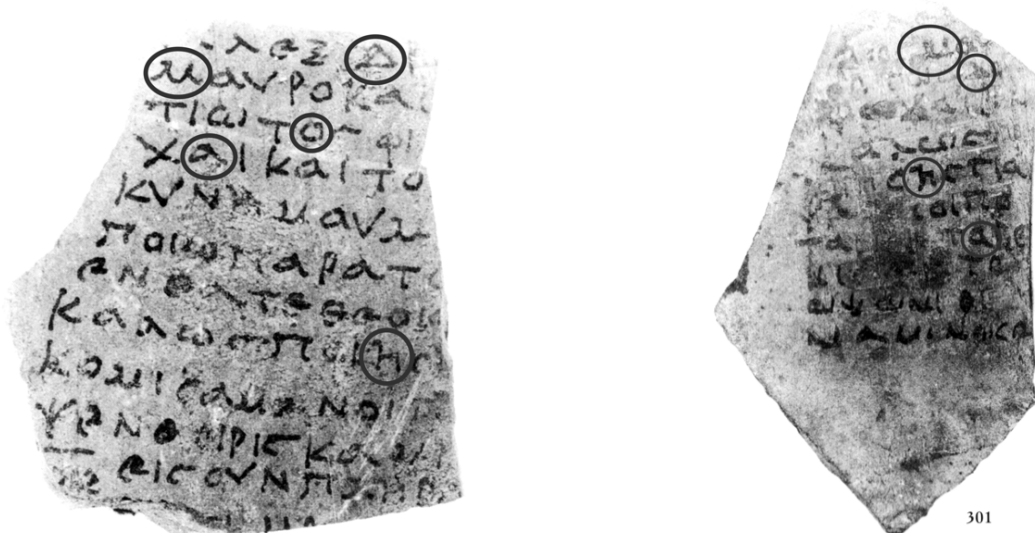


Figure 9. O.Claud. II 300-301. Taken from O.Claud. II.

Two other letters from Abu Sha'ar (SB XXII 15378-79; first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century) written in the same hand which is probably that of the military man Constans the sender of the letters to certain a Niger. Anicetus and Heracleides, who are two brothers carrying Greek names, sent two letters to their father Soterichus (O.Claud. I 172-173; 110-120) concerning financial matters. It is not clear whether they are civilians or belong to the military, but both of their letters are written by the same hand, which shows Latin influence, such as in the use of interpunct between most words.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. I 172-173, p.159.

Clemens, the Roman curator, addresses two private letters to Antoninus the centurion (O.Claud. I 148-149; ca 100-120) concerning the purchase of young pigs. Both of the letters are most likely written by the same hand but probably with a different pen, as the editor suggests.

Turning to Egyptians, there are two hands that belong to the civilians Petenephotos and Patrempabathes, who bore Egyptian names: Petenephotos (O.Claud. II 243-254; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) is known to be *kibariates* and a civilian worker who also served as high priest of a σύνοδος or association for a period of time. His literacy may have been the reason he held these positions.<sup>44</sup> He is responsible for one of the biggest groups of letters that was found at Mons Claudianus, eleven letters in all, the majority of them addressed from him to his brother Valerius, in Mons Claudianus, in addition to three other persons. All of these letters are in the same hand,<sup>45</sup> therefore the possibility that it is Petenephotos' is very high. As for Patrempabathes, his status is not clear but all his letters concern the delivery of vegetable and money to his receivers (O.Claud. II 270-273; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). He sent four letters, three of them (270, 272, 273) are most likely in the same hand.

People involved in the quarry work might also have written their own letters. There are some letters in the same hands, such as the two letters of Apollonios, whose name is Greek, which are likely addressed to a certain Leon concerning smithing work and charcoal (O.Claud. IV 826-827; ca. 138-161).

From the persons appearing in the network of Philokles, we have Apollos, who is presumably a soldier stationed in Persou. He penned a large number of letters, around 39, published in O.Krok.II. Eleven of them he sends on behalf of himself, but he also serves as a scribe for at least nine persons. One of these persons is Priscus, a soldier stationed in Persou, who is the sender of around 6 letters to a certain Maximus written in his own hand (O.Krok. II 276-280); one was written by Apollos on his behalf (O.Krok. II 275).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Priests have to be able to read and write Demotic language at least because of their position, cf. Otto (1908) 237.

<sup>45</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. II 243-254, pp.69-70.

<sup>46</sup> See O.Krok. II, pp.143-146, 153. See also p.144, where the editor wonders if Apollos started as a public writer in his own small circle of acquaintances, then becoming independent and penning letters for other people.

### 5.3.5 Hands appearing in both letters and other kinds of texts

Lastly, I would like to discuss the people whose hands appear both in letters and other kinds of texts. As I mentioned earlier, people in the Eastern Desert were not only involved in writing official and unofficial correspondence, but also different kind of texts, such as Palais, the person in charge of the stocks of usable stone. He sent an official letter (O.Claud. IV 888; ca. 150-154) to Athenodoros and wrote in the same hand a list of stock (O.Claud. IV 841; ca. 150-154).<sup>47</sup> Maximus, who is most likely a member of the military, writes a private letter of simple greetings (O.Claud. I 146; ca. 100-120) in the same hand as two customs orders (O.Claud. I 73, 75; 98-117 CE).<sup>48</sup> Also the official scribe of Krokodilo who penned O.Krok. I 87 (after (?) 9 March 118) is attested writing the private letter O.Krok. II 230 (ca. 118); the names of the sender and receiver of the latter letter are lost in the lacuna. Therefore, either he penned this letter for himself or he wrote it for someone else. Moreover, this might mean that the letter was never sent since it was found in Krokodilo, or else he was stationed for some time at another site, as the editor presumes.<sup>49</sup> In addition, the Thracian soldier, Cutus, mentioned above, wrote three letters and a list of names in Latin in the same hand.

Some of these persons, if not all, probably held their positions because they were literate, such as Palais, Capito the curator, and Petenephotos, the *kibariates*. Their ability to write might have contributed to their gaining these positions. We have seen that Capito wrote his private and official letters himself. Petenephotos, to whom the receipts of provisions received are addressed (O.Claud. II 244; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), must have been literate to be able to perform and practice the duties of his office. Sokrates, the architect who wrote dozens of letters and Sokrates, the *ergodotes*, might have been involved in these professions since they are not illiterate. The official scribe of Krokodilo, who penned the large ostrakon O.Krok. I 87 and the private letter O.Krok. II 230, must have held this office since he was literate, also his function as scribe did not prevent him from penning private letters for himself and on behalf of others.

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<sup>47</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. IV 888, p.222.

<sup>48</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. I 146, p.135.

<sup>49</sup> See the intro. to O.Krok. II 230, p.135.

### 5.3.6 Female hands

Very few women's hands appear in the Eastern Desert letters,<sup>50</sup> and almost within the network of Philokles. About four hands have so far been distinguished. One can doubt that they write by themselves, but bearing in mind that these women are all involved in the network of Philokles and particularly his business, they might have needed to write in order to manage the work they were involved in. One of these women is Nemesous (Figure 10). She is the sender of three letters that are written in the same hand (O.Did. 400, before ca. 120-125; O.Did. 401, ca.115-120; O.Did. 405; before (?) ca. 110-115), and appears to have written a letter (O.Did. 386) sent from Iulia to Sknips, the wife of Philokles. The editor does not seem to think that Nemesous wrote the letters herself, but as Nemesous was likely in charge of issues concerning the prostitutes and thus involved in Philokles's business, as the editor suggests,<sup>51</sup> she could well have needed to be literate to manage this work.

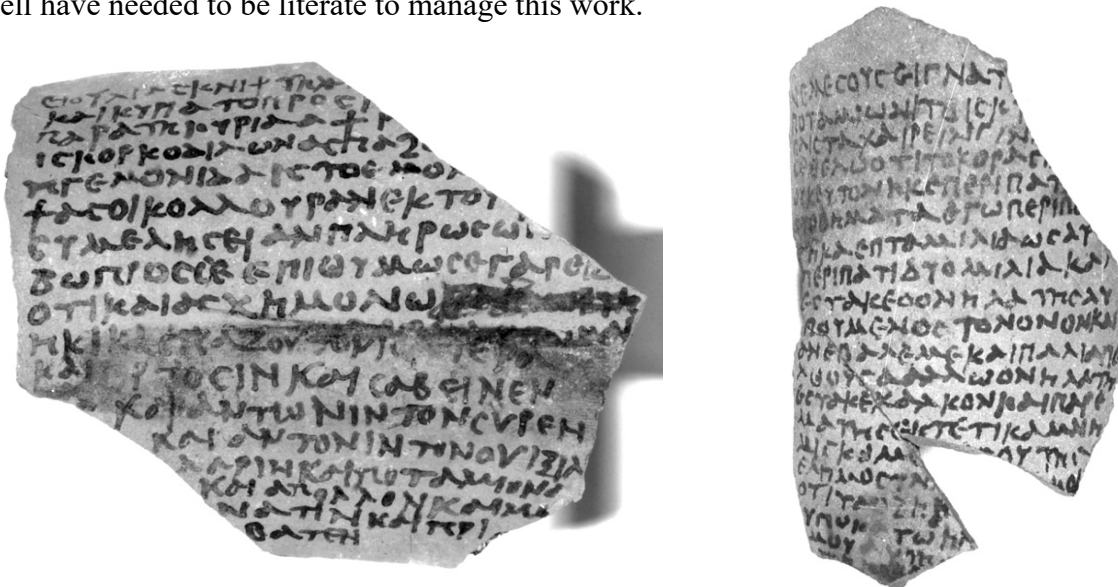


Figure 10. O.Did. 386 and 400. Taken from O.Didymoi

The second known female hand also belongs to the network circle of Philokles. She is Philotera who might be the daughter of Kapparis,<sup>52</sup> close friend of Philokles. She sent three letters (O.Krok. II 197-199; 98-117) to various persons. Two of them (197, 199) are likely

<sup>50</sup> In Roman Egypt, the evidence suggests a gradual increase in female literacy during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, see Sheridan (1998) 190. For more about female education, literacy and letters, see Criboire (2001) 74-78, 86-101.

<sup>51</sup> See the letter O.Did. II 400 and the intro. to O.Did. 400-410, p.329.

<sup>52</sup> See O.Krok. II 198.8-10 ἀσπάζου Κάππαριν τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ Ἡγεμονίδα τῆ[ν] ἀδελφὴν μου, 'greet Kapparis my father and Hegemonis, my sister', trans. Bülow-Jacobsen O.Krok. II 198 (forthcoming).

written by a similar hand, but not necessarily the same one. The editor presumes that 199 was written on behalf of her by someone with better writing skills; he dismisses the possibility that 199 was written by Philotera after some years because the archeological context makes 197 and 199 contemporaneous. I agree that 199 is written by a more practiced hand but it is hard to tell if it is the same hand as 197. It seems to me that both have the same style and tend to write letters separately, but there are differences in some letters. Unlike the hand of Nemesous, Philotera's hand is slow, and does not follow straight lines.

The third hand is unpracticed and displays several spelling mistakes. It could be assigned to Iulia, who is probably the daughter of Sknips and Philokles.<sup>53</sup> She wrote two letters in a similar hand (O.Krok. II 212 and O.Did. 386), one of which is addressed to her mother Sknips (O.Did. 386) and the other to a certain Maximus (O.Krok. II 212). The fourth possible hand can be assigned to Sknips, the wife of Philokles.

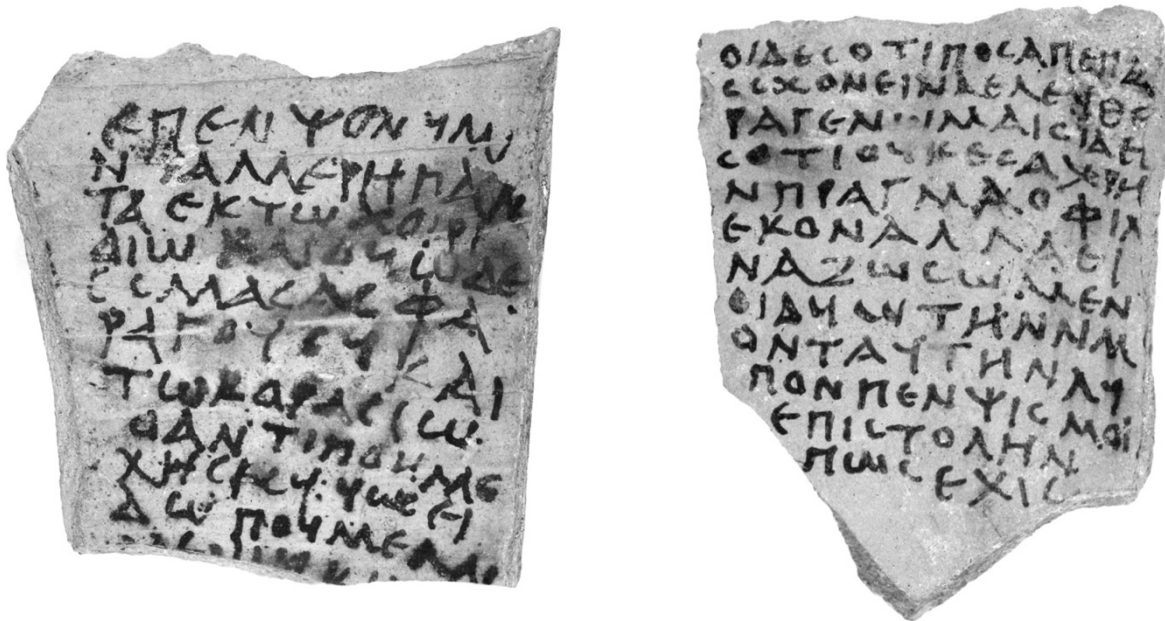


Figure 11. O.Did. 379b and O.Did. 394. Taken from O.Did.

Sknips seems to be literate, but she relied on Philokles to write on her behalf. The letters that she likely penned by herself were addressed to Philokles. She addresses two letters (O.Krok. II 179-180) to Philokles in the same hand, but a third one (O.Krok. II 192) to Domittius in a different hand, which is probably Philokles', as the editor states. And there are other letters addressed from Sknips that are also in the hand of Philokles (O.Krok. II 158;

<sup>53</sup> See the intro. to O.Krok. II 212 (forthcoming), p.107 and O.Did. 386 (2012) 310.



O.Did. 379; O.Did. 394), in two of which (Krok. II 158; O.Did. 379) he was the co-sender along with her. (Figure 11).

## 5.4 The third century

### 5.4.1 Unofficial letters

As with the first century, the appearance of similar hands in the third century is also rare, but this likely reflects the shortage of later correspondence. One of these is that of Eukylistros, the *monomachos*, who holds a Greek name. He is the sender of two letters (O.Did. 44-45; beg. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) written in the same hand, dating to the beginning of the third century. O.Did. 44, which is better preserved, concerns an attack made by *barbaroi*.

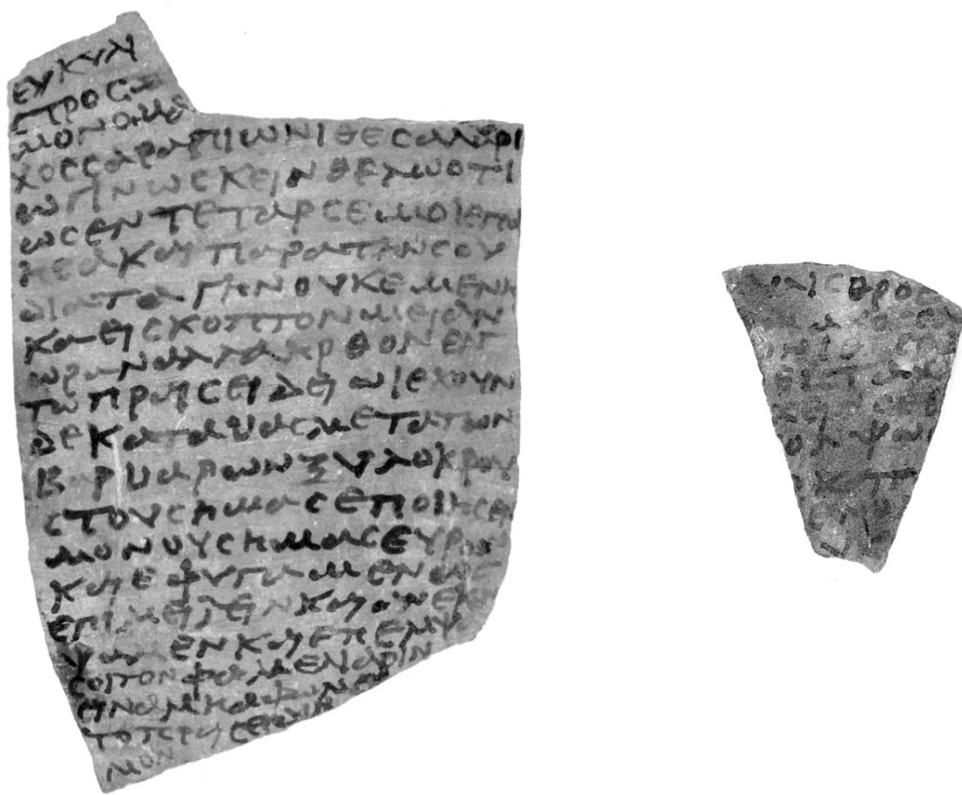


Figure 12. O.Did. 44 and 45. Taken from O.Did.

Aelius Silvinus (O.Did. 455-457; first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) writes three letters in Latin and addresses them to three different people. Two of these letters (455-456) are in the same hand.<sup>54</sup> The third letter is very fragmentary and it is not easy to tell whether the hand belongs to Silvinus or not.

<sup>54</sup> See the intro. to O.Did. 455, p.390.

#### 5.4.2 Literate individuals who write for others

Those individuals who write on behalf of others seem from their correspondence to have been relatives and acquaintances, or to have belonged to the same network. I will explain this by the following examples:

Maximus penned three private letters from Mons Claudianus, two of them (O.Claud. I 138, probably O.Claud. I 139; 110 CE) are addressed from him and one is from Valerius Palmas (O.Claud. I 137; 110 CE) to Longus, most likely all of them are soldiers. The relationship between these three persons could be understood from a letter (O.Claud. I 138) that combines all of them together. It is sent from Maximus to Serapias, whom he addresses as ‘sister’, and concerns personal problems related to Longus, whom he calls ‘brother’, informing her that Palmas left for Kampe. The three private letters are written by the same hand,<sup>55</sup> which is most likely Maximus’s. The reason we can say this is because Maximus sends his greeting to Longus at the end of the only letter that is not addressed from him, but is addressed from Valerius Palmas to Longus, (O.Claud. I 137, 21-22, ἀσ{σ}πάζετε [l. ἀσπάζεται] Μάξιμος). Valerius Palmas himself sent another letter (O.Claud. I 140; 110 CE), but in a different hand, which excludes him from being the author of these letters.

The habit of the person who penned a letter for someone else to add greetings in the third person to the recipient is attested in other letters from the Eastern Desert.<sup>56</sup> For example,<sup>57</sup> in a letter sent from Titianus, O.Claud. II 258 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Alexandros, who is likely the

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<sup>55</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. I 137-140, p.124.

<sup>56</sup> For more about reference to the writer in the letter, see Sarri (2018) 128-129.

<sup>57</sup> Another Maximus might also be the person who penned O.Did. 359 (before (?) ca. 88-92), he might have added his greeting to the end of the letter, see the note to lines 17-18, ll.17-18 ἀσπάζετα[ί] σε . . . . μος. In SB VI 9017 (11)= O.Faw. 11 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Valens greets two persons, the receiver of the letter and a certain Herennius, who receives greetings from the sender, too, ll.5-7 ἀσπάζεται σε Οὐάλις· ἀσπάζει (l. ἀσπάζου) Ἐρέννιν καὶ Ἀκύλαν. ἀσπάζεται Ὀάλης Ἐρέννι, Valens greets you. Greet Herennius and Aquila. Valens greets Herennius. For the other examples of this formula in the Eastern Desert, see O.Ber. III 271, 10 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.) [-ca.?- ἀσπά]ζεταί σε E. [-ca.?- ]; SB VI 9017 (13)=O.Faw. 13, 13-14 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἰσίδωρος; O.Claud. I 147, 11-12 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ἀσπάζεταί σε Φῆστος. The name Festus is mentioned in two more texts, in O.Claud. I 106 (ca. 100-120) which is a list of sick persons from Mons Claudianus, see note of l.12. Certain Festus is also the recipient of SB XXVIII 17098, which is a Latin letter from Maximianon dating to 117-138; O.Claud. II 293, 8 (ca. 142-143) ἀσπάζετ(αί) σε Σαραπιόδωρος πολλά. The name Sarapiodoros is twice mentioned in the Eastern Desert. The second attestation appears in a letter dating to around 150-154 from also Mons Claudianus (O.Claud. IV 892, 10-11), which makes it possible that he is the same person. For more attestations of the formula from Didymoi, see note 58 below.

person who penned the letter, added his greetings to the recipient Alexas, ll.8-9 (hand1) ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἀλέξανδρος. In this letter, the final wishes are written by a different hand, which we can suppose to be that of Titianus the sender, l.10 (hand 2) ἐρρῶσθαι ὑμ(ᾶς εὐχομαι).

In another letter from Mons Claudianus (O.Claud. II 264, 8-9; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), another Maximus, who penned the letter, added his greetings to the receiver Alexas. This is clear because he inserted a phrase that confirms he is the writer of the letter, ll.8-9 ἀσπάζομαι σε πολλὰ [M]άξιμος ὁ γράψας, ‘I Maximus who wrote the letter send you many greetings’. The same habit of the scribe adding his own greetings is observed in letters from Didymoi,<sup>58</sup> an example of which is seen in the correspondence penned by the soldier Albucius,<sup>59</sup> O.Did. 329, on behalf of Iulius the sender,<sup>60</sup> ll.13-14 ἀσπάζεται σε{ται σε} Ἀλβούκις.

Comparing the formulas in the letters from Mons Claudianus and Didymoi that have been previously discussed, O.Claud. II 264, 8-9 and O.Did. 329, 13-14, I guess that O.Claud. II 271, 11-12, which includes ‘ἀσπάζεται σε Δίδυμος’ near the bottom, was penned by Didymos, and since it is written in the same hand as 274,<sup>61</sup> Didymos could be the writer of this letter, too.

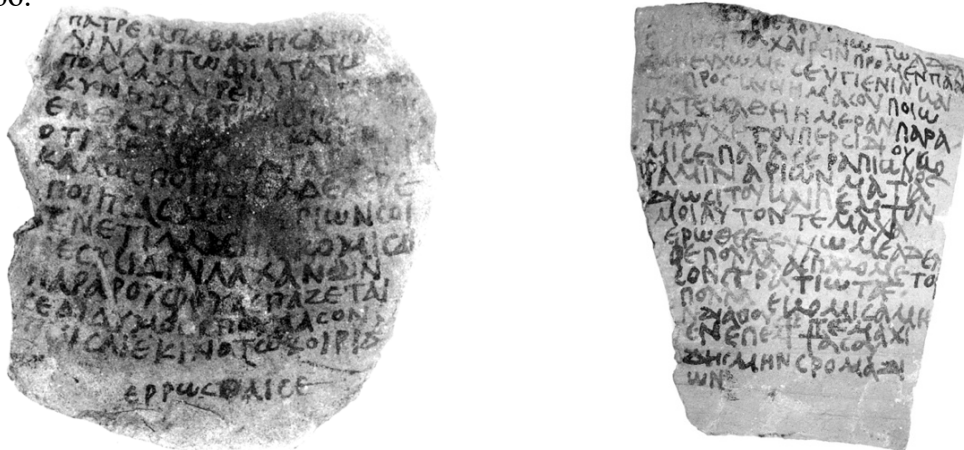


Figure 13. O.Claud. II 271. Taken from O.Claud. II. O.Claud. II 274. I am grateful to Professor Bülow-Jacobsen for the image.

<sup>58</sup> Most of attestations of this formula appeared in letters from Didymoi, see O.Did. 324, 13-14 (before (?) ca. 77-92) ἀσπάζεται [σε] Ἰούλις Τιγέλλις; O.Did. 325, 17-18 (before (?) ca. 77-92) ἀσπάζεται σε Λονγῖνος; O.Did. 331, 19-20 (before (?) ca. 77-92) ἀσπάζεται σε [Λο]γγῖνος (l. [Λο]γγῖνος); O.Did. 347, 11-13 (before (?) ca. 77-92) ἀσπάζεται σε Οὐαλι[έ]ριος Κλήμης; O.Did. 350, 10-11 (before (?) ca. 77-92) ἀσπάξε<ταί> σε ..... ις; O.Did. 361, 9-10 (1. March 77) ἀσπάζεται σε Θέρμουθις; O.Did. 369, 14-15 (before (?) 88-92) [ἀσπάζεται σε(?)] Μᾶρκος.

<sup>59</sup> Albucius himself writes three letters in the same hand (O.Did. 327-329; before ca. 77-92).

<sup>60</sup> See the intro. to O.Did. 329, p.247.

<sup>61</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. II 274, p.106.

However, it should be made clear that this formula does not always refer to the person who penned the letter, in particular when it refers to more than one person, as in SB VI 9017 (25) = O.Faw. 25, 5-6 (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) ἀσπάζεται σε Ἀπολινάριος καὶ Γερμανός, ‘Apolinarios and Germanus greet you’.<sup>62</sup>

The advantage of recognizing and following a person’s handwriting is that it allows us to know the places from which he or she was writing, such as in the example of the woman who bears the Egyptian name Theanous and belongs to the circle of Philokles. She received three letters from different senders (O.Did. 402-403, before ca. 110-115; O.Did. 404; before ca. 140-150), all of them written in the hand of a Greek man called Ankyras. Theanous was at Didymoi until she decided to leave Didymoi and move to where her husband was, which was close to the Nile valley.<sup>63</sup> She sent a letter to a friend written in a hand assigned to the woman Nemesous (O.Did. 405). This means that she moved to the same place from which Nemesous is writing. Since we know from other letters that Nemesous was at Phoinikon or Aphrodito Orous, this suggests that Theanous was probably at Phoinikon, which is closer to the Nile valley.

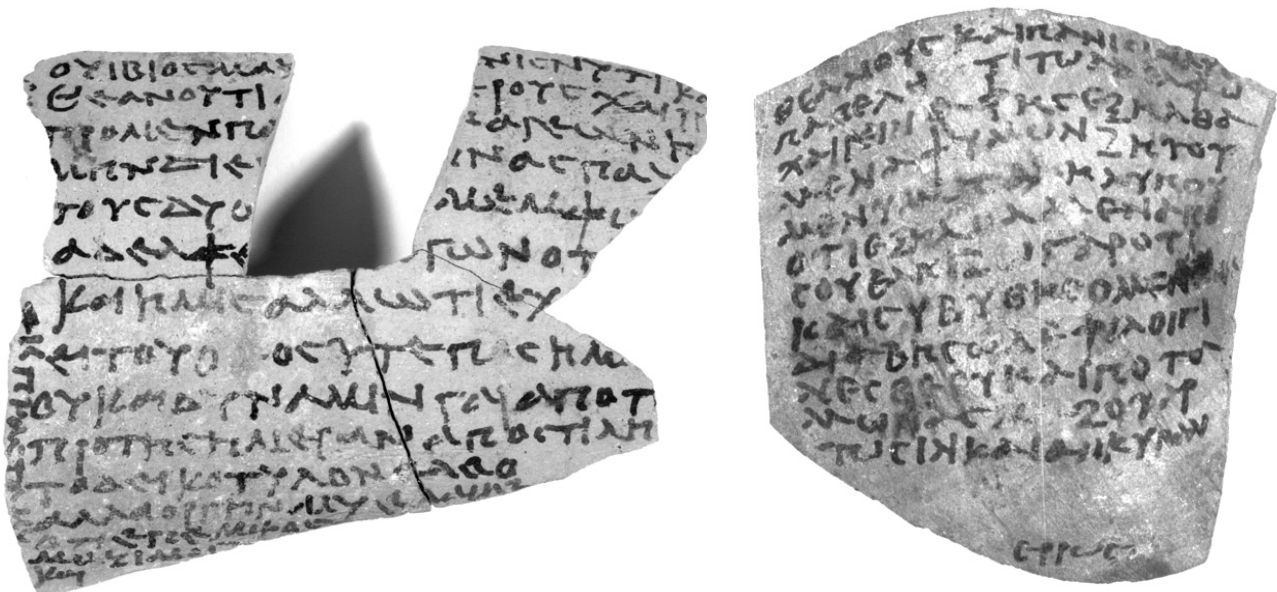


Figure 14. O.Did. 403 and O.Did. 405. Taken from O.Did.

<sup>62</sup> See also O.Did. 337, 10-12 (before (?) ca. 77-90) ἀσπάζεται σε Δημήτρης καὶ ὄλον τὸ πραισίδιν (l. πραισίδιον); O.Did. 342, 16-18 (before (?) ca. 77-92) ἀσπάζε[ταί σε] Ἡραῖς καὶ Ἀβασκαν[τίων]; O.Did. 344, 11-13 (before (?) ca. 77-92) ἀσπάζεται σε Ἡραῖς καὶ Ἀβασκαντίων; O.Did. 451, 20-22 (before (?) ca. 176-210) ἀσπάζεται σε Ὀφελλάς καὶ ὁ Βουτίτη[ς] ἀσθενῶν· [[ασθε]] ἀσπά[[σαι]]ζεται ὑμᾶς Πρόκλος καὶ Σαραπίων, ‘Ophellās and the man from Bouto who is ill greet you. Proclus and Serapion greet you both’, trans. Bülow-Jacobsen.

<sup>63</sup> See the intro. to O.Did. 402-405, p.333.

O.Claud. I 146 (ca. 100-120), a letter found at Mons Claudianus, was sent from Maximus and written by the person who wrote O.Claud. I 73 and 75 (98-117). They are two “orders to let pass” found at Mons Claudianus. Since the letter of Maximus was sent to Mons Claudianus, it is supposed that Maximus must have been stationed somewhere else.<sup>64</sup> What is interesting is that in ll.4-6 ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἀρτέμεις is mentioned, so Maximus might not be the person who penned these texts. Artemius seems to have been close to Maximus; he sends these greetings to Cassianus the brother-in-law of Maximus and his daughter. Could that also mean that Artemius is the person who penned the customs texts on behalf of Maximus?

Lastly, as I mentioned earlier, it is not certain if all the people discussed in this chapter actually penned their correspondence by themselves. On the one hand, regular workers at Mons Claudianus, for example, had to go to a scribe in order to have a letter written on their behalf. On the other hand, letters of high officials were often written by the same hand, as in the case of the curators’ letters. But how can we know if they penned the letters by themselves or they dictated their messages to writers? In my opinion, it seems likely that at least some of them wrote their correspondence themselves, for example, that Capito the curator of Krokodilo wrote his own, and copied the correspondence of the prefect Cosconius.

What is few in the Eastern Desert material is subscriptions to someone who has written on behalf of another illiterate person. There are only a few of these, and they generally appear in receipts for provisions and other financial contexts.<sup>65</sup>

These were just some examples of the various hands known to have been writing in the Eastern Desert of Egypt. To conclude this section, I wish to say that it is obvious that the writers were of different origins and held various kind of professions. They are Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks, in addition to Thracians. There are high officials, soldiers, civilian workers, in addition to women. But the most common are the soldiers and other military men, who formed the majority of people with some education. Generally, this reflects the high standard of

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<sup>64</sup> See the intro. to O.Claud. I 146, p.135.

<sup>65</sup> See e.g. O.Did. 136 (14. May 215) 7-11 ἔγ[.]ψα (or ἔγ[ρα]ψα) ὑπὲρ αὐ<τοῦ> μὴ εἰδοτες (l. εἰδότος) γράμ<μ>ατα; O.Claud. III 452, 7-8 (28. Oct. - 26. Nov. 137); O.Claud. III 567, 3-4 (136-138); O.Claud. III 614, 5 (138-160). For this formula and more about (il)literacy in Egypt, see Youtie (1975a) 101-108; Kraus (2000) 322-342.

education of the persons who settled in this uninhabited area of Egypt,<sup>66</sup> that is, it is not surprising that high Roman officials and Greek soldiers would be educated, but it is interesting that there are *monomachoi* and traders such as Philokles, the most prolific letter writer from the Eastern Desert. Moreover, the women who are suspected to have been educated belong to Philokles's network. This shows the vital connection between commerce and literacy.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> In Egypt, generally, illiteracy was widespread in rural communities and small towns of Egypt; for illiteracy in Egypt, see Youtie (1975b) 201-221.

<sup>67</sup> For discussion of literacy and economy in the Roman Empire, see Ruffing (2018) 221-236.

## 6 Case study

The aim of this case study is to make a brief comparison between the circulation of unofficial correspondence from the Eastern Desert and that of an archive of letters from the Nile valley dating to the Roman period. For this comparison, I have chosen the private archive of Gaius Iulius Sabinus and his son Gaius Iulius Apollinarius from Karanis.

I have to mention that Apollinarius' correspondence does not represent the Nile valley correspondence completely, but only a part of it. Thus, the purpose of the comparison here is to show the different circumstances that affected the process of communication and the circulation within the Eastern Desert as opposed to the Nile valley in general.

### 6.1 Gaius Iulius Sabinus and his son Gaius Iulius Apollinarius

Both the father and his son were military men and belonged to a socially privileged class. Gaius Iulius Sabinus was born in the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century CE into a wealthy Greco-Egyptian family. He obtained Roman citizenship due to his service in the army and passed it later on to his son who followed his father's footsteps into the army. His place of service was near Alexandria, where he served as a soldier in *legio III Cyrenaica* by 96 CE. At 105 at the latest, he reached the rank of *signifer*, and in the meantime had been transferred from *legio III Cyrenaica*, which had left Egypt, to perhaps *legio XXII Deiotariana*. By 117-118 Sabinus's service in the army was finished.<sup>1</sup>

Gaius Iulius Apollinarius, was born in 85/86. As his father did, he also served in the *legio III Cyrenaica* around 103/104, and reached the rank of *secutor* around 105 CE, then becoming *librarius legionis ad spem promotionis*. In the spring of 107, he likely was serving in Arabia in the old Nabataean capital of Petra (Fig.1). By 119 CE, Apollinarius was still serving in *legio III Cyrenaica*, but had in the meantime the post of *frumentarius*, which is a special liaison or messenger between Rome and the provinces. Both Sabinus and his son eventually returned to their home, the village of Karanis, after their career.<sup>2</sup>

The family archive was found in Karanis where it was kept by Iulius Sabinus, and later his son Apollinarius. It dates between 70 and 147 and consists of 38 texts from which 18 are published and 20 still unpublished. It contains 14 published letters (P.Mich. VIII 465–466, 482,

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<sup>1</sup> See Claytor, Feucht (2013) 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> See Claytor, Feucht (2013) 1, 4-5, Alston 134-134, Strassi (2002) 164, Husselman (1963-1964) 4.

485–487, 493, 496–501, 509) and at least 11 unpublished letters.<sup>3</sup> All of the letters are written on papyri. Most of them belong to Apollinarius and only two to his father.<sup>4</sup> These two letters do not include a clear reference to details surrounding the delivery or the carriers, while Apollinarius’s letters include several references to the persons who delivered both the letters and the accompanying goods; my analysis will therefore concentrate on Apollinarius’s letters.

The letters generally concern personal affairs, such as reassuring others about the health and welfare of the sender, conveying news and dispatching items. As the place of Apollinarius service was outside Egypt, some letters in the archive were in fact sent from or received in Rome (e.g. P.Mich. VIII 487; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) or Bostra (Fig.1) (e.g. P.Mich. VIII 466; 26. March 107). In what follows, I look at some logistical issues in order to offer a comparative perspective on practices observed in the Eastern Desert.

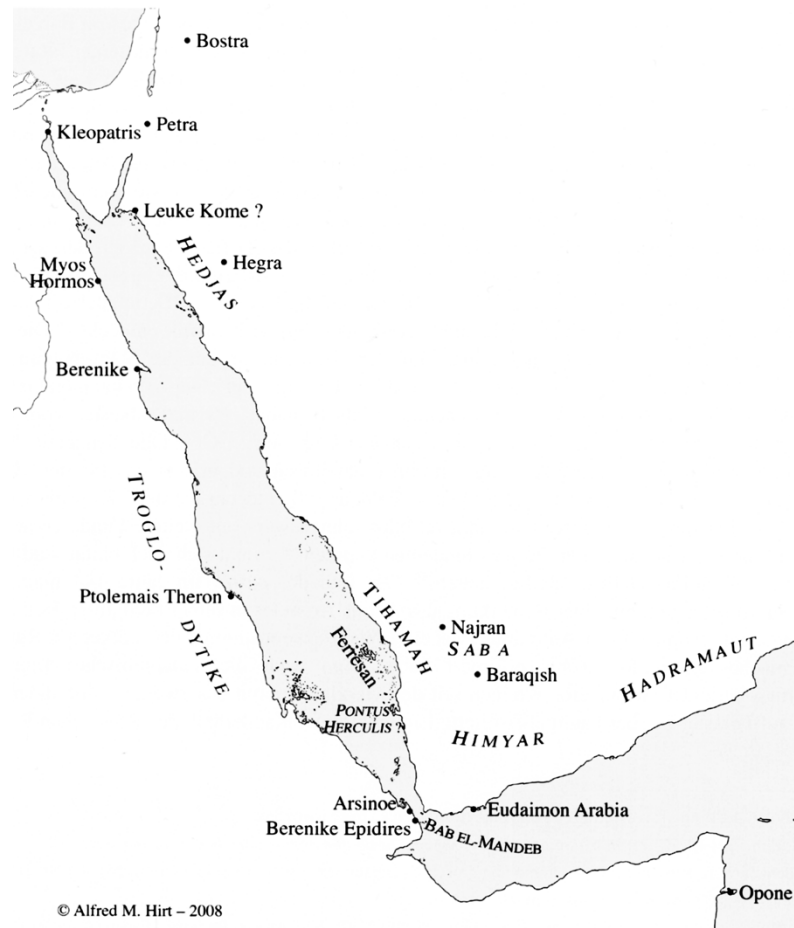


Figure 1. Map shows the location of Bostra and Petra. Taken from Speidel (2007).

<sup>3</sup> See Sarri (2018) 273 and Claytor, Feucht (2013) 1-3, the unpublished texts likely will be published in the forthcoming P. Mich. XXII.

<sup>4</sup> The Sabinus’s correspondence: P.Mich. VIII 485; 493. Apollinarius’ correspondence: Addressed from him are P.Mich. VIII 465; 466; 487; 501; addressed to him are P.Mich. VIII 486; 496; 497; 498; 499; 500; 509; 482?.



It was not always easy for Apollinarius to keep in touch with his family and get their correspondence, particularly while he was outside Egypt. The highest number of times he complains about going unanswered is twenty.<sup>5</sup> Being far, he was naturally concerned about his parents and on several occasions he asks them to reassure him about themselves, as in P.Mich. VIII 465, 35-37 (20. Febr. 108?) ἐρωτῶ [ὑμᾶς ἀόκν]ως μοι ἀντιγράψαι περὶ τῆς σω[τηρίας] ὑμῶν, ‘I ask you without delay to reply to me concerning your health’.<sup>6</sup> But the complaints were directed at him as well. His correspondents blame him for neglecting to write, as we see in a letter (P.Mich. VIII 496; 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) addressed from Apol[] to Apollinarius while he was at Bakchias, ll.6-9 ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη χάρτην ἀνήλωσα γράφων σοι καὶ μόγις ἐν ἐπιστόλιόν σου ἐκομισάμην, ‘for I have already used up a papyrus roll in writing to you, and I received barely one letter from you’.<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes logistical problems sprang from a lack of trusted carriers. Most often, Apollinarius sent or received his things through trusted persons, friends and individuals from his circle of acquaintances. On occasion, however, there was no one available to convey a letter. For example, in P.Mich. VIII 465 (20. Febr. 108?), while he was at Bostra, Apollinarius informed his mother that he could not send her some valuable gifts because he could not entrust them to anybody due to the distance between them.

Negligence on the part of the carrier could also be the source for logistical problems. In P.Mich. VIII 499 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), it clearly seems that the carriers neglected to deliver the letters between Apollinarius and his brother Sabinianus, ll.12-14 πολλάκι σοι ἔγραψα, κα[ὶ] ἡ τῶν παρακομισζόντων (1. παρακομιζόντων) ἀμέλεια διέβαλεν ἡμᾶς ὡς ἀμελεῖς, ‘I have written to you often, and the negligence of those who carry the letters has slandered us as negligent’.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, it is not said what form exactly the carriers’ negligence took.

## 6.2 The carriers of both letters and goods

Apollinarius relied on his friends and fellows to exchange items. In P.Mich. VIII 465 (20. Febr. 108?), a letter sent from Bostra, Apollinarius asked his mother to make inquiry of a friend of his at Alexandria, so that she may send to him through his friend coarse-fibered linens.

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>6</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter P.Mich. VIII 465. See also P.Mich. VIII 466 where he expresses his sadness over the lack of letters from his father.

<sup>7</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter P.Mich. VIII 496.

<sup>8</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

Apollinarius occasionally also names his carrier. For example, in P.Mich. VIII 466 (26. March 107), a letter he wrote to his father one year before P.Mich. VIII 465, while he was still in Bostra, he found it important to inform his father the names of the carriers through whom he sent previous letters without getting a response from him. Some of these carriers are military men, ll.4-9 τοῦτο δέ μοι ἠνώχλησεν ὅτι πλειστάκις μου γράψαντος διὰ Σατουρνίνου τοῦ σημεαφ[όρου], ὁμοίως διὰ Ἰου[λ]ιανοῦ τοῦ τοῦ Λονγεῖν[ο]υ (l. Λογγίνου) [καὶ διὰ Δίου], καὶ οὕτω μοι ἀντέγραψες (l. ἀντέγραψας) περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας σου, ‘but this has troubled me, that I have very often written to you through Saturninus the *signifer*, likewise through Iulianus the son of Longinus and [[through Dios]], and not yet have you answered me concerning your health’.<sup>9</sup>

Also in P.Mich. VIII 501 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which is a letter sent from N.N. to Apollinarius, he informs N.N. about a letter he sent to him through a certain Aurelian, ll.14-16 καὶ ἐν ταῖς διὰ Αὐρηλιανοῦ ἐπιστολαῖς [ἔγ]ραψ[ά σοι λαβεῖν τέσσαρα (l. τέσσαρα) . . ρ . . [ . ] . τιανὰ ἀπὸ Φιλήτου [ἂ παρ’ αὐτῷ κατέλ]ιπον, ‘in the letters that I sent by Aurelian I wrote you to get from Philetas four . . . which I left with him’.<sup>10</sup>

In P.Mich. VIII 466 (26. March 107), Apollinarius says that it was not easy for him to send stuff to his father with Longinus, who delivered the letter, because Longinus refused to deliver anything else, ll. 12-17 πολ[λάκις δέ] μοι ἐρωτήσαντος Λονγεῖν[ο]ν (l. Λογγῖνον) τ[ὸ]ν κομίζοντά (l. κομίζοντά) σοι τὸ ἐπιστόλιον εἶνα (l. ἶνα) β[α]στάξῃ σοί τι, καὶ ἠρνήσατο λέγων οὐ δύν[ασθαι αὐτὸ λαμβάνειν. γι]νώσκιν (l. [γι]νώσκειν) δέ σε θ[έ]λω ὅτι σφυρίδα μετεβάλλετο Δομίτιος ὁ ἀρμι[κούστωρ ἐν ἧ . . . .]ς σοι ἐνήν, ‘a number of times I asked Longinus, who brings you the letter, to take something for you, and he refused, saying that he was unable [to take anything]; but I want you to know that Domitius the armicustos(?) [took a long a basket in which] there was a . . . for you’.<sup>11</sup>

Merchants were another way by which Apollinarius received items from his family, as in P.Mich. VIII 466, 33-37 (26. March 107) ἐὰν οὖν με φιλήσῃς εὐθέως ἐργασίαν δώσεις (l. δώσεις) γράψαι μοι περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας σου καὶ ἐάν μοι μεληθῆς πέμψαι λίνα διὰ Σεμπρονίου· ἀπὸ Πηλουσίου γὰρ καθ’ ἡμέραν ἔρχονται πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔμποροι, ‘if then, you love me, you will straightway take pains to write me concerning your health and, if you are anxious about me, to

<sup>9</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

<sup>10</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter. Another messenger called Valerianus is mentioned in P.Mich. VIII 486; from his Roman name it seems that he is military man.

<sup>11</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

send me linen garments through Sempronius, for merchants come to us from Pelusium every day'.<sup>12</sup>

The soldiers' families were often wealthy, which meant that they could own domestic slaves or still retain the services of their freedmen. People of this status in the family include Abaskantos (P.Mich. VIII 499, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.; IX 549, 117-118), Antonius (493, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), perhaps Nikostratos (P. Mich. inv. 5901+5836), and Eros (P.Mich. VIII 487, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.; 465, 20. Febr. 108?), who was a slave who had been freed later. The precise status of most of them is not identified, but probably the family oversaw extensive networks of slaves and freedmen.<sup>13</sup>

From the family's slaves and freedmen, Eros was employed to deliver items from Apollinarius. In P.Mich. VIII 487 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Apollinarius writes from Rome to inform Sempronius<sup>14</sup> that he sent Eros, their man, to deliver some items; additionally, he includes a request in the letter to escort Eros home safely, ll. 10-15 [ . . . ] . [ . . . ] ἔπεμψα Ἔρωτα τὸν ἡμέτε[ρο]ν. διὸ ἐρωτῶ συνλαβοῦ αὐτῷ ὅπως διὰ σο[ῦ εἰ]ς οἶκον διασωθῆ. ἔδωκα γὰρ αὐτῷ εἰς ἀνακομιδὴν δι[ . . . ] . κε. εἴαν σοι εὐκαιρὸν ᾗν παρὰ π[ε]μψον ἀ]νακομίζοντα αὐτόν, 'I have sent our man Eros. I ask you therefore to assist him so that through you he may reach home safely. For I gave him 25 . . . to deliver. If you have the opportunity, give him an escort for the delivery . . .'.<sup>15</sup>

Apollinarius's father played an important role in assisting with the delivery of his correspondence. He was relied on to forward and likely deliver letters to his correspondents. In P.Mich. VIII 486 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the sender, Sempronius Clemens, informs Apollinarius that he received his letters from his father Iulius Sabinus, ll. 3-4 ἔλαβ[όν] σου [τὰ]ς ἐπιστολὰς παρὰ τοῦ σοῦ Ἰουλίου Σαβ[ε]ίου.

### 6.3 Forwarding letters and other items

The previous examples show that Apollinarius often relied on people to forward messages from place to place because of the great distance his correspondence covered. Indicative of this is also P.Mich. VIII 465 (20. Febr. 108?), which he wrote in Bostra. In P.Mich. VIII 486 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), the sender acknowledged the receipt of Apollinarius's letter

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<sup>12</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

<sup>13</sup> See Claytor, Feucht (2013) 7-8.

<sup>14</sup> He could be the same family agent mentioned in P.Mich. VIII 466, see Strassi (2002) 173 and also P.Mich. VIII 486 note to l.1.

<sup>15</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

through Apollinarius's father. In P.Mich. VIII 465 (20. Febr. 108?), which is addressed from Apollinarius to his mother Tasoucharion, the address on the verso of the letter shows that the letter should be delivered to his sister, l. 48 [ὥστε Τασουχαρίῳ μητρει (l. μητρι) ἀπό(δος) Ἰουλίᾳ, '[For Tasoucharion,] my mother; deliver to Iulia'. One might also suppose from the reference to others' letters in P.Mich. VIII 498, 20-22 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which was sent from Gemellus to Apollinarius, that correspondence was also forwarded to Apollinarius, who then sent it on to the intended recipients, ἔπεμψά σοι τὰ ἐπιστόλια Αἰμιλλιανοῦ καὶ Ῥούφου καὶ Χαρίτωνος, 'I sent you the letters of Aemilianus and Rufus and Chariton'.<sup>16</sup>

#### 6.4 Exchanging goods and other items

Apollinarius exchanged goods, victuals and valuable gifts with his family and friends while he was both inside and outside Egypt. For example, in P.Mich. VIII 496 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which was addressed to him from Apol[ ] while he was at Bakchias, Apol[ ] acknowledged the receipt of cloaks and the dispatch of vegetables and some fish to Apollonius, ll. 6-14 ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη χάρτην ἀνήλωσα γράφων σοι καὶ μόγις ἐν ἐπιστόλιόν σου ἐκομισάμην ἐν ᾧ ἐδήλους τοὺς φαινόλας με καὶ τὸν δέλφακα κομίσασθαι. τὸν μὲν δέλφακα οὐκ ἐκομ[ι]σάμην, τοὺς δὲ φαινό[λας] ἔλαβον, 'for I have already used up a papyrus roll in writing to you, and I received barely one letter from you, in which you informed me that I should receive the cloaks and the pig. The pig I did not receive, but the cloaks I did get', ll. 15-18 κόμισαι καλὰς θρίδακας τέσσα[ρ]ος (l. τέσσαρας) καὶ δέσμην σεύτλου καὶ βόλβ[α]κας ἀριθμῶ κα χλοῦς ἱς καὶ μαιώτας καλοὺς τρεῖς ἡμινήρους, 'do receive four good lettuces, a bundle of beets, 21 bulbs, 16 (?) greens, and three good semi-salted fish'.<sup>17</sup>

While he was at Bostra, he wished to send to his family valuable gifts and luxury items, P.Mich. VIII 465, 17-19 (20. Febr. 108?) καὶ ἠθέλησα ὑμῖν πέμψαι θαλλὸν ἐκ τῶν Τυρίων, 'and I wanted to send you a gift of Tyrian wares'.<sup>18</sup> In P.Mich. VIII 500 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which was received by Apollinarius in Rome,<sup>19</sup> included a request from his friend to send white cotton, ll.7-16 τὰ ἐρει[ό]ξυλα (l. ἐριόξυλα) τὰ λευκά, καθὼς σε παρὼν παρεκάλασα (l. παρεκάλεσα) πέμψον Μ[έ]γρονι. ἂ[ν μ]αλακὰ ἦν, εἶπε πα[ρῶ]ν σοι, πεμφθῆ ἀπὸ Ῥώμης. ἀνακομίσω ἂν ἐθέλης ἀν[α]πέμψασθαι κ. [ -ca.-? ] [ . ] ἱπινασουει . ὕ . ο[ ]καί]ντ . ἀντίγρα . ον ἀπέπεμψά σοι ἵνα

<sup>16</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter P.Mich. VIII 498.

<sup>17</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter P.Mich. VIII 496.

<sup>18</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

<sup>19</sup> See into. to P.Mich. VIII 501.

μὴ παραπέση . . . . ενεικον πολλάκι Σεμπρωνίω κα . . . . ο[ . . ] . . [ -ca.?- ] περισπωμεν[ . . ] περὶ τὰ στρατιωτικὰ . . [ -ca.?- ] . . [ . . ] εστιν παρενοχλοῦν ἵνα μὴ . . . [ -ca.?- ] . . . . ε . [ . . ] ομέν[ο]υς καὶ δυναμένους [ -ca.?- ], ‘send the white cottons, as I requested of you when I was with you, to Menon. “If there are soft ones”, he said when he was with you, “let them be sent from Rome”. I will deliver them(?) if you wish to send them . . . . I sent you a copy(?) so that it might not go astray . . . .’.<sup>20</sup>

In P.Mich. VIII 501 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), there is a reference to the sending of Marseillan wine. The editor suggested that this letter was sent after Apollinarius return to Alexandria, ll.19-21 ‘ἐὰν ἐπ’ ἀ[γαθῶ] ἰς (l. εἰς) Ἀλεξάνδρειαν ἔρχῃ, λαγύν[ο]υς Μασσαλιτανὰς [ . . . . ] . . . . μοι ἵνα ἰς (l. εἰς) τὰς ἐ[ὺ]γοίας τοῦ κυρίου Σαρά[πιδος] . . .’, ‘if by luck you come to Alexandria, [buy(?)] for me . . . Marseilles flasks so that [I may not put off giving thanks(?)] for the favors of the lord Sarapis . . .’.<sup>21</sup>

## 6.5 Addresses

Seven letters from the correspondence of Sabinus and Apollinarius clearly have addresses on the backs.<sup>22</sup> Both of the father’s letters contain an address. P.Mich. VIII 493 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which is addressed from Sabinus to ...[.].narion and Demetrous, is interesting because Sabinus addressed the letter to his house in Karanis while he was away in Alexandria.<sup>23</sup> And P.Mich. VIII 509 (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), which likely belongs to the archive, is addressed to Priscus at Apollinarius’s house from an unknown person, [ἀ]πό(δος) Πρεῖσκω στρατιώ(τη) εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν [ -ca.?- ], ‘deliver to Priscus the soldier at [his(?)] home’.<sup>24</sup> Generally, the addresses were simple, such as in P.Mich. VIII 496v (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Ἀπολιναρίωι × φίλωι; 498v (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Ἰουλίω Ἀπολιναρίωι × οὐετρανωῖ ἀπὸ Γεμέλλου; 499v (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), Ἰουλίω Ἀπολιναρίωι ἀπὸ Σαβεινιανοῦ ἀδελ[φο]ῦ Ἀπολ[ι]ναρίου τοῦ . . . . P.Mich. VIII 465 (20. Febr. 108?) is addressed to Iulia, but the letter itself is sent to his mother Tasoucharion.

<sup>20</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

<sup>21</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter.

<sup>22</sup> P.Mich. VIII 465; 485; 493; 496; 498; 499; 509.

<sup>23</sup> See chapter 4. The second letter is simply addressed to Sabinus, P.Mich. VIII 485v Ἰουλίωι Σαβείνωι σημεαφόρωι × ἀπὸ Ἀμμωνίου φίλο[υ], ‘to Iulius Sabinus, standard bearer, from Ammonios, his friend’, trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter P.Mich. VIII 485.

<sup>24</sup> Trans. (eds.) Youtie and Winter P.Mich VIII 509.

## 6.6 Who writes his letters?

As the editor states, P.Mich. VIII 465 (20. Febr. 108?) and 466 (26. March 107) are written in the same hand. The hand of P.Mich. VIII 487 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) resembles them too, which likely implies that Apollinarius is the writer of his letters. These are not the only letters written in Apollinarius's hand but more unpublished letters were written by him too.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Claytor and Feucht (2013) 9, notes 45 and 46, where they discuss two styles of writing observed in Apollinarius's letters.

## Conclusion

### The unofficial correspondence system

In light of the previous case study, it is very clear that, in unofficial contexts, anybody going in the right direction could carry or transfer letters or items to the intended destination. In both the Eastern Desert and the archive of Sabinus and Apollinarius, we are dealing with persons from a military milieu. The kinds of carriers normally differ according to the community and the circumstances of the place. In the Eastern Desert we have a variety of carriers who were employed to transfer items while they were on their way: e.g. the horsemen, donkey drivers, camel drivers, wagoners, the *tabellarii*, the *kibariator* or *kibariates*, the emerald workers, the *galearii*, servants and some other individuals, in addition to the caravan, *προβολή* and *conductor*.

In the archive of Apollinarius, the carriers were Apollinarius' fellow's soldiers, friends, merchants, slaves or freedmen and his father. His father, particularly, played an important role in transferring or forwarding Apollinarius' items. Apollinarius adopted this method of "forwarding the letters" in order to convey items, particularly when he was outside Egypt. The length of the routes and obstacles that hampered the movement items over long distances necessitated this. Apparently, it was not always easy for Apollinarius to exchange correspondence since the largest number of unanswered letters comes from his correspondence. In the one that he wrote to his mother while in Arabia complaining that it is the twentieth time he writes to her also did not get an answer.

In the Eastern Desert, family members assist in forwarding items to the Nile valley, as in the case of Petenephotos in Tiberiane who relied on his brother Valerius in Mons Claudianus to forward his items to the Nile valley, but this is not all that common. It was normally dictated by the need for people to dispatch items over long distances, such as to the Nile valley.

As for the means of travel, horses, donkeys, camels, wagons, and also boats were used to transfer correspondence and other items, at least in the area of the Red Sea. It is not always stated what means of travel a carrier used but it can be understood that the horseman used a horse and the donkey driver used a donkey. In the archive of Apollinarius, the means of travel are not mentioned, and carriers are almost always mentioned by names or by titles that do not usually show how they travelled, such as in the case of the merchants. But they definitely used some means of transportation, particularly when items were transferred outside Egypt. For example, in P.Mich. VIII 465 (20. Febr. 108?) discussed above, it is not said how Apollinarius' friend is going to travel to him from Alexandria to Bostra where Apollinarius was. Also in

P.Mich. VIII 487 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), which was sent from Apollinarius while he was in Rome, it is not stated how Eros travelled to Egypt, but it is implied that he must travel by sea.

This leads us to the point of the carriers who are identified by names in the Eastern Desert letters. Carriers appear to be familiar to both corresponding parties in many cases and the same carriers were employed between the same correspondents. The carrier could be a friend, relative or acquaintance from one's circle of correspondents and those familiar to them. That could be one of the reasons behind the lack of an address in most of the Eastern Desert letters. Besides, ostraca are by their nature open and do not provide privacy to the message, which makes the initial address available and legible to the carrier. Even the few letters that contain addresses in the Eastern Desert are simple and only sometimes was an address provided for future correspondence. On the other hand, as discussed above, seven of the fourteen published letters of Sabinus and Apollinarius included an address on the verso of the papyri. They are in general simple and brief, but they also show that letters can be addressed to either individuals or places (i.e. home), such as P.Mich. VIII 493, which is addressed from Sabinus to his house while he was in Alexandria. In the Eastern Desert letters, we do not find letters addressed home, and this is not surprising in this military milieu where people were mainly stationed temporarily for practical work reasons. Thus, in the Eastern Desert, letters were considered an integral part of the inner economy. Simply put, if someone needed some cabbage, he would write a letter to request it. First and foremost, letters were used for exchanging basic goods and services. On the other hand, in the Nile valley regions, the inhabitants enjoyed easier access to goods, as, for example, markets were more available. Letter-writing was probably less important for fulfilling basic day-to-day needs for most inhabitants.

Also while he was outside Egypt, Apollinarius exchanged gifts and other items with his family and other correspondents, but he was mainly concerned about his parents' safety and welfare and spent many lines in letters dealing with this. His letters are all written on papyri, which of course has given him the capability to express in detail his concern about his family. Generally, his letters are relatively informative, unlike most of the Eastern Desert letters, which tend to be short and brief.<sup>26</sup> Besides, he exchanged private information with his family members, friends and colleagues. Generally, the archive of Sabinus and Apollinarius reflects more personal and family matters. Most of Apollinarius' letters are even addressed to his

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<sup>26</sup> For discussion about the relationship between the medium of the letter and its length, see Blumell (2014) 25-32.



mother and other family members. These personal and family relationships are not so familiar in the Eastern Desert letters.

Finally, we have discussed in the fifth chapter of this work that letter writers in the Eastern Desert were of different origins and held various kinds of professions. They were Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, and Thracians. They included high officials, soldiers, civilian workers, traders, *monomachoi*, in addition to some women. This shows the high standard of education of the Eastern Desert inhabitants. Moreover, most of the women who appear to be literate, belong to Philokles' network, which also shows the connection between commerce and literacy. However, the majority were military men. We have seen that Apollinarius likely penned his letters in his own hand, which is not surprising, since he is a military man who grew up in a socially privileged family.

### **The official correspondence system**

As discussed in the second chapter, the official postal system in the Persian empire or the so called ἀγγαρήιον relied on horses and postal stations that were spread all over the Empire at intervals of one day of travel from each other. Items were delivered from one courier to another along these stations and night relays were available, when necessary.

In Egypt during the reign of the Ptolemies, a postal system was created on the model of the Persian system, although it was not exactly duplicated. It relied on post offices and postriders who performed four journeys each day according to a six-hour plan. The system itself ran from North to South and vice versa. As in the Persian system, officials of high rank who held the liturgical position postal director oversaw the entire system. There was another less urgent communications system, which relied mainly on foot carriers and camels and was used for heavier parcels.

For the Roman period, it is not easy to outline the postal system in the whole of Egypt due to lack of sources. However, the Eastern Desert preserves evidence for the official postal system there, which during the Roman period imitated the Persian and Ptolemaic systems in relying mainly on postriders. What differentiates the system from others is the use of the *monomachoi*, who were employed for night deliveries. In each station, the curators of the *praesidia* were responsible for documenting or recording what the postriders brought upon their arrival and entrusting another or the same postrider with transferring letters or information to the next station. To each *praesidium* a group of postriders was assigned. As for the time spent on transferring items from one station to the next, this naturally depended on the distance between the stations. A horseman could take 2-3 hours to travel between two stations lying 25-

30 km apart. But he could also take up to one week to exchange a set of correspondence between two stations such as Dios and Xeron, which are 50-60 km apart. In general, most of the deliveries were performed over the course of the entire day, namely in the morning, evening or at night. There was a preference for night deliveries to be done by the *monomachoi*. Perhaps, there was a secondary postal system, in which camels were used; however, it cannot be confirmed since the references to this are not secure as discussed in the second chapter of this work. Additionally, there was likely an official maritime postal service in the Red Sea, at least during the first century. This appears from the existence of a military dispatch boat in a loan from Myos Hormos (Inv. P.004; 25 March 93) and the use of boats for private correspondence in the letters of Berenike (P.Ber. II 129, 130; ca. 50-75), as discussed in the third chapter. The system was not only used for the official transfer of correspondence and other items but also extended to the escorting of officials, military men and soldiers on missions to the Nile valley and to caravans travelling along the same routes to their destinations. Postriders and the *tabellarii* were mainly used for such missions. Because such a system was a matter of necessity for quick circulation and communication between the stations, mainly horsemen and the *monomachoi* were employed, who provided speed and security to the system. Some other carriers were used in official contexts, such as the *tabellarii*, camel drivers and the donkey drivers.

Extant official correspondence such as the daybooks and the *diplomata* (or the circulars) from Mons Claudianus, Krokodilo, and Dios show that there was a central office at each area or road. They were likely also based at Mons Claudianus, on the Northern part of the desert, Krokodilo, on the road from Koptos to Myos Hormos and probably Dios, on the road from Koptos to Berenike. In these offices, correspondence was copied and likely also archived. Moreover, official scribes were at least present at these main sites and were responsible for copying incoming messages. They copied official correspondence onto large pieces of ostraca and wrote official correspondence.

## APPENDIX: Notes on Some Texts and New Readings

O.Did. 369 (before (?) 88-92) was partially published as follows:

13 lines untranscribed

[ -ca.?- ἀσπάζεται σε(?) ]

15 (Left Margin) Μᾶρκος. ἐάν μοι πέμπης

φάσιν ἵνα ἔλθω παρὰ σέ{ν},

ἐντελῆ τῷ ὀνηλάτῃ.

Translation: ll.15-17: Marcus [greet you]. If you send me word to come to you, please instruct the donkey driver.

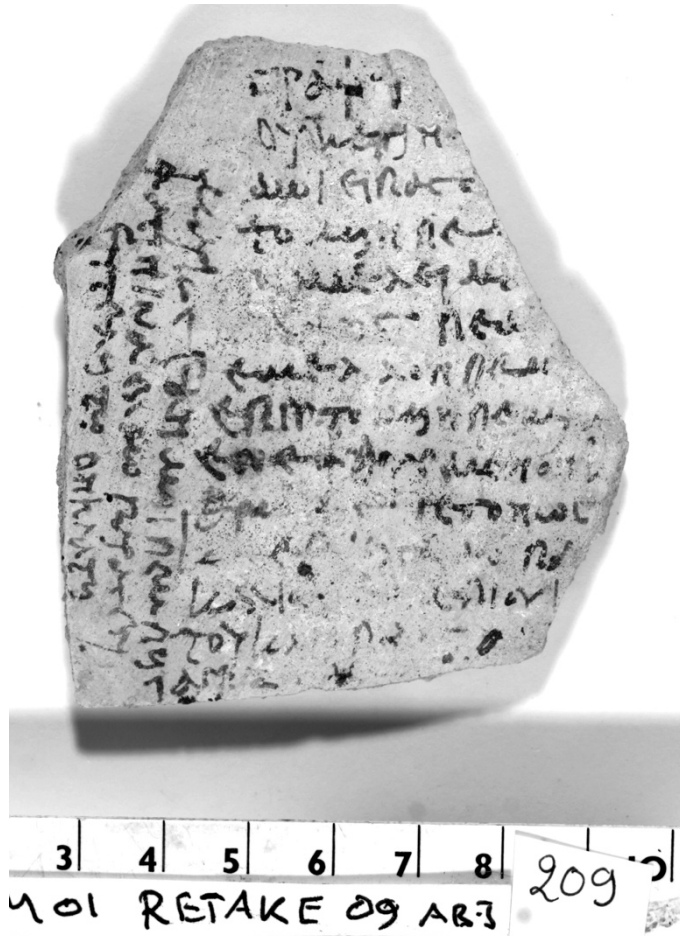
In the note to l.15, the editor mentioned that Μᾶρκος belongs to a previous phrase, probably [ἀσπάζεται σε] Μᾶρκος. It seems to me that in line 14 ἀσπάζ[ετ]α[ί σε] could be read, meaning that there is nothing lost between lines 14 and 15.

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γραφη [ ca.11 ]  
οὐκέτι ν.[ ca.7 ]  
μοι εἶπας ὅτ[ι ἐπισ]  
4 τολήν πεμ[ ca.7 ]  
.. ἀμέλει μο[ ca.5 ]  
[γρ]αφης πεμ[ca.6]  
ἔμελλον πέμ[ψαι]  
8 ἐπιστολήν πέμψας  
επεφ θ, ὑπέμενον κ  
θρα...ς γεγονὸς  
κ..ξο.ης .. πα[ρα-]  
12 καλιῶ.... ἐπι ουί[]  
τοῦ Κανπαγοῦ []  
ἀσπάζ[ετ]α[ί σε]

On the left margin

Μάρκος. ἐάν μοι πέμπης  
 16 φάσιν ἵνα ἔλθω παρὰ σέ{ν},  
 ἐντελῆ τῷ ὄνηλάτῃ.

Translation: 1.2. no longer ... 11.3-4 you told me to send? a letter ... 1.5 don't hesitate ... 11.7-9 I was intending to send a letter. Send? by 9 Epeiph endure? ... 11.13-14 Kanpanos. Marcus greets you.



I am grateful to Professor Bülow-Jacobsen for the image.

Notes:

The bad condition prevents secure reading; therefore, I provide reading alternatives in the following notes.

1.1 Instead of the η of γραφη, οι could be possible.

1.4 A form of πέμπω is expected by the end of line 4.

1.5 A negative article is expected before ἀμέλει, such as μὴ ἀμέλει, see e.g. O.Claud. II 270, 12 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) μὴ ἀμέλη (1. ἀμέλει) ποίσόν (1. ποιήσόν) μοι ταῦτα; O.Claud. II 273, 7 (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) κα· [ . . . ] μὴ [ἀμέλει.

μο[ ] could be supplemented to μοι in the dative case or the genitive μου, see e.g. P.Sarap. 96, 4-5 (90-133) ἔπιτα (l. ἔπειτα) ἐρωτῶ σε μὴ ἀμελεῖν μου and SB XIV 12084, (1st cent.) περὶ δὲ τῶν γερδίων μὴ ἀμέλι (l. ἀμέλει) αὐτῶν. This makes the meaning of the line in our letter ‘don’t neglect or don’t forget me’. However, μέλει μοι is also not excluded, see e.g. P.Oxy. XLIX 3994, 8-9 (early 3rd cent.) οὐκ ἐπὶ (l. ἐπεὶ) μέλει μοι περὶ αὐτῆς; P.Oxy. XXXXI 2981, 27-28 (2nd cent.) καὶ μέλι (l. μέλει) μοι περὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

l.6 [γρ]αφης: is likely γραφῆς referring to record, register or list, perhaps also γραφή in the first line.

ll.7-8 For examples of ἔμελλον followed by accusative and infinitive, see e.g.

P.Fay. 344 v, 21-22 (2nd cent.) ἤμελλον (l. ἔμελλον) αἰλάσε (l. ἐλάσαι) αὐτήν/ εἰς τὴν μητρόπολιν) πρὸς σέ· In O.Florida 14, 10-11 (mid-end 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) it is followed by the dative in addition to the infinitive and accusative ἔμελλον σοι πέμψαι ἀγγία (l. ἀγγεῖα) εἰς τὴν λοχίαν σου·

l.9 It might be Ἐπέφ θ for Ἐπεῖφ. Most likely, the writer wrote *nu* then modified it to *pi*. The *kappa* perhaps stands for κ(αὶ)

l.10 The letter after the *alpha* might be *eta*, and the *alpha* is not certain, it might also be *omega*.

l.11 ο.ης or perhaps θ.ης.

ll.11-12 πα[ρα]καλι perhaps stands for παρακάλει.

l.12 ου might also be συ or σε.

ll.12-13 by the end of lines 12 and 13, probably one or two letters are lost.

### Notes on other letters:

O.Ber. II 196, 1: [-ca.?-] . φ τῶ φιλ- > [Ἐρέννιος Σατορν]ύφ τῶ φιλ-, see chapter 5

O.Did. 393, 16: κ<α>ῖ is rather κ(αὶ)

O.Claud. IV 867, 5: πέμ]ψαι is rather πέμψ]αι, I thank Professor Bülow-Jacobsen for sending me an infrared photo

O.Claud. IV 852 should rather be dated to the late second century CE, see chapter 4

O.Claud. IV 848-860 are not drafts of one letter but rather are drafts or copies of different letters, see chapter 4

O.Claud. IV 849 contains two different letters, see chapter 4

### **The hands:<sup>1</sup>**

O.Claud. I 140: different from O.Claud. I 137, 138, 139, see ch.5

O.Claud. II 228: penned by the hand of the soldier Dioskoros, see ch.5

O.Claud. II 263: penned by the hand of Maximus, see ch.5

O.Claud. II 270: the same as 272 and 273. It is likely the hand of Patrempabathes, the sender of the letters, see ch.5

O.Claud. II 271: penned by the hand of Didymos; compare with the greeting formulas of

O.Claud. II 264 and O.Did 329, see ch.5

O.Claud. II 275: the same as 276; they are perhaps penned by the hand of Apollinaris, the sender of the letters, see ch.5

O.Claud. II 300: the same as 301; it is perhaps the hand of Alexandros, the sender of both letters, see ch.5

O.Claud. IV 876: penned by the hand of Sokrates the foreman? See ch.5

O.Claud. IV 877: penned by the hand of Sokrates the foreman? See ch.5

O.Claud. IV 878: penned by the hand of Sokrates the foreman? See ch.5

O.Claud. IV 879: penned by the hand of Sokrates the foreman? See ch.5

O.Claud. IV 883: penned by the hand of Sokrates the foreman? See ch.5

O.Claud. IV 896: penned by the hand of Sokrates the foreman? See ch.5

O.Krok. I 14: penned by the hand of Capito, the curator of Krokodilo, see ch.5

O.Krok. I 31: penned by the hand of Ehip

O.Did. 383: penned by the hand of Philokles, see ch.5

O.Did. 391: penned by the hand of Philokles? See ch.5

O.Krok. II 156: penned by the hand of Philokles?

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<sup>1</sup> The question mark beside some letters indicates uncertainty about the identification.

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## ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

DGE: <http://dge.cchs.csic.es/xdge/>

EDH: <https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/home>

HGV: <http://aquila.zaw.uni-heidelberg.de/search>

LGPN: <http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/database/lgpn.php>

PHI: <https://inscriptions.packhum.org/>

PN: <http://papyri.info/search>

TLG: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/>

TM: <https://www.trismegistos.org/>

VTO: <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/index.shtml>

WL: <https://papyri.uni-koeln.de/papyri-woerterlisten/index.html>