

## BUSINESS LETTER ON AN OSTRACON

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This Greek ostrakon belongs to the private collection in Leiden of Mr. A. Fatatri, and I am most grateful for his permission to publish it here. It was bought on the antiquities market, together with the demotic ostraca edited in the present volume, p. 151 and p. 160. They were all said to come from Thebes. The text may be assigned to the second half of the second century A.D. on palaeographical grounds.

The overall appearance of the handwriting is reminiscent of that of the Florida ostraca of the middle of the second century (cf. pp. 3-5), especially O. Florida 15 (Plate 7), although some of the letter forms differ. As is suggested by the parallel, Roman influence on the script is possible. For the  $\eta$  with curve to the left (line 5), see W. SCHUBART, *Griechische Paläographie*, Abb. 42. The  $\nu$ , drawn with its stem upwards, is of the "rising type"; see J. P. GUMBERT, P. L. Bat. 14, pp. 1-12.

The ostrakon contains a business letter from Paulinus to Serenus, whom he addresses as his brother, and perhaps they actually were brothers. The contents are difficult to reconstruct, especially as the end of each line is lacking. It is certain, however, that Serenus had previously sent a letter to Paulinus, asking him to do something, and the present letter is Paulinus' reply in which he tells him that he has done his best to act accordingly. He reports now that he had succeeded in obtaining something in exchange for or instead of four artabas of a certain commodity. This may have been five artabas of the same commodity (see line 4, note). The drift of lines 5-6 might just possibly be that Paulinus struck a good bargain and received the five artabas at the price of four. But here we are only guessing.

### TEXT

#### Plate V

Thebes

11.3 × 9 cm.

II A.D.

Potsherd: thickness: 0.5-0.9 cm.; colour: reddish brown; on the front two dark brown bands which were part of the decoration of the original pot; the back is ribbed and not inscribed. The text is complete on three sides, but broken away at the right.

- 1 Παυλεῖνος Σερήνω τῷ ἀδελφῷ [ - - χαίρειν.]
- 2 Καθὼς ἔγραψές μοι, ἀδελφε, .[
- 3 ἐσπούδασα καὶ ἔλαβον καθὼ[ς
- 4 ἀντὶ τεσσάρων ἀρταβῶν πε.[
- 5 τούτων τὴν τιμὴν οὐκ ἐλ[- - - τεσσά-]

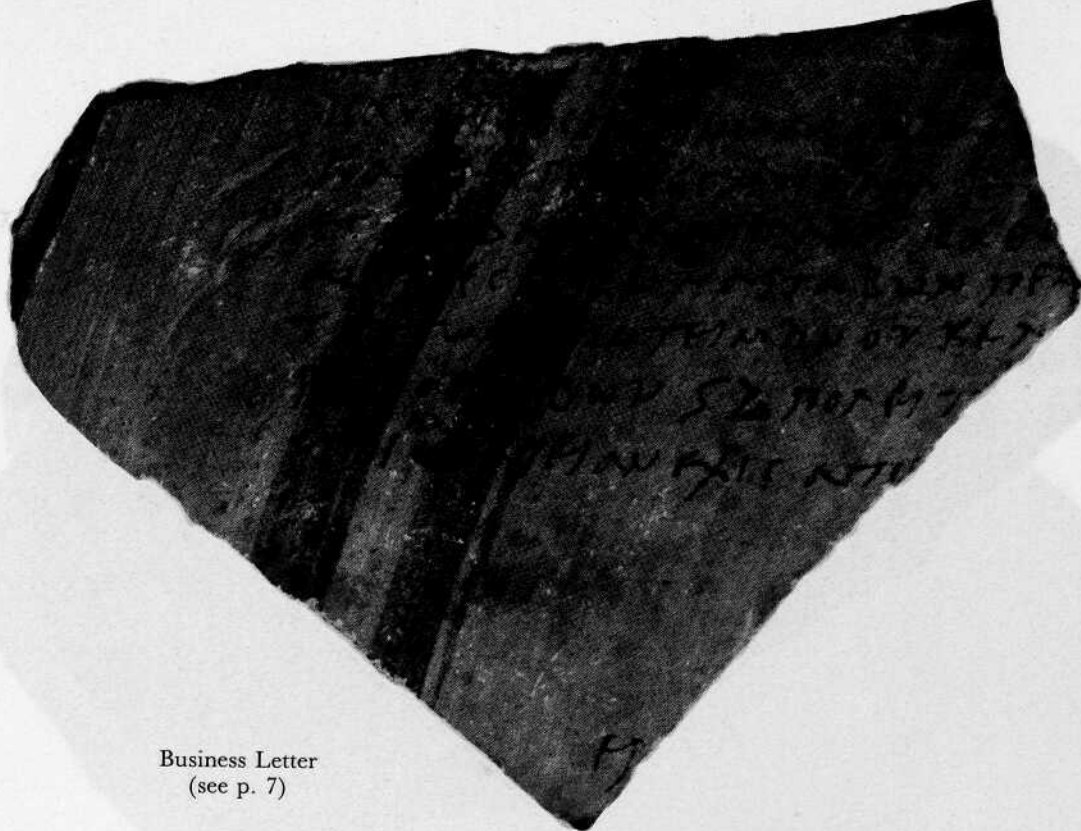
- 6 ρων ἀρταβῶν (δραχμ.) δ πολειτ[  
 7 εἴ τι [...] ἄλλο' χρεῖαν ἔχεις. Ἀσπ[άζ - -  
 8 Ἐρ[ρῶσθαί σε εὐχομαι.]

## TRANSLATION

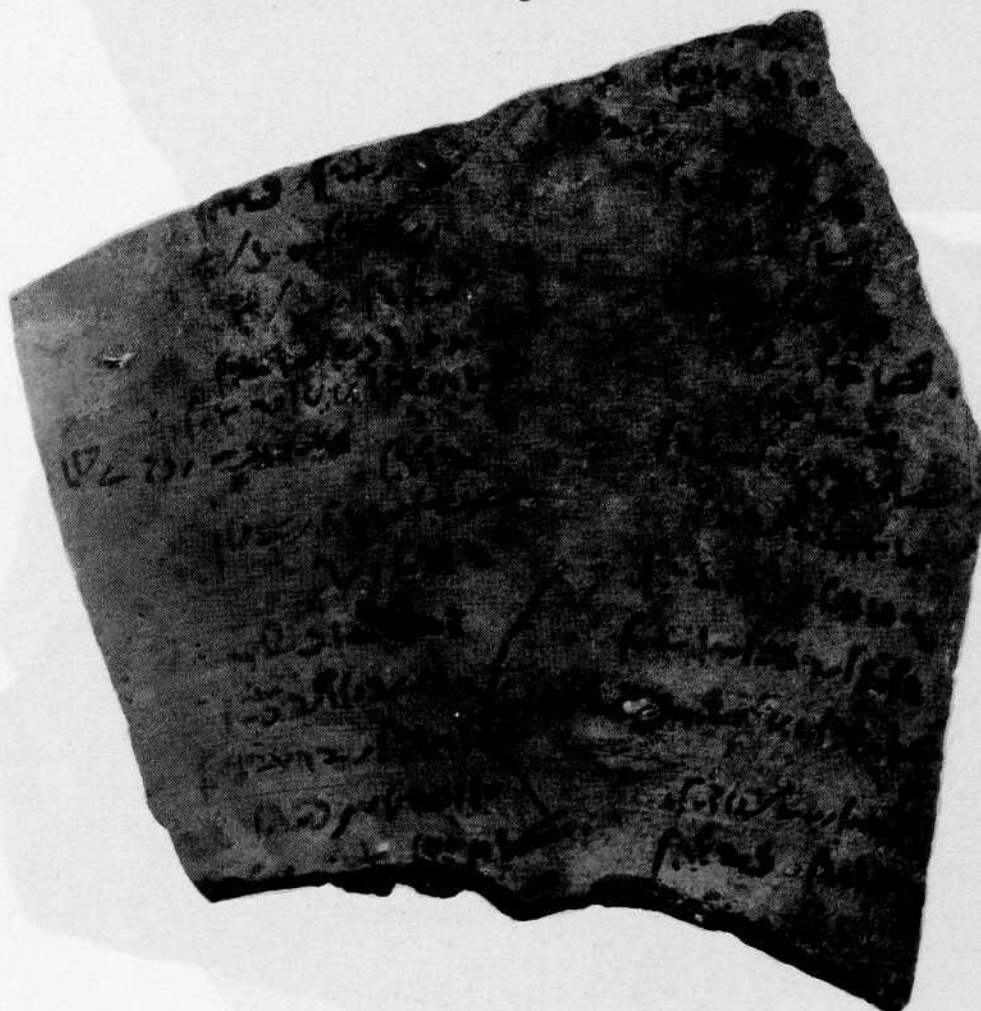
- 1 Paulinus to his brother Serenus, [ - - greetings.]  
 2 In conformity with what you have written to me, brother, [  
 3 I have done my best, and I have obtained, in conformity with [  
 4 for four artabas fi[ve (?)  
 5 the price thereof [I (?)] did not - - [  
 6 of four artabas 4 drachmas *poleit* [ - - . Let me know (?)]  
 7 if in any other way you have need. Greetings [to/from  
 8 I pray for your health.

## NOTES TO THE TEXT

- 1 πολλὰ/πλεῖστα χαίρειν or simply χαίρειν may be supplied. This tells us nothing about the length of the lacuna, for something like καὶ κυρίῳ may also have stood there (cf. O. Lund. 12, 1-2).  
 2 Perhaps περὶ ---.  
 3 καθὼς: supply ἔγραψες as in line 2 or some other verb meaning "you ordered" or "you wanted".  
 4 If πε. belongs to the preceding sentence, πέν[τε of course suggests itself. If we should punctuate after ἀρταβῶν, perhaps a form of πέμπω.  
 5 τήν: η corr. from ει, as if Paulinus were going to write the next word τιμήν = τιμήν.  
 - οὐκ ἐλ[ : maybe οὐκ ἐλ[αβον. This could mean that Paulinus received something (the fi[ve artabas?]), but did not receive the price for it, when selling it again. Perhaps better is a form of λογίζομαι; cf. P. Oxy. 48. 3385, 2-3: παράσχεις Ἀφυγίῳ ὧν τὴν τιμὴν ἐλογίσαμην αὐτῷ οἴνου κεράμια τρία. If οὐκ ἐλ[ογίσαμην is to be restored, the sense may have been: "I received instead of four artabas, five artabas; of these I did not book the price, but of four artabas: four drachmas"; also possible is οὐκ ἐλ[ογισάτο: "he did not charge me (or you) the price of the five artabas but of four artabas: four drachmas." In this case the subject, the seller of the five artabas (?), will have been mentioned in one of the lacunas above.  
 6 Four artabas at four drachmas would concern something very cheap (see A. C. JOHNSON, *Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian* [1936], pp. 310-321).  
 - The numeral letter is written in such a way that one might think of 4000; but it rather seems that the delta is made with a right oblique which started at the upper left, as in P. Hamb. 1. 39 passim (Taf. XI/XII).  
 - πολειτ[ : maybe πολεῖται for πωλεῖται, "it is sold", or a form of πολιτεύω in the meaning of "to be usual"; cf. P. Giss. 105, 7-8: κατὰ τὴν πολιτευομένην (sc. τιμήν). That we have πόλις or one of the names beginning with Πολ- seems less likely.  
 7 εἴ τι [...] ἄλλο': cf. P. Strasb. 2. 117, 6-7: εἴ τι ἄλλο χρήζω.  
 - At the end, just possibly ἀπό[στελλον, ἀπό[δειξον or ἀτή[σον; but ασπ[ seems a much better reading. The verb meaning "let me know", then, will have been in the lacuna in line 6, and here we most likely have the ἀσπάζομαι-wish.  
 8 ἐρ[ρῶσθαί σε εὐχομαι] or just ἐρ[ρωσο].



Business Letter  
(see p. 7)



List of names  
(see p. 151 no. 1)