

Selected ostraca from the *Archive of Philokles*

These ostraca were found at the Roman military outposts of Didymoi and Krokodilô, in the Eastern Desert of Egypt. The former was situated on the Koptos–Berenike route (ἡ ὁδὸς Βερενίκης), while the latter was on the road from Koptos to Myos Hormos (ἡ ὁδὸς Μυὸς Ὀρμου). Ostraca are particularly fascinating because their non-standard linguistic features, often considerably more marked than in contemporary papyri, do not merely reflect their writers’ ‘errors’, but allow us insights into the writing process of those whom we might call *literate with specific competences*: writers who have ‘restricted literacy and can apply their writing skills to specific needs, both professional and personal’.¹ If the observations of the editor, Adam Bülow-Jacobsen, who has edited the private letters of both the Didymoi and Krokodilô ostraca, are correct, then the Philokles of this letter is the ‘pimp and green-grocer’ about whom we know so much about from the *O.Krok.*² Some of the characters from there are not mentioned in *O.Did.*, like Διδύμη (a partner of Κάππαρις), with whom Philokles apparently had a ‘symbiotic relation’, but others, like Σκνύψ (Σπίν) do feature in this collection. In fact, Philokles appears to be having a *ménage à trois* with the latter in both archives with a woman, Ἥγεμονίς, who is quite obviously younger than them (*O.Did.* 386); the ostraca relevant to him in *O.Krok.* belong to the period c. 110–40 CE, while in *O.Did.* he is represented between c. 96–150 CE. Philokles’ network, however, is quite large and complicated,³ and the cast of characters is larger in *O.Krok.* than it is in the Didymoi ostraca.

Although not mentioned in the following selection of texts from this archive, Σκνύψ was one of his principal business partners, and on occasion appears to be sorting out his problems concerning the sex workers; ‘a kind of travelling *madame*’ in the words of the editor. It is understandable, then, that she spent much of her time in the Roman military fort at Didymoi, while Philokles seems to have been at Phoinikion growing and selling vegetables—the other part of his business. In one letter (*O.Did.* 389) he even asks that Σκνύψ be given barley so that she can make some sourdough for him (ll. 7–11 δώσις Σπίν | δραχμὰς πέντε καὶ | κρηθῆς μάτια τρία | {γ} {ε} ἵνα ποίησῃ μοι ζύμην).

We are fortunate that several of these ostraca were physically written by Philokles himself (including this one), his hand being rather distinct and easily identifiable,⁴ and his is a curious orthography, for there are certain interchanges (e.g. *O.Did.* 390.13 φόλετρον for φόρετρον ‘transport expenses’) that point to him being a non-native or L2 speaker of Greek. The editor, though, thinks that he was probably not Egyptian, but more likely a native Greek speaker who had taught himself to write by ear. In other words, he was, according to categories I introduced above⁵,

¹ Y. Amory. *Forthcoming*. ‘More than a Simple Intuition: Towards a Categorization of Paleographical Features in Greek Documentary Papyri’, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin*; in Pettruci’s (‘Storia della scrittura e storia della società’. 2018 [1989]: 111–15) original (Italian) classification they are called *alfabeti dell’uso*.

² A. Bülow-Jacobsen. 2019. ‘The archive of Philokles’, A. Bülow-Jacobsen, J.-L. Fournet, B. Redon (eds), *Ostraca de Krokodilô II: La correspondance privée et les réseaux personnels de Philoklès, Apollôs et Ischyras. Praesidia du désert de Béréenice V: O.Krok. 152–334*, 33–127. Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale.

³ See p. 37 ff. in the above edition for an excellent prosopographical analysis of this circle.

⁴ According to the editor, who also co-led the excavations at Didymoi and Krokodilô, they are so easy to recognise that ‘even [the] Egyptian workers soon learned to identify his hand’ (Bülow-Jacobsen 2012: 297).

⁵ Y. Amory. *Forthcoming*. ‘More than a Simple Intuition: Towards a Categorization of Paleographical Features in Greek Documentary Papyri’, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin*; in Pettruci’s (‘Storia della scrittura e storia della società’. 2018 [1989]: 111–15) original (Italian) classification they are called *alfabeti dell’uso*.

a *complete illiterate*: someone with a very basic education, with ‘the hand of the total novice who does not yet know the letters’⁶—a so-called ‘zero-hand’. In contradistinction to the typical six-vowel system reconstructed for this period (e.g. Horrocks 2010: 167), Philokles appears to have reduced his vocalic inventory to basically three: /i/, /e/, /a/. Interestingly, he seems to have even suppressed both /y/ and /u/, so that /y/ became /i/ and /u/ went to /i/. The editor cites the spelling διέ (e.g. *O. Did.* 376.4) as evidence that even his /a/ was ‘climbing’ toward an /e/ or /i/ sound. Finally, it is worth noting that many ostraca, including some of these, are *opisthographic*, that is, written on the front and back.

n.b. vertical bars within texts indicate line breaks, which correspond to the numbering in the apparatus, e.g. 3 l. ἀμ[φοτέ]ροις refers to ἀμ[φοτέ]ροις, which appears after two vertical bars (third line) below. They may also occur within words, e.g. ll. 4–5 παντὸς below.

(1) Letter of Philokles to Kapparis; O.Krok. II 152=TM 704437; Phoinikion(?) (w); Krokodilō (f); 98–117 CE

convex side

Φιλοκ[λῆς] | Καππάρ[ι καὶ] | Διδύμη ἀμ[φοτέ]ροις | πλῖστα χ(αίρειν) κ[αὶ διὰ] παντὸς
 ὑγιένιν. [ἐρ]ωτῶ | ὑμᾶς καὶ π[α]ρακαλῶ | ἐπέχιν τὰ χοιρίδια καὶ τήν | οἰκίαν· σὲ γὰρ ἔχων
 νομίζω | ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐκὶ· εἰμί. κόμισε κρ<ή>λα καμήλη καὶ δέσμας σὺτλω τέσσερας· δώσις
 τῶ | κοράτορι μίαν, καὶ Κλαυδίῳ μίαν, καὶ Ἀλλομέινῳ μίαν, Μαξίμῳ | μίαν· καὶ πτώματα
 | κόμ[ι]σε. προσδέχου | με ἐν τῆς ἡμέρες | πρὸς σε{ν}. ἀσπάζου Ἀντωνᾶν καὶ Κλαύδιον
 καὶ Ἀλλόμενον

concave side

[. . .] μα | [. . .] οντι συ | ἐν[τέ]λλομ<αι> ἄ | συ ο[ἰδ]ες περὶ τῶν ἐκί. ἂν τις συ βίαν ποιῇ,
 ἔχῃς τὸν κλοράτοραν ἐκί· μελίσι αὐτῶ <ὄ>πως ἰμίδις συ παρά τι ποιήσῃ. ἔπεχε τὰ
 κεράλμα τὰ παρὰ Κερμανόν, μὴ πραθιῶσιν. ἂν εἴρης, κρλάτησον· κα<ι> γὰρ | ἐγὼ εἶπον
 Ὅρτισίῳ περὶ αὐτῶν. ἔρρωσ|{σ}ο{ν}.

3 l. ἀμ[φοτέ]ροις 5 l. ὑγιαίνειν 9 l. κόμισαι 9–10 l. κρέλα 10 l. καμήλεια

10–11 l. σὺτλων 12 l. κοράτορι 17 l. ταῖς ἡμέραις 23 l. σοι 27 l. ποιῇ 28–9 l. μελήσει

30 l. μηδεῖς 32–3 l. Γερμανόν (οἱ Γερμανοῦ) 34 l. αἴρης

⁶ R. Cribiore. 1996. *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 112. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

(2) Letter of Montanus to Kapparis and Didyme; O.Krok. II 189=TM 704474; Persou (w); Krokodilô (f); 98–117 CE

Μοντανὸς Καππάρει | καὶ Διδύμη τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν). | μετέλαβον παρὰ τοῦ ἰππέος ὅτι | θέλει Διδύμη καταβῆναι εἰς | Κόπτον καὶ λέγει ὅτι ἐγδέχεταιί με. λοιπὸν οὖν, θεῶν θελόων/των, ἐὰν τὰ καμήλι<α> ἀναβῆ, | εὐθέως καταβαίνω μεθ' ὧν | ἔχω χαιριδίων· ἐταμιάσεις σ[ὺ] ὑμῶν ὑδάτιν | ἵνα ἔ[χωμ]εῖν ποτίσαι. | ἔπεμψα διὰ ὀνηλάτου κράνβης | δέσμας β καὶ α | συρμαδίων.

in the upper margin, upside-down

κόμισα[ι] διὰ τοῦ φέροντός σοι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν | δέσμη κράνβης

in the left margin, downwards

πήγανον | καὶ γλήχωνα{ν}

on the left edge

ἔρλρ/ωσο. η

9 l. χαιριδίων

9–10 l. ἐτοιμιάσεις

9 l. πήγανον = πιπερίδιον

(3) Letter of Menandros to Gallonia; O.Krok. II 193=TM 704478; Persou (w); Krokodilô (f); 98–117 CE

convex side

Μένανδρος Γαλλωνίαι | τῇ θυγατρὲι χαίρειν. | τὸ προσκύνημά σου, τέκνον, ποιῶ παρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς | θεοῖς. τί με, τέκνον, μέμφ | ὅτι οὐκ ἔγραψά σοι ἐπι[σ]τυλιήν; τίνα
 . ινας; εἶπον ὅτι | “δυσωποῦμαι μηδὲν ἔχων πέμψαι σοι.” γραφῆς γὰρ τοὺς | θεούς. οὐδένα γὰρ ἔχομεν εἰ μὴ σέ{ν}. | εἰ ἥσυχον ἐληλυθ . ν ἂν παρὰ | σέ. νῦν δεῖν οὐκ οἰκαιν οὐδὲ | βλέπειν μητέρα σου. μήτηρ | ἐστὶ Διδύμη καὶ Κάππλις δεύτερος πατήρ. | μὴ οὖν, τέκνον, ἀγωνία ὡς παρὰ | ξένους.

concave side

ἐὰν δύνῃ, τέκνον, | ἐκεῖ εἰμαρτάβιν | σείτου ἀγοράσαι καὶ ἀριτίδια ἡμῖν ποιῆσαι | ἐκεῖ,
καλῶς ποιήσεις, | τέκνον. ἀσπάζου τὸν | κουράτορα πολλά. ἀσπάζου Διδύμην καὶ
Κλάππαριν καὶ Βαρβαρίωνα καὶ Μοῦσαν καὶ πᾶντας τοὺς ἐν τῷ πραισιδίῳ. | ἔρρωσο.
| ἐρεῖς Βαρβαράτι “ ἴς τρίτην σοι πέμφω | τὴν ἀκόνην.”

traces of two lines from the previous text ending with ἔρρωσο.

12 l. οἰκίαν 14 l. ἐστί 20 l. ἡμαρτάβιον 32 l. ἴς = εἰς

**(4) Letter of Tiberia to Pompeius; O.Krok. II 202=TM 704487; Persou (w); Krokodilô (f);
98–117 CE**

Τιβερία Πομπείῳ τῷ | ἀδελφῷ καὶ κυρίῳ | πλείστα χαίρειν. τὸ | προσκύνημά σου πνῶ
παρὰ τῇ κυρίᾳ Ἀθηνᾶ. εὐχολοῦμαι τοὺς θεοὺς πάντες | ποτὲ ἐκείνη ἢ ἔμέρα | γένηται εἶνα
σ<ο>ῦ τὸ | πρόσωπον προσκυνήσω. | σὺ δ' ἐμοῦ ἐπιλέλῃσαι. | ἐγὼ δὲ σοῦ οὐ δύνομαι |
ἐπιλαθέσθε. εἰρηκέ | μοί τις ὅτι μέλλεις | ἀγοράσαι τὸ ἀβρικόν· ἀγόρασον αὐτό. ἔπεμφά
σοι πεντήκοντα καὶ πέντε

in the right margin, upwards

φυνίκια δι<ὰ> Πετρων[ᾶ]\το[s]/ [·]

in top margin

δὸς τῷ πεδίῳ | καὶ Ἑγεμωνί<δι>.

4 l. ποιῶ 6 l. τοῖς θεοῖς πᾶσι 11 l. δύνομαι 12 l. ἐπιλαθέσθαι 19 l. παιδίῳ

(5) Letter of Antoninus to Clemens; O.Krok. II 207=TM 704492; Persou (w); Krokodilô (f); 98–117 CE

Ἄντωνῖνος Κλήμεντ[ι] | τῷ πατρὶ χαίρειν. γειν[ώσ]ικιν σε θέλω [ὅτι] ἔπεσα ἀπ[ὸ] τοῦ ἵππου μο[υ κ]αὶ ἐρ<ρ>άπισμαι | [[. .]] τὴν πλευράν. δι[ὸ] ἐρωτῶ σε, | ἀδελφε, [[αφε]] . ρ αὐτήν | ἐγγύς μου ὡς κο[μ]ψῶς σχῶ. | ἐρωτῶ σε, πάτηρ, μὴ [ὄρ]γίσθης | μοι ὅτι οὐκ ἔπεμψα σοι αὐτήν· | ἠρώτησεν αὐτήν Οὐλτις εἶνα | μείνη ἐγγύς μου τὰς δύο ἡμέρας | ὡς κομψῶς σχῶ, αὐτὴ δὲ πολλὰ | ἔκραζε λέγων ὅτι “ὑπάγω {μου} πρὸς | τὰ παιδιά μου.” μετὰ τῶν ἐρχομένων ὀναρίων πέμψω σοι αὐτήν. | ἀσπάζου τὰ παιδιά. ἔπεμψά σοι | τεμάχια β δια Πάκοιβις | ἐχθές. ἀσπάζεται σε | Νίγερ. ἔρρωσο.

8 l. πάτηρ 11 l. δύο 13 l. λέγουσα

(6) Letter of Antoninus to Secunda; O.Krok. II 208=TM 704493; Persou (w); Krokodilô (f); 98–117 CE

Ἄντωνεῖνος Σεκούνδα· ὡς ἄρτι ἐνόμισόν σε γυναῖκαν εἶναι. | οὐκ εἶ δὲ γυνή· ὅλον τὸ πραισιίδιν ἀννωμην πεποί<η>κες. | ἐγὼ ὅλως οὐκ αἰσχύνομαι | ἐρχόμενος παρά σε, ἀπάρτι δὲ | μέλλω αἰσχυνῆν ἔχειν χάριω | τῆς δελφακίδος. ἐὰν μὴ ἔρθης | ὧδε οὐ δίδει ἡμεῖν αὐτήν. | τὸ λυπὸν οἴσεις τὸ ἡμαρτάβιν | τῶν ἄρτων· μὴ πέμψεις μοι. | ἔγραψα τοῦτο τὸ ὄστρακον ἀγτὶ τοῦ μικροῦ.

1 l. ἔως 2 l. γυναῖκα 3–4 l. πραισιίδιον 4 l. ἀννωμην = ἀγνωμονεῖν 9 l. δίδωσι
10 l. ἡμαρτάβιον

(7) Letter of Panouris to Maximus; O.Krok. Π 214=TM704499; Krokodilô (w); Eastern Desert (f)

convex side

Πά<ν>ουρις Μαξίμω | τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ ἀδελφῷ πλισιτα χαίριν. ἡ μὴ διὰ με ἰς τὸ
πρα<ι>σίδιον οὐδὲ ἐμείσθου τὸ κοράσιον. ἐγὼ δὲ | διακώνηκα τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτῆς ἵνα λάβῃ |
ἐξ στατῆρος. καὶ παρακέχρηται μοι | ὡς μὴ ἀνθρώπων. ἀποφέρω αὐτήν | ὄλη\ν/ ὥραν
πρὸς τὸν κουράτορα καὶ | ἐστὶ καὶ πίνι, ἵνα ἴπῃ Ἀρίστον αὐτῆ | ὅτι “ὑπαγε, μετὰ
Πανούριος κάθειδε.” ἐγὼ τὰ ἐμὰ βία ποιῶ αὐτῆ. | φιλι τὸν Δάκα κα<ι> λέγι Ἀρίστονι
ὅτι “δὸς τῷ Δακὶ καὶ δέξαι χαλκόν.” ἔνεκε τού\το/ | παρακέχρηται μοι.

concave side

Μαξίμω η . . παρέλθη | οί . . . ἔρχομεν . . .

3 l. ἡ μὴ διὰ με ἰς = εἰ μὴ δι' ἐμοῦ εἰς 4 l. ἐμίσθου 5 l. διεκόνησα 6 l. στατῆρες, i.e.
στατῆρας 8 l. ὄλην 10–11 l. ἐστὶ καὶ πίνι = ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει

(8) Letter of Didymos concerning prostitutes; O.Krok. Π 218=TM 704503; Persou (w); Krokodilô (f); 98–117 CE

Δίδυμ[ο]ς . [---] | ἀδελφῷ πλείστα χαί[ρειν.] | γεινώσκ[ει]ν σε θέλω ὅτ[ι πε] | φόνευται
μοῦ τὸ κοράσιον μ[έ] | στον τῆς πορέας ἀπὸ Σαβίνου. | ἤθελον προσελθεῖν τῷ δεκο<ν> | ρίονι
καὶ ἐπὶ νύξ ἦν οὐκ ἀφήκέ | με Δημητροῦς οὐδὲ Μέναν | δρος, μὴ πάλιν ἔλθη καὶ λόγους |
εὐδὸν λέγων ὅτι “ὑβρι<ν> | μοι πεπόηκαν.” γεινώσκουσι γὰρ ὅτι | οὐδεὶς ἡμῶν αὐτὸν
ἠδίκηκεν. ἦλθον ἵνα αὐτῷ λαλήσω καὶ ὑστηρω ἐπὶ τοῦ | σκοπέλω παρακέκρηται | μοι
λέγων “ψολοφάγε.” γείνωσκε δὲ τὸ κοράσιον τὸν πόδα ἐξέκλαικεν δερομένη ὑπ' αὐ | τοῦ
καὶ κατεσχάσται | καὶ ἀργεῖ. οὐ δύναται ἐγερθῆναι ἐκ τοῦ | κραβάττου. ἄσπασαι |
Μάξιμον καὶ Βεζανα | καὶ Φρόντωναν ε . [---] | . . . ον . . . τα α . [---] | [α]υτοῦ | ερρ . [---
-]

5 l. πορέας 10 l. εὐθὴν 10–11 l. πεποηήκασιν 14 l. ὑστερον 16 l. ψωλόφαγε 18–19 l. ἐξέκλαισεν

(9) Letter of Philokles to Aquila; O.Did. 390=TM 144951; Didymoi (f & w)*convex side*

Φιλοκλήης *vac.* Ακυλάτι | τῷ τειμοστάτῳ *vac.* χαίρειν· | οἶδες ὅτι εἴκοσι καὶ δύο | στατήρες
 εἰδίδουσάν | μοι τὸ κατὰ μῆνα τοῦ κορασίου· ἐλθόντος δὲ σοῦ | μάλλον *vac.* ἠθέλησα ὑμῖν
 | παρεσχεῖν ἢ γὰρ ἄλλοις. | οἶδες γὰρ καὶ σὺ αὐτὸς <ὅτι> ἐκπορευομένου τοῦ κορασίου |
 ὁ κονδούκτωρ ἔλαβε ἀπ' αὐτῆς στατήρες τρεῖς | καὶ φόλετρον δραχμ(ὰς) β· | ἀπὸ τῶν
 δέκα πέντε | στατήρων εἰς τὰς χεῖρες μου στατήρες

concave side

ἔνδεκα δίδραχμον ἦϊκαν. λοιπὸν οὖν | οἶδες πῶς μετὰ | ἀλλήλων σύνφωλοι γεγόναμεν
 διὰ γραμμάτων, μηδεμίαν <ν> ἐπήρεάν τις ποιήσῃ τῷ κορασίῳ παρὰ τὴν συνφώνησιν·
 ἀσπάζου | Κάσυλλαν. *vac.* ἔρρωισο.

4 l. εἰδίδοσαν 13 l. φόρετρον 24 l. ἐπήρειάν