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# It's in the Mail: Two Lost and Unpublished Papyri from Roman Egypt

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## Two Unpublished Papyri Formerly at the University of British Columbia

Max Nelson

Nearly seventy years ago, on October 22, 1932, Dr. Otis Johnson Todd of the University of British Columbia, Professor in the department since 1922, and an authority on Aristophanes, wrote a letter to Arthur Edward Romilly Boak of the University of Michigan, which still survives in the Bentley Historical Library at the latter institution.<sup>1</sup> The letter begins:

The two papyrus documents that you so kindly secured for us are to be mounted as in the British Museum between panes of glass, with a brief statement about them and a translation. In view of our lack of material and experience in handling papyri we felt that if it would not be asking too much we should like to get your views as to their condition and date, something as to the circumstances of their purchase, and a criticism of my interpretation. This would have been done long since, when they were fresher in your memory, if I had not been under the impression that Professor Robertson was getting in touch with you about the matter.

Unfortunately these papyri are now nowhere to be found, and no information about their provenance has survived. Boak, a Canadian who was born in Halifax and grew up in Vancouver, where he taught briefly between 1907 and 1910 at the McGill University College, evidently had sent these two papyri to Lemuel Robertson, the head of the Classics department at U.B.C. since 1920, and a former colleague of his at McGill. Since the late 1920s Boak had worked on papyri from Tebtunis in Egypt and we know that in early 1932 he purchased a dozen or so papyri in Egypt from a dealer named M. Nahman. He had been told that these documents came mainly from Upper Egypt, possibly from Akmîm; scholars think rather that they probably all came from Oxyrhynchus. Two of the papyri purchased by Boak, which concerned the sale of a slave, were given to Columbia University, and were soon after published by W. L. Westermann in the 1933 issue of *Aegyptus*.<sup>2</sup> Two other texts

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<sup>1</sup> This correspondence is preserved in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Boak papers, box 3, folder 3. The author's attention was drawn to the collection by Dr. Robert Todd (no relation) of the University of British Columbia (see [www.cnrs.ubc.ca/history/biol.htm](http://www.cnrs.ubc.ca/history/biol.htm) [accessed on September 19, 2005]) and permission to publish these holdings was gratefully obtained by the author from the Bentley Historical Library. For a newly published cup given to O. J. Todd in 1923 by Sir Arthur Evans, see M. J. Griffin. "A Middle Minoan "Egg-Cup" at the University of British Columbia." *Museion* 3.4 (2004) 233-238.

<sup>2</sup> See W. L. Westermann, "Slave Transfer: Deed of Sale with Affidavit of Vendor." *Aegyptus* 13 (1933) 229-237, with an explanation of the provenance at 229.

from the same lot, both invitations to a dinner of Sarapis, which were also given to Columbia University, were published only in 1976 by J. F. Gilliam in a volume honouring H. C. Youtie, an eminent papyrologist at the University of Michigan.<sup>3</sup> It may well be that the two papyri that Boak gave to U.B.C. were from the same lot. Todd in late October of 1932 speaks of them having been given “long since,” which could possibly refer to a date early in 1932. Furthermore, the two papyri from this lot published by Gilliam are invitations of the same type as one of the papyri given to U.B.C. We know this since, not only did Todd include a full description of the papyri along with his own restorations in his letter to Boak, but in the letter of reply dated November 1, 1932, a copy of which also survives in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, J. G. Winter, another papyrologist at Michigan, writing on Boak’s behalf, provided careful transcriptions of both papyri.

Todd describes the first papyrus as having “a soiled appearance extending nearly an inch from the right hand margin. It looks as if the papyrus had been broken or divided and later drawn together, with a loss of about ½ inch in the patching, which has been done so skilfully that it is hard to discern the joint on the recto. The polishing (or whatever it was that served to camouflage the juncture) has rather obscured the letters near the joint, which is about ¾” from the edge on the recto (and about 7/8” on the verso).” Following Winter’s transcription and restorations (which are certain) the text can be printed as follows:

*P.Brit.Col.* 1 (Oxyrhynchus?, 2<sup>nd</sup> C. A.D.):

1 ἔρωτᾷ σε Χαιρήμων δει[π]νήσαι  
 εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σα[ράπ]ιδος  
 αὔριον, ἧτις ἐστὶν ε’ ἐν [τῷ Σαρα]πείῳ  
 ἀπὸ ὠρ(ας) θ’.

Restorations by J. G. Winter. 3: [τῷ Σαρα]πείῳ Winter, [καισ]αρείῳ Todd.

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<sup>3</sup> *P.Coll.Youtie* 1.51 and 52 (see 320 for the provenance).

‘Chairemon invites you to dine at the couch of the lord Sarapis tomorrow, which is the 5<sup>th</sup>, at the Sarapeum, from the 9<sup>th</sup> hour on.’

This type of invitation for a dinner of Sarapis (specifically to the couch of the god) is found in a number of examples, almost all of which come (or are suspected to come) from Oxyrhynchus, and which date to the late first to the third centuries A.D., as seen in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: PAPYRUS INVITATIONS TO SARAPIS DINNERS						
PAPYRUS	PROVENANCE	DATE	HOST	EVENT	PLACE	DAY / HOUR
<i>P. Brit. Col.</i> 1	Oxyrhynchus?	2 C.	Chairemon	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum	N = 5 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> I.110	Oxyrhynchus	2 C.	Chairemon	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum	N = 15 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> XXXI.2592	Oxyrhynchus	1-2 C.	Neilos	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum	10 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> LII.3693	Oxyrhynchus	2 C.	Hermeinos	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum	N = 30 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>PSI XV.</i> 1543*	Oxyrhynchus	2-3 C.	Sarapion	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum	N = 15 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>SB XVIII.</i> 13875	Oxyrhynchus?	2-3 C.	Harpokras	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum	N = 24 <sup>th</sup> /29 <sup>th</sup> ? / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Coll. Youtie</i> I.52	Oxyrhynchus?	2-3 C.	Herais	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum house	N = 11 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> XIV.1755	Oxyrhynchus	2-3 C.	Apion	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum house	13 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> LXII.4339	Oxyrhynchus	2-3 C.	Ammonios	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum house	9 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy</i> LXVI.4540	Oxyrhynchus	3 C. ?	Dionysalaxandros	Sarapis dinner	Sarapeum house	N = 8 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Coll. Youtie</i> I.51	Oxyrhynchus?	2-3 C.	Nicephoros	Sarapis dinner	Birth house	23 <sup>rd</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> XII.1484	Oxyrhynchus	2-3 C.	Apollonios	Sarapis dinner+	Thoëreum	lost / lost
<i>P. Köln</i> I.57**	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Unnamed god†	Dinner (at a couch)	Thoëreum	N = not given / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oslo</i> III.157	? (not indicated)	2 C.	Sarapion	Sarapis dinner	Host's house	N = 15 <sup>th</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> III.523	Oxyrhynchus	2 C.	Antonios	Sarapis dinner	Sarapion's house	16 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>SB XVI.</i> 12511	Narmuthis	2 C.	...on	Sarapis dinner++	Host's house	N = lost / lost
<i>P. Yale</i> I.85	Oxyrhynchus?	2 C.	Dionysios	Sarapis dinner	Father's house	21 <sup>st</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> XXXVI.2791	Oxyrhynchus	2 C.	Diogenes	Daughter's birthday	Sarapeum	N = 16 <sup>th</sup> /26 <sup>th</sup> ? / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Fouad</i> I.76	unknown	2 C.	Sarapous	Isis festival	Host's house	N = 29 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P. Oxy.</i> LXVI.4539	Oxyrhynchus	2-3 C.	Tauris	Isis festival	Iseum	8 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>

\* = SB XII.11049

† Probably Sarapis + For a coming of age

N = next day

\*\* = SB X.10496

++ For a birthday

Five of the surviving Sarapis dinners (at the top of Table 1) follow the format of ours exactly in placing the dinner at the Sarapeum at the ninth hour (a typical time for dinner in the Roman world);<sup>4</sup> another four specifically say that the dinner is to take place in the *oikos* or house of the Sarapeum, evidently a special part of the temple, also at the ninth hour.<sup>5</sup> In another example, the dinner, again at the ninth hour, is to take place “in the birth house” (ἐν τῷ λοχίῳ), perhaps another part of the Sarapeum consisting of a shrine devoted to Isis and Horus, her son by Osiris/Sarapis.<sup>6</sup> Most of these invitations also specify that the dinner is to take place the next day (I have shown this with an “N” in the last column of Table 1), which may show that these are simply reminders for pre-arranged events (note that some surviving invitations are even for the same day [see those marked by “S” in the last column on p. 3]). However, it was not unusual in Roman Imperial times to invite someone for dinner even at the last minute (note, for instance, the case of Trimalchio’s dinner in Petronius).

Further papyri make it clear that these Sarapis dinners were not always put on at the temple of Sarapis but could also take place in other sacred or even secular locations. One example has the dinner taking place at the Thoëreum, the temple of the obscure goddess Thoëris.<sup>7</sup> It has also been

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<sup>4</sup> *P.Oxy.* I.110 (= *W.Chrest.* 99) (from Chairemon, for the 15<sup>th</sup>); XXXI.2592 (from Neilos, for the 10<sup>th</sup>); LII.3693 (from Hermeinos, for the 30<sup>th</sup>); *PSI* XV.1543 (= *SB* XII.11049) (from Sarapion, for the 15<sup>th</sup>); and *SB* XVIII.13875 (from Harpokras, for the 24<sup>th</sup>). In the original publication of the last papyrus (*P.Noviomagensis* inv. in R. P. Salomons and K. A. Worp. “Some Nijmegen Papyri.” *ZPE* 58 [1985] 93-95, at 95) the date is given rather as the 29<sup>th</sup>. For the 9<sup>th</sup> hour as a typical one for dinner, see *Cic., Ad fam.* 9.26.1; *Hor., Ep.* 1.7.71; and *Mart.*, 4.8 (cited at J. P. V. D. Balsdon. *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* [London 1969] 361, n. 105).

<sup>5</sup> *P.Coll.Youtie* I.52 (from Herais, for the 11<sup>th</sup>); *P.Oxy.* XIV.1755 (from Apion, for the 13<sup>th</sup>); LXII.4339 (from Ammonios, for the 9<sup>th</sup>); and LXVI.4540 (from Dionysalexandros, for the 8<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> *P.Coll.Youtie* I.51 (from Nikephoros, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour).

<sup>7</sup> *P.Oxy.* XII.1484 (from Apollonios; the date and time are missing). A similar, though more fragmentary papyrus from Oxyrhynchus is published by T. C. Skeat. “Another Dinner-Invitation from Oxyrhynchus (*P.Lond.Inv.* 3078).” *JEA* 61 (1975) 251-254 (= *SB* XIV.11944).

suggested that another dinner invitation by an unnamed male god to a couch at the Thoëreum at the ninth hour also involves a Sarapis dinner, which seems quite likely.<sup>8</sup> Two further invitations to festivals of Isis (listed at the end of Table 1) have also been closely connected to the Sarapis dinners. Finally, in four other examples, the Sarapis dinner takes place rather at a private residence, in one case at the eighth, rather than the typical ninth hour.<sup>9</sup>

Scholars have often tended to treat these Sarapis dinners as part of public festivals of the god, yet everything points to them rather being private affairs. Not only do individuals send out the invitations, but sometimes they even put on the dinners in private homes. Even more telling, in two instances, the Sarapis dinners are even connected to secular celebrations. In the example of the invitation for the Sarapis dinner at the temple of Thoëris, it is specifically said to be ὑπὲρ μελλοκουρίων, that is, for a coming of age celebration. In another, fragmentary example from Narmuthis, the Sarapis dinner seems to be put on for a birthday celebration. Conversely, in yet another invitation (listed third from last on p. 2), a birthday dinner is to be celebrated at the Sarapeum at the 8<sup>th</sup> hour, with no indication that it is specifically to be a “Sarapis dinner.”<sup>10</sup>

However, scholars, assuming a fundamentally public, religious character to the Sarapis dinners have for the most part also suggested that the dates on which they were to take place were sacred festival days (though the fact that months are never named in the invitations makes this hard to prove, or disprove for that matter). In 1936 Eitrem and Amundsen, editors of *P.Oslo III*, suggested that since the examples of Sarapis dinners (from only four invitations known to them which provided the date) fell on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> (twice), and 16<sup>th</sup> of the month, they might involve a

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<sup>8</sup> *P.Köln I.57* (= *SB X.10496*) (the date is not given).

<sup>9</sup> *P.Mil.Vogl. n. cat. 68.75* published by C. Gallazzi. “Invito a pranzo per la *kline* di Sarapis.” *Quaderni ticinesi di numismatica e antichità classiche* 6 (1977) 233-237 (= *SB XVI.12511*) (an unknown man extends an invitation to his own house; the date and time are missing); *P.Oslo III.157* (Sarapion the ex-gymnasiarch extends an invitation to his own house, on the 15<sup>th</sup>, at the 8<sup>th</sup> hour); *P.Oxy. III.523* (Antonios, son of Ptolemy extends an invitation to the house of Claudius Sarapion, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour); and *P.Yale I.85* (Dionysios extends an invitation to his father’s house, on the 21<sup>st</sup>, at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour).

<sup>10</sup> *P.Oxy. XXXVI.2791* (Diogenes extends the invitation for the 16<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> at the 8<sup>th</sup> hour).

festival of the god which took place in the middle of some month, perhaps the middle of November, the time of the Roman *Isia*. This notion of a close connection of the invitations to calendrical festivals of Isis and her divine entourage (Osiris/Sarapis and Horus) was much expanded upon by Koenen some thirty years later. In 1976, Gilliam added two instances for the 10<sup>th</sup>, one for the 11<sup>th</sup>, and another for the 15<sup>th</sup><sup>11</sup> to bolster the hypothesis of a long mid-month festival, adding also that two more examples for the 21<sup>st</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> pointed to a second festival at which dinners of Sarapis took place. Cockle, editor of *P.Oxy.* LII, suggested that the newest instance of a festival on the 30<sup>th</sup> discredited this hypothesis. However, Shelton and Whitehorne, editors of *P.Oxy.* LXII, showed that there was a *Sarapeia* that fell on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Pharmuthi, and they suggested that the newest instance of a festival on the 9<sup>th</sup> could be the 9<sup>th</sup> of Phamenoth, to be connected to the Roman festival known as the *navigium Isidis*, the official launch of the sailing season on March 5<sup>th</sup> on the Julian calendar. In 1999, Montserrat published another invitation which gave the 8<sup>th</sup> as the date, and admitted the possible secular functions of these events. Finally, another papyrus not cited as part of this debate, and first published in 1985, gives as the date the 24<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> of the month (editions disagree on this point).

Thus we find a range of dates for Sarapis dinners, and, to return finally to our papyrus, this now includes the 5<sup>th</sup> of a month. Since there is no known Isiac festival for the fifth of an Egyptian month<sup>12</sup> this evidence may show that there is no overall pattern to the Sarapis dinner dates,<sup>13</sup> but it remains possible, with our lack of knowledge of ancient religious calendars, that all the dinner invitations fit special days of the year. As of now, however, we may wish to link them more closely to the many undoubtedly secular invitations (particularly for weddings) found on papyrus (as seen on Table 2).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, in *PSI XV.1543* the original date of the 15<sup>th</sup> was changed to the 10<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> R. Merkelbach (*Isisfeste in griechisch-römischer Zeit: Daten und Riten* [Meisenheim am Glan 1963]. 77) lists no Isiac feasts for the fifth of an Egyptian month.

<sup>13</sup> See already the commentary on *P.Yale I.85*, at 262.

<sup>14</sup> Note that there also exist invitations in epistolary form: *BGU I.333* and *II.596*, *P.Apoll. 72*, and *P.Oxy. I.112* and *LII.3694*.

TABLE 2: OTHER PAPYRUS INVITATIONS:

PAPYRUS	PROVENANCE	DATE	HOST	EVENT	PLACE	DAY / HOUR
<i>P.Fay.</i> 132	Euhemeria	3 C.	Isidoros	Daughter's wedding	Titus's house	not given / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Fuad</i> I.7	not indicated	2 C. ?	Agathos	Daughter's wedding	Xystarches's house	16 <sup>th</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Köln</i> VI.280	unknown	2-3 C.	Pasion	Children's weddings	Horus's house	N = lost / lost
<i>P.Oxy.</i> I.111	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Herais	Children's weddings	Host's house	N = 5 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> I.181	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	D...	Daughter's wedding	Locheum	not given / 10 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> III.524	Oxyrhynchus	2 C.	Dionysios	Children's weddings	Ischyriion's house	N = 30 <sup>th</sup> / lost
<i>P.Oxy.</i> IV.747	Oxyrhynchus	2-3 C.	A decadarch	Party ( <i>xenike</i> )	Host's house?	-6 <sup>th</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> VI.926	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Heratheon	Host's <i>epicrisis</i>	Host's house	N = 5 <sup>th</sup> / lost
<i>P.Oxy.</i> VI.927	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Eros	Wedding	Host's house?	N = 29 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> IX.1214	Oxyrhynchus	5 C.	Gennadios*	Son's birthday	Host's house?	16 <sup>th</sup> / 7 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XII.1485	Oxyrhynchus	2-3 C.	An exegetes	Dinner	Demetreum	S = 9 <sup>th</sup> ? / 7 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XII.1486	Oxyrhynchus	3-4 C.	Xenikos / Pelios	Host's wedding	Host's house?	S = 22 <sup>nd</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XII.1487	Oxyrhynchus	4 C.	Theon	Sister's wedding	Host's house?	N = 9 <sup>th</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XII.1579	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Thermouthis	Daughter's wedding	Host's house	N = 18 <sup>th</sup> / lost
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XII.1580	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Theon	Sister's wedding	not given	N = not given / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XVII.2147	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Eudaimon	Son's coronation	Gymnasium	1 <sup>st</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XXXIII.2678	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Dioskoros	Sons' wedding	Sabazeum	14 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XXXVI.2792	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Oreion	Son's <i>epicrisis</i>	Host's house	15 <sup>th</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XLIV.3202	Oxyrhynchus	3-4 C.	A pryтанis	Host's coronation	not given	N = 9 <sup>th</sup> ? / 8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> XLIX.3501	Oxyrhynchus	3-4 C.	Syros	Son's <i>epicrisis</i>	not given or lost	15 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> LXVI.4541	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Sarapion	Son's <i>epicrisis</i>	Capitolium	not given / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> LXVI.4542	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Severus	Festival for daughter+	Host's house	S = 19 <sup>th</sup> ? / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>P.Oxy.</i> LXVI.4543	Oxyrhynchus	3 C.	Ischys	Festival for daughter+	House opposite	17 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>SB</i> V.7745	unknown	2 C.	Ktesidaimon	Daughter's wedding	Host's house	5 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>SB</i> XIV.11652	Soknopaiou Nesos	2-3 C.	Pabous	Wedding	not given	lost / 8 <sup>th</sup>



SB XIV.11944	Oxyrhynchus	2 C.	A...	Coming of age	?’s house	lost / lost
SB XVI.12596	unknown	2 C.	Lollios	Dinner	Hadrianeum	18 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup>

\* To Makarios + A *therapeuteria*

N = next day

S = same day

One last note, about our papyrus. No two invitations so far discovered have been for the same event,<sup>15</sup> but our papyrus is strikingly similar to *P.Oxy. I.110* (listed second on Table 1), as Winter already noted in his letter to Todd. The host in both cases is a Chairemon, and the Sarapis dinner is described in both cases as taking place on the following day at the Sarapeum at the ninth hour. The only difference is the date, the 5<sup>th</sup> in our papyrus and the 15<sup>th</sup> in the other one. Perhaps we can suggest that our papyrus should also read the 15<sup>th</sup>, and that the iota for 10 was missed by Todd and Winter, perhaps because of that obscuring gap in the papyrus described by Todd. Since our papyrus cannot now be located we are not able to examine it carefully or have its handwriting compared to that of the extant *P.Oxy. I.110*, to substantiate this possibility.<sup>16</sup>

The second U.B.C. papyrus, larger but also more fragmentary than the first, is also of a common type, and is also of some minor interest. Todd says in his letter that this papyrus “has strips from ½” to 1” wide pasted on all four sides on the verso.” Similarly, on the recto a number of the words were apparently written on inserted pieces of papyrus. Furthermore, the papyrus “has been cut in two vertically; what appears as a margin at the left is one of the strips pasted on the back.” Todd attempted to restore the lost portions of this papyrus, and Winter complimented him on this

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<sup>15</sup> However an individual named Sarapion is found in three of the invitations; surely this name had cult associations with the god Sarapis.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of these texts, aside from the editions cited above, see, for instance, J. G. Milne. “The Kline of Sarapis.” *JEA* 11 (1925) 6-9; P. Collart. “Réjouissances, divertissements et artistes de province dans l’Egypte romaine.” *Revue de philologie* 18 (1944) 134-152, at 137; H. C. Youtie. “The Kline of Sarapis.” *Harvard Theological Review* 41 (1948) 9-29, esp. 14 (= *Scriptiunculae* [Amsterdam 1973] vol. 1, 487-489, at 492); L. Castiglione. “Zur Frage der Sarapis-Kline.” *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 9 (1961) 287-303; and L. Koenen. “Eine Einladung zur Kline des Sarapis (P.Colon.inv. 2555; s. Taf. II).” *ZPE* 1 (1967) 121-126. A list of these texts was made in M. Totti. *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-Religion* (Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York 1985). 124-127. For invitations in general, see also M. Vandoni. *Feste pubbliche e private nei documenti Greci* (Milan 1964). 124-131 (“inviti a feste”).

endeavour, saying: “your restorations are excellent and give the required sense.” Nevertheless, Winter proceeded to restore the letter quite differently, based on his own much more extensive knowledge of papyri, and the formulaic nature of ancient epistolary texts. Winter had in fact lectured extensively on the letters of Greco-Roman Egypt, and his book on the subject, *Life and Letters in the Papyri*, would come out less than a year after his letter was written to Todd, in October 1933.<sup>17</sup> No mention of our papyrus is found in this work, nor in a short article in the journal *Aegyptus* in 1933, in which Winter published for the first time another similar letter, this one from an almost illiterate daughter to her mother.<sup>18</sup>

As competent a restorer as Winter obviously was, the mass of papyri published since the early 1930s provide us with a much more accurate knowledge of epistolary formulas. I thus present Winter’s text with my own tentative restorations based on papyri unknown to him which involve formulaic addresses to the sender’s mother (it goes without saying that similar formulaic wording is found in letters addressed to other people as well; nevertheless, these examples provide a good representative sample).<sup>19</sup> My own restorations must remain tentative since without the papyrus at hand it is very difficult to know for certain the amount of letters that need to be restored to the left on any one line.

*P. Brit.Col. 2 (Oxyrhynchus?, 2<sup>nd</sup> C. A.D.):*

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<sup>17</sup> J. G. Winter. *Life and Letters in the Papyri* (Ann Arbor 1933). See the letters to mothers cited in this work at 49, 50, 87, 89, 90, and 91.

<sup>18</sup> J. G. Winter. “An illiterate Letter of the Second Century.” *Aegyptus* 13 (1933) 363-366, republished as *SB V.7572*.

<sup>19</sup> Compare, for instance, *BGU III.845.1-6* (2<sup>nd</sup> C. A.D., provenance not indicated): ... τῆ μητρὶ πλεῖστα | πολλὰ χαίριν. | πρὸ μὲν πάντων εὐχομέσαι ὑγιαίνειν καὶ τὸ πρόσκύνη[μ]ά σου ποιῶ | [κα]θ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν παρὰ τῷ κυ[ρ]ίῳ Σαράπιδι ...; *BGU III.846.2-5* (2<sup>nd</sup> C. A.D., Arsinoite): ... | [τ]ῆ μητρὶ πλεῖστα χαίρειν. καὶ διὰ παντῶ[ν] εὐχομαί σε ὑγιαίνειν. τὸ πρόσκύνη[μ]ά σου [ποι]ῶ καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Σαράπιδι. ...; *BGU IV.1043.1* (3<sup>rd</sup> C. A.D., Fayum): ... τ[ῆ] μητρὶ πλεῖστα χαίριν (Nelson, χαίρειν ed. [Zereteli]) ...; *BGU VII.1680.1-2* (3<sup>rd</sup> C. A.D., provenance not indicated): ... τῆ μητρὶ πλεῖστα χαίρειν. τὸ πρόσκύνημά σου ποιῶ καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ [Σ]αράπιδι ...; *P.Col. VIII.215.2-4* (c. A.D. 100, unknown provenance): ... τῆ μητρὶ πλεῖσ[τ]α χα[ί]ρε[ι]ν· | πρὸ μὲν πάντων εὐχόμεθά σε | ὑγένιν ...; *SB I.5282.1-2* (= *Stud.Pal. XX.24.1-2*) (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> C. A.D., unknown provenance): ... τῆ μητρὶ | πλεῖστα χαίρειν. ...; *SB V.7572.1-2* (2<sup>nd</sup> C. A.D., Philadelphia): ... τῆ μητρὶ πλεῖσ[τ]α χέριν κὲ διὰ παντῆς ὑγένιν. ...; and *SB XVI.12556.2* (2<sup>nd</sup> C. A.D., Arsinoite): ... τῆ μ[η]τρὶ πλεῖστα χαίρειν. ...

1 ]...[  
]ορει προς σ[  
].σινβων τῆ μητρὶ πλείστα  
χαίρειν.  
5 πρὸ πάντων? ε]ϋ̄χομ[αι] ὑμᾶς ὑγιαίνειν καὶ διὰ παν-  
τῶν ὑ]γιαίν[οντα]ς, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ μ[ν]είαν ὑμῶν  
ἔχω καθ'ἐκάστην?] ἡμέραν. τί οὖν ἐστὶν ὁ παρα-  
γένεται ὑμῖ]ν περὶ ἐμοῦ; τυχὸν γὰρ ὅτι  
ἐνοχλεῖ με παρ]έκειτο θεῶν θελότων. ἐὰν  
10 δὲ παραγένωμαι] ἐν Τύριδι ταχύτερον ἐλ-  
θω πρὸς ὑμᾶς. σπο]ύδασαι κομιάτω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς  
ἐμέ.] ἄσπασαι Ἄμμω[να  
].[...].-[

Restorations by J. G. Winter except where otherwise indicated. 3: πλείστα Winter, Μειετα Todd. 5: πάντων? Nelson, ὄλων Winter. 5-6: διὰ παν|[τῶν] Nelson, διὰ παν|[τός] Todd, Winter. 7: καθ'ἐκάστην? Nelson, νύκτα καὶ Winter, ἀνὰ πᾶσαν νύκτα καὶ Todd. 11: κομιάτω (= *commeato*) Nelson, Κομιάτω Winter, Καμιατω Todd.

‘... to mother, many greetings. Before everything, I pray that you [plur.] are well and healthy throughout everything, and I myself have a memory of you [plur.] each day. What [news] then is there which arrives to you [plur.] concerning me? Perhaps that it annoys me that it was close at hand [?], gods willing. If I arrive in Tyris more quickly I will come to you [plur.]. Make haste [sing.] to come to me on a trip ... Give [sing.] my regards to Ammon[?] ...’

The name of the sender, usually found at the beginning of the letter has been lost, and thus it may be a man or woman, though Todd assumed that it was “a young man away from home answering a letter of affection and expostulation from his mother, and trying to quiet the family’s apprehensions about his prolonged absence by intimating that a little extension might permit him to do a stroke of business for the family exchequer.” Some of this is certainly imaginative restoration. The letter contains very typical salutations, evidently to the whole family (note the plurals), the

promise to come visit, and the corresponding invitation for the mother to come visit. The importance of our letter lies in the fact that a new town, apparently in Roman Egypt, is named. In line 10 we learn that the mother addressed in the letter lives ἐν Τύριδι. Todd suggested that Τύρις was a variant of Τύρας, a Greek city on the north coast of the Black Sea. Winter, however, more plausibly suggested that it was the name of an Egyptian village. Judging from A. Calderini's dictionary of geographical and topographical names of Greco-Roman Egypt, no town of Tyris has otherwise been attested there.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See A. Calderini. *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell' Egitto greco-romano*, 1972- [including supplements].