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ROGER S. BAGNALL – GAËLLE TALLET

OSTRAKA FROM HIBIS IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART  
AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CITY OF HIBIS

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## OSTRAKA FROM HIBIS IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CITY OF HIBIS<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

I (Roger Bagnall) first saw the ostraka published here in 1990, before I was interested in the oases, when I visited the Metropolitan Museum in company with Ursula Kaplony-Heckel, who was, as always, in search of Demotic ostraka. A decade later, she published an article in *Enchoria* 26 (2000)<sup>2</sup> on the 28 Demotic ostraka that she saw, with at the end a brief summary of the Greek ostraka, provided by me. By then I had forgotten entirely about these ostraka, which I did not have time to transcribe in 1990 and of which I did not have photographs, and they came back to my attention only recently, when a couple of my graduate students took an interest in the material from these excavations that had just been put online by the Museum in recent years, as well as the small exhibition about Kharga the Museum had mounted, and pointed out that there were photos online of some ostraka. At the same time, the team working at El-Deir, the major fortress of the Kharga oasis, under the direction of Gaëlle Tallet, has been starting to study the Metropolitan's finds from its excavations in the Kharga Oasis as part of the contextualization of their own work.

By the time these developments brought the ostraka back to my attention, of course, I had begun an excavation project in the Dakhla Oasis, the other part of the ancient Oasis Magna, and any written material from the oasis was of great interest to me.<sup>3</sup> In the intervening years also, many more ostraka from the oases had become available in published form, with the appearance of more fascicles of the ostraka found in the IFAO excavations at the site of Douch, in the south of the Kharga Oasis, and the papyri, ostraka, and wooden tablets from Kellis, in the Dakhla Oasis, as well as the ostraka from our own excavations at Amheida, ancient Trimithis. The rediscovery of the Metropolitan Museum's ostraka therefore has offered an opportunity to look at this little group of Greek ostraka from Hibis and ask what we can make of it, given the enormous growth in our knowledge of the oases, from both texts and archaeology, since the early twentieth century, and at the same time to try to see how much can still be reconstructed, even if hypothetically, of the archaeological contexts of the Hibis ostraka.<sup>4</sup>

### Hibis under the palm groves

Apart from the magnificent temple of Amun-Re at Hibis, excavated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition under the supervision of H. E. Winlock,<sup>5</sup> the ancient capital city of the Kharga oasis is rather poorly known from archaeology.<sup>6</sup> We know that private houses encroached on the *τέμενος* during Late Antiquity, probably from the fourth century onwards and perhaps even earlier, and that a church was then built against the north side of the portico.<sup>7</sup> Though quickly excavated and covering only a very limited area, these reuses of the temple area are described by Winlock as being made up of very poor and small

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<sup>1</sup> Apart from the introductory remarks, which are by Roger Bagnall, the majority of the introduction to Hibis and its archaeology is by Gaëlle Tallet and the section on the texts by Bagnall. But we have both contributed to both parts. We are indebted to Rodney Ast for a number of valuable suggestions in both parts.

<sup>2</sup> Kaplony-Heckel 2000.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.amheida.org](http://www.amheida.org) for a bibliography on the excavations at Amheida, links to most of the publications, and field reports. The excavation database is available at [www.amheida.com](http://www.amheida.com).

<sup>4</sup> Collaboration over the past several years between the Amheida and El-Deir projects has been made possible by a grant from the Partner University Fund, which we acknowledge with gratitude here.

<sup>5</sup> Winlock 1941; Cruz-Uribe 1986; Cruz-Uribe 1987. See also Bonnet 1952.

<sup>6</sup> We intend to discuss the administrative history of Hibis within the larger framework of the Great Oasis as a whole in a separate paper.

<sup>7</sup> Winlock 1941, 48.

houses, extending over a wide area south and west of the temple.<sup>8</sup> He assumes that this building activity occurred ca. AD 325–350.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, another important site of the area of Hibis documents this later period of occupation: the nearby Christian cemetery at Bagawat displays tombs and chapels dating, at least in some cases, to the reign of Constantine (controlled Egypt 324–337)<sup>10</sup> and clearly attesting the presence of a wealthy Christian community as early as the first third of the fourth century.

Due to the lack of archaeological investigation in areas now under cultivation and palm groves, the chronology and the topography of the city of Hibis apart from the temple area are far from certain, and their connection with the chronology of the temple itself still has to be studied. We know little about the beginnings of the city, before the building of the sanctuary, and hardly more about its history after the fourth century. Despite the anecdote about marauding Mazikes in a passage of John Moschus' *Pratum Spirituale* (PG 87C, 2976–2978), referring to an incident during the reign of Tiberius II (Augustus 578–582), we have little evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries. A Coptic graffito from nearby Gebel Teir bears the inscription “In the year of Diocletian 500(+), I Severus the son of the Pagarch of Hibis ...” Thus, the city still existed between AD 784 and 883.<sup>11</sup> G. Wagner even mentions a Coptic graffito from Bagawat dating to AD 1013, left by one Klatios of Hib while visiting the necropolis.<sup>12</sup>

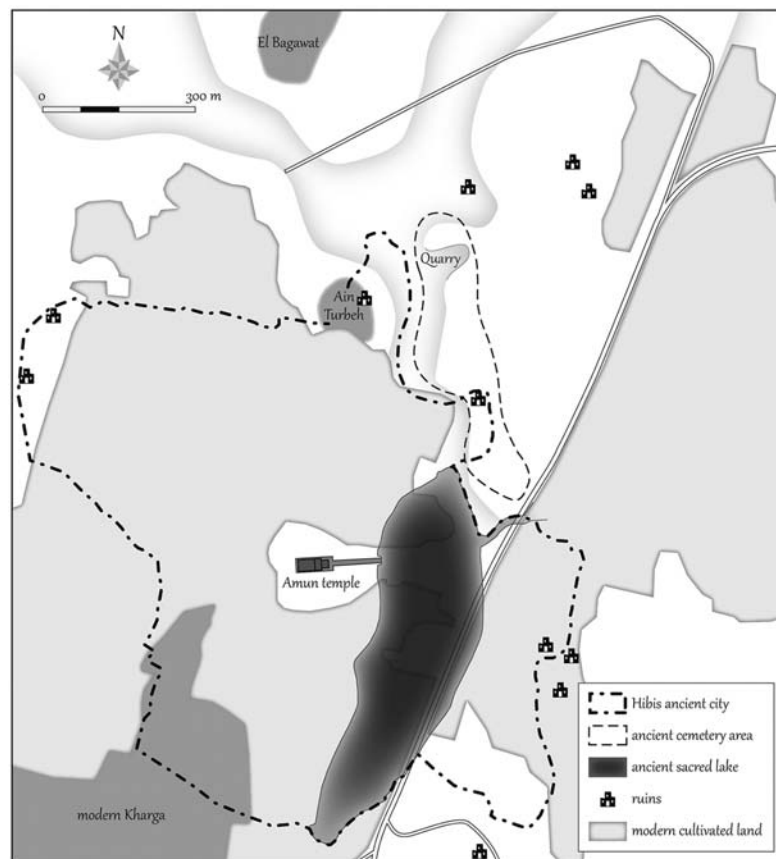


Fig. 1. Map of Hibis (Hervé Tronchère, after H. Winlock)

<sup>8</sup> Winlock 1941, 44, pl. XLIX.

<sup>9</sup> Materials from the Ptolemaic circuit wall were reused for their construction, and their plan is very similar to that of Byzantine houses in Medinet Habu: Winlock 1941, 44–45.

<sup>10</sup> Fakhry 1951.

<sup>11</sup> Winlock 1941, 49. See also the Greek graffiti of Theodoros son of Phokas, mentioning the “polis of Hibis” (Fakhry 1951, pl. XXXVIA, graffiti no. 21), and of Kyros mentioning only Hibis (graffiti nos. 3 and 7), in Bagawat, during the seventh–eighth centuries: Wagner 1987, 155.

<sup>12</sup> See Wagner 1987, 156 for further references.

The excavations conducted by Winlock in the temple and the survey of the neighboring area revealed that it was surrounded on the north, west, and south by a variety of structures, most of which were never excavated. As Winlock puts it, “the site covered by Hibis at its greatest development is today largely under cultivation, but wherever the ground is plowed fragments of pottery are turned up, and on the edges of the site where the cultivation has not extended there still exist ruins of sun-dried brick buildings”.<sup>13</sup> The city of Hibis lay south of the hills of Gebel Teir, in a large plain, broken only by the hill of Nadura, roughly 1 km towards the southeast. This hill, reaching an elevation of about 75 meters above the bottom of the depression, provided a very wide panorama of the north of Kharga, to which the Arabic name of Nadura (“the lookout”) testifies.<sup>14</sup> It affords clear views of Hibis, Bagawat, and the desert roads leading to the Nile Valley, and, according to David Klotz, “on a clear day, one can see the Abu Sighawal and Refuf passes to the north, Gebel Ghennima to the east, the Bulaq pass to the south, and the entire town of Kharga (ancient Hibis) to the West”.<sup>15</sup> The geomorphology of the place clearly points to the presence of a hollow, located between the western part of the town, where the temple was built, and the eastern part, located at the bottom of Nadura hill. It has always been a natural catch basin for excess water from near-by wells, and Winlock forcefully hypothesizes the existence of a lake 750 meters long and 225 meters wide, with a depth of more than 3 meters in its middle.<sup>16</sup> Its peak capacity was probably reached at the end of the Ptolemaic period or at the beginning of the Roman period.

Whereas almost nothing has been excavated of the earlier stages of the town, some remains of the Roman period were identified: “The northernmost part of the town proper was built on the mound of earth which was raised in the drilling of the ancient well Ain et Turbeh. This mound had at one time been occupied by a part of the city cemetery; but in the third century AD dwelling houses had encroached upon and had been built over the subterranean tombs, and throughout the following century well-constructed, vaulted brick houses covered at least the whole eastern side of the elevation.”<sup>17</sup> The Metropolitan Museum excavated this part of the town site during the years 1908–1909, but these excavations, conducted in a very limited area and during a short span of time, have never been published.

The Expedition members also noted that “the westernmost part of the town is marked by large mounds of rubbish and potsherds. Beyond the city limits to the west, south and east, there is bare desert which was never built upon. The town site so bounded is roughly 1,000 meters from north to south and 1,200 meters at its widest from east to west. On the southern and eastern edges of the city were the pre-Christian, pagan cemeteries. From the extreme northwest to Ain Turba, graves were chiefly subterranean, with but few stone structures built above ground. Just east of Ain Turba, tombs were cut into the low sandstone hillocks facing the town.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the Museum also worked during these years at the late antique cemetery of Bagawat: “To the north of the town, on the southern tip of the last of the foothills of Gebel Teir, was the Christian cemetery, today called el-Bakawat, with its domed and vaulted brick tombs chapels of the fourth and fifth century.”<sup>19</sup>

#### The excavations at Ain Turba

Unfortunately, we found no notebooks from Herbert Winlock dating to 1907 and 1908, or any other notebooks covering the excavations of those years in the archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>20</sup> Yet in one of the earliest brief reports on the excavations in the Kharga Oasis, published in the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* in 1908, there is a description of the excavations at Bagawat in 1907, including elements on Ain Turba:

<sup>13</sup> *BMMA* 3 (1908) 208; 4 (1909) 121.

<sup>14</sup> Winlock 1941, 1. It may be the translation of the ancient name of the place.

<sup>15</sup> Klotz 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Winlock 1941, 2. A similar configuration was observed at el-Deir by Prof. Jean-Paul Bravard and Dr. Ashraf Mostafa: Bravard et al., forthcoming.

<sup>17</sup> *BMMA* 3 (1908) 208; 4 (1909) 121. For the dating, based on the identification of coins, see also Winlock 1941, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Winlock 1941, 2–3.

<sup>19</sup> Winlock 1941, 3 and 48.

<sup>20</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Helen Evans for her kind authorization to work in the Winlock archives at the MMA in June 2013, and providing me with a complete list of the objects from Winlock’s excavations in the Museum.

“Excavation was also begun on a mound a few hundred meters south of the cemetery, known as Ain el-Turba. This was done with a view to determining the character of such mounds, of which there are many in the oasis. As seemed probable, they proved to contain the remains of houses, with walls of mud brick. The houses consist of a series of rooms, with no apparent regularity of arrangement, roofed with barrel vaults of mud brick, the walls covered with white plaster and in many cases ornamented with frescoes. The walls of the ground floor were preserved generally to a height of about two meters, and stairways which occurred showed that originally there was often a second story. Below the second floor were sometimes subterranean rooms, roofed likewise with barrel vaults. The excavation of these houses yielded much interesting material – pottery of many types, decorated and undecorated; ostraka and wooden tablets inscribed in Greek; blue-glazed and glass beads and other small ornaments; coins, and various types of glassware ... The coins ranged in date from Constantine the Great to Arcadius, and therefore these particular constructions may be assigned in general to the fourth century A.D.”<sup>21</sup>

Additional work was done in 1908 at the same site and briefly described;<sup>22</sup> a letter of Albert M. Lythgoe, the first curator of Egyptian art at the Metropolitan Museum, then staying in Kharga, to Edward Robinson, the assistant director, dated 20 April 1908, kept in the Museum archives, suggests that ostraka, coins, ivory, leatherwork, and luxury glassware were found in this season also at Ain Turba: “A large ruin just south of the necropolis which is proving to have vaulted chambers with frescoe walls” yielded coins dating back from Constantine to Arcadius and Marcianus (thus ca. 325–450) as well as “ostraka, pottery (many of the forms decorated), ornamental ivory and leather work and beautiful types of glassware – one type of the latter previously unknown to me, an opaque green or blue body with a flower ornament in other colors fused into the body”.<sup>23</sup> One year later, on 18 March 1909, Lythgoe writes again to Edward Robinson and explains that the Mission has started the campaign with “the early Christian cemetery” (Bagawat) and its decorated tomb chapels, “and then we went on to Ain Turba where we are working with a force of 150 men clearing houses of the period of Constantine the Great”.<sup>24</sup> Among the ca. 500 pictures taken during these years, some clearly represent the site of Ain Turba (fig. 2).



Fig. 2. The excavations of the Metropolitan Museum Expedition at Ain Turba (courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

<sup>21</sup> *BMMA* 3.1 (1908) 203–208, at 208.

<sup>22</sup> *BMMA* 4 (1909) 122.

<sup>23</sup> The letter can be found in Box 1, f. 1. The millefiori can be reasonably identified as MMA Inv. 25.10.20.96.

<sup>24</sup> Box 1, f. 1.

A sketch plan was drawn by Winlock and his team in March 1909,<sup>25</sup> and Dr. Marsha Hill had the “Middle-East group of houses at Ain Turba” redrawn by Felix Arnold in 1989 (fig. 3), relying on Winlock’s sketch plan of the Lower East group of houses (incomplete) and on pictures taken by the Expedition.

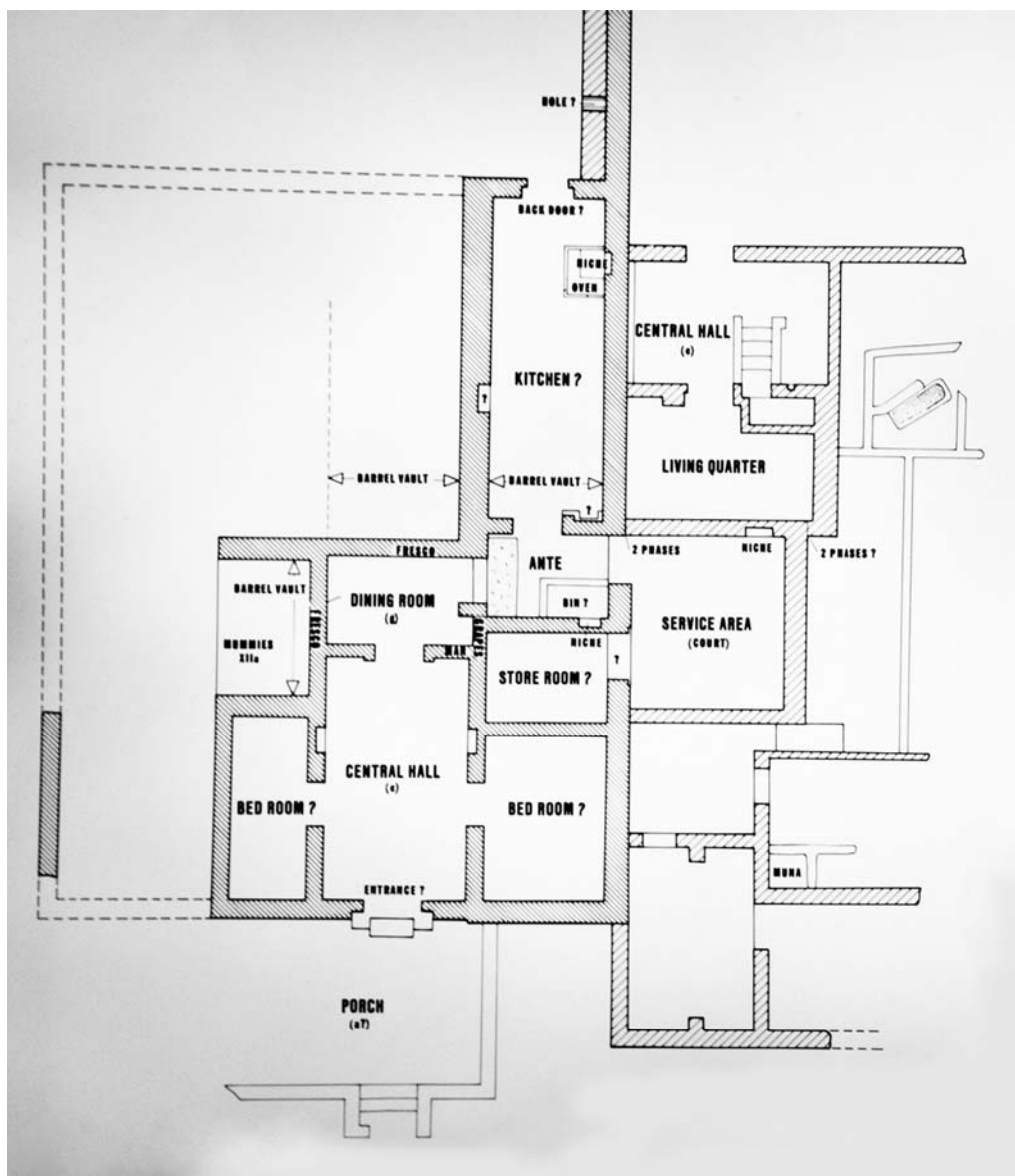


Fig. 3. The middle-east group of houses at Ain Turba  
(drawn by Felix Arnold after Winlock, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

As pointed out by Winlock, the houses at Ain Turba were very well built, in sharp contrast with the later area south of the *τέμενος*.<sup>26</sup> They were probably more than one story high, with excellently built mudbrick walls, covered with a fine plaster, and with vaulted ceilings; some had wall-paintings in tempera.<sup>27</sup> They reflect a far wealthier community than the later southwestern area near the temple. Similar architecture is documented at Kellis, in the Dakhla Oasis, especially in the residential Area A, dating to the late third-fourth centuries, with one-story and two-story houses. Of the latter type, House 4 and its neighbors seemingly housed several families at the same time.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Box 1, f. 13, “Roman Houses side plan March 1909”.

<sup>26</sup> Winlock 1941, 48.

<sup>27</sup> Winlock 1941, 33–35, pls. XIII et XXXVIII.

<sup>28</sup> Bagnall 1997, 11; Knudstad and Frey 1999.



This archaeological context makes it possible to say something in response to the question initially posed about the source of the ostraka. It is very likely that these Greek (and two Coptic) ostraka were found at Ain Turba in 1907, or possibly 1908, during the excavations described, though there is no hope of recovering the precise find-places of the ostraka. They bear no numbers assigned by the excavators to which any of the older records could have referred. But the files show that the ostraka came to New York only in 1925, after the demolition of the Museum's excavation house at Bagawat, having been kept there to assist in the work of dating what had been excavated. Part of them were unpacked a half-century later in New York and given accession numbers referring to their 1925 arrival date. Others were apparently unpacked later, for reasons and at a time not now determinable, and given accession numbers beginning in X to represent ignorance – why such ignorance when the other group had been accessioned as 1925 acquisitions, no one seems to know.<sup>29</sup> The situation was already somewhat obscure in 1925, as it appears in a letter from Hauser to Winlock, dated 8 August 1925 (after Evelyn-White's death in 1924), which states, “[Evelyn-]White had a large collection of ostraka Greek and Coptic, a hundred or more, which his father thought ought to go to the Metropolitan Museum. In fact he wasn't sure that they didn't belong to it, perhaps from Khargeh and Epiphanius.<sup>30</sup> He sent them to Crum for examination and wrote to the Museum offering to ship them – to whom I don't know any more than I know whether such things would be wanted.”<sup>31</sup> Crum apparently sent them, eventually, to the Bodleian Library. The two groups, however, are not in any meaningful way to be distinguished from one another, nor do they represent any distinction in the original excavation process. They both included Hieratic and Demotic ostraka as well as Greek and Coptic.<sup>32</sup> Archaeologically, it is very likely that these earlier texts in the Egyptian scripts come from the temple compound, although in the absence of a proper report it is impossible at present to say if the town site or Bagawat had occupation as early as the Persian period, or even the Ptolemaic period, although it is hard to believe that they did not. There is no direct mention of the Demotic ostraka in the Museum's archives concerning work in Kharga.

Still, it seems possible to make two arguments that are not completely trivial. First, it is likely that the Greek ostraka came entirely or almost entirely from the town site, not from Bagawat. In his volume on the oases, Guy Wagner published inscriptions, graffiti, and funerary stelai from Bagawat, but no ostraka. One may say that he was not able to excavate there, but Wagner was able to unearth a remarkable amount of material from everywhere he went, even without excavations, and he did not have any ostraka from Bagawat. More generally, none of the Kellis ostraka published by Klaas Worp came from the vast cemeteries of that village; those from el-Deir all are from the temple area and other habitation zones. Nor does anything in our ostraka appear to concern the preparation of bodies or the burial of the dead, nor for that matter the feasts celebrated in cemeteries. There is no mention of ostraka found at Bagawat anywhere in the reports published in the *Bulletin*.

Despite the lack of excavation notebooks, moreover, the passages quoted above from the brief excavation reports show that ostraka were in fact found in the houses. And the letter of Lythgoe to Edward

<sup>29</sup> In a letter to Lythgoe, 23 February 1910, Winlock asks if he should take the material from Ain Turba and Bagawat to the Museum, and therefore ask the authorization from Maspero (Box 1, f. 2). In a letter dating April 20, 1910, Winlock states that he is now sending a column to Cairo and then by boat; in a separate parcel, a box of small bronzes, a fragment from a capital belonging to the Christian church built within the temenos of the temple, and 60–70 Coptic pieces that will complete the embroideries that are already in the Museum. Then, there was no mission until 1925. A letter from Winlock to Lythgoe, dating 15 March 1925, describes the situation when the Mission returned to Kharga: some objects without museographical interest were stolen, either by the Egyptian staff of the mission, or by soldiers who were housed in the dighouse during the war (Box 1, f. 2). The dighouse at Bagawat was soon destroyed, as mentioned in a letter from Winlock to the Service of Antiquities, dated March 19, 1925. He then mentions an Antiquities resthouse at Nadura.

<sup>30</sup> Both sites were excavated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Winlock worked at the monastery of Epiphanius, in Sheikh Abdel Gurna, during the years 1911–1914. The ostraka found there were edited by W. E. Crum and H. G. Evelyn-White in *P. Mon. Epiph.*, which appeared in 1926, after Evelyn-White's death. In this volume a current location and inventory number in either Cairo or the Metropolitan Museum is given. It is unclear if any of these could be the ostraka mentioned by Hauser in 1925, when the volume was already in press.

<sup>31</sup> Box 1, f. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, files of objects excavated at Ain Turba circa 1908–1910 do not deal with ostraka. Box 1, f. 15.

Robinson already quoted, dated 20 April 1908, suggests that ostraka were found in this season also at Ain Turba, although the letter is not specific about exactly when the ostraka were excavated. It is thus possible that these are the same ones mentioned in the published report. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the ostraka we are dealing with came mainly or entirely from Ain Turba, and of course particularly the wooden tablet points to this conclusion. One wonders only about the plural “tablets” in the passage quoted.

Given this information, it seems justifiable to treat the ostraka as evidence for the community that inhabited these houses. Although it would exceed the scope of the present article to synthesize our knowledge about late antique society in the Kharga Oasis, we may point to a few key points that emerge from the ostraka.

The ostraka of Ain Turba clearly document a Christian community at Hibis. Ostrakon **7** is an order to supply oil delivered to a “presbyteros of Ptetou” πρ(εσ)β(υτέρω) Πτετου, an otherwise unattested locality. This priest is referred to as an ἀδελφός (colleague) of one Hatres and connected to one Faustianus, potentially the same person as the landlord mentioned in the Kellis Account Book and in ostraka from Trimithis: it should mean that a πρεσβύτερος could be part of the staff of one of the estates of Faustianus, maybe located in Ptetou. If Faustianus is to be identified with the landlord mentioned in the KAB, it should be remembered that the account book bears the distinctively Christian letters ΧΜΓ at its beginning.<sup>33</sup> Another hint of the presence of Christian people at Ain Turba or its vicinity is **6**, an account of bricks, with one Ἰάκωβος furnishing bricks (see below for uncertainties about the reading): this kind of biblical name may be taken as evidence of Christianity.<sup>34</sup> Two letters in Coptic were also found among the ostraka, **18** and **19**. The first one was written by someone who knew Greek well.

The material excavated at Ain Turba displays very sophisticated glassware, including *millefiori*, and fine ceramic wares. Together with the wall paintings, it points to wealthy hellenized inhabitants. The similarities to the house of Serenos at Amheida go further, as evidence of Greek instruction and education can be noted among the ostraka from Hibis. The wooden opisthograph tablet **1** displays on the first side phrases referring to the *Iliad*, with a mention of Phoinix, the tutor of Achilles, and Pandaros, a Trojan archer killed by Diomedes. The other side, written in a skilled hand, belongs to the teaching of grammar, or perhaps even rhetoric, with a classification of words according to their grammatical function and nature. Several types are mentioned and examples given. Another example is the ostrakon **14**, an alphabet written by a practiced hand, probably that of a teacher. These documents point to a quite sophisticated teaching in grammar, involving a theoretical reflection on language, and certainly evoke the classroom discovered adjoining the house of Serenos at Amheida.<sup>35</sup> As in Kellis and Amheida, the site of Ain Turba attests a high degree of Hellenism among an elite of rich owners of villas, at the end of the third and beginning of the fourth century.

Another point of interest is the presence of the military and its connection with the world of property. In **2**, the author, one Phibion, a decurion, mentions his “master Domitios the tribune from my camp (?)”, κάστρον, no doubt in a military sense,<sup>36</sup> and asks one Heraklas Ambrosios, an ἐπιμελητής σιτοκρίθου, to supply wheat and barley (*sitokrithon*) to this Domitios. Indeed this is reminiscent of several attestations of ἐπιμεληταί “of the camp of Hibis” among the ostraka from Douch:<sup>37</sup> it is very likely that these ἐπιμεληταί were bouleutai (πολιτευόμενοι) of the city of Hibis and were in charge of the levy in kind for the military *annona*.<sup>38</sup> In the ostraka from Douch, when they concern the “epimeletai of the camp of Hibis”, the orders are given from a λειτουργός to another λειτουργός, but other orders to supply commodities may be sent from a military officer to a civilian, as is the case here. It is very likely here that Hibis is the place these

<sup>33</sup> See Bagnall 1997, 83.

<sup>34</sup> On biblical names as onomastic evidence of Christianity: Bagnall 1982, 110–111.

<sup>35</sup> Bagnall et al. 2006; Cribiore et al. 2008.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of the term, see Bagnall 2001, 7–8.

<sup>37</sup> *O.Douch* 218, 220, 362, 397, 565. Another attestation of an ἐπιμελητής of a camp outside the Great Oasis: *P.Prag.* I 33.2 (AD 392).

<sup>38</sup> Lewis 1997, 25.

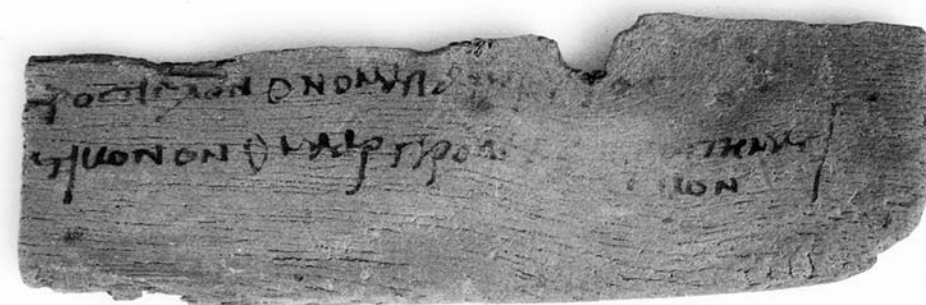
requisitions were destined for.<sup>39</sup> The measure used may differ from one ostrakon to another: *O.Douch* 218 mentions the measure of the owner (γεουχικὸν μέτρον), while in *O.Douch* 220 and *O.Douch* 565 we find, as in **2**, the measure is the *modius italicus*. Another measure appears in **5**, an order to supply barley given by one Hadokles, son of Claudius, to one Ambrosios Heraklammon: the *modius castrensis*.<sup>40</sup> It is not well attested in Egypt, and the only other example from the oasis is *O.Douch* 1.13.7.<sup>41</sup> Another measure is attested in **4**, an order to supply wheat given by Hadokles, son of Claudius, to Heraklammon (son of?) Heraklammon: the public measure.

A mention of a detachment of troops is found in **3**, with the word Ἑρμωνθ(ῖται), Hermonthites, almost certainly soldiers from Hermonthis, *Hermonthitai*. They are attested in many parts of the Kharga Oasis as well as in Dakhla. In Bagawat, a tomb of a soldier from the Hermonthites has been identified,<sup>42</sup> and also one finds one Abraam, “Hermonthite soldier of the oasis” at Douch.<sup>43</sup> Some of them left graffiti on the walls of the καθεστήριον of the church at Chams el-Din.<sup>44</sup> After Van Berchem,<sup>45</sup> Guy Wagner suggested that the Hermonthites were soldiers of the Legio II Valentiniana stationed in Hermonthis.<sup>46</sup> The articulation of the title *praepositus* in line 2 with the Hermonthites is not entirely clear, but probably he is in fact their commander; detachments of cavalymen from the Legio II Traiana are attested in AD 302, when they are detached to Tentyra under the commandment of the *praepositus* Macrobios.<sup>47</sup>

#### Ostraka from Hibis

##### 1. MMA X.608.1. Wooden tablet

Wooden tablet from lower right corner (as looked at from Side 1) of original piece; surviving tablet is 7.8 × 2.4 cm, broken at top and left. Side 2 is written with the tablet inverted vertically.



Side 1

-----  
 ] πρὸς τι ἔχον ὄνομα παγάρετος  
 [-? ὄνομ]ατικὸν ὄνομα ἀργυρόπεζα ἐρωτηματι-  
 κόν

<sup>39</sup> See also the mention of the “*epistalma* of Hibis”, most probably requisitions for Hibis, in *O.Douch* 163.

<sup>40</sup> Duncan-Jones 1976; Rathbone 1983.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the edition below.

<sup>42</sup> Inscr. Bagawat, no. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Inscr. Douch VI, 2. See also one anonymous Hermonthite in *O.Douch* 209, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Graff. Chams el Din, nos. 40 and 49, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Van Berchem 1952, 62–63.

<sup>46</sup> Wagner 1987, 34, 379–381.

<sup>47</sup> *P. Grenf.* 2.74; see Wagner 1987, 378.



## Side 2

] Φοῖνιξ ἐν τῷ μονομαχίῳ  
 ]ας  
 ] Πάνδαρος

-----

“] Phoinix. In single combat ... Pandaros”

Side 2, 1 A horizontal stroke projects from the lacuna, perhaps the top of a sigma.

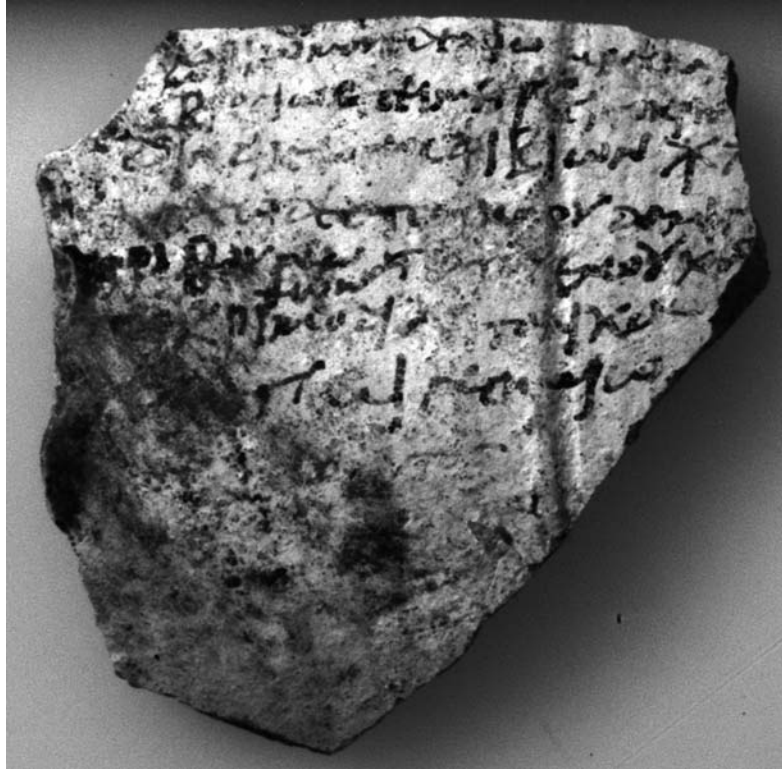
It seems most likely that Phoinix is the tutor of Achilles who serves as envoy to him in book 9 of the *Iliad*. There is a space between the name and the following phrase, “in single combat”, and because of the damage at the left, it is impossible to say if there is any connection. Pandaros was a Trojan archer, killed by Diomedes after having wounded the Greek hero. As far as I can determine, his name never appears in Graeco-Roman Egypt as a personal name, nor is he a prominent figure in Homer. I cannot find any passage in which either Phoinix or Pandaros is linked to single combat, although obviously Pandaros engaged in combat with Diomedes and, in book 4, with Menelaos. Single combat is in any case a curious way of describing what an archer does.

The other side belongs to the world of grammar, in the classification of words. Several types are mentioned and examples given; unfortunately the damage at left prevents a complete appreciation of what was being taught. The hand, it should be noted, is skilled and fluent. An ἐρωτηματικόν word is an interrogative – words like who, what, what sort, how much, and so on. No such word appears here, so it may be that it appeared in the next line at the left side in the now lost portion. The word ἀργυρόπεζα, “silver-footed”, is an epithet used of Thetis, but “the silver-footed one” is a noun, so perhaps [ὀνομ]ατικὸν ὄνομα, “nominal word”, which sounds at first rather pleonastic, is appropriate here. πρὸς τι ἔχον, literally “being with respect to something”, is a term for relational nouns, i.e., nouns that have meaning only in terms of the relationship of something to something else, like “brother” or “friend”, as Dionysius Thrax explains (*Ars Grammatica* 1.1, p. 35): πρὸς τι ἔχον δέ ἐστιν ὡς πατήρ υἱός φίλος δεξιός. It is far from evident how πανάρετος, “all-virtuous”, can belong to this category. What follows may be more promising, as Eleanor Dickey, to whom I am grateful for guidance on this term, has suggested: ὡς πρὸς τι ἔχον δέ ἐστιν ὡς νύξ ἡμέρα θάνατος ζωή. That is, ὡς before the phrase makes it “quasi-relational”, such as pairs of opposites, like night and day, death and life. What is more curious is that πανάρετος is not a very common word (other than as a proper name) in pre-Christian literature. It is impossible to suggest with any confidence what its opposite might be here.

## 2. MMA X.608.2. Order for payment of σιτόκριθον

6.9 × 7.2 cm; written on the convex side.

A fairly close parallel to this text may be found as *O.Douch* 5.565, an order for payment of *sitokrithon* from an *epimeletes* with a somewhat different sequence in the formula.



κυρίῳ μου ἀδελφῷ Ἡρακλᾶτ[ι]  
 Ἀμβροσίῳ ἐπιμετεῖς σιτοκρίθ[ων]  
 δ' ἰνδικτίωνος Φιβίων (δεκαδάρχης) χ[αίρ(ειν).]  
 4 δὸς τῷ δεσπότῃ μου Δομιτί[ῳ]  
 τριβούνῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐμοῦ κάστρου]  
 σιτοκρίθων' μόδια ἰταλικά  
 δέκα, γίνε(ται) μό(δια) ἰ. σεσημίω-  
 μαί ὁ αὐτός.

21. ἐπιμελητής (i.e., ἰ. ἐπιμελητῆ) 6 ἰταλικά ostr.

“To my lord brother Heraklas Ambrosios, *epimeletes* of *sitokrithon* for the 4th indiction, Phibion, decurion, greetings. Give to my master Domitios the tribune from my camp (?), ten Italic *modii* of *sitokrithon*, that is, 10 *mod.* I, the aforementioned, have signed.”

1–2 In *O.Douch* 5.565, the title follows two names, but the second is in the nominative. That this is not an error is shown by the repetition of the name in the signature in line 7. Here, by contrast, the writer's name is not given until line 3, so Heraklas Ambrosios is to be taken as the full name of the recipient. Such double names occur in other ostraka from this group. The *Douch* and *Ain Waqfa* ostraka are full of *epimeletai*, over 120 occurrences in all, and there can be no doubt that this is the title intended here. Some of the *epimeletai* or those who addressed them had trouble with the title. The optio Abraham seems in general to write ἐπιμη. Examples are *O.Douch* 5.561–564, 568, 571, 579–581, 588–590. The title occurs twice in *O.Douch* 565 in the form ἐπιμετ( ), transcribed by Wagner as ἐπιμελ(ητής) in its first appearance, ἐπιμε(λη)τ(ής) in its second. In fact, however, the final letter is clearly a tau in both cases. In *O.Douch* 5.578.2, the last letter

also appears to be tau rather than lambda. It is true that tau and lambda often look alike, but these two cases seem clearly to be tau. In *O.Douch* 3.193.2, we find  $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\mu\epsilon\tau$ . The last letter in *O.Douch* 3.335.2 could be tau, but the reading is not as clear. At all events, it seems that the syllable  $\lambda\eta$  was omitted by some writers, including one (Peteuris) who actually held the position.

The ἐπιμελητῆς σιτοκρίθου is attested in *P.Oxy.* 36.2766 (AD 305), where the office concerns wheat and barley transported to the Small Oasis from Oxyrhynchos, a councilor of which held the office. The office of epimeletes was normally a bouletic liturgy, cf. Lewis 1997, 25–26.

2 The name Ambrosios occurs in other Great Oasis texts: from Kharga, *SB* 12.10930 (fragmentary receipt, 15th indiction; Hibis mentioned in text), *SEG* 40.1565 (Aur. Apollinarios alias Ambrosios, former magistrate, 280), and *O.Douch* 1.53 (patronymic); from Dakhla, *P.Kell.Copt.* 18 and in a toponym in *P.Bingen* 119. There is no reason to identify any of these with the man here.

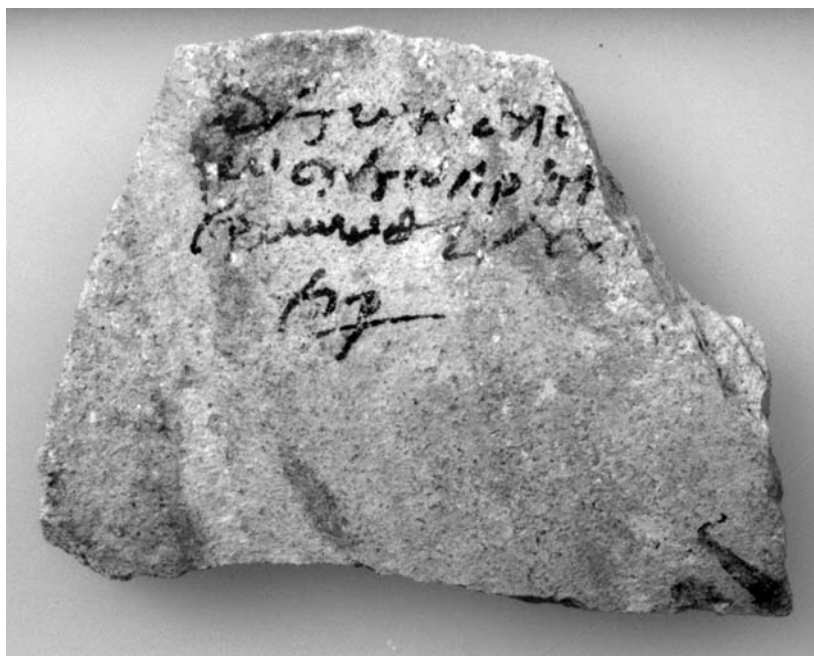
That σιτόκριθον referred to a combination of payments in wheat and barley rather than to a mixture of the grains has long been known. *O.Douch* 5.565 is interesting for the term σιτόκριθον in providing a very clear example in which a half-modius of wheat and a modius of barley are summed as  $1\frac{1}{2}$  modii of σιτόκριθον. Similarly *O.Waqfa* 8 and probably 28. I have restored the singular ending here, but in line 6 the plural is very clearly written above the line – the first clear instance known to me of a plural. The word is, however, very often abbreviated.

5 On the previous instances of tribuni in the oasis documentation, see *O.Douch* 4.457.3n., where it is a question of the tribunus of the Mauri.

7–8 For this formula, common in ostraka from the Kharga Oasis, see 5.5n.

### 3. MMA X.608.3. Memorandum concerning timber

9.0 × 6.6 cm; written on the convex side.



δι(ὰ) τῶν ἀπο[  
 ὥστε τῷ προαιπ[οσίτῳ τῶν?]  
 Ἐρμωνθ(ιτῶν) ξύλ(ου) σχι[στοῦ]  
 4 ἔγρ(αψα) [

“Through the *apo*[*dektai*?] for the praepositus of the Hermonthites, split timber ...”

1 One would expect an office here. If we are dealing with the collection and distribution of foodstuffs for military use, as lines 2–3 seem to indicate, the most plausible restoration would be ἀπο[δεκτῶν, quite likely abbreviated. Lewis 1997, 15 indicates a chronological range probably extending past the latest precise date attested, 345 (his citation of *P.Neph.* 33.2n. is a slip for *P.Neph.* 37.2n.). Even the Nephros texts, however, are probably not later than 351, given the modest numbers of talents indicated in them. The apodektai do not appear in the Douch ostraka. One might alternatively read ἀπα[ττητῶν], attested until the late 370s (Lewis 1997, 14), but alpha seems like a less attractive reading of the fragmentary letter.

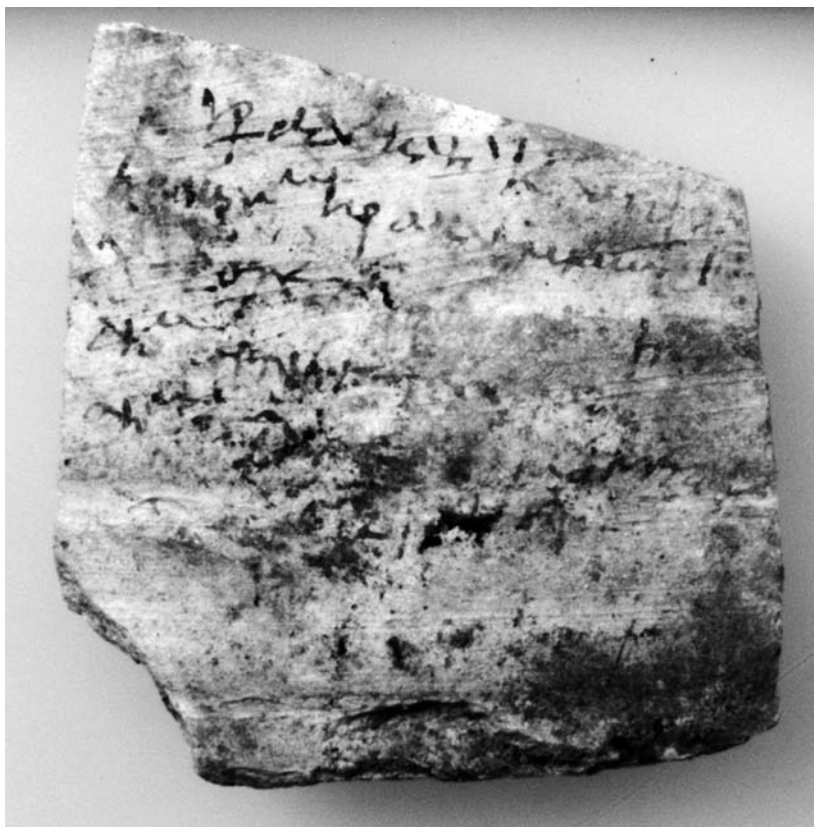
2 The extent of loss at the right is not clear; the presence of the article seems likely but is not certain.

3 As noted above, the mention of Hermonthis or Hermonthites almost certainly is to be ascribed to soldiers from Hermonthis, Hermonthitai, who appear in many texts from the Kharga Oasis, including notably the graffiti on the walls of the kathersterion behind the church of Chams el-Din, in the south of the oasis not far north of Douch. Guy Wagner (1987, 34, 379–381) already suggested that these Hermonthites were soldiers of the Legio II Valentiniana stationed in Hermonthis, modern Armant, not far south of Luxor. For the phrase ξύλος σχιστός see *P.Kellis* I G. 68.18 with note suggesting building activities as the purpose. There could of course be abbreviation (σχιστ(οῦ), most likely) in the lacuna.

4 The second letter could also be tau or upsilon, but these do not seem to lead to any likely readings. ἔγραψα is likely to precede the name of the writer; in receipts from Kellis and also in *SB* 12.10930 we find ἔγραψα τὴν ἀποχὴν followed by the name of the writer. The space left blank to the right of the word here, however, does not favor the idea that anything was written after it. The brevity of the abbreviation makes it unlikely that a personal name is meant.

#### 4. MMA X.608.4. Receipt for wheat

7.0 × 7.1 cm; written on the convex side.



- κυρ(ίω) Ἀδοκλῆ(τι) Κλαυδί(ου)  
 Ἡρακλάμμων Ἡρακλάμμωνι  
 χ(αίρειν). παρέσχες . . . σίτου  
 4 δημ(οσίω μέτρῳ) ἀρτάβας τέσσαρες, γί(νονται)  
 δημ(οσίω μέτρῳ) (ἀρτάβαι) δ. σεσημ(είωμαι) ἐγὼ ὁ αὐτὸς  
 τῆς ζ ἰνδικ(τίωνος).

2 l. Ἡρακλάμμωνος (second occurrence of name)

“To my lord Hadokles, son of Claudius, Heraklammon, son of Heraklammon (?), greetings. You have furnished ... four artabas of wheat by the public (measure), total, 4 art. by public (measure). I, the above-named, have signed for the 7th indiction.”

1 Ἀδοκλῆς is an otherwise unknown name, found also in **5**, but the reading seems certain combining the two ostraka. The third letter here and there could be epsilon, which would not help and which does not seem likely in **5**. Possibly the name is formed from Hades, and should thus be taken as Ἀδοκλῆς, as I have rendered it in the translation. But I have found no other instance of this name or any other close to it. It seems to be declined -ῆς, -ῆτος, rather than -ῆς, -ήους.

2 Since one must take the initial κυρίῳ in the dative, as in many other texts, it seems likely enough that the name following is that of the addressee and the one after it the addressee’s patronymic. But for what follows it is impossible to be sure whether the name at the start of line 2 is correctly in the nominative, and if so why it is followed by another dative. Similar problems are found in **5**, but there it appears that the third name is dative and the last one nominative, offering another set of questions. Here, the second Heraklammon has been taken as intended as patronymic.

3 Barely ghosts of the letters in the central part of this line are preserved.

4 That δημοσίῳ μέτρῳ might be expressed by a writing of only the first word, sometimes abbreviated, was recognized in *O.Douch* 2, p. 87. A writing identical to that here can be found in *O.Douch* 3.274.2 and, from Dakhla, *O.Trim.* 1.10.

5–6 The reading is extremely uncertain, but αὐτὸς seems secure. At the start of line 6 the space seems more than needed, but tau at the start and sigma before the zeta are sufficiently clear. Cf. the note to **5**, line 5, on this formulation.

### 5. MMA X.608.5. Order to supply barley

8.6 × 7.4 cm; written on convex side.

- κυρ(ίω) Ἀδοκλῆ(τι) Κλαυδί(ου)  
 Ἀμβροσίῳ Ἡρακλάμμων  
 χ(αίρειν). δὸς Λέωνι κριθῶν  
 4 μοδίου(ς) καστρη(σιούς) ἕξ, γί(νονται) κρ(ιθῶν) μ(όδιοι) κ(αστρήσιοι)  
 ς. σεσημ(είωμαι) ὁ αὐτὸς  
 ζ ἰνδικ(τίωνος).

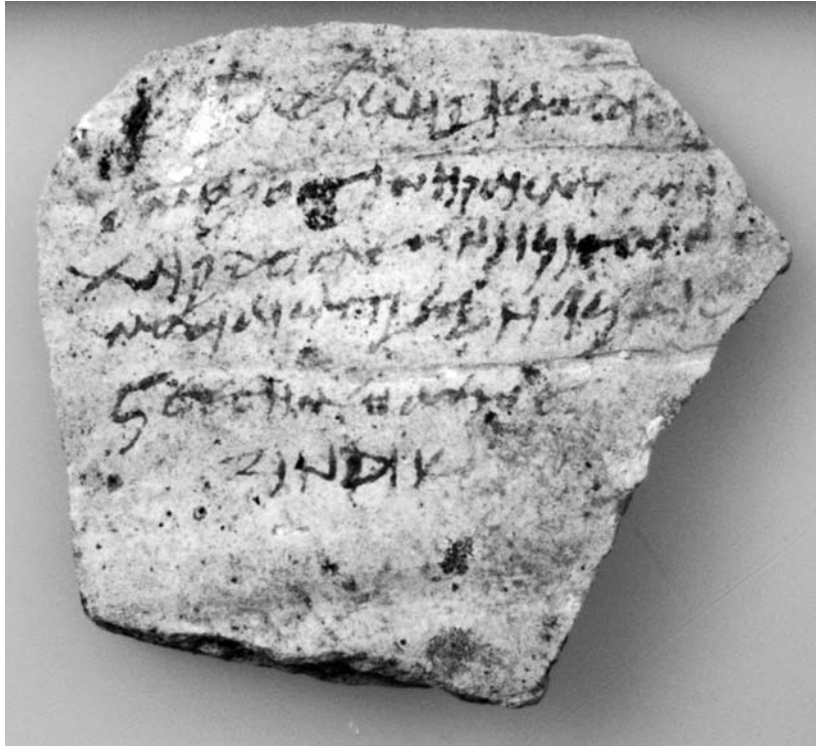
2 l. Ἀμβρόσιος Ἡρακλάμμωνος

“To my lord Hadokles, son of Claudius, Ambrosios, son of Heraklammon, greetings. Give Leon six *modii castrenses* of barley, that is, 6 *mod. castr.* of barley. I, the above-named, have signed; for the 7th indiction.”

1 On the name of the writer, see **4.1n**.

2 Ἀμβροσίῳ, σ ex ζ. On the double dative, see the note on **4.2**. Here also it seems likely that the name should be taken as that of the sender.





3 The declension of Λέων in this fashion, without tau, is far less common than the normal declension, but it is attested, including two instances of Λέωνι at Kellis.

4 μoδίου(ς) is difficult: the diagonal upper stroke of the delta is not visible, and the ending is unclear. It appears that the upsilon was raised and the sigma omitted. The modius castrensis is not well attested in Egypt. The only other example from the oasis known to me is *O.Douch* 1.13.7, where the word was only partly preserved; cf. the note ad loc. with a reference to the discussion at *P.Cair.Isid.* 11. On the measure, see Duncan-Jones 1976.

5 This formulation is also found with minor variations in **2**, **4**, **9** and **16**.

#### 6. MMA X.608.6. Account of bricks

11.2 × 11.7 cm; written on convex side. Broken at upper left, lower left, and probably upper right.

The bricks in this account add up to 7,450, not counting whatever number may have stood in the first line, which may sound like a lot. But it is actually only, in standard brick sizes of the Roman period, about 35 cubic meters of bricks, or enough to build walls a half-meter thick, 3 meters high, and 23 meters long, say a room 6 meters on a side. Not nothing, but hardly a house.

	[παρ]έσχεν Ἰάκωβος πλίθ(ου)ς [
	ὁμοί(ως) πλίθ(ου)ς υν
	ὁμοί(ως) πλίθ(ου)ς /Αω
4	ὁμοί(ως) πλίθ(ου)ς /Βω
	ὁμοί(ως) πλίθ(ου)ς χ
	ὁμοί(ως) πλίθ(ου)ς χ
	[ὁ]μοί(ως) πλίθ(ου)ς /Ασ

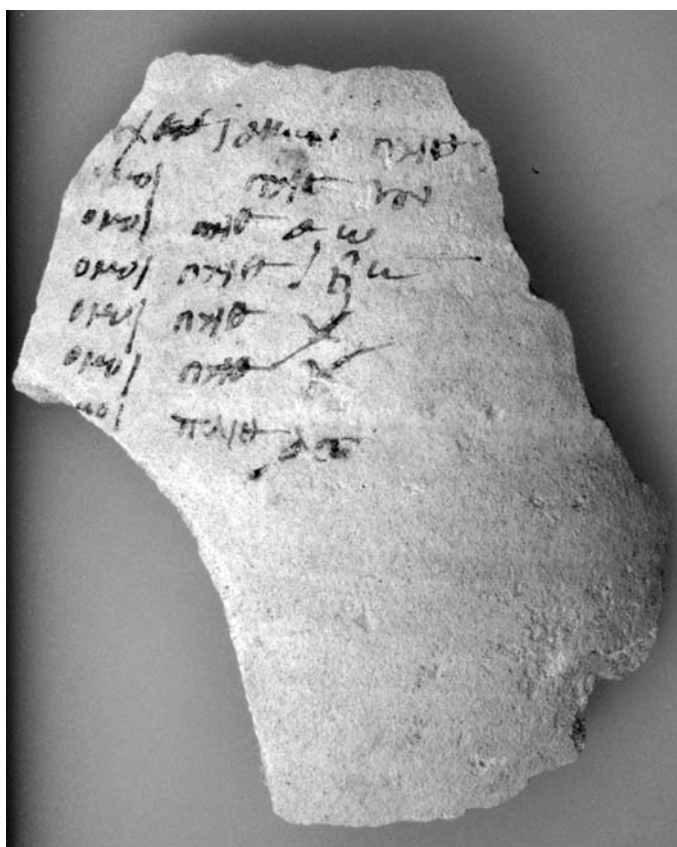
passim l. πλίνθους (cf. *SB* 16.12568)

“Jacob furnished [-] bricks; likewise, 450 bricks; likewise, 1800 bricks; likewise, 2800 bricks; likewise, 600 bricks; likewise, 600 bricks; likewise, 1200 bricks.”

1 It appears that the upper left corner of the sherd has been lost, like the bottom left corner. There is diaeresis over iota of ἰόκωβος. The last three letters are very difficult to read, and one might be led by the slight traces before iota to read διόκων instead, but the delta is very unlikely. The thin traces of ink before iota might instead be (ὑπέρ) in the form of a curve with a diagonal stroke through it, but I am not persuaded that this is correct either. At the end of the line there is at best a tiny trace of a number, perhaps nothing at all; but the shape of the sherd suggests that an upper right corner may have been broken off, taking the numeral.

3–4 The stroke indicating that alpha is a thousand stands below and to the right of the numeral; the same is true of the beta for two thousand.

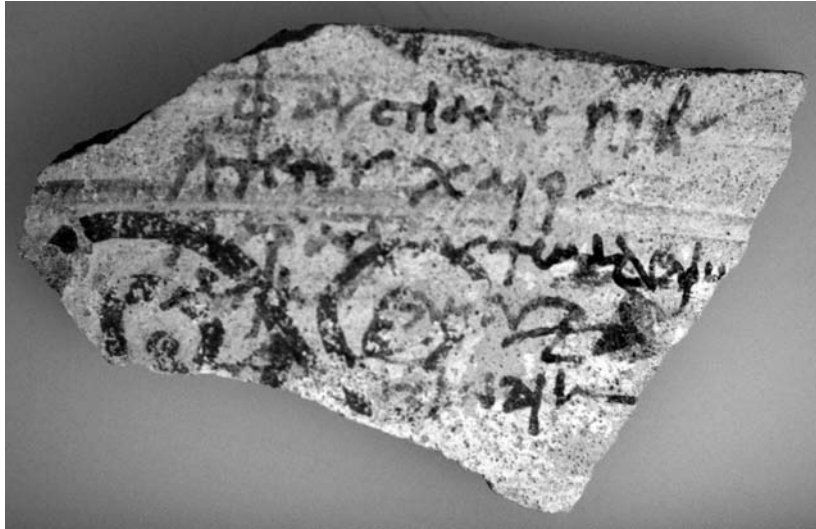
7 The stroke marking alpha as a thousand stands below and to the left of the numeral.



### 7. MMA X.608.7. Order to supply oil

7.7 × 4.7 cm; written on the convex side.

This short text has several points of interest, the chief being the appearance of a Faustianus. The landlord of the Kellis Agricultural Account Book (*P.Kellis* 4) is identified as Faustianus, son of Aquila. His unnamed wife, described simply as the mistress of the household, οἰκοδέσποινα, is also referred to twice in the accounts, and in one of these places she is said to be in Hibis. As I remarked in the edition, “On the reasonable assumption that the oikodespoina and the geouchos were husband and wife, and that they shared a residence, we may locate Faustianus also in Hibis.” It is true that it does not have to be the same man. A Faustianus who was a former magistrate of Mothis, the chief city of the Dakhla Oasis, is known from a Kellis papyrus dated to 321, or about 45 years before the date of the Kellis Account Book; he could be an ancestor of the landlord or completely unrelated. A Faustianus with the title of *actuarius* appears in an ostrakon from Amheida (*O.Trim.* 1.329), dated to the 350s or 360s. We can neither affirm nor deny an identification. Another appears in *O.Trim.* 2.476, an account of hay datable to the same period, in which “to our father Faustianus” identifies an entry of 10 bundles. The next line says “to the Hibite”, presumably referring to the district of Kharga. There is more reason to identify this Faustianus with the landowner of the Kellis Account Book, given his status (“father” is not to be taken in family terms but in professional relationship) and the proximity of the reference to the Hibite nome. Moreover, apart from these attestations of the name from the Great Oasis, the name Faustianus appears in the tens of thousands of papyri published to date *only* as the cognomen of a prefect of Egypt. So the chances of identity are in fact extremely high.



- Φαυστιανὸς πρ(εσ)β(υτέρω)  
 Πτετου χαίρ(ειν).  
 παράσχον τῷ ἀδελφῷ  
 4 Ἀτρήτι ἐλαίου ξ(έστην) α.  
 σεσημ(είωμαι) ἡ ἰνδικ(τίωνος).

“Faustianus to the priest of Ptetou greeting. Supply to our brother (i.e., colleague) Hatres one sextarius of olive oil. I have signed; for the 8th indiction.”

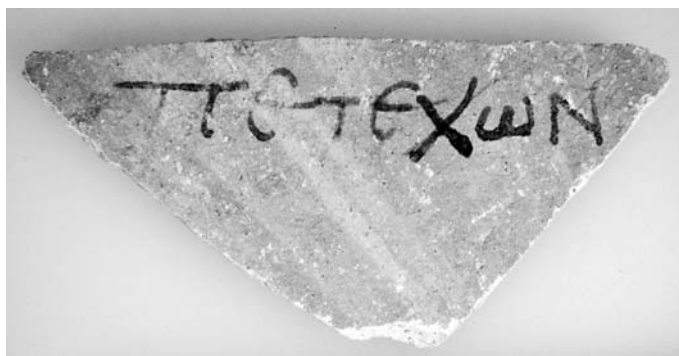
1 πρβ/ occurs as an abbreviation for πρεσβύτερος also in KAB 576 and in *O.Waqfa* 3 and 19 (not 64, as indicated in the note to KAB 576). There is also an instance in *P.Neph.* 13.2, 20, described by the editors as an “ungewöhnliche Abkürzung”. Important points are, first, the address to a priest as an agent in a transaction of this sort; second, the fact that his name is not given. The second point suggests that in some way his role in this transaction is *ex officio*, not personal. That is, he is not an individual who happens at the same time to be the priest of Ptetou, an otherwise unknown locale of the district, and an agent of Faustianus. Rather, it is in his capacity as priest that he is responsible for disbursing the oil. The curt use of title is reminiscent of orders sent to village officials by higher-ranking bureaucrats ordering them to detain and send up someone wanted for questioning. I have not found another clear example of such a usage with respect to a priest, although one seventh-century papyrus in the Rylands collection (*P.Ryl.* 4.708) appears to be directed “to the priest and village headmen of the village of Senombo” *tout court*. We do not know in what capacity Faustianus was in a position to give orders in this fashion, as he gives himself no title. The impersonality of the order, however, suggests to me that Faustianus could have sent similar orders to other priests, or at least other people in similar positions of responsibility.

2 Πτετου is not elsewhere attested.

### 8. MMA X.608.8. Name

11.2 × 5.3 cm; written on the convex side.

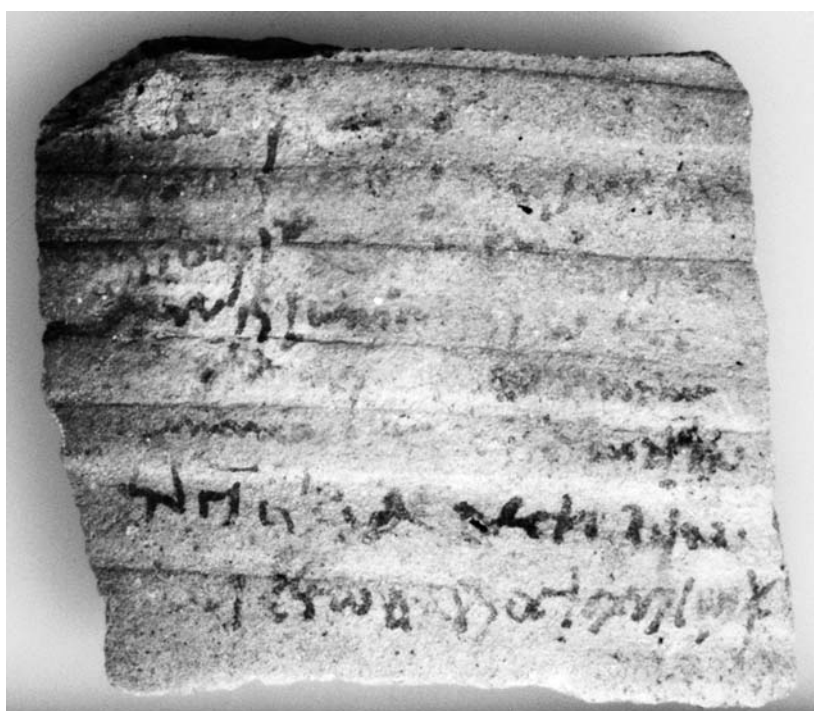
The nature of this ostrakon, which is complete and bears only the single name Ptechon, written in an attractive, clear hand, is unclear. It is much larger than the labels or tags that we find commonly in the Great Oasis, which were largely set into jar stoppers. The name Ptechon (subsumed under Πτεχῶνσις in TM People) in its various forms is proportionately more common in the Western Desert than in any other part of Egypt, even the Theban region.



Πετεχῶν

**9. MMA 25.10.25.41**

8.8 × 7.6 cm; written on convex side.



τῷ κυρίῳ μου . . . . .  
 Ἡρακλείδης ἐπειμελητῆς  
 σειτοκρίθ(ου) χέριν' ἔσχ[ον] παρὰ  
 4 Ἀνουβίωνος . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . . σίτου μόδιον  
 ἔν, γί(νεται) σίτ(ου) μό(διον) α. σεσημίω-  
 8 μαί ἐγὼ ὁ αὐτὸς Ἴσχυρίων (δεκαδάρχης)  
 3 l. σιτοκρίθ(ου) χαίρειν

“To my lord ..., Herakleides, superintendent of wheat and barley, greetings. I have received from Anoubion ... one modius of wheat, that is, 1 mod. of wheat. I, the aforementioned Ischyri-  
 on, decurion, have signed.”

1–2 The extremely faded condition of most of this ostrakon makes reconstruction of the sense uncertain. It is remarkable to have the person from whom the goods were received not be the same as the recipient of the receipt, and equally odd is the fact that the aforementioned Ischyriion in line 8 is not in fact the collector Herakleides mentioned in line 2. We do not know how to resolve these difficulties. It is conceivable that the name at the end of line 1 is Hadokles/Hadekles, but the traces are exiguous.

**10. MMA 25.10.25.42. Account (?) of bricks**

5.5 × 4.3 cm; broken at bottom, right, and left; written on convex side.



]τιξίς πλίθου[  
] traces

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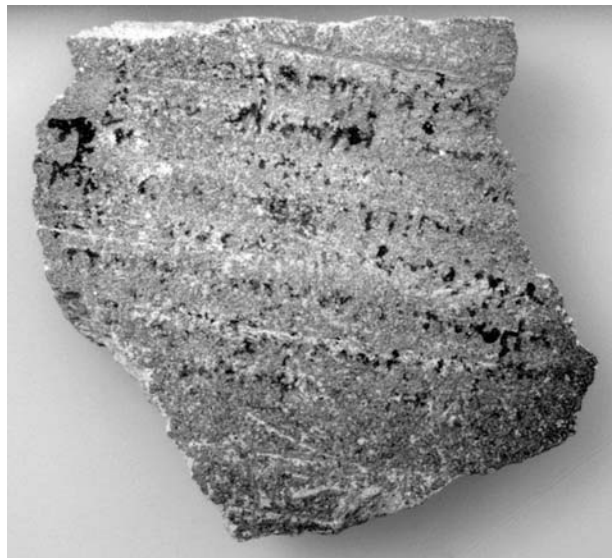
11. πλίνθου

1 Perhaps [ἀπ]ότιξίς for ἀπόδειξις. The hand is not the same as that of 6, and a top margin is preserved there, so this does not join it.

**11. MMA 25.10.25.43. Order or receipt**

9.3 × 8.5 cm; highly abraded surface; 8 lines.

Next to nothing can now be made out of the text. Line 6, at end, τακοσια.



**12. MMA 25.10.25.44. Account of rent (?)**

5.2 × 5.4 cm; written on the convex side; broken at top.



-----  
 ] . π(αρά) υίο(υ) Σ . .[  
 ] π(αρά) Ψεναμ[ούνιος  
 ἐν]οικίου π(αρά) Ψεγ[-  
 4 ἐνο]ικίου π(αρά) Ψεγ[  
 ἐνο]ικίου π(αρά) [  
 ] . . . . . Ψεγθ[  
 [        ] . . . θ

1–5 Throughout these lines we encounter an abbreviated word that might be read either as π(αρά) or as υί/. It is written with a slash through the lower part of the second main vertical stroke. Various lists in *O.Douch* contain persons designated simply as “son of” someone; the nearest parallel is 4.473. I have not, however, found a parallel in the Douch ostraka with the abbreviation carried out in this manner. Also weighing against interpreting the abbreviation as υί(ός) is the fact that this word follows it immediately in line 1. Against π(αρά) may be adduced the awkward form of the supposed pi in line 3. On the whole, π(αρά) seems preferable.

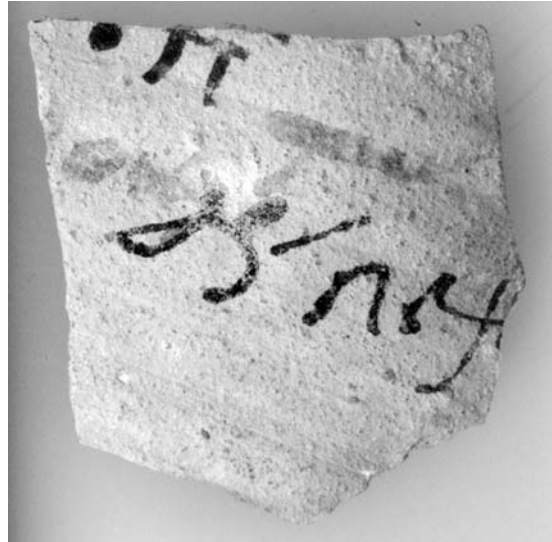
3–5 On the likely assumption that all three of these lines represent payments for the same purpose, despite some variations in how the word is written, reading the ending as ικίου seems unavoidable. The only plausible restorations are ἐνοικίου and πιστικίου. The traces in line 3 seem decisive for the first. The second, argued by Boak and Youtie (*P.Cair.Isid.*, p. 107) to be a form of emmer wheat, whether hulled or unhulled, is not attested in the western oases so far.

**13. MMA 25.10.25.45. Uncertain text**

4.5 × 4.8 cm; written on convex side; broken at top and right.

-----  
 ]οπ  
 ] α (ἔτους) Πειψ[

There is a trace above pi in line 1, perhaps a supralinear stroke (of abbreviation?) or a remnant of an earlier line. Between the lines one can see the faint traces of several washed-out characters, probably representing not a deleted line of the present text but a previous use of the sherd. The sinusoidal curve can represent either a regnal year or an indiction number.

**14. MMA 25.10.25.46. Alphabet**

7.5 × 7.5 cm; written on convex side.

α	ζ	κ
β	η	λ
γ	θ	μ
δ	ι	ν
ε	ξ	

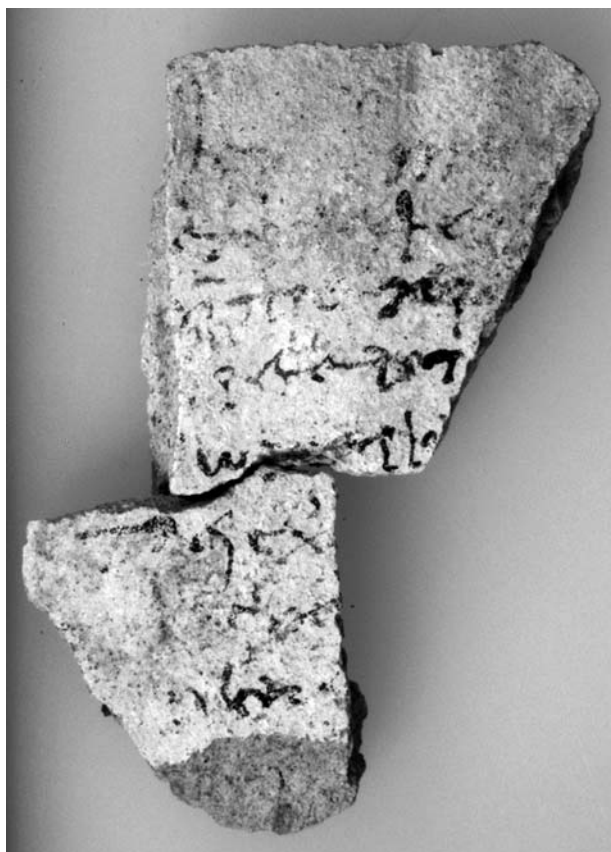
The space to the right of these three columns is not sufficient to have contained the remainder of the alphabet, and mu extends nearly to the right edge of the sherd. The remaining letters of the alphabet must have been written on another sherd if at all. The hand is a practiced one and more likely to be that of a teacher than of a student. Cf. Criore 1996, 183–184, nos. 41, 42, 46, etc. The zeta is difficult to make out and was perhaps erased and remade. Possibly the writer initially wrote eta by error.

**15. MMA 25.10.25.47+48. Uncertain text**

9.1 × 6.5 cm; written on convex side of a sherd probably broken on all sides, except perhaps bottom. A reddish fabric with cream slip.

Too little survives to establish the nature of this text clearly; apart from breakage, much of the writing is very faint. The signature at the end suggests that we are dealing with an order or receipt, but no other structural element can be read with any confidence.

[. .] . [. . .] υἱ . [ ]  
 [. .] δῖ [ . . ] . . [ ]  
 [. .] ελ . . . . . ψ . . [ ]  
 4 [. .] υἱὸ πρεπ( ) κερά[μια  
 [. .] . ρετε δότ[ε  
 [. .] . ω . . . ρις [ ]



τ . εἰς χ[  
 8 [ . . ] . . . . . [ .  
 σεσημ[είωμαι

4 Perhaps πρεπ(οσίτου) for προπι(οσίτου), but the second pi is very faint and no clear mark of abbreviation can be seen. The kappa following might be tau instead.

6 Instead of rho, one might read xi for xestai, followed by 16. But there is no clear sign of abbreviation.

7 At start, perhaps τά.

#### 16. MMA 25.10.25.49. Order for delivery

6.8 × 7.3 cm; complete but faded; written on convex side.

1–3 unread

4 χ(αίρειν)· δὸς τῷ ἀδελφῷ η . . .

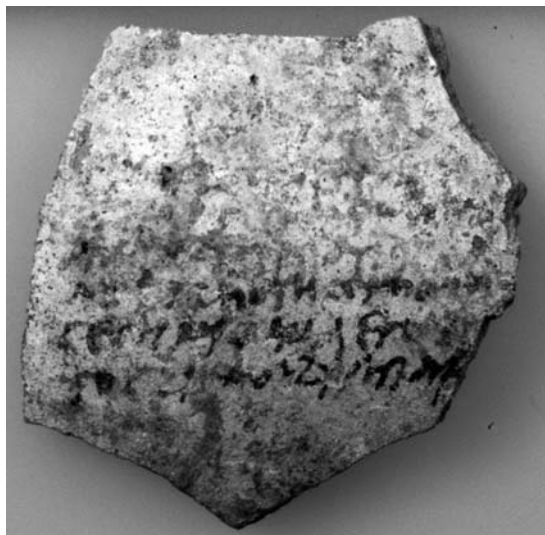
ε . . . . . ρείαγ σίτ[ου]

μοδ(ίους) κ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐμήης . . . .

σεσημίωμαι ἐγὼ ὁ α[ὕ-]

8 τὸς δι' ἐμοῦ Δίου πατρὸς[ς]

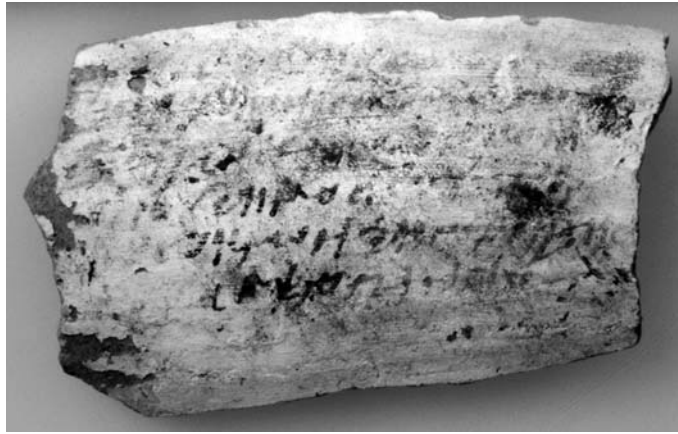
“... greetings. Give to our brother ... 20 modii of wheat from my ... I, the aforementioned, have signed through me, Dios his father.”





**17. MMA 25.10.25.50**

10.4 × 6.1 cm; complete but extremely effaced, particularly in the upper half.



- 1–2 unread  
 3 χαίρειν. ἔλαβ traces  
 4 σίτου δημοσίῳ μέτρῳ ἀρτ[ά-]  
 5 βας ὀκτώ, γί(νονται) δημ(οσίῳ) μέτρ(ῳ) (ἀρτάβαι) η . .  
 6 [...]

“... greetings. (I have received from you?) eight artabas of wheat by the public measure, total, 8 art. by public measure ...”

3 Although the beginning of this line is somewhat better preserved than what precedes, it is very uncertain in reading after rho. If ελαβ is correct, it indicates that this is a receipt rather than an order. One would expect ἔλαβον παρὰ σοῦ, which would suit the space adequately, but we have not been able to verify this from the faint traces.

5–6 One or two more letters follow the numeral at the end of line 5. We might expect an indiction number and a signature, or perhaps just a signature. But we have not been able to read the substantial remaining traces as either.

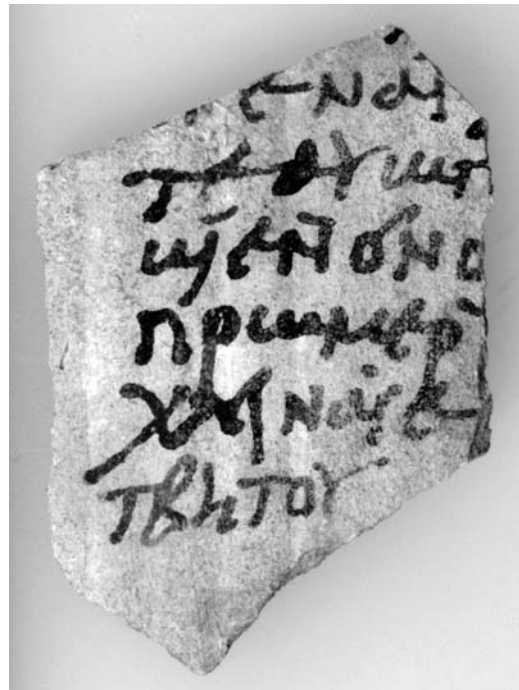
**18. MMA 25.10.25.51. Letter**

4.1 × 4.8 cm; written on convex side; broken at top and right.

The hand is fluent and rapid, but not in my view in any way distinctively Coptic; it is the writing of someone trained to write Greek very well.

- [...] . [  
 [] . ενδι . [  
 τεδγωπ[  
 4 φεν δν . [  
 πρωμε ρ[ενο-]  
 χλει νδι ε-  
 τβητογ

3 Perhaps divide after τε and understand δγωπ, “they have reckoned.”



5-7 ΠΡΩΜΕ Π[ΕΝΟ]ΧΛΕΙ ΝΑΙ ΕΤΒΗΤΟΥ, “the man is bothering me about them”. H. Förster, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten* (Berlin 2002) 262 lists a number of cases of the use of ἐνοχλέω in Coptic without the preceding π-. Crum, *Coptic Dictionary* 84a, lists verbs constructed in this manner, where (as here) the form of the Greek verb used is the apparent imperative used as what Bentley Layton calls the “Greco-Coptic infinitive”: *A Coptic Grammar* (Wiesbaden 2000) 155.

**19. MMA 25.10.25.52. Letter?**

4.8 × 5.8 cm. Two-sided text; broken at one side?

Written in careful, somewhat uneven, capital letters, slowly made. The preservation is too fragmentary to allow much content to be recovered.



Side 1

-----  
 ΠΙΟΥΝ [   
 ΟΥΡΤΩΒ [   
 ΤΗΡΟΥ Π.[   
 4 ... ΠΡΙΝ[

Side 2

-----  
 ]ΒΝΘΙΝΔ   
 ] . ΩΒC ΝΟΥ   
 3 ]ΝΕΙC

Side 1, 2 “An artaba.”

Side 1, 3 The partly preserved letter may be pi.

Side 1, 4 Förster, *Wörterbuch*, lists no instances of Greek πρίν in Coptic documentary texts. Given the fragmentary context, it is impossible to say what is intended. The first three letters are extremely faded.

Side 2, 2 The slight trace of the first letter is compatible with hori, thus perhaps ΩΒC ΝΟΥ. But without context it is hard to be confident in this.

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