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THE εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν FORMULA AND THE DELIVERY OF LETTERS TO THIRD
PERSONS OR TO THEIR PROPERTY

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THE εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν FORMULA AND THE DELIVERY OF LETTERS TO THIRD PERSONS OR TO THEIR PROPERTY

P. Mich. VIII 509 (II/III cent. AD, Karanis) is a letter to Priscus Apolinaris. The writer neither uses his own name in the praescript nor in the address on the verso of the letter.

Praescript: Πρεῖσκω Ἀπολινάρι στρατιώτῃ πλεῖστα χαίρ(ειν).

Address: [ἀπ]ό(δος) Πρεῖσκω στρατιώ(τηι)
εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν [

On the address the editor observes:¹ 'There was space sufficient for approximately 2 to 4 letters at the end of the line before the papyrus was damaged. Consequently, although εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν may be complete, it may well have been followed by αὐτοῦ or some other short explanatory word or phrase.' It is assumed that the owner of the house referred to in the address was none other than the addressee himself.

SB XVI 12572 (*ca* AD 500, Arsinoite nome?) is a letter addressed from a father to his son. Both the name of the son and of the father are missing from the praescript of the letter. However, the address on the verso is complete.

Praescript: Τῷ κ[υρί]ῳ μου τιμιωτάτῳ υἱ[ῷ] ...
ὁ πατήρ σου [

Address: Ἀπό(δος) εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν (crossing) Παύλου ὀρδ(ιναρίου)

The editors observe:² 'Ob der in der Adresse auf der Rückseite genannte Ordinarius Paulos der Empfänger selbst war, ist nicht ganz sicher.' Giving expression to their caution the praescript is translated: 'An meinen verehrten Herrn Sohn (Paulos?, N.N.) dein Vater, (Grüsse).' In other words, it is tentatively assumed that the addressee of the letter is identical with the owner of the house.

Both reconstructions present a problem. Why did the writer not address his letter in one of the more usual forms?³ Why the addition of the prepositional phrase εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν? As they now stand the reconstructions of *P. Mich.* VIII 509 and *SB XVI* 12572 assume either that there was a degree of redundancy in the writing of the address or that the letter would normally have been delivered to the addressee at a place other than his home. Either assumption seems somewhat implausible. The problem is solved, however, when one considers other letters containing the εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν formula, for in each instance the person to whose house the letter was to be delivered is different from the addressee. In other words, the prepositional phrase functioned much as the symbol *c/-* ('care of') in the modern letter. A number of examples can be cited. To begin with, those letters which were to be delivered to the writer's own house may be considered.

P. Mich. VIII 493 (II cent. AD, Karanis) is a letter written by Sabinus to his mother and Demetrous (his wife?). Sabinus was absent from home to attend a legal suit in Alexandria but had

¹ *P. Mich.* VIII 509, 138.

² G.H. Karlsson - H. Maehler, *ZPE* 33, 1979, 286.

³ F. Ziemann, *De epistularum graecarum formulis solemnibus quaestiones selectae*, diss. Halle 1910, 278-281, identifies four basic types of address: (a) τῷ δεῖνι; (b) παρὰ τοῦ δεῖνος τῷ δεῖνι or τῷ δεῖνι παρὰ τοῦ δεῖνος; (c) ἀπόδος τῷ δεῖνι; (d) ἀπόδος παρὰ τοῦ δεῖνος τῷ δεῖνι or ἀπόδος τῷ

been detained there due to a delay in the appointment of a new *archidikastes*. The praescript was addressed to his mother and Demetrous but the letter itself to his own house in Karanis. No doubt, that was where both his mother and Demetrous lived.

Praescript: Σαβεῖνος... [] ναρ[ί]φ τ[ῆ] μη-
 τρὶ κ[α]ὶ Δημητροῦτι
 ἀμφοτέρες (l. ἀμφοτέραις) [χα]ίρειν.

Address: εἰς Καρανίδα εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν Σαβεῖν[ου] τοῦ (sc. ἀνδρὸς) Δη[μητρ]οῦτος.

A similar instance is found in *P. Laur.* II 41 (III cent. AD, Memphis). On hearing of his father's safe return home Polydeukes, the author of the letter, writes to his parents. He also states that he will return if the gods are willing — ἐπιδημήσω δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτῶν θελώντων. The letter was apparently addressed to his own house in Memphis — ἀπόδ(ος) εἰς οἰκίαν Πολυδεύκ[ους]. The editor concludes that Polydeukes' parents were living in his house.

Second, letters to be delivered to the house of a third party can be considered. In *P. Mert.* II 63 (AD 57, Arsinoite nome) Herennia writes to her father, Pompeius, concerning a contribution which was being sought from him for the sanctuary of Souchos. The fact that the request for a contribution was made against Pompeius but received by his daughter indicates that he may well have been away from home. The possibility is further supported by the fact that Syrion, a son of Pompeius, appears to have been living with or near his sister, Herennia (*ll.* 19-23). Be that as it may, Herennia had been expecting Pompeius to come on the day of writing but when he had failed to arrive, she dispatched this letter to him. It is addressed to her father but is to be delivered to the house of Nemesous.

Praescript: [Ἐ]λενία Πονπηγίωι τῶι πατρὶ
 [π]λεῖστα χαίριν καὶ διὰ παντὸς
 [ὑ]γιαίνιν.

Address: δῦς Πονπηγίωι πατρὶ παρὰ Ἐλενίας ιτ[.....] ἔλυν
 τῶι πατρὶ Ὠνομάστου α[...][...] οσε[...][ἀπό]δος
 εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν Νεμεσοῦ[τος].

In *P. Oxy.* XVII 2150 (III cent. AD, Oxyrhynchus) Didymos writes to Apollonios. The letter concerns a quantity of purple (cloth) and specifications regarding its use. The letter, though addressed to Apollonios in the praescript, was to be delivered to Sarmates, the ex-prytanis.

Praescript: Δίδυμος Ἀπολλωνίω τῷ ἀδ[ελ]φῷ
 πολλὰ χαίρειν.

Address: ἀπόδ(ος) εἰς τὴν οἰκ(ίαν) Σαρμάτ(ου) πρυτανεύσ(αντος) π(αρὰ) Διδύμου.

Another example is provided by *P. Ant.* II 93 (IV cent. AD, Antinoopolis). In the letter Papais writes to his future mother-in-law, Nonna, to arrange a house for him near her. However, though the letter is addressed to Nonna in the praescript, the address reads

Address: ἀπόδ(ος) εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν (blank) Ἀντινίου Μάρκου π.[.].[.].

From the above evidence it is clear that the εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν formula was used to indicate delivery to the house of a third party. What reasons can be found for such a practice? More particularly, what were the circumstances which pertained in these examples and which may have influenced the practice? An analysis of the evidence suggest four reasons:

- (a) the addressee was away from home and presumably staying at the home of another person, e.g. *P. Mert.* II 63 (?);
- (b) the addressee was a woman and presumably did not own a house, e.g. *P. Ant.* II 93;

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- (c) the owner of the house or property was either well-known or easily found and could hand the letter on to the addressee, e.g. *P. Oxy.* XVII 2150; or
- (d) the absent member of a family wrote to relatives at his own house, e.g. *P. Laur.* II 41 and *P. Mich.* VIII 493.

To which of these categories should *P. Mich.* VIII 509 and *SB XVI* 12572 be assigned? The question, of course, assumes that the categories are complete and mutually exclusive, neither of which assumption need be the case. Be that as it may, it is proposed that *SB XVI* 12572 be assigned to (c) in view of the mention of Paulus' office; *P. Mich.* VIII 509 is a little more difficult to assign as the text is both brief and fragmentary. Nevertheless, I tentatively place it in category (a); none of the other categories appears to apply and the fact that the addressee was a soldier adds force to the argument that he may have been away from home.

The letters so far discussed have been chosen because of their use of the εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν formula. There are yet other letters which were to be delivered to a third party or to his property but which do not use the formula. We should now consider these in order to discern reasons for the practice more generally. *P. Oxy.* VII 1061 (22 BC) is a letter from Diogenes to Dionysios requesting that he and his brother, Apollonios, oversee the assessment of land which had not been inundated and the payment of dues on it. Dionysios had neglected an earlier request to see to the matter himself and Diogenes was compelled to seek the assistance of Ptolemaios instead. Nevertheless, he now writes a second letter to Dionysios asking him and his brother to meet with Ptolemaios because they are, as he says, more experienced than Ptolemaios. The letter is addressed:

Address: Διονυσίωι τῷ καὶ Ἀμότιι Πτολεμαίου ἀδελφῶι Ἀπολλωνίου
κωμογραμμάτεωσ Θώλθεωσ παρόντωσ ἐχόμε(να?) Θέωνο(ς) Ἴσχυρίω(νοσ)

The details concerning office and location are for the brother and not Dionysios. No doubt, the letter would more easily find its way to his brother than Dionysios himself.

BGU IV 1078 (AD 39) is a letter written by Sarapion to his 'sister' Sarapias (praescript). The letter deals with certain business arrangements and the failure of Sarapias to keep in touch, a commonplace in private letters.⁴ On the verso the letter is addressed from Sarapion to Sarapion, the younger son, at home:

Address: ἀπόδο(ς) παρὰ Σαραπ(ίωνοσ) ἐμπόρου Σαραπ(ίωνι) υἱῷ νεωτέρῳ ἐπ' οἴκου.

The relationship between Sarapias and the addressee on the verso is unclear. Olsson suggests that Sarapias was the sister and wife of the writer and Sarapion their common son.⁵ Sarapion senior was writing home (ἐπ' οἴκου presumably a small village in the *chora*) from Alexandria and addressed his letter to Sarapion, his son, as the courier would be able to find the address more easily. It is assumed on the basis of the rather vague address that the letter was carried by a travelling friend.⁶ The hypothesis, however, fails to account for the inclusion of the son's name in the address, for clearly if the letter was carried by a friend known to Sarapias and her son, then her name would have sufficed in the address. Moreover, it cannot safely be assumed that because the address is not clearly stated, the letter was carried by a friend. Elsewhere Olsson observes that messengers knew or received oral information concerning the address.⁷ It must be assumed on available evidence that numerous letters were carried by strangers with no greater detail than the

⁴ H. Koskenniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr.*, Helsinki 1956, 64-67.

⁵ B. Olsson, *Papyrusbriefe aus der frühesten Römerzeit*, Uppsala 1925, 88 and 91.

⁶ Also suggestive that a friend may have carried the letter is *l.4* (ἐκπορευομένων πολλῶν φίλων).

name of the addressee written on the verso of the letter and the knowledge that this person lived in the place to which they were travelling. In view of the collected data an alternative hypothesis can be suggested. The letter was addressed to the son's house because either Sarapias lived there with him or he could easily forward the letter on to her. Whether Sarapias was only Sarapion's aunt and whether the letter was carried by a friend remain open questions.

P. Oxy. II 300 (late I cent. AD) was a letter to accompany the delivery of a bread-basket, presumably sent by a slave girl, Indike (of Indian origin?), to her mistress, Thaisous. The carrier of this item and the letter was Taurinos, a camel driver. The letter, though written to Thaisous (praescript), was to be delivered to Theon in the gymnasium.

Address: εἰς τὸ γυμνάσι(ον) Θέωνι Νικοβούλ(ου)
ἐλεοχρεΐστη

The edd. pr. assume that Theon was probably Thaisous' husband. Whatever the relationship, the text of the letter shows that Indike uses the title κύριος for both Thaisous (*l.1*) and Theon (*l.7*). Why the letter was addressed to Theon at the gymnasium is unclear. Nevertheless, it is highly probable that the gymnasium was a convenient and well-known address which facilitated the letter's delivery.

P. Mich. VIII 514 (III cent. AD) is a letter from Isidora to her daughter Sarapias. The letter deals with various family matters including an illness which had prevented her from collecting her deceased son's *deposita*. In order to attend to this last matter Isidora had to travel to Alexandria and it was from there that she wrote. The address on the verso reads:

Address: ἀπό(δος) Ὀννώ (crossing) φρεῖς εἰρενὺς α. ησ.
ἀπὸ Ἀπολλῶ (crossing) τος Σαλιβωτᾶ

The letter was to be delivered to Onnophris the priest (for the nominative read instead a dative). The ed. pr. assumes that the latter was the husband of Sarapias. At any rate, he is also addressed in the second person in the body of the letter (*ll.35-37*) and was thus probably a family member.⁸ The letter was probably addressed to him as an easier person for the courier of the letter to find.

I would group with the above examples three other letters which, though they contain the name of the addressee in the dative on the verso, are to be delivered to the address of a third party. *P. Oxy.* III 529 (II cent. AD) is a letter whose praescript no longer survives. As a result we have no indication of the writer's identity. For the same reason the identity of the addressee is also uncertain. From the address on the letter's verso the edd. pr. state that the addressee was a woman called Athenarous.

Address:] εἰς τὰ Πausανίου γενομέ[νου γραμμα]τέως πόλεως Ἀθηναροῦτι Κέρδω(νος).

The relationship between Athenarous and Pausanias is not made clear in the letter itself. The list of persons to be greeted by the addressee suggests that Athenarous was a resident of Oxyrhynchus. Furthermore, the fact that Pausanias is not mentioned in this list indicates that he may not have been a familial relation, cf. *P. Oxy.* II 300. No doubt he was a well-known and trusted person who was acquainted with Athenarous and could see that the letter was delivered to her.

⁸ It will be noted that the address of *P. Mich.* VIII 514 gives the letter as being from (ἀπό) Apollos. The ed. pr. states: 'Apollos displaces Isidora in the address, doubtless because he was better known at Alexandria'. The practice may be compared with *P. Mich.* VIII 507 (II/III cent. AD), a letter from Artemis to Socrates in which the writer asks her correspondent to send a legal representative. As a woman she needed to be represented in court by a *kyrios*. The address on the verso is fragmentary but appears to state that the letter was from (ἀπό) Harpacysis. The ed. pr. observes that Harpacysis may have been Artemis' host whilst in a foreign city to attend to the legal matter. In both *P. Mich.*

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PSI XII 1241 (AD 159, written in Alexandria to be delivered at Narmuthis) is a letter from Maximus to his children, Chairemon and Eudaimon. There appears to have been some ill-feeling between the two sons, and the father is keen to restore familial harmony. He also writes to tell them not to neglect the vineyard and to give them his address whilst in Alexandria, should they wish to write (*ll.*30-36). Though in the praescript the letter is to Chairemon and Eudaimon, on the verso delivery was to be made to himself, i.e. Maximus, the weavers' secretary:

Address: ἀπόδο(ς) ἐν Ναρμούθ(ει) (crossing) παρὰ Μάξιμον γραμματέα γερδίων.
Vitelli observes that as secretary of the guild of weavers Maximus was a well-known person. Consequently it was sufficient to indicate his house to assure delivery of the letter to his children.

PSI XIII 1331 (III cent. AD) is a letter from Hyperephanos to his sister, Senthonis. The letter was written from Alexandria⁹ and was carried to Oxyrhynchus¹⁰ together with certain produce by a seaman. The letter gives directions for delivery in the address on its verso:

Address: ἀπόδο(ς) Σενθῶνι ἐπὶ τῇ πλα- (crossing) ἀπὸ Ὑπερηφάνου ἀδελ[φοῦ]
τεία τοῦ Θεάτρου παρὰ Γάϊον κασσιτερουργόν

The letter, though addressed to Senthonis, was to be delivered at Gaius' address. As Gaius is not mentioned in the body of the letter and his name is absent from the list of those persons to be greeted, the relationship between him and Senthonis is unclear. In the somewhat similar case of *P. Oxy. III 529* we concluded that the recipient of that letter was a well-known and trusted person who was acquainted with the addressee and could see that the letter was delivered to her. In this instance it appears that both the address and profession of Gaius probably facilitated delivery. In other words, he also was probably a trusted acquaintance of the family who had a convenient address for the delivery of the letter.

A fourth example might also be considered. *SB III 6222* (end of III cent. AD) is a letter from Dios to his sister, Sophrone. The location of the addressee is unknown. Dios, however, was in Alexandria in search of a person. Unable to find him Dios relates his fortune in another area, the fighting arena. The letter provides details (unfortunately incomplete) for delivery in its address.

Address: ἀπόδο(ς) Σωφρονίῳ ἀδελφῆ εἰς Δ... []
ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ γὰρ ἡ οἰκεία, π(αρά) Δίου ἀδελφοῦ.

Written in the reverse direction

Σωφρόνη π(αρά) Δίου ἀδελ(φοῦ).

Due to the fragmentary nature of the text it is unclear whether the letter in this instance was to be delivered to the property of a third party. However, in view of the frequency with which the prepositional phrase εἰς + place-name (nome, city or village) was used in the address of letters, it is highly probable that the letter was to be delivered directly to Sophrone. For this reason *SB III 6222* must be omitted from consideration. However, this letter and the above examples of addresses using the εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν formula do illustrate the important role which the possession of property played in the delivery of letters. Such possession, I assume, will in some way or other have facilitated the finding of the person.

In the preceding discussion four reasons (a to d) were given for the use of the εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν formula in the address of letters. One of the reasons (i.e. b) was that 'the addressee was a woman and presumably did not own a house'. In view of the examples of letters addressed without

⁹ Cf. Hyperephanos' προσκύνημα ... παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Σαράπιδι (*ll.*3-4) and references to his desire to 'come up' (*ll.*18 and 21-22).

¹⁰ The location (i.e. the street of the theatre) indicates to the edd. pr. that the address was in

the formula to a third party or to his property this category of reason may be subdivided further. To subcategory (b¹) belong papyri in which the addressee is a woman and the letter is delivered to a familial relation. Conversely, papyri in which the addressee is a woman but the letter is delivered to a well-known person whose relationship to the woman is unclear are assigned to subcategory (b²). It will be noted that this latter subcategory is only a special case of category (c). The following table classifies the available evidence using this new set of reasons or categories.

Table of letters addressed to a third party or to his property

Category	Papyri	Totals
a	<i>P. Mert.</i> II 63 (?); <i>P. Mich</i> VIII 509;	2
b ¹	<i>BGU</i> IV 1078; <i>P. Oxy.</i> II 300; <i>P. Mich.</i> VIII 514;	3
b ²	<i>P. Ant.</i> II 93; <i>P. Oxy.</i> III 529; <i>PSI</i> XIII 1331;	3
c	<i>P. Oxy.</i> XVII 2150; <i>SB</i> XVI 12572; <i>P. Oxy.</i> VII 1061;	3
d	<i>P. Laur.</i> II 41; <i>P. Mich.</i> VIII 493; <i>PSI</i> XII 1241;	3

A final and related issue still needs to be considered. It concerns letters in which a traveller gives a return address in the text of the letter proper. A number of examples may be cited here. *P. Lond.* III 897 (AD 84) is a letter written in Alexandria where the writer was staying at the time. The addressee lived in the Arsinoite nome. In the body of the letter (*ll.*16-19) the writer gives his address for the delivery of future correspondence.

- 16 ἔὰν δέ μοι ἐπιστολὰ[ς] πέμπης, πέμψεις εἰς τὸ Θέωνος τρα-
γματοπωλίων ἐπὶ τὸ Χαριδήμου βαλανεῖον καὶ ἐν τῷ
18 ἐργαστηρίῳ εὐρήσει Δεῖον τὸν τοῦ Σύρου καὶ αὐτός μοι
ἀναδώσει ἢ παρὰ Ἡρακλειδίωνα τὸν τοῦ Ἀβᾶ.

Letters were to be delivered to either Dios or Herakleidion and they would see that they were then forwarded to the writer.

PSI XII 1241 has already been described above. Maximus wrote in part to inform Chairemon and Eudaimon of his address whilst in Alexandria, no doubt in view of Thermoutharion's anticipated visit (*ll.*17-21) or should they themselves wish to write.

- 30 ξενίζομαι δὲ ἐγὼ καὶ
ὁ σὺν ἐμοὶ πλεύσας Σαρα-
πίων υἱὸς Δημητρίου
υἱοῦ Ἀπελεκήτου εἰς
τὴν ῥύμην Ὀριγένους
35 ἐν οἰκίᾳ Ἡρακλείδου τοῦ
[[του]] Καλαῆ.

Letters were to be forwarded to the house of Herakleides for the writer. Indeed, any letter to Maximus in Alexandria may well have used the εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν formula in its address. As a final example of the provision of an address within the text of a letter, *P. Mich.* VIII 514 *ll.*27-30 (III cent. AD) may be cited. The lines contain the address of the writer whilst in Alexandria in case the recipient should wish or need to write.

The text of the letter *P. Meyer* 20 is also of interest, for in it Athenodoros makes arrangements for the delivery of future letters both to himself (*ll.*49-51) and his addressee (*ll.*44-49). The

writer, Athenodoros, appears to have been an *equus* attached to the *epistrategia* of Heptanomia.¹¹ The ed. pr. surmises that he and his colleagues were employed in the area of tax-administration.¹² The letter was written to Σελβεῖνα ἡ ἀδελφή (his wife?) who was living in Antinoopolis. As the letter indicates that Athenodoros was not stationed at the time of writing in his home-town,¹³ one is inclined to think that his *idia* may well have been Antinoopolis. The carrier of the letter appears to have been Dioskoros. En route to Hermopolis he delivered thirty denarii to Selbeina together with the letter. The nature of his introduction in the letter indicates that though he was a colleague of Athenodoros, he was unknown to Selbeina (*ll.*12-15).

Εἰπὲ

45 τῇ ἱερίσῃ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῶν Ἑρμωνθιτῶν,
 ἵνα ἐκεῖ πέμψω τὰς ἐπιστολάς, ἐπὶ εὐ-
 σήμαντά ἐστιν. δῆλωσόν μοι οὖν,
 εἰ ἐνετείλω αὐτῇ ἵνα σοι ἐκεῖ πέμψω
 τὰς ἐπιστολάς. Πέμσον μοι εἰς τὸ ὄπ-
 50 φίκιον ἐπιστόλιον Μέμμονι καὶ Μέ-
 μνων μοι διαπέμπεται.

Letters to Athenodoros were to be sent to Memnon in the *officium*. He would see that they were then forwarded to Athenodoros. Arrangements are also made for future letters to Selbeina. She was to tell the priestess of the temple of the Hermonthites that future letters from Athenodoros to Selbeina would be sent to her at the temple. It is of interest to note that on the verso of *P. Meyer* 20 the directions for its delivery give as a starting point the same temple, thus confirming it to be a well-known landmark.¹⁴

Meyer points out that the temple possibly formed the focus of a cultic society of inhabitants of the Hermonthite nome resident in Antinoopolis.¹⁵ These persons may have come as colonists

¹¹ A number of letters of naval recruits and soldiers further shows the use of delivery to a third party. In *P. Mich.* VIII 490 Apolaris, the writer, asks for a letter from home telling of the family's σωτηρία, informing his mother that if she is unable to find someone travelling from Karanis to Rome, she should write to Socrates and he will send (διαπέμπομαι) the letter on (*ll.*12-16); cf. *P. Tebt.* II 583^v (verso), *P. Mich.* VIII 503 *ll.*2-4 and *P. Meyer* 20 *ll.*49-51 for the same use of a third party. In *BGU* II 423 (II cent. AD) Apion availed himself of the military post to send his letter home. The letter was sent from Misenum to the *librarius* of a cohort in Alexandria for delivery to the writer's father at Philadelphia. In *P. Tebt.* II 583 Aurelius Polion, possibly stationed in Pannonia, writes home to his brother Heron and family in Tebtynis. The letter is addressed to a veteran who was to send it to Polion's homeland (πατρίς). One other document is worth noting at this point, for it refers to the use of a village guard to deliver a private letter dealing with various financial matters. *VBP* II 35 (= *P. Bad.* 35, AD 87) is a letter from Johanna to Epagathos. The address on the verso reads: [εἰ]ς Πτολεμαεῖδα τὴν Ἑρμεῖου. [δὸς κω]μοφύλακι ὥστε Ἐπαγ[άθω φέρειν].

¹² *P. Meyer* 20, pp.82-83.

¹³ Cf. τὸ προσκύνημά σου ποιῶ παρὰ τοῖς (1. οἷς) ἐπιξενο[ῦ]μαι θεοῖς *ll.*3-4.

¹⁴ The documentary evidence of Egypt provides several examples of σημασία-texts or directions which were intended to facilitate the delivery of letters or other items. The texts are in three forms: (a) directions given on a label, *SB* VI 9126; (b) directions given on a separate sheet of papyrus, *P. Oxy.* XXXIV 2719 and *SB* XVI 12550; (c) directions given together with the address on the verso of letters, *P. Oxy.* XIV 1678, *P. Meyer* 20, *P. Oxy.* XIV 1773, *P. Laur.* I 20 and *P. Ross. Georg.* III 6. For a discussion of these and related texts see a forthcoming entry in volume 7 of *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*.

when the city was founded under Hadrian, though one need not necessarily assume this. However, the use of the temple as a type of *poste restante* is interesting. Braunert uses this text (cf. the presence in Antinoopolis of a ἱερόν of the Hermonthites) and *PSI* III 206 (ἐπιδημοῦντες Μεμφίται presumably in Oxyrhynchus) in his discussion of internal migration to show that the number of those who temporarily stay in a foreign nome cannot have been small. He further suggests that the temple may have acted as a clearing-house for information from home.¹⁶ Unfortunately for this hypothesis, Athenodoros' letter was not written from Hermonthis. Indeed, Meyer notes that Athenodoros and Selbeina may not even have been members of the cultic society. Be that as it may, the interesting point is that temple personnel for whatever reason could act as recipients of letters. No doubt the reasons for the practice were that the temple was a well-known site and its officers were considered trustworthy.

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