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A LETTER FROM HIERAX TO ARSINOE: BL PAPYRUS 2126 (+ 2192?)

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British Library Papyrus 2126 is broken off at bottom but otherwise complete: the text extends almost to the edge of the sheet at right, and the left margin measures 8 mm. A prominent vertical fold at the center of the sheet is clear: it lies approximately 4.4–4.8 cm from the right edge. Small holes are scattered along the right side of the fragment, especially between lines 1–9; the left side is in considerably worse shape, with lacunae both large and small as well as missing fibers in nearly every one of the twenty-six lines of text. The text is written with the fibers.¹ The obverse contains a one-line docket whose middle portion is very faint.

The hand, which is practiced and contains only a few cursive elements, is that of British Library Papyrus 2192, dated by Zellmann-Rohrer in the *editio princeps* to II/III CE on internal grounds.² Todd Hickey reports that both papyri were purchased for the British Museum by Bernard Grenfell on 31 March, 1920, from the Cairo antiquities dealer Maurice Nahman as part of a lot whose total cost was £.E. 47.³ Because inv. 2126 contains the beginning of a letter and inv. 2192 the end of one, it is possible that they join to make a single document: for one thing, the dimensions of the two fragments and the pattern of folding are very similar; for another, the location and dimensions of a trio of vertically aligned holes in the lower right section of inv. 2192 are compatible with a similar trio of holes in the upper right of inv. 2126 (suggesting that the document was folded in half along the horizontal axis before it was folded in half along the vertical axis⁴). One can make a connection on mechanical grounds, too: as is the case in inv. 2192, *vacat* is used to indicate punctuation in inv. 2126 (ll. 3, 10, 14); word-break is occasionally marked by an apostrophe (ll. 11, 17, 23);⁵ and *iota* adscript is written after both *eta* and *omega*,⁶ occasionally in error.⁷

Yet the hypothesis of a single, joined document cannot be decisively established, and there are also good reasons to doubt it. For one thing, a physical connection based on content cannot be conclusively made; while the possibility of a change of topic cannot be discounted (see further, below), the two documents concern family and business affairs, respectively. A more significant objection to the hypothesis of a join is the exceptionally large size of the missive that would result: the sheet would measure ca. 35 cm in height and include at least 54 lines of text!⁸ Sadly, an examination of the verso fibers' alignment, which

¹ This edition had its origins in Heidelberg University's Webinar 'Greek Papyri in the British Museum', which took place from April to June, 2018, as part of the Landesinitiative Kleine Fächer, which is supported by the Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst in Baden-Württemberg. For stimulating feedback, I am grateful to the Webinar's other participants, especially Rodney Ast and Lajos Berkes, and also to Dieter Hagedorn, Todd Hickey, Andrea Jördens, Federica Micucci, and Péter Tóth. Special thanks are owed to Michael W. Zellmann-Rohrer, who not only provided comment but also granted permission for me to reproduce his work and confirmed several corrections to the *apparatus* of British Library Papyrus 2192 (see n. 10, below).

² Michael W. Zellmann-Rohrer, *Five Private Letters on Papyrus in the British Library*, *APF* 63 (2017): 143; see also his *Comm.* to ll. 18–19 (p. 149).

³ This lot was the third of three purchases Grenfell made from Nahman in early 1920 (the others were on 23 February and 10 March). For a history of Grenfell's activities in Egypt in early 1920, including his collaboration with Francis W. Kelsey (who was then in Egypt on his famed "first expedition"), see Todd Hickey's introductions to the forthcoming *P.Lond.* VIII and *P.Mich.Cent.*

⁴ The pattern of holes is not conclusive for the join hypothesis: two separate sheets may have been stored on top of one another.

⁵ Such specificity was no doubt intended as a lectional aid: whatever the precise nature of Hierax and his 'sister' Arsinoë's relationship, care was taken to ensure the letter's legibility and intelligibility. The case of l. 17 is too fragmentary to analyze, but in l. 11 the division seems to be marked to prevent reading an Egyptian name in (G)ounsīs (TM Nam_8095), while in l. 23 it distinguishes οὐ from οὐδ'. On the general slipperiness of kinship terminology in letters, see Roger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC–AD 800* (Ann Arbor 2006) 85–88.

⁶ Cf. Zellmann-Rohrer 2017: 143: in inv. 2192, *iota* adscript appears only after *omega*.

⁷ E.g., γρ[ά]φωι (l. 2), μερμυῶι (l. 10); cf. its omission in ἀναγεχθῆ (l. 25).

⁸ Data compiled by Antonia Sarri, *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World: 500 BC – AD 300* (Berlin/Boston 2018) indicate that the best parallel for such an extent in a complete letter from the Roman period is *P.Mich.*

might provide certainty on this front, is impossible: inv. 2192 is mounted on cardboard, and its verso is inaccessible as a result. Not least because of their acquisition in a common purchase, I favor the hypothesis of a join; an alternative is that the two texts belong to a small family archive that Nahman had acquired.⁹

In what follows, I present BL Papyri 2126 and 2192 separately, but in sequence: the text and translation of inv. 2192 are from Zellmann-Rohrer's *editio princeps* (the line numbers in parentheses provide the running total). I have also incorporated his *apparatus criticus* (with several noteworthy corrections¹⁰), but not his commentary, for which one may consult the *editio princeps*.¹¹ So as to facilitate the evaluation of the fragments' possible connection, English translations are also provided in sequence – following the texts and *apparatus critici*.

P.Lond. inv. 2126 contains the initial portion of a letter from Hierax to his 'sister' Arsinoe and is dominated by concerns about her children, their education, and their employment, which Hierax is disappointed not to have been entrusted with. Peculiarities of orthography, not to mention the state of the papyrus, impede further analysis. In P.Lond. inv. 2192, by contrast, the tone is less personal and more business-oriented: it is concerned principally with reciprocal shipments of goods in the context of managing Ousiac land. Zellmann-Rohrer imagines that the two parties are partners in a lease, or that the sender was the overseer of the recipient.¹² Neither of those details is incompatible with Arsinoe's status as Hierax's 'sister': she is plausibly the recipient of both letters – possibly his wife. Irrespective of any physical join, the two texts' palaeographical coherence means that Zellmann-Rohrer's hypothesis of an Arsinoite provenance plausibly applies to inv. 2126, as well.¹³

BL Papyrus 2126
Arsinoite nome?

17.5 (h) × 10.7 (w) cm

II/III CE

→ Ἰέρ[α]ξ Ἀρσινόῃ τῇ ἀδελφῇ πλεῖστα χα(ίρειν).
 [±11] ἐπιστολήν σοι γρ[ά]φωι
 ἀνθρωπίνως. σοὶ δ' ἐμοὶ ἐδήλωσας λ[ί]αν
 5 . [.] . ιαν γέμουσαν, καίτοι ἐμοῦ ἀσ[θ]ενοῦν-
 τος διπλᾶ μοι ἡ ἀσθένεια γέγονεν ἥδε
 ν [.] . [.] αῖων ἕως ἡ ἐπὶ δώδεκα ἡμέρ[α]ς,
 καὶ χάρις τοῖς θεοῖς ὅτι κομσῶς ἔσχον.
 οἶδας οὖν ὅτι οὐ κατὰ στρήνος ἐνθάδε
 10 ἐπιμένω . . . [α]μεριμνῶν περὶ σου κα[ί]ν
 τῶν πεδίων σου· ἐγὼ γὰρ ἄλλα μεριμνῶ οὐδὲ
 περὶ ἄλλων. ἐφθωνήθης οὖν σεαυτῇ καὶ
 ἐμοὶ μήτε ἐλθοῦσα ἐνθάδε καὶ μὴ πέμψαι
 τὰ πεδία. ἐδυνάμην γὰρ αὐτὰ ἐνθάδε
 15 διδάξαι. μετέλαβον ὅτι εἰς ἀγρὸν ἐπορεύ-
 θης μὴ . . . ἐξῆν ἐλθεῖν σε ἐνθάδε καὶ
 ἐμ[. . .] ἀπὸ δὲ σῶν Ἑρμαίων καὶ κα-

8.465 (107 CE, Karanis < Bostra), which contains 47 lines of text and measures 30 cm in height. See her Appendix II for a catalogue: <https://www.degruyter.com/viewbooktoc/product/456723>.

⁹ To date, I have been unable to identify further texts in this hand from material purchased by Kelsey and Grenfell in 1920. In the absence of better information regarding the provenance of the text, the extent of any hypothetical archive remains indeterminate.

¹⁰ The published *apparatus* for inv. 2192.27 is incorrect, and there were several other typesetting errors involving punctuation by vacat and superscripted letters. The *apparatus* published herein therefore supplants that of the *editio princeps*.

¹¹ Zellmann-Rohrer 2017: 146–150.

¹² Zellmann-Rohrer 2017: 143.

¹³ Zellmann-Rohrer, comm. to l. 11 (p. 143).

- 20 κᾶ[±7]γεν τριχ[ὸ]ς φροντίζων σου
 [. ±8] πεδίων σου. ἐὰν δὲ ᾦν τὰ πεδία
 παρειλημμένα εἰς ἕτερον ἐργαστήριον
 [εὐχ]εσθαι τύχηι τῇ ἀγαθῇ. οὐ δ' ἤθελον
 [α]ὐτοὺς ἐκτός μου γενέσθαι. δῆλωσον
 [δὲ] περὶ τῶν πεδίων πότερον συνέστα-
 κας τοὺς εἰς ἐργαστήριον εἰ οὐ δηλώσεις
 25 [. . . .] πόσον ἐστὶν τὸ τάλαντον
 [. . . .] ἵνα ἀναγεχθῇ σοι καὶ πραθῇ
 [±13] οὐδεμια[. . .] αντι

Verso

- ↓ 27 ἀπὸ Ἰέρακος Χ Ἀρσινόῃ ἀδελφῇ

2 l. γράφω 3 ἀνθρωπινως *vac.* σοι *par.* 1. σύ 5 ἡ *par.* 1. ἀσθένεια 7 l. κομψῶς 10 l. παιδίων σου *vac.*
 ἐγω *par.* 1. μεριμνῶ 11 l. ἐφθονήθης συν'σεαυτη *par.* 13 l. παιδία 14 διδασθαι *vac.* μετελαβον *par.*
 17]γ'εν *par.* 18 l. ἡ 1. παιδία 20 l. εὐχεσθε 22 l. παιδίων 23 οὐ'δηλωσεις *par.* 25 ἵνα *par.*

BL Papyrus 2192

16.8 (h) × 10.2 (w) cm

II/III CE

Arsinoite nome?

→

- 1 (28) [±15] [. ±5] . . . [±15]
 φέ[ρ]ουσιν ἐδήλωσα[ς]. περὶ δὲ τοῦ βορειδίου
 ἐὰν μὲν καλὸν γεγονώς, θύσον αὐτ[ό]. ἕως
 5 (32) στῆ[λ]λη τὸν μάγιρον καὶ παντάπασι ἐὰν
 ἐπιζητῆς, ἔχεις παρὰ σοὶ ἐν ἐτοίμῳ καὶ
 μὴ χάριτά μοι ἀναθῆς ἐν τούτῳ. ἔπεμ-
 ψάς μοι διὰ Μιύσει ναυτικοῦ δύο πίθους
 καὶ στάμνους δύο ὀβολοῦ καὶ ἄλλο δύο
 10 (37) ὀβολῶν καὶ μικρὰν βούκαλιν Τεχωσοῦτί
 καὶ βακτηρίαν Ἡρώι πατρί. ἐδήλωσάς μοι
 ὅτι ἐνεκλείσθην εἰς ταμ(ι)ον Ἀντιανοῦ ἐπὶ
 τρεῖς ἡμέρας. τίνας ἔνεκα; ἀφείλον γὰρ ναυ(ι)κοί).
 Εὐτύχης μοι ἐλθὼν, ἔδωκα αὐτῷ ἀντὶ (δραχμῶν) κβ̄
 (δραχμάς) κδ̄. εὐχαρίστησον αὐτῷ Εὐτύχητι καὶ Πτο-
 15 (42) λεμαίῳ ὅτι διὰ παντὸς ὑμᾶς φυλάσσω
 ἐν ταῖς οὐσιακαῖς. ὑμεῖς δὲ οὕτως με πε-
 φυλάκατε μηδὲ ἐν ἀφείλων τὸ ἀγγεῖον
 τοῦ ἐλαίου ὃν ἔπεμψά σοι κοτ(ύλας) ιβ̄ (ἡμισυ) δ̄ (δραχμαὶ) η,
 20 (47) ἄρτι δὲ ἐξ ὀβ(ολῶν) ε̄ κοτ(ύλας) ι [. . .] ὅ ἐστιν (δραχμαὶ) η ὀβ(ολοὶ) β.
 πέμψεις δέ μοι μικρὰ ταρίχεια. περὶ δὲ
 τῆς μικρᾶς σοὶ . . . σθήσῃ εἰ καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν
 πρὸς τὴν σὴν ἀρέσκίαν ἐποιοῦν. ᾧ δὲ
 βούλη μόνον δεξιὰν δὸς αὐτῷ μηδὲ ἐν
 δὲ παρ' αὐτοῦ λάβῃς μέχρι οὗ δηλώσεις μοι
 25 (52) τίνι δεξιάν ἔδωκας. ἐὰν ἐξέρχεται ἅπα
 Δημήτριος, δώσεις αὐτῷ τὸν δυσμὸν τῶν

σεβενίων [. . .] ε . ου Θὼτ ᾠ. *vacat*
 ἄσπασαι τὰ πεδία καὶ τοὺς ἐν οἴκῳ πάντας.

21. βοιδίου 3 μεν'καλον pap. 1. γεγονός 41. μάγειρον 71. Μύσιος or Μύσεως 81. ἄλλον 10 -ριαν'ηρω-
 pap. πατρι *vac.* εδηλωσας pap. 111. ἐνεκλείσθη? 1. ταμείον (ταμειῖον) 12 ναυ^τ pap. 13, 14 ς pap. 15 ὕμας
 pap. 1. φυλάσσω 16 ὕμεις pap. 17 αφειλων'το pap., 1. ἀφεῖλον 18 κο^τ pap. 1. ς pap. 19 ο^β pap. κ^ο^τ
 pap. ς pap. ο^β pap. 201. ταρίχια 211. σὺ 1. ἡμῖν 221. ἀρέσκειαν εποιουν *vac.* ω pap. 25 εδωκας *vac.*
 εαν pap. 261. δεσμόν 27 σεβενίων *vac.* pap. 281. παιδία

“(1) Hierax to his sister Arsinoe, very many greetings. [...] I write you a letter with humanity. You told me that [?] is very full; indeed, although I was ill, this illness of mine doubled ... until the eighth, for twelve days, and thanks to the gods that I am well.

(8) You should know that I do not remain here in a state of luxury, heedless of you and your children. For I am anxious about other things but not about other people. You begrudged yourself and me by not having come here personally and not having sent your children here. For, I could have taught them here.

(14) I received news that you went to the country [and that (?)] it was not possible for you to come here and ... And from your (?) Hermaion also bad-(?) ... [worth a (?) hair (?) thinking of you ... [and?] your children (?) And if your children have been taken up in another workshop, good luck! I didn't want them to be apart from me. Let me know regarding your children whether you have placed them under a shop's charge. If you don't let me know how much the weight/balance/talent is ... in order that [?] be brought up to you and sold ... no ... in place of ...

(28) ... you informed the bearers. As for the calf, if it is a good one, sacrifice it. Until he sends the butcher, by all means, if you're looking for more, you have (it) with you at hand, and don't thank me for this. You sent to me via Miusis the boatman two *pithoi* and two *stamnoi* at an obol (each), and another at two obols, and a small vessel for Techosous, and a staff for father Heron. You informed me, 'It (?) was locked up in the storeroom of Atianos for three days.' Why? For boatmen removed it.

(39) Eutyches, when he came to me, I gave him, instead of 22 drachmas, 24 drachmas. Thank Eutyches himself and Ptolemaios for the fact that I look out for you on the (plots of) *ousiac* (land). You have looked out for me so well that they did not remove even one vessel of the oil that I sent you, 12½ kotyls ... total 8 drachmas, and just now, at 5 obols (per kotyl) ... ten kotyls, that is 8 drachmas 2 obols.

(46) You will send me small salted fish. As for the little girl, you will ... if I have acted to your satisfaction on my end. Give your right hand to whomever you want, but only that, and don't take anything from him until you inform me to whom you have given your right hand. If *apa* Demetrios comes out, you will give him the bundle of palm-fronds ... the 30th of Thoth. Greet your children and all those in your household.

(Verso) From Hierax to his sister Arsinoe.”

1 Traces compatible with Ἱέραξ (TM Nam 4607) and Ἀρσινόῃ (TM Nam 2318) are confirmed by the verso docket (l. 27).

2 The traces before ἐπιστολήν are most compatible with *nu*; one might supply [ταύτην τή]ν.

For the *iota* in γρ[ά]φωι, see also μεριμνῶι (l. 10) and cf. *P.IFAO* 2.46 (I CE); *SB* 14.12084 (I CE); *BGU* 3.844 (83 CE, Diopolites Parvus); *P.Fay.* 344.verso.7 (II CE, Theadelphia);¹⁴ *P.Oxy.* 41.2980 (II CE).

¹⁴ For this text, see W. G. Claytor, A Schedule of Contracts and a Private Letter: *P.Fay.* 344, *BASP* 50 (2013): 111–119.

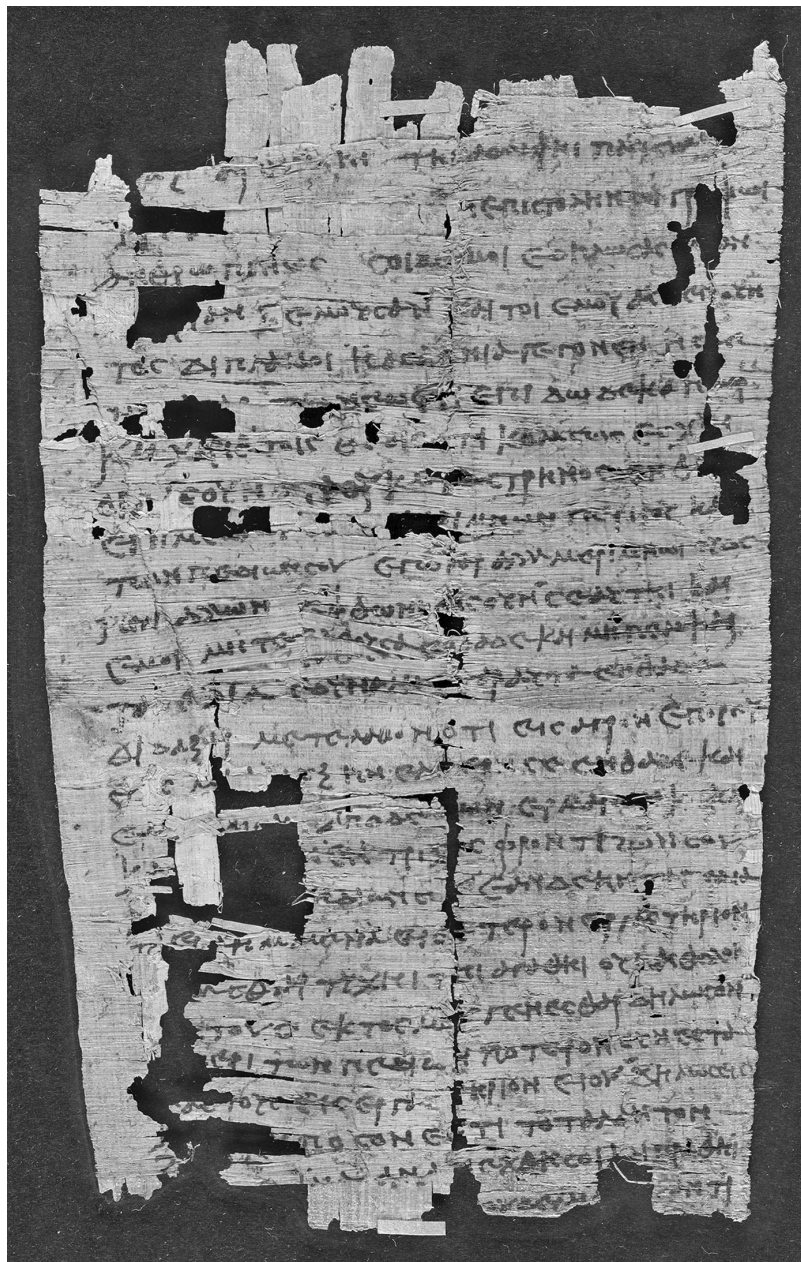
- 3 ἀνθροπίνως. A rare adverb; cf. *PSI* 12.1248.17 (235 CE, Oxyrhynchus); *P.Panop.Beatty* 2.85 (300 CE).
- 4 The reading at the start of the line is difficult. Only a trace of the first letter's lower left edge remains: it resembles a decorative serif, seen elsewhere at the start of the line on *kappa* (ll. 7, 17, 23) or *tau* (ll. 11, 13). If a single word is lost, *tau* is unlikely: we expect a noun, while the two best possibilities (τ[ελ]εῖαν or τ[αχ]εῖαν) are both adjectives. One might restore a noun/article pair, e.g., τ[ὴν θ]ύϊαν, where the "mortar" is perhaps a synecdoche for the olive press to which it belongs (cf. *Chr.Wilck.* 312.10, 55 CE; *Chr.Wilck.* 176.11, post 60 CE, both from Soknopaiou Nesos). The resulting phrase would mean "the olive press is very full", and would imply a larger context of oil production. But this is incompatible with the hypothesis of a single document: the date on inv. 2192 (= Thoth 30) falls before the season of the olive harvest (= Hathyr through Tubi).
- The letter following the lacuna has a descender that curves slightly at its base, a shape suggesting *upsilon* or *rho*, or (possibly) an unusually narrow *sigma* or *epsilon*. Reading *epsilon* would permit κ[υρ]εῖαν or κ[ηδ]εῖαν, neither of which makes good sense with the participle that follows. *Rho*, which might be the best reading of the traces, is difficult to construe with the serif at the beginning of the line: that decoration renders suggestions such as ἐ[πῆ]ριαν or ὕ[πῆ]ριαν unlikely. No solution is satisfactory: one might posit the noun ὀλοκληρία as appropriate to the context (cf. *P.Oxy.* 12.1593, IV CE) and in doing so read the serif at the start of the line as the lower edge of a larger *lambda*, but there is space for only two (or, at most, three) letters between *lambda* and *rho*, making [ὀ]λ[οκλη]ρίαν unlikely.
- γέμουσαν. For the meaning 'to be full' (*angefüllt sein*), see Preisigke, *WB* s.v. γέμω.
- 5 ἦδε. The traces read as *delta* are obscured by a hole: at left they are rather lunate (as possibly of *sigma*), and at right there is only a trace of a horizontal extender. For a *delta* with such a shape, cf. ἐδήλωσας (l. 3): if one reads *sigma* instead of *delta*, an attractive restoration is ἡσθελνη[κ]υ[τ]α (i.e., 'my illness doubled, when it had abated'). But the traces that follow in l. 6 are difficult to construe with the participle.
- 7 χάρις τοῖς θεοῖς. This form of the expression is not especially common in the Roman period, but the sentiment is normal in the context of one's improved health: cf. *P.Oslo* 3.155.1–2 (II CE) and – with the alternative expression εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ – *P.Oxy.* 55.3816.9–12 (III/IV CE).
- 8 στρήνος. A rare word in the papyri, elsewhere used of insolent behavior (i.e., *P.Oxy.* 55.3815.9) but here in the negative as a denial of any luxury or self-indulgence. For the expression κατὰ στρήνος, cf. Barsanuphius and John, *Letters* 771.19–20: τὸ γὰρ κατὰ στρήνος λούσασθαι καὶ οὐ κατὰ χρεῖαν ἐστὶ ἁμαρτία καὶ δίκαιον ἔχει σκάνδαλον ('for bathing out of self-indulgence and not out of need is a sin and veritably scandalous').¹⁵
- 11 ἐφθωνήθης. Aorist passive forms of this verb are unparalleled in the papyri, and the construction here with a pair of dative pronouns is additionally unusual.
- 15 A difficult restoration: before -ξην the traces resemble a squat *upsilon* more than *epsilon*, but the meaning produced by that analysis is unclear. We expect, rather, something along the lines of "I received news that you went to the country [when in fact I was expecting] you to come here ..." but the possible restorations for reading *upsilon* (e.g., αὖξην) are incompatible with that sense. Given the presence of μι- or μη- after ἐπορεύθης, I posit negation of some sort and restore ἐξῆν to produce a coherent thought: "I received news that you went to the country [and that] it was not possible for you to come here ...".
- 17 Another difficult restoration. The scribal pause between *nu* and *tau* in the sequence εντριχ[]ς invites the assumption of word-division: the space fits the genitive τριχός ('hair') better than the adverb τριχ[ω]ς ('threefold'). The latter analysis is nonetheless enticing; taken with the participle and the two genitives that it governs, a third object of thought may be lost in the lacuna of line 18. Alternatively,

¹⁵ See F. Neyt and P. de Angelis-Noah (eds), *Correspondence (Volume III, Aux laïcs et aux évêques, Lettres 617–848)* (Paris 2002).

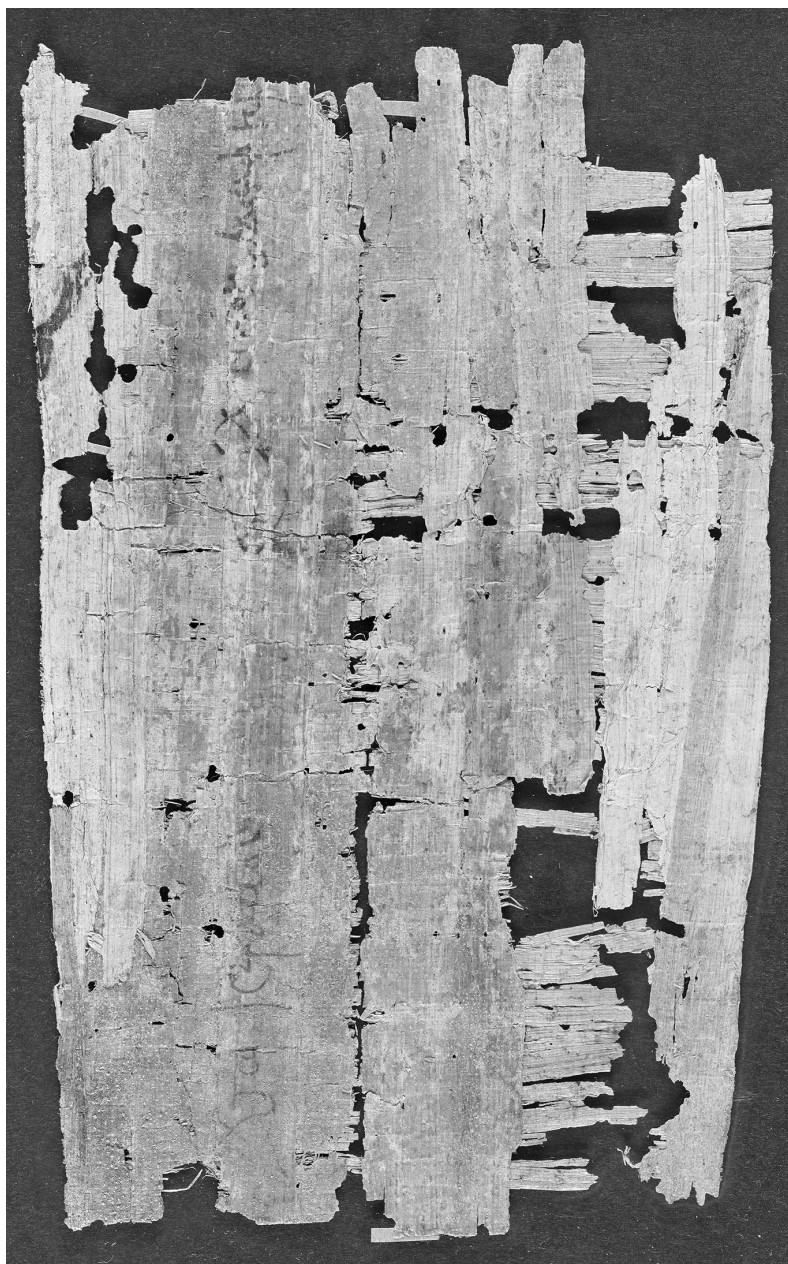
the adverb may recall διπλᾶ μοι ἡ ἀσθένεια of line 5 (the ‘doubled’ illness) – Hierax’s anxiety for his sister and her family might constitute yet another ailment. A more difficult analysis along this line of thinking derives from Hesychius (ε3403) and ignores the scribal pause: the lexicographer glosses ἔντριχον as ἀσθενές – but there are no good parallels in the papyri.

- 20** τύχηι τῇ ἀγαθῇ. Mention of good fortune is common in papyri, where a wish for good fortune is implicit, particularly in difficult circumstances (e.g., *P.Oslo* 3.78.16, 136 CE, Arsinoite nome). Here, the wish is explicit.
- 23** εἰ οὐ. Punctuation and interpretation are uncertain: if ἐργαστήριον is the end of the previous sentence, εἰ οὐ belongs with δηλώσεις. But εἰ οὐ could also belong to the previous sentence: interpreted as ἢ οὐ, it would make explicit the alternative implicit in πότερον – ‘whether ... or not’ – as in *P.Laur.* 4.187.4–5 (II CE), *P.Oxy.* 12.1488.23–24 (II CE), and *P.Oxy.* 12.1585.3 (II/III CE). The state of the text makes the problem intractable.
- 24** τάλαντον. Only at this point in the document do business affairs arise: if a join is to be made with P.Lond. inv. 2192, Hierax’s discussion of measures, shipping, and sales in 24–25 would lead into the second part of the letter.

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BL Papyrus 2126 recto



BL Papyrus 2126 verso