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## 4 Imposing psychological pressure in papyrus request letters: A case study of six Byzantine letters written in an ecclesiastical context (VI–VII CE)

**Abstract:** The present study deals with two kinds of linguistic strategies attested in private request letters on papyrus, namely politeness strategies and those giving the epistolary text an imperative tone. By means of these coexisting strategies the sender exercises psychological pressure on the recipient, so that the latter satisfies his/her request(s). The object of the offered analysis is a corpus of six well-preserved, already published private papyrus request letters, which are dated to the Byzantine period of Egypt (330–641 CE) and written in an ecclesiastical milieu, i.e. they are sent to and received by clerics or monks. The selected letters are examined from the perspective of the interaction between politeness and imperative tone strategies. My aim is to explore whether they bear common features that allow us to speak of a special, “ecclesiastical” style of Byzantine letter writing in the papyri.

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 The aim of the study

The vast majority of private papyrus letters dated to the Byzantine period of Egypt (330–641 CE) fall into the category of request letters.<sup>1</sup> As such, we consider the letters in which requesting constitutes the primary communicative goal – or, at least, one of the main communicative goals – of their senders.<sup>2</sup> The latter resort to several

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<sup>1</sup> The present paper is based on my thorough study of requesting in an extensive corpus of 7.836 private papyrus letters dated to the Roman (31 BCE–330 CE), Byzantine and Early Arab (641–799 CE) periods of Egypt (Koroli 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Private letters can be defined as the authentic letters preserved on the original writing materials, referring to various fields of private life and sent to private persons and not to the authorities (Koroli 2016: 37–48, esp. 48). Private papyrus letters can be divided in two broad categories on the basis of the main communicative goal(s) of the ancient writers: (a) request letters, and (b) letters where requesting is not included in the main communicative goals of the sender, even if

linguistic strategies in their effort to convince the recipients to satisfy their requests. Very often, they use a wide variety of politeness strategies or they give their request(s) an imperative tone. The present chapter offers a study of the two aforementioned categories of linguistic strategies.

The object of my analysis is a corpus of six well-preserved, already published private papyrus request letters, which are dated to the Byzantine period and written in an ecclesiastical milieu, i.e. they are sent to and received by clerics or monks. The state of preservation of the writing material, along with the amount of information available regarding the context of the selected letters,<sup>3</sup> enables comprehensive analysis. My ultimate aim is to explore whether and to what extent we are entitled to speak of a special, i.e. “ecclesiastical” style of letter writing on the basis of papyrological evidence.

## 1.2 Theoretical framework and methodology

Linguistic politeness denotes the variety of strategies used by the requesters to soften the burden<sup>4</sup> imposed on the persons invited to satisfy their request. In this way, they prevent the possibility of becoming disliked sabotaging the achievement of their goal. The complexity of this linguistic and cultural phenomenon lies in the fact that it is connected with the interlocutors’ social features and relationship, the situational context of the text, as well as the general cultural framework, i.e. what is considered as (im)polite in a given speech community.<sup>5</sup> While analyzing courtesy expressions and imperative tone in papyrus request letters we are faced with one more factor of complexity: papyrus letters abound in markers of conventional politeness not necessarily connected to requesting, but to the writing of the letter *per se*. *Φιλοφρόνησις*, the expression of courtesy and friendly attitude towards the recipient of the letter, was considered by ancient epistolary theorists as the primary purpose of composing a

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they contain stereotypical requests through which the senders express their concern for the recipient and his or her relatives. For this classification, see Koroli (2016: 193–202, 257–263). Private correspondence was connected to the practicalities of everyday life, as well as to the maintenance of family and social bonds. Therefore, the greater proportion of request letters among private papyrus letters should be attributed to the key role of requesting in all these aspects of private life (e.g. in sending and receiving goods, transactions, cooperating, problem solving, etc.).

<sup>3</sup> See §4.

<sup>4</sup> Or threat, according to Brown and Levinson’s theoretical model (1987). When the beneficiary is not the sender, there is no such a burden.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Sifianou (1992: 38–39, 46–47, 200–219; 2014: 278–283).

letter and thus one of its inherent elements.<sup>6</sup> When it comes to papyrus request letters therefore, one must decide whether and to what extent this formulaic politeness should be connected to requesting or not. The analysis proposed will be completed in two stages:

- a) Location of the politeness and imperative tone markers in the selected texts and study of the way they enhance the achievement of the writers' main communicative goal, i.e. the satisfaction of the request.
- b) Comparative study of the linguistic data with certain social features of the writers, namely the fact that they are either monks or clergymen, as well as their place/status in the monastic order or the clerical hierarchy.

This text-driven analysis of papyrological evidence is based on theoretical and methodological concepts of text-linguistics and speech act theory.<sup>7</sup> The focus of study is not the use of single decontextualized linguistic elements but rather two sorts of interaction: on the one hand the interaction of various linguistic choices serving in conjunction the writer's intention and on the other hand the interaction of the text as a whole with its situational, inter-textual, and cultural context.

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<sup>6</sup> For ancient epistolary theory, cf. Trapp (2003: 42–46), Muir (2009: 18–24), Koroli (2016: 48–51). Compare also the term *captatio benevolentiae* denoting the linguistic strategies used by the writer of ancient letters and petitions in order to gain the favour of the addressee; cf. Zilliacci (1949, 1953, 1967), Koskenniemi (1956: esp. 64–154), Papatthomas (2007, 2009). One of the most common expressions of formulaic courtesy is the use of honorific names, cf. Hornickel (1930), Zilliacci (1949), Kim (2011: 52–57 *et passim*).

<sup>7</sup> The approach suggested here has some relevance to studies concerning the organization of textual information, e.g. Kim (1972), who analyzed directives in a small corpus of papyrus letters of introduction and Risselada's analysis of directives in a small corpus of Latin authors (1993), which is also based on speech act theory. Studies on some markers of politeness and imperative tone in private request letters are offered by Leiwo (2010) and Dickey (1996, 2001, 2010, 2016a). My starting point is the thorough, systematic analysis of the papyrological evidence and the classification of markers of politeness and imperative tone as (a) commonplace and unusual, (b) directly and indirectly connected to requesting, and finally (c) more helpful and less helpful as far as the achievement of the sender's goal is concerned.

In other words, I intend to create a framework of analysis applicable to the special features of papyrus letters. Modern analyses of linguistic politeness may enable more insight if we take into consideration the individualities of papyrus correspondence. For instance, it would be tempting to examine the wealth of information found in papyrus letters according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) notions of positive and negative politeness, of requesting as a threat, and of positive and negative politeness cultures. Also, to draw the line between the frequent, conventionalized or formulaic strategies and the unusual or unexpected ones on the basis of Terkourafi (2002, 2005, 2008), and Watts' (2003) theories. On the application of modern models of analysis on ancient sources, see Dickey (2016b).

### 1.3 Directive speech acts in papyrus private letters

Directives<sup>8</sup> in private papyrus letters can be analyzed according to speech act theory<sup>9</sup> as locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.<sup>10</sup> For example, the sender of SB XIV 12123 (V–VI CE), asks the recipient to send him a bowl (φιάλιον), which is necessary because of the upcoming visit of the prefect:

- (1) **καταξιούτω ἡ ἀδελφική σου διάθεσις πέμψαι μοι διὰ τοῦ γραμματη|  
φόρου τὸ φιάλι<ο>ν**, ἐπειδὴ χρεια γίνεται αὐτοῦ αὔριον· | ἤκουσα γὰρ ὅτι  
ἀνέρχεται ὁ κύριός μου ὁ ἄρχων. καὶ με<τὰ> τὴν | ἐπιδημίαν \αὐτοῦ/ πάλιν εἰ  
χρήσεις λαμβάνεις· οἶδας γὰρ ὅτι ἄλλο | οὐκ ἔχω· εἰ γὰρ εἶχον, οὐκ ἂν ἐζήτουν,  
ὡς καὶ ἐπίστασαι.

**‘May your brotherly attitude deign to send me the bowl via the letter-carrier**, as there will be need of it tomorrow; for I heard that my lord the prefect is coming up. And after his visit you can have it again if you need it. For you know that I don’t have another one; for if I had, I would not have asked, as you understand’.<sup>11</sup>

(SB XIV 12123, 1–5; V–VI CE) [tr.: Shelton (1977: 169)]

Since the intention of the scribe is to ask for an article that he needs, the illocutionary act performed is requesting. The formulation of the request, i.e. the locutionary act, is found at the beginning of the letter (καταξιούτω . . . φιάλι<ο>ν [‘May . . . the bowl’]). In the remainder of text the scribe not only explains the reasons for requesting this bowl (ἐπειδὴ . . . ὁ ἄρχων [‘. . . as . . . the prefect’]; οἶδας γὰρ . . . ἐπίστασαι [‘For you know . . . you understand’]) but also assures the recipient that he will give the bowl back when necessary (καὶ με<τὰ> . . . λαμβάνεις [‘And after . . . you can have it’]). The possible satisfaction of the request, that is the sending of the bowl by the recipient, constitutes the perlocutionary act.

Directives similar to this are attested in the main body of the papyrus private letters.<sup>12</sup> They concern a wide variety of everyday issues that can be classified according to the following (overlapping) thematic categories: financial and/or law

**8** The terms “directive” and “request” are used indiscriminately as general terms denoting all kinds of directive speech acts (asking, begging, commanding, urging, etc.).

**9** Searle (1969, 1976, 1981).

**10** Koroli (2016: 89–99).

**11** The English translation of the texts and passages cited in the present chapter is my own unless otherwise attested.

**12** These directives are rarely submitted as postscripts, see Koroli (2016: 218–226). Furthermore, the verso also contains stereotypical requests, by means of which the sender asks the letter-carrier to give the letter to its addressee; e.g. P.Oxy. LVI 3869, 14 (VI–VII CE): *ἔπίδ(ος) τῷ θαυμαστ(ιωτάτῳ) vacat* Ἀνοῦπ π(αρά) Ἰωάγγου [‘Deliver to the most admirable Anup, from

issues, domestic and/or professional activities, health and/or illness, human relationships (family, friendships, cooperations), important events such as birth or death, justice and/or restoration of the order, ethics and/or religion (but no metaphysics), religious habits, obligations or events, and, of course, psychological and/or emotional issues. The object of requesting is either giving/sending or receiving (mostly goods, money, letters and individuals), or is related to other activities, such as the production of oral texts, for example, when the recipient is asked to submit a request to a third person, tasks related to professional life, social or emotional problems, and others. Finally, an important parameter of requesting is the number of persons involved, namely the requester(s), the recipient(s) of the request(s), the person(s) who will satisfy the request(s) and the beneficiary/-ies from the satisfaction of the request(s), as well as the relationship of these individuals.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.4 Direct and indirect directives

### 1.4.1 Direct requests

The majority of requests contained in papyrus private letters are direct, i.e. requests formulated in a manner which points directly to the writer's communicative goal. Direct requests are formulated mainly by means of grammatical markers of deontic modality.<sup>14</sup> Performative verbs such as *ἔρωτῶ* and *παρακαλῶ* (both meaning 'to entreat') are also very common. Alternatively, verbs such as *γράφω* ('to write') or *πέμπω* ('to send') are combined with subordinate clauses of purpose; in this case, the directiveness derives from the purposive value of the subordinate, which reveals in an explicit manner what is requested.<sup>15</sup>

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John'; tr. Sirivianou (in Sirivianou et al. 1989: 158)]; on this type of request, see Koroli (2016: 227–230).

**13** Koroli (2016: 93–97).

**14** Mostly imperative or subjunctive mood, or rarely infinitive or simple future; the encoding of deontic modality in the lexicon, i.e. the use of deontic verbs such as the impersonal *χρή* ('it is necessary'), is much rarer.

**15** On the various ways of formulating direct requests in private papyrus letters, see Koroli (2016: 100–126), where many examples and previous bibliography are offered; cf. also indicatively Ljungvik (1932: 94–98), Steen (1938: 131–138, 140–143, 146–147, 153–168). Deontic modality is very closely related to directives; cf. Iakovou (1999: 27–30).

Direct requests constitute the core of thematic-textual units including their thematically relevant co-text. The organization of these units is based on the following rhetorical pattern:

*preparation for the directive – formulation of the directive – supplement of the directive*

The framing of the requests, i.e. their thematically relevant co-text, functions as their preparation or their supplement in one or more of the following ways: A. informing the recipient; B. imposing psychological pressure on the recipient; C. in other ways, e.g. encouraging the recipient (assuring him/her that the satisfaction of the request is feasible). This organizational pattern varies, depending on whether it is complete, as well as on the function of the preparation and/or the supplement.

Many private papyrus letters contain more than one directive. These directives may concern the same topic or not. In the first case, they belong to the same thematic-textual unit, the structure of which is based on complicated versions of the above presented rhetorical schema. In the second case, they constitute the core of separate thematic-textual units. Sometimes, a directive plays a subsidiary role with regard to another request (basic directive). These supplementary directives increase the perlocutionary effect of the basic directives because they impose psychological pressure on the recipient either directly, e.g. by repeating the content of the basic request, or indirectly, e.g. by inquiring for the recipient's health.<sup>16</sup>

#### 1.4.2 Indirect requests

The term “indirect request” is used in the present study to denote the directive which is not formulated by means of the recurrent linguistic elements presented in Section 1.4.1. These requests do not constitute the core of textual units based on the aforementioned tripartite organizational pattern. In the case of indirect requests the recipient has to detect the sender's communicative goal. Indirect directives are very rare in private papyrus letters. This should be attributed, first of all, to the utilitarian character of these letters, which are short texts concerning everyday issues. Moreover, the formulation of direct requests makes the sender's communicative goal easily conceivable by the recipient, which was important given the difficulties concerning the sending of the letters.

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<sup>16</sup> Koroli (2016: 127–202).

Unlike modern languages like Modern Greek and English, indirect requesting is not necessarily connected to politeness. However, there are several letters where the sender chooses this method of requesting in order to be both discreet and polite. In this case, a variety of interacting linguistic choices are resorted to in order to submit the request.<sup>17</sup>

## 2 Politeness strategies vs. imperative tone in request papyrus letters

### 2.1 General remarks

Both markers of politeness and markers of imperative tone function as means of imposing psychological pressure on the recipient of the request letter, i.e. as means of increasing the perlocutionary result of requesting.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, politeness strategies function as means of imposing indirect – but not necessarily light – psychological pressure: their use is aimed at the moral engagement of the recipient. The sender attempts to seem pleasant to the recipient showing his/her respect, friendliness, admiration, or even his/her affection. By doing so, he/she tries to compensate for the burden laid upon the recipient due to requesting. In several request letters though polite tone is striking or even extreme. Finally, some of the politeness strategies attested in papyrus request letters are very frequently attested in the papyrological evidence, whereas others are rarely or even once attested.

The function of strategies giving the papyrus private letters an imperative tone is stronger or more direct in comparison with the function of politeness strategies. By using them, the writer expresses clearly his/her communicative goal; sometimes he/she expresses intensively his/her will and aims at the immediate activation of the recipient by causing a sense of responsibility or even negative feelings such as sadness, fear or guilt. In my opinion, there are three variations of such an imperative tone: A. the urgent tone due to a problematic situation; B. the strict tone (without necessarily blaming the recipient); C. the accusative or criticizing tone. Urgency, strictness and criticizing mood may well overlap. For example, the sender may adopt a strict attitude towards the recipient

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<sup>17</sup> P.Oxy. XVI 1868 (VI–VII CE) and P.Oxy. XVI 1869 (VI–VII CE) are such cases; see Papatomas and Koroli (2014), Koroli (2014: 50–52), Koroli (2016: 212–214).

<sup>18</sup> See Koroli (2016: 231–256).

not only because he/she wants to be absolutely sure that the latter will satisfy the request and/or because his/her social status allows him/her to do so, but also because they want at the same time to blame the recipient for being negligent, inconsistent, irresponsible or, in general, for having caused a problem. In other cases, the sender may stress the urgency of solving a problem in the most polite way, because the recipient is not responsible for the problem in question and/or because the social status of the recipient is much higher than that of the sender. Similarly to politeness strategies, markers of imperative tone vary, depending on whether and to what extent they are commonplace or unusual. It should be noted that cursing was a very rare occurrence in private papyrus letters.<sup>19</sup>

To sum up, politeness is the antipode of requesting in the sense that requesting lays a burden on its recipient and politeness strategies compensate for this burden. Every choice of the sender putting emphasis on requesting itself is an imperative tone marker; every choice deriving from the sender's effort to lessen the burden of requesting and become pleasant for the recipient is a politeness marker. Imperative tone markers showing the sender's strict or accusative attitude towards the recipient could be also defined as 'impoliteness markers'. It is interesting to observe how politeness strategies interact with imperative tone markers.

## 2.2 The place of markers of politeness and of imperative tone in the main body of request papyrus letters

The position of markers of politeness and of imperative tone contained in the main body of the letter is either in the thematic-textual unit of the directive(s), or in the non-directive co-text which is not thematically related to a directive.<sup>20</sup> The markers of politeness or of imperative tone contained in the main body of the Byzantine letters interact with those contained in the verso.

<sup>19</sup> SB XX 14463 (V CE) offers a very rare example of cursing: Οὐαλέριος vacat Ἀθανασίῳ [- - -] | κακόγηρε, προδότα, πορνοβοσκέ· τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτο, [ - - - αὐ] | τῆ τῆ ὥρα ἐνεχθῶσι αἱ ἑκατὸν σαργάναι του [- - - τῆ] | ἔστιν νεῦρα Οὐαλερίου. μὰ τὸν Χριστόν, δε<ε>ῖ με καῦσαι σε σ[- - -] [‘Valerios to Athanasios . . . you, bloody old man (?), traitor, brothel-keeper! This thing . . . bring the one hundred baskets of . . . immediately . . . they are whips of Valerios. For Christ's sake, I must burn you . . .’].

<sup>20</sup> This chapter includes only some of the recurrent or commonplace strategies. Given the topic of the present paper, the passages cited are extracted exclusively from Byzantine letters.



### 2.2.1 Markers of politeness or imperative tone in the textual unit of the directive — Some characteristic examples

Both politeness and imperative tone are codified, first and foremost, in the formulation of the request.<sup>21</sup> The use of the 2nd person plural or the 3rd person singular (usually with an honorific name as subject) is one of the recurrent politeness strategies.<sup>22</sup> The choice of the subjunctive instead of the imperative mood is also one of the most common markers of politeness. The use of θέλω ('to want') or καταξιώω ('to deign') in one of these two moods constitutes a more striking politeness strategy.<sup>23</sup> The use of performative verbs ἐρωτῶ and παρακαλῶ (also in the passive aorist) or formulas such as καλῶς or εὖ ποιέω (in the 2nd person, 'you will do well to. . .') also belong to the commonplace strategies of politeness.<sup>24</sup> Linguistic choices for the avoidance of the deontic markers (such as γράφω + purpose clause) discussed in Section 1.4.1 should also be considered as markers of politeness. Finally, the occurrence of conditional sentences, may lessen the deontic content.<sup>25</sup>

The use of the imperative mood or of the simple future instead of the subjunctive or παρακαλῶ are very common imperative tone markers. An equally common strategy is the increase of deontic modality;<sup>26</sup> this is achieved, for

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Leiwo (2010); Dickey (2016a).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. e.g. P.Cair.Masp. I 67064, 15–16 (ca. 538–547 CE; see HGV): κα[ι] ἀπ[ο]πέμψατέ μοι τὰ αὐτὰ χαρτία ['and **send back** to me the same small leaves of papyri']; P.Oxy. XVI 1847, 2–4 (VI–VII CE): **παρασκευάση** οὖν αὐτὸν | **ἢ σὴ γνησία ἀδελφότης** τὸ γραμματίον ἀποτεθῆν[αι] ἐν μέσῃ χειρὶ . . . | καὶ τὰ ὀλοκόττινα δοθῆναι τῇ γυναικί . . . ['**Will your true brotherliness** therefore **cause** the bond to be deposited by him . . . and the solidi to be given to the woman . . .'; tr.: Grenfell, Hunt & Bell (1924: 32)].

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e.g. P.Hamb. III 228, 6–7 (VI CE): **θέλησον** δὲ **ἀνελεῖν** πρὸς τὸν γεοῦχον καὶ παρακαλέσαι αὐτόν, ἵνα πέμψῃ | τὸν αὐτὸν μονοπωλάριον ἐνταῦθα πρώτον. ['**Be so good as to go** to the landlord and ask him to send the same monopolarius here first'; for a German tr., see Kramer and Hagedorn (1984: 179)]; P.Ant. I 45, 2–4 (VI CE): **καταξιώση ἢ σὴ ἀδελφότης ἔασαι** | τὸν κύριον Οὐράνιον ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ οἰκ[ε]ῖα | εἰς ὀλίγας ἡμέρας. ['**May your brotherliness condescend to let** the lord Ouranios be in the great house for a few days'; tr.: Roberts (1950: 103)].

<sup>24</sup> Cf. e.g. P.Köln III 166, 14–15 (VI–VII century CE): **παρακληθήτω** οὖν **ἡ ἐμὴ δέσποινα** (I. δέσποινα) | συντόμως **δηλώσαι** μοι τὴν ἀπόκρισιν ἢ τὴν τιμὴν. ['**I ask my mistress to give** me **the answer** or the purchase price'; for a German tr., see Hübner (in Kramer, Ertler, Hagedorn and Hübner 1980: 186–187)].

<sup>25</sup> Cf. e.g. SB XVI 12573, 2–4 (mid-VI CE; see HGV): **εἰ δοκεῖ τῷ ὑμετέρῳ μεγέθει**, Ἄ[ν]τώνιο[ν] τὸν πεδιοφύλακα καὶ Παύλου (I. Παῦλον) | τὸν φυγό<ν>τα καταξιωσάτω τούτους ζητῆσαι καὶ συνευρεθῆναι μετὰ τῶν | ἄλλων. ['**Please / If you are fine with it**, may your highness condescend to seek out the guard of the estate Antonios and the escaped Paulos and make them stay with the others'; for a German tr., see Karlsson and Maehler (1979: 289)].

<sup>26</sup> Koroli (2016: 106–112).

instance, by means of deontic adverbs, as well as adverbs or adverbial phrases denoting the manner, the quantity, or the time.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, formulas like μή οὖν ἄλλως ποιήσης ('don't do it in other way') or directives with many parts are very frequently attested.<sup>28</sup>

Both politeness and imperative tone are expressed in various manners in the non-directive co-text, functioning as preparation for or supplements to the directive. For example, stressing the urgency undoubtedly accords the letter an imperative tone.<sup>29</sup> The reminders of older requests, not yet satisfied by the recipient and, in general, complaints or expression of anger or disappointment for promises not kept are common thematic motifs.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, flattering the recipient before and/or after the formulation of the request is clearly a politeness strategy.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, even the provision of detailed information to justify the submission of the request could be considered a sort of politeness strategy.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. CPR XXIV 31, 7–8 (mid- or second half of VII CE): λοιπὸν πέμψον εὐθέως [τὰ] | ὀφείλοντα ζητῆσαι <τ>αὐτα αὐτόθι. ['So ask **immediately** what is needed to be claimed on the spot'; for a tr. in German, see Palme (2002: 183)].

<sup>28</sup> A request has two or more parts when the object of what is asked is denoted by infinitives, participles or subordinate clauses which are dependent on the same verb or verbal periphrasis (see Koroli 2016: 123–125). In the following passage, not only is the formula πᾶν ποιήσον used, but also the recipient is asked to proceed in three actions, all objects to the periphrasis: πᾶν ποιήσον οὖν, κύριέ μου | ἀδελφέ, σοῦ κατερχομένου λαβ<ε>ῖν τὸ κέρμα | καὶ ἀγοράσε (l. ἀγοράσαι) μοι ἐντολικὸν καὶ λαβ<ε>ῖν | παρὰ τῆς Μεγάλης τὸ στιχάριον (P.Oxy. XIV 1775, 11–14; IV CE). ['Therefore, my lord brother, **make any possible effort to take** the money when you come **and carry out** the note of authorization, **and take** the tunic from Megale'; for an Italian translation, see Naldini (1998<sup>2</sup>: 275–277) [No 66]].

<sup>29</sup> For example, in the following passage, the choice of vocabulary clearly points to a problematic situation: P.Oxy. XVI 1849, 1–2 (VI–VII CE): καταξίωση ἢ ὑμετέρα γνησία ἀδελφότης μίαν ὑπὲρ μίαν πέμψαι μοι ἐλεοσπάρακα (l. ἐλαιοσπάραγα), | ἐπειδὴ τὸ λάχανον ὄδε (l. ὠδε) σαπρὸν ἔστι καὶ σιαινόμε (l. σιainομαι). ['Will your true brotherliness have the goodness to send me from day to day some asparangus, for the vegetables here are **rotten** and **disgust** me'; tr.: Grenfell, Hunt & Bell (1924: 33)].

<sup>30</sup> Cf. e.g. P.Oxy. XVI 1935, 2–5 (VI CE): καταξίωση ἢ σὴ ἀδελφότης παρασκευασον τοὺς ἀγροφύλακας | τοῦ κτήματος Μεσκανοῦνιος ἀναδοῦναι τὴν μηχανὴν τοῦ | θαυμασιωτάτου Παπνουθίου, ὡς καὶ [ἄ]λλοτε ἐβρῆκα | τοῖς φρονιταιαῖς τοῦ αὐτοῦ κτήματος. ['May your true brotherliness condescend to cause the land-guards to hand over the field / water-wheel of the most splendid Papnouthios, **as I have said at another time to the stewards of the same estate.**']

<sup>31</sup> Cf. e.g. P.Herm. 17, 2–3 (late IV CE?; see BL X 86): ἡ χρηστώτητα (l. χρηστότης) σου κατέλαβεν πάντας τοὺς μὴ (l. μὴ) δυναμένους· | καμὲ φθάσι (l. φθάσει) ἢ ἐλεημοσύνην (l. ἐλεημοσύνη) σου, κύριε. ['Your goodness **embraces all those without resources**; and let your mercy extend to me too, my lord'; tr.: Bagnall and Criore (2006: 204); see also Rees (1964: 30)].

### 2.2.2 Coexisting directives

The formulation of subsidiary requests, repeating emphatically (either identically reproducing or paraphrasing) one or more basic requests is a recurrent linguistic strategy used to convey an imperative tone to the request letter. In most cases, these subsidiary requests are commonplace requests through which the sender asks the recipient not to be neglectful.<sup>32</sup> The coexistence of more than one request in many cases intensifies the imperative tone.<sup>33</sup>

At the other end of the scale, any stereotypical, commonplace request connoting that the sender cares about the recipient and/or his/her family, functions as a politeness strategy regarding the basic request(s) contained in the letter.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2.3 Politeness strategies in the non-directive co-text, not thematically related to a directive

As already noted in Section 1.3, conventional politeness constitutes an integral part of letter-writing regardless of the main communicative goals of the senders. The use of strategies which are closely related to requests in terms of subject matter, can be attributed with certainty to the effort of the sender to enhance the satisfaction of the request. Politeness strategies which are not thematically connected to directives, are mostly common politeness markers occurring in all kinds of letters (not only in request letters) or even in other kinds of papyrus non-literary texts. The use of these commonly attested strategies in

<sup>32</sup> Cf. e.g. PSI IV 318, 3–9 (IV CE?): παράσχου τῷ ἀδελφῷ μου Ἀμμωνίωνι | ἅφ' ὧν μου ἔχεις | ἀργυρίου μυριάδαν μίαν· | γί(νε)ται ἀρ(γυρίου) (μυριάς) α. **ἀλλ' ὄρα μὴ | ἀμελήσης, κύριέ μου | ἄδελφε.** ['Provide my brother Ammonion ten thousand myriads of silver; total, 10.000 myriads of silver. **See that you won't be neglectful my lord brother.**']

<sup>33</sup> Cf. e.g. P.Oxy. XVI 1838, 1–5 (VI CE), which contains four directives: καὶ τὴν ὑποδοχὴν πᾶσαν τοῦ μακαρίου Ἰού[σ]του αὐτὸς **ὑπόδεξε (I. ὑπόδεξαι), | καὶ μὴ ἐάσης** τὸν σίτον ἐπάνω τῶν γεωργῶν. **ἔασον δὲ** | Φίβιν ἐγγὺς σοῦ, ἵνα διδάξῃ σε τὰ πράγματα ἔω[ς] ὅτε μάθω | ποῖον τύπον ὀφείλω δοῦναι αὐτῷ. τὸν **δὲ** σύμμαχον Ἰούστου **ἔ[α]σον** ἐγγὺς | σοῦ ἕως ὅτε πληρώσῃ τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν αὐτοῦ. [**Receive** yourself all that the late Justus collected, **and do not leave** the corn in the hands of the cultivators. **Allow** Phibius to remain with you in order that he may instruct you in your duties until I learn what decision I am to give him. **Allow** the messenger of Justus to remain with you till he has completed this year'; tr.: Grenfell, Hunt & Bell (1924: 21)].

<sup>34</sup> Cf. e.g. the request contained in ll. 27–28 of P.Oxy. LIX 4000 (late IV CE), a long letter, containing many directives: **ἄσπασον** τοὺς ἡμῶν | πάντας κατ' ὄνομα. [**Greet** all your own people name by name'; tr.: Ioannidou (in Handley, Ioannidou, Parsons, and Whitehorn 1992: 156)]. Requests like this not only do not constitute a burden for the recipient, but also their formulation constitutes a politeness strategy.

request letters, however, has a special dynamic: similar to politeness strategies which are thematically related to requests, they function as compensatory strategies, only in a more indirect way.

Thus, any expression of deference, care, love or admiration contained in the main body of the letter, such as the commonplace expressions of greeting and wishing, or the expressions of thanking or positive evaluation of the recipient, can be considered as a strategy of politeness.<sup>35</sup>

### 2.3 The features of the Byzantine style of letter writing

In Byzantine correspondence on papyrus, the interaction of politeness and imperative tone becomes more interesting. In these letters, the emphasis on politeness is greater, even when the writer obviously has the intention of blaming the recipient. Furthermore, there are much more options codifying the intention of the ancient writers to seem polite in comparison with earlier periods. For instance, the sender can use the subjunctive mood instead of the imperative as well as the 2nd person plural of politeness or the 3rd person singular (with an honorific name as subject). Consequently, the complete absence of commonly used politeness strategies where their use is expected, is much more striking compared to letters dated to earlier times.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, in private letters of this era, politeness is very closely related to religiousness and the display of Christian virtues, such as humbleness.<sup>37</sup> The increase of politeness strategies in private

**35** Cf. e.g. the beginning of the short request letter P.Ant. I 45, 1–2 with BL XI 7 (VI CE): *πρὸ μὲν πάντων πολλὰ προσκυνῶ καὶ ἀσπάζομαι | τὰ ἴχνη σου*. [‘First of all I make obeisance to your countenance and salute your footsteps’; tr.: Roberts (1950: 103)].

**36** Cf. e.g. the case of P.Harr. I 159, 1–7 with BL III 83 (V–VI CE): *ἄ ἦλθεν ὁ καιρὸς τῆς καταβολῆς. φρόντισον οὖν μὴ ἀμελήσης, ἴνα μοὶ (l. μὴ) ὀχλήσης ἐνταῦθα, | καὶ μὴ ἀνέλθης ἐς τὴν πόλιν [πρὶν ἂν ποιήσῃς] τὴν καταβολήν, καὶ μὴ | ὡς ἐ<ί>ς ἡμᾶς ἀσημονήσαι. οἱ δὲ σταυροῖς ὑπῆλθιν (l. ὑπεισιν) τοῦ γεούχου καὶ τοῦ βοηθοῦ. ποιήσον | τινα δύο μουεῖων (l. μωίων) χόρτου ἔνεχθῆναι/ τοῦ ζώου ταχέως. φρόντισον δὲ τὰ [ἐ]πέ<ν>τε ὀλοκόττινα | τοῦ τέκτονος πεμ. [- - -] | (hand 2) λαβέ καὶ τὸν σίτον τοῖς πε[σί] (l. παισί). οἶδες (l. οἶδας) ὅτι ὁ κόμες (l. κόμης) ἀπεσ[πασε] ν[ε]ωστί (?) τὸν σίτον | Μαλέου Κλέωνος· μὴ ἀμελήσης [οὔν].* [‘The time for you to make the payment has come. So, take care that you don’t disturb me here, that you don’t return to the city before making the payment and you don’t misbehave with us. Those who behave in this way are under the torment of the landowner and the assistant. Take care that the one of the two moia be quickly carried by the animal. Take care that the five solidi of the craftsman . . . Moreover, take the wheat from the slaves; you know that lately the comes took away the wheat of Maleos Kleon. Therefore, don’t be neglectful. . .’; for a Spanish tr., see O’Callaghan (1963: 157–159) [No 42]].

**37** On private Christian letters on papyrus, see, among others, Tibiletti (1979), Naldini (1998<sup>2</sup>), Kim (2011), and Koroli (2016: 75–97).

letters dated to this period could be attributed to the gradual disappearance of the opening and closing formulas from the fourth and fifth centuries CE onwards.<sup>38</sup>

### 3 Classification of papyrus request letters on the basis of politeness and imperative tone

Linguistic (im)politeness is a very complex phenomenon. Therefore, several linguistic and extra-linguistic factors should be taken into consideration while analysing papyrus letters from this point of view. The most important parameter is the content of the text, namely what is requested and for whom. The interaction of various linguistic elements and strategies, i.e. the quantity, quality and originality of linguistic markers of politeness or of imperative tone markers, should also be examined carefully. Specifically, what should be examined is A. the combination and interaction of commonplace politeness strategies (e.g. the honorific names) with those less common; B. the combination and interaction of strategies making part of the thematic-textual unit(s) of the directive(s) with those found in other parts of the letter; C. the coexistence of politeness strategies with imperative tone markers and the way the former moderate the impact of the latter.

The social identity and the relationship of the correspondents are equally important factors. The reconstruction of the extra-linguistic context of papyrus letters is difficult if not impossible. Nevertheless, frequently the main body of the letter and/or the verso contain useful information concerning the correspondents' social status and their relationship (e.g. words or expressions denoting professions, titles or family relationships). Difficulties derive from damaged writing material, the ambiguity of the content and/or the use of polysemous words, such as κύριος/κυρία or δεσπότης/δέσποινα often used in addresses.<sup>39</sup> Finally, the dating of the papyrus letter plays a crucial role. For instance, it is absolutely necessary to consider the norm of letter writing established from the fifth century onwards (see §2.3).

Judging by the above-mentioned observations we could divide requesting in private papyrus letters into the following categories on the basis of the interaction between imperative tone and courtesy strategies, otherwise said of

<sup>38</sup> Papatomas (2007: 507).

<sup>39</sup> Dickey (1996, 2001); Papatomas (2007: 504–506).

the proportion between imperative tone and politeness strategies. These categories belong to a continuum starting from over-politeness and ending in impoliteness:

- a) Requesting concerning an urgent situation. The sender appears to be absolutely dependent on the recipient's help. Over-politeness strategies and the expression of humbleness are the means to which he/she resorts in order to be convincing. In this case, we can speak of solicitation.
- b) There is a problem to be solved, an urgency or even an accusation. The urgency or the critical mood of the sender though are obvious only from the content, since the sender refers to them in the most discreet way. This is because over-politeness is displayed as a compensation for the imperative tone deriving from the content, so that the sender does not seem offensive. In other words, the sender clearly relies on politeness strategies to be convincing but not because he/she is dependent on the recipient.
- c) There is neither a problem nor any kind of urgency. Also, there is no emotional involvement. The tone is not at all imperative. The sender may use some conventional, i.e. common, politeness strategies, only because he/she does not want to spoil his/her request by seeming rude.
- d) The tone is imperative by necessity due to an urgency and the sender may seem worried. Although politeness is not neglected and attention is paid to not being rude, he/she does not count as much on politeness strategies.
- e) There is again an imperative tone due to urgency. The sender displays over-strictness but without blaming the recipient. Even if there are some politeness strategies, the sender certainly does not depend on them. The sender's social status or relationship with the recipient allows him/her to be indifferent to whether he/she seems particularly gentle or not.
- f) There is a clear imperative tone due to the sender's intention to accuse the recipient of causing a problem and/or of his/her character in general. Although there are possibly a few politeness strategies, the imperative markers are dominant.
- g) The irritation of the sender is very obvious. The tone of the letter is severely critical or even threatening. No politeness strategies are used. Even the very expected/conventional markers of politeness are absent.

In categories a–d, politeness is considered as a priority or even a necessity (in a and b), in categories e–f, politeness stops being a necessity, whereas in category g, politeness strategies are absent. Linguistic politeness and impoliteness are related to the social status of the correspondents. It seems, for example, that the complete lack of politeness strategies is possible only if the social status of the sender is higher and/or if he/she has authority over the recipient.

## 4 The selected texts

As already noted in Section 1.1, all six selected Byzantine letters allow us to examine politeness and imperative tone from a sound basis, given that their context is clear.<sup>40</sup> There is no doubt that they all date to the Byzantine period of Egypt, and therefore they bear the typical features of Byzantine letters (see §2.3). They were all produced in an ecclesiastical milieu: they were all sent to and received by clerics or monks.<sup>41</sup> Both their main body and verso allow us to make assumptions about the situational context, the social identity of the correspondents – namely their gender, their profession, and their status in the ecclesiastical community –, as well as the relationship between the sender and the recipient. The relevant remarks contained in the editions and in the secondary literature were of course taken into consideration. Finally, the letters in question are preserved on the same writing material, i.e. papyrus.

As already noted, only linguistic strategies found in the main body of the letter will be focused on. These strategies though interact with the politeness markers included in the verso of the papyrus, for example the plethora of honorific names.

### 4.1 Letters from P.Fouad

P.Fouad 86, 87, 88, and 89<sup>42</sup> are dated to the sixth century CE<sup>43</sup> and belong to the same dossier, which is certainly helpful for the reconstruction of the context;<sup>44</sup> they were written by four monks belonging to the same monastery

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**40** The six letters under study are cited in their entirety along with an English translation and the BL references in the Appendix to this chapter.

**41** Papatomas (2007: 510) remarks that many of the letters dated to fourth century CE onwards were written by members of the clergy; before the fourth century CE there are only very few cases of correspondence between pagan priests.

**42** The four letters under study are included in the volume P.Fouad and were edited by Henri Marrou (in Bataille, Guéraud, Jouguet, Lewis, Marrou, Scherer, and Waddell 1939: 175–202). P. Fouad 87 is commented upon in detail by Gascou (1976: esp. 163–177; see BL VII 58); see also the commentary of P.Fouad 88 offered by Kim (2011: 115–119) focusing on the Christian elements of the letters.

**43** On the dating, see Marrou's remarks (1939: 175, 177); for a further precision, see Gascou (1976: 157 with fn. 2); also BL XI 82.

**44** For a definition of dossiers and archives, as well as the advantages of studying non-literary papyri belonging to such groups of texts, see Vandorpe (2009: 216–255); Papatomas (2016<sup>3</sup>: 258–269).

situated in Aphrodito and were sent to the same person, a certain *προεστώς* ('provost') Georgios, who is the Superior of the Monastery of Petinence (Μετανοία) in Canope. Both monastic communities belong to the Pachomian Order.<sup>45</sup>

The content of all four letters reveals the power of the addressee: he seems to oversee the monastic community of Aphrodito (cf. P.Fouad 86 and 87) and is also considered as a very respectful religious person and spiritual father for the monks of this monastery (cf. P.Fouad 88 and 89). This is confirmed by the verso of the letters, where many honorific names and other nominal phrases denote the respect of the senders towards the recipient (see Appendix).<sup>46</sup> According to Henri Marrou (1939: esp. 176–177, 190), the monks who are connected to the monastery of Aphrodito, as well as the ones connected to the monastery of Stratonikis<sup>47</sup> are under the authority of Georgios, the superior of the monastery of Petinence, who serves as an intermediary between the two aforementioned monastic communities and the “common Father” of the Order.<sup>48</sup>

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**45** Information and bibliography on the two monasteries, as well as the monastery in Stratonikis mentioned in P.Fouad 87,11 is offered by Marrou in the general introduction of the edition (1939: 175–183); also in Gasco (1976), who focuses on the monastery of Μετανοία. The placement of this monastery seems to be problematic; see Marrou (1939: 176 and 178–183 [esp. 183]). Marrou believes that Ἀφροδιτώ should most probably be identified with Aphroditopolis of the Athribite nome of Lower Egypt, a place near the monastery of Stratonikis. This suggestion is questioned by Gasco (1976: 159–163; cf. BL VII 58). Gasco (1976: 160) believes that Ἀφροδιτώ might well be identified with the village of Aphrodito in the Antaiopolite nome, the current Kom Ichqaou; cf. Fournet (1999: 464; cf. BL XII 73).

**46** In all four cases, the sender expresses his humbleness by belittling himself. On the relation between politeness and servility or self-devaluation in Greek papyrus letters of Late Antiquity, see Zilliagus (1953); Papathomas (2007); on the verso of P.Fouad 86, see Papathomas (1996); also BL XI 82.

**47** Cf. fn. 45.

**48** Cf. Marrou's remark: “ils [i.e. the monasteries of Aphrodito and of Stratonikis] sont soumis, eux, à l'autorité du supérieur de la Métañoia qui apparaît comme un intermédiaire hiérarchique entre ces communautés et le supérieur général” [“they [i.e. the monasteries of Aphrodito and of Stratonikis] are subject to the authority of the superior of the Metanoia, who appears as a hierarchical intermediary between these communities and the general superior”] (1939: 177). Gasco (1976: 157 fn. 3) on the other hand remarks that this is not necessarily the case. He argues that, although the deference displayed towards Georgios and his influence on the senders are undeniable, neither his exact role nor the place of the monastery of Μετανοία in the Pachomian institutions are perfectly clear; what is more, the senders' exact position in the monastery of Aphrodito remains equally uncertain, and it is doubtful that they resided in this monastery on a permanent basis since they seem to move from place to place (cf. the relevant remarks in Marrou 1939: 184–185, 190). According to Gasco (ibid.), the content of P.Fouad 86 and 87 indicates that the letters of this small dossier were written by and sent to travelling monks, which, in his opinion,



#### 4.1.1 P.Fouad 86

Both P.Fouad 86 and 87 are narrative letters that refer to issues of the monastery, and specifically to problems caused by unrighteous monks. Their context and the relation of the people involved in the stories told are complicated.<sup>49</sup> The sender of P.Fouad 86 informs the recipient, Georgios, about the wicked behaviour of an immoral monk. The fact that Georgios appears to be responsible for the solution of this problem and that he has the authority even to expel the monk in question from the convent (l. 18) indicates that he is certainly superior to the sender. The latter seems to play, though, an important role in the monastery of Aphrodito, which is why he is responsible for keeping Georgios informed. Nevertheless, he is not equal to the superior of the Monastery of Petinence (Μετανοίας), which is made evident by his deferential style of writing.<sup>50</sup>

The letter starts with the preparation for the directive (ll. 1–17; see Appendix). The detailed information offered to the recipient in this part of the text could be considered as indicative of the urgency of the situation and, consequently, as conveying a kind of imperative tone to the text. At the same time though, the fact that the sender informs the recipient in detail before formulating his request could be considered as a politeness strategy: it proves that the submission of the request, i.e. the expulsion of the immoral monk, is justifiable considering all the events he speaks of. The directive can be found in ll. 17–19:

(2) παρακληθῆ ὄν ἡ ὑμετέ]ρα πατρικὴ θεοφιλία κατὰ νοῦν ἔχειν | περὶ τούτου  
πρὸς τῷ τῆ ὑμετέρᾳ σπουδῆ περιαιρεθῆναι τὸν ἀνόσιον ἐκ τῶν | μοναστηρίων  
ἡμῶν.

‘We beg, therefore, **your paternal piety not to forget to remove** this unholy person from our monasteries.’

(P.Fouad 86, 17–19; VI CE)

In general, the writer of this letter is largely dependent on politeness strategies. In the preparation of the request, we twice encounter the honorific name ἀγιοσύνη (‘holiness’) in combination with the 2nd person plural of politeness and specified in the first case by an adjective pointing to Christian faith (l. 1: τῆ ὑμετέρᾳ πατρικῆ ἀγιοσύνη; l. 7: ἡ ὑμετέρα ἀγιοσύνη [‘your (paternal) holiness’]).

In the formulation of the request, the prepositional phrase πρὸς τῷ τῆ ὑμετέρᾳ σπουδῆ περιαιρεθῆναι τὸν ἀνόσιον ἐκ τῶν | μοναστηρίων ἡμῶν (ll. 18–19)

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should be rather attributed to “cette vie de relation développée qui caractérise le cénobitisme pachômien” [“this life of developed relationship that characterizes Pachomian cenobitism”].

<sup>49</sup> See Marrou (1939: esp. 175–178, 184–185, 189–192).

<sup>50</sup> See Marrou’s remark in the introduction to the letter (1939: 184).

['to remove as soon as possible this unholy person from our monasteries'] which supplements the verbal phrase παρακληθῆ οὖν ἡ ὑμ[ετέ]ρα πατρικὴ θεοφιλία κατὰ νοῦν ἔχειν | περὶ τούτου (ll. 17–18) ['we beg, therefore, your paternal piety not to forget'], gives an imperative tone to the text, since it contains the noun σπουδὴ ('zeal'). This imperative tone is counterbalanced by many politeness strategies. First of all, the writer chooses a performative verb, the lexical sense of which is connected to the notion of politeness, i.e. παρακαλῶ, put in the 3rd person singular of the subjunctive (l. 17: παρακληθῆ), since the subject is an honorific name specified by a possessive pronoun in the 2nd person plural and the adjective πατρικὴ (l. 17: ἡ ὑμ[ετέ]ρα πατρικὴ θεοφιλία ['your paternal piety']). The passive syntax also ensures that the 'ego' of the sender/requester is of less importance. In addition, the noun σπουδὴ (σπουδῆ, l. 18) is specified by a pronoun put in the 2nd person plural of deference (τῆ ὑμετέρᾳ σπουδῆ ['your zeal']).

Outside the textual unit of the directive (ll. 19–21), there are also some politeness strategies. Specifically, this part of the letter contains an extended version of the formula of salutation<sup>51</sup> including two verbs very closely connected to the notion of deference, i.e. προσκυνῶ ('to make reverences')<sup>52</sup> and ἀσπάζομαι ('to salute'), as well as the nominal phrase τὴν ὑμετέραν πατρικὴν ἀγιοσύνην ['your paternal holiness'] in l. 20, also attested in l. 1 and enriched here by a phrase denoting the writer's deep Christian faith (ll. 20–21):

- (3) πλεῖστα **προσκύνομεν** (l. **προσκυνούμεν**) καὶ **ἀσπάζομεθα** | **τὴν ὑμετέραν πατρικὴν ἀγιοσύνην, περιπτυσσόμενοι αὐτὴν τῆ τοῦ Πνεύματος | ἐνώσει.**

**'We make you many reverences and salute your paternal holiness embracing you in the unity of the Holy Spirit.'**

(P.Fouad 86, 20–21; VI CE)

In sum, the sender of this letter clearly expresses his respect towards the recipient by combining several commonplace politeness strategies.

#### 4.1.2 P.Fouad 87

Similarly to P.Fouad 86, this letter refers to issues of the monastery. Here again the sender writes about a problem the solution of which necessitates the addressee's intervention. The story hidden behind this letter is more complicated as

<sup>51</sup> For the thematic motif of salutation, see, among others, Koroli (2016: 67–68).

<sup>52</sup> On phrases containing προσκυνῶ καὶ ἀσπάζομαι, see the comment of Papatthomas in CPR XXV (2006: 175–177 with fn. 3).

compared with the one to which P.Fouad 86 is related. The sender, Andreas,<sup>53</sup> asks Georgios to protect the monks living there from the vicious behaviour of their current superior. As already observed by Marrou (1939: 189–192), the relationship of the two correspondents is more complicated in comparison with P.Fouad 86, 88 and 89. Georgios is the superior of the monastery of Petinence, and therefore Andreas displays the appropriate respect; at the same time though Andreas is an important person of the monastery of Aphrodito, as well as the spiritual father of Georgios.<sup>54</sup>

The detailed information offered to the recipient in ll. 1–30 (see Appendix) functions as an indirect request. By means of this long list of complaints the writer clearly expresses his irritation for a third person and stresses the urgency of the situation. He writes that his intention is just to keep Georgios informed; cf. his statement in ll. 27–28, where the honorific name εὐτεκνία ('blessing of children'; 'fruitfulness'; 'blessedness'; for the first two meanings, see LSJ) is used specified by a possessive pronoun in the 2nd person plural, as well as the adjective θεοφιλής ('dear to God'): καὶ πρὸς εἶδησιν τῆς | ὑμετέρας θεοφιλοῦς εὐτεκνίας ταῦτα γέγραφα ['and I have written this text in order to keep your supreme blessedness, which is dear to God, informed']. Nevertheless, it is clear and easily understandable that the real intention of the sender is to make Georgios take action. This passage has a somewhat imperative tone due to its content. At the same time though the choice of the sender to submit an indirect request could be attributed to his effort to be polite by not asking explicitly for Georgios' intervention.

The direct request (l. 34), which is thematically irrelevant to the preceding indirect directive and supplemented by ll. 35–36 (see Appendix), is formulated in the 3rd person singular of the subjunctive; the subject is the honorific name θεοφιλία specified by the possessive pronoun in the 2nd person plural:

(4) **μὴ ὀλιγορήσῃ (l. ὀλιωρήσῃ) δὲ ἡ ὑμετέρα θεοφιλία** κατὰ τοῦ γραμματηφόρου.

**'May your piety not be angry** with the letter-carrier.'

(P.Fouad 87, 34; VI CE)

<sup>53</sup> On Andreas' status and relation to Georgios, see Marrou (1939: 190) and Gascou (1976: 157 fn. 3; 159).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. l. 37 of the verso: τῷ τὰ πάντ(α) θεοφιλε(στάτῳ) **πνευματικῷ ὑίῳ** ['to my **spiritual son**, who is absolutely dearest to God']. On the reconstruction of the context of the letter, the persons involved and their relationship, see Marrou's remarks in the introduction to the letter (1939: 189–190).

Outside the two directives' thematic-textual units, we again find a version of the formula of salutation (ll. 30–33). The salutation is presented as the primary goal of the sender (cf. *πρὸ πάντων* ['first of all'] in l. 30). This passage, which includes the honorific name *θεοφιλία* ('the favour of God'; see LSJ; in this context: 'piety'), has a very striking religious content:

- (5) ἀσπάζομαι **πρὸ πάντων** τὴν σὴν ἀδελφικὴν | **θεοφιλίαν** ἐν Κυρίῳ, μετὰ πάντων τῶν {των} σὺν αὐτῇ καὶ ἀγαπούντω(ν) (l. ἀγαπώντων) | αὐτὴν ἀδελφῶν. οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς ἐν Κυρίῳ.

'**First of all**, I salute your brotherly **piety** in the Lord, as well as all of the brothers who live with you and love you.'

(P.Fouad 87, 30–33; VI CE)

In general, the sender resorts to several commonplace politeness strategies expressing his deferential attitude to the superior of the monastery of Petinence. Nevertheless, due to his spritual superiority in comparison to the recipient he does not appear as submissive as the senders of the rest of the P. Fouad examples.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.1.3 P.Fouad 88

In P.Fouad 88 and 89, Georgios' influence on the monks connected to the monastery of Aphrodito is shown differently than in P.Fouad 86 and 87; Georgios is not asked to solve a problem but is the recipient of the sender's excessive deference.

What is particularly interesting in P.Fouad 88 is the content of the two directives it contains: the sender, a humble monk, asks the recipient to include him in his prayers and to always have good feelings about him (ll. 4–6; 9):

- (6) ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ παρακαλῶ | μνησθῆναι τῆς ἐμῆς βραχύτητος ἐν ταῖς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν αὐτῆς | εὐπροσδέκτοις λιταῖς . . . παρακαλῶ αὐτὴν ταύτην βεβαίαν ἔχειν μέχρι παντός.

'Secondly, I beg you to remember me, the least of all, in the prayers that you address to God, which are accepted [by Him] . . . I beg you to keep it [i.e. your benevolence towards me] as strong as it is now for ever.'

(P.Fouad 88, 4–6; 9; VI CE)

<sup>55</sup> See Marrou's remark in the introduction to the letter (1939: 189–190).

In reality, these two directives are nothing more than an expression of the sender's deferential attitude towards the recipient.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the peculiarity of the *petitum*, the writer organizes his text as a common request letter and writes as if he is asking for something of great importance. The two thematically relative directives are formulated by means of the performative verb παρακαλώ. Their submission is justified by ll. 6–9 (see Appendix), which function as a supplement of the first directive and as preparation for the second one, as well as by ll. 10–11 (see Appendix), which function as the supplement of the second directive. The framing of the two directives stresses to an even greater extent the writer's respect, since it gives prominence to the recipient's piety and benevolence. This respect is displayed with the same intensity in the rest of the letter, which contains five attestations of the 2nd person plural of the possessive pronoun (ll. 3: τὴν ὑμετέραν; 6–7: τῶν | ὑμετέρων; 7–8: τῆς | ὑμετέρας; 10: τῶν ὑμετέρων; 11: ὑμετέρας).

In ll. 1–4, we come across two thematic motifs commonly attested in private papyrus letters. First of all, the sender refers to the opportunity he took advantage of to send the present letter to Georgios. He claims that his main goal was to prostrate and salute the recipient. This passage is full of politeness markers, such as a nominal phrase including the honorific name ἀγιοσύνη ('holiness') in combination with the adjective πατρική ('paternal') and the second plural of politeness (l. 3: τὴν ὑμετέραν πατρικὴν ἀγιοσύνην ['your paternal holiness']), as well as the participles προσκυνῶν καὶ προσφθεγγόμενος (l. 4; ['making obeisance and saluting']):

- (7) καὶ νῦν τῆς εὐκαιρίας δραξάμενος τοῦ γραμματιφόρου μονάζοντος | κατερχομένου μετὰ τῶν γραμμάτων τοῦ ὁσιωτάτου (l. ὁσιωτάτου) ἀββᾶ Ἀνδρέου | πρὸς τὴν ὑμετέραν πατρικὴν ἀγιοσύνην [γε . . . φ .] γέγραφα πρῶτον μὲν | προσκυνῶν καὶ προσφθεγγόμενος αὐτήν).

'Now also, finding an opportunity by the monk and letter-carrier, who descends towards **your paternal holiness** holding the letter of the most holy abbot Andreas, I have written this letter first and foremost **in order to make obeisance** to you **and salute** you.'

(P.Fouad 88, 1–4; VI CE)

<sup>56</sup> Marrou characterizes this letter as a “bon specimen de la verbeuse politesse byzantine et de la vanité des jeux épistolaires où les chrétiens de la basse-antiquité se sont complu” [“a good specimen of the verbose Byzantine politeness and the vanity of the epistolary games in which Christians of the Roman and Late Antique period delighted themselves”] (1939: 197 with fn. 1, where literary parallels for this style of letter writing are offered); see also Gascou (1976: 158 fn. 2). The submission of directives of this kind is usually not the main communicative goal of the sender in private correspondence, but only a way of displaying reverence and religiousness; see indicatively Kim (2011: 45).

The letter closes in an equally submissive way, specifically with a long version of the salutation formula characterized by an intense religiousness and ending with the invocation θεοφιλέστατέ μου πάτερ [‘my holiest spiritual father’] in ll. 11–14:

(8) ἀσπάζομαι δὲ τὸν τε | θεοφιλέστατον κοινὸν πατέρα, καὶ τὴν κοσμιωτάτην κοινὴν  
μητέρα, | καὶ πάντας τοὺς σὺν ὑμῖν ἐν Κ(υρί)ῳ, δέσπο(τα) **θεοφιλέστατέ μου**  
**πάτερ.**

‘I salute our common Father, who is dearest to God, and our common mother, who is the most virtuous, and all the people who live with us in the Lord, **my** master and **most pious Father**’.

(P.Fouad 88, 11–14; VI CE)

In reality, by means of the submission of two pseudo-directives, the writer displays in extremis his Christian virtues, so that he wins the favour of Georgios, who is both a man of power and his spiritual father.<sup>57</sup> It has to be noted that in other private papyrus letters, requests like the ones included in P.Fouad 88 are used only as subsidiary requests.<sup>58</sup>

The writer of this letter expresses not only an excessive politeness, reverence and admiration for Georgios himself and whatever is his (cf. ll. 5–8; 10–11; see Appendix), but also his unlimited humbleness and submission; he goes so far as to belittle himself not only in the verso but also in the main body of his letter.<sup>59</sup>

#### 4.1.4 P.Fouad 89

This letter is very similar to the previous one in terms of both content and writing style. Once again, the text resembles a solicitation; in reality, the writer considers its writing and sending as proof of his deep religiousness and his deferential attitude towards the recipient and, consequently, as a means for winning his favour. The pseudo-request (ll. 4–8) is formulated again with the performative verb παρακαλῶ supplemented by the phrase τὸν ἐμὸν δεσπότην [‘my lord’]:

(9) καὶ | παρακαλῶ τὸν ἐμὸν δεσπότην μνησθῆναι τῇ ἐμῇ ταπ<ε>ινώσει ἐν | ταῖς πανοσίαις  
καὶ εὐπροσδέκταις εὐχῆς (l. εὐχαῖς) **τῷ ἐμῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη,** | ἄχρη (l. ἄχρι) ἀξίωσι μαι  
(l. με) ὁ θεὸς καὶ κατὰ πρόσωπον προσκυνῆσαι τὸν | **ἐμὸν ἀγαθὸν δεσπότην.**

57 Cf. ll. 3: **πατρικὴν ἀγιοσύνην** [‘paternal holiness’]; 13: **θεοφιλέστατέ μου πάτερ** [‘my most pious Father’]; 15–16: **πατρὶ | π(νευματικῷ)** [‘spiritual Father’].

58 See Koroli (2016: 157–162, esp. 161).

59 Cf. ll. 5: τῆς ἐμῆς **βραχύτητος** [‘me, the least of all’]; 8–9: εἰς ἐμέ, τὸν **ἐλάχιστον** αὐτῆς ἀδελφόν | καὶ υἱόν [‘me, the least of all your brothers and your son’], as well as l. 17 of the verso: **ἐλάχισ(ιστος)** [‘the least of all’]; cf. fn. 46.

‘. . . and **I beg my lord to remember** my insignificance in his all-holy prayers, which are accepted by God, **for my virtuous lord** until God will think me worthy to make obeisance to **my virtuous lord** also in person.’

(P.Fouad 89, 4–8; VI CE)

The reference to the recipient as if he was a third person is an over-politeness strategy. In the supplement of the directive (ll. 8–11; see Appendix), the sender assures the recipient that he also prays for him all day and all night. In general, when the writer refers to the recipient, he never uses the second person (neither singular nor plural) but nominal phrases including the noun δεσπότης (ll. 3; 4; 5; 6; 8; 10; 11; see Appendix).

The letter opens again with the motifs of the chance for sending the letter (l. 1; see Appendix) and of the salutation (ll. 2–4). The latter is enriched by two clumsy repetitions expressing the boundless respect of the sender towards the recipient:

- (10) προσκυνῶν καὶ ἀσπαζόμενος τὰ εὐλογημένα ἵχνη τῶν εὐλογημένων | ποδῶν τῷ ἐμῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη μετὰ καὶ πάντων τῶν | συνόντων θεοφιλεστάτ(ων) ἀδελφῶν τῷ ἐμῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη (l. δεσπότη).

‘. . . in order to worship and salute **the blessed prints of the blessed feet of my virtuous lord**, and of all the brothers, who are the most pious, and who live with **my virtuous lord**.’

(P.Fouad 89, 2–4; VI CE)

The writer exalts the recipient and whatever is related to him;<sup>60</sup> at the same time, similar to P.Fouad 88, he expresses a limitless humbleness by devaluating himself.<sup>61</sup> Despite their similarities, P.Fouad 88 and 89 differ as far as the linguistic aptitude of the two senders is concerned.<sup>62</sup> The repeated use of nominal phrases containing the noun δεσπότης (‘lord’) in P.Fouad 89 is indicative not only of the sender’s excessive deferential attitude but also of his inability to express it in good Greek.

<sup>60</sup> ll. 2–3: τὰ εὐλογημένα ἵχνη τῶν εὐλογημένων | ποδῶν [‘the blessed prints of the blessed feet’]; 5–6: ἐν | ταῖς πανοσιαις καὶ εὐπροσδέκταις εὐχῆς (l. εὐχαῖς) [‘in his all-holy prayers, which are accepted by God’].

<sup>61</sup> cf. l. 5: τῆ ἐμῆ ταπεινώσει [‘my insignificance’], as well as ll. 12–13 of the verso: ἐλάχιστος | δοῦλος [‘the least of all slaves’]; cf. fn. 46.

<sup>62</sup> Marrou attributes the sender’s linguistic maladroitness, namely the syntactical and orthographical mistakes contained in the letter to his Coptic origin, manifested by his name (1939: 200); this view is questioned by Gascou (1976: 158 fn. 2), who attributes these features of the text to “la pratique du grec courant” [“the practice of then current Greek”].

## 4.2 Letters from P.Ness. III

### 4.2.1 P.Ness. III 47

This letter was sent to a deacon, Stephanos, by an abbot, Patrick, probably before 605 CE.<sup>63</sup> The position of Stephanos is mentioned on the verso of the papyrus (see Appendix). The title of the sender (ἡγούμενος, ‘abbot’) is mentioned in the letter preserved on the verso of the papyrus (l. 8). The verso also contains the reply of Stephanos to Patrick’s letter. The content of the letter is not related to religious matters. The sender submits two thematically irrelevant directives. The basic directive is contained in ll. 2–5. The sender uses the structure θέλησον [‘please’] + infinitive, which is a politeness strategy:

- (11) **θέλεσων (l. θέλησον) δέξασθ[αι]** παρ]ὰ [το]ῦ γραμ|ματεφώρου (l. γραμματηφόρου) σκάρου λ(ίτρας) ὠγδωέκωντα (l. ὠγδοήκοντα) κεφαλὰς μεγάλας ἕκωσι (l. εἴκοσι) | **καὶ** εἰς ταῦτα πρωκάλυμμα (l. προκάλυμμα) **ποιήσε (l. ποιήσαι)** τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ μου Ἀνακλᾶ | ὅτι ἐδέξου (l. ἐδέξω) αὐτά.

‘**Please accept** from the letter-carrier eighty pounds of sea fish, twenty large heads. In return **give** my man Anaklas the protection of a note that you have received them.’  
(P.Ness. III 47, 2–5; before 605 CE?)

In the second, formulaic directive (l. 5), the sender asks the recipient to pray for him. This is a subsidiary request increasing the perlocutionary force of the basic bipartite directive in an indirect way, since the two directives are thematically irrelevant:

- (12) καὶ εὔχου ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ διὰ τῶν (l. τὸν) κύριων (l. κύριον).

‘Pray for me to the Lord.’  
(P.Ness. III 47, 5; before 605 CE?)

Furthermore, the sender makes use of a series of conventional politeness strategies. Specifically, in ll. 1–2 he writes a formula of obeisance and a salutation, in the framework of which he includes the recipient among his real friends, and uses the invocation δέσποτα (‘lord’) and of the verbs προσκυνῶ (‘make obeisance’) and ἀσπάζω (‘salute’):

- (13) πάντων πρότερον (l. πρότερον) γράφω **προσκ[κ]υνῶ καὶ ἀσπ[ά]ζω** σε τὸν ἐμοῦ | **γνήσιων (l. γνήσιον) φίλων (l. φίλον) ὄντα, δέσποτα.**

<sup>63</sup> The two letters under study were published by Casper J. Kraemer in 1958. On their dating and provenance, cf. Kraemer (1958: 139, 144).



‘Before writing anything else, **I send respectful greetings to you, sir, for you are my true friend.**’

(P.Ness. III 47, 1–2; before 605?)

The editor of the letter attributes the deferential attitude of the sender to the hierarchical distance between the two correspondents, which is obvious by the reply of the recipient on the verso: the latter makes no attempt to be excessively polite towards Patrick.<sup>64</sup>

#### 4.2.2 P.Ness. III 50, 1–9

The sender of P.Ness. III 50, Georgios,<sup>65</sup> is also of a higher ecclesiastical and social status in comparison to the recipient, Zoninos; he is a bishop (ἐπίσκοπος), whereas the recipient is an abbot (ἀββάς). The position of the two correspondents in the clerical ranking is mentioned in the main body of the letter (ll. 1–2; 10–11; see Appendix). The content of this letter, written in the early seventh century CE, is clearly connected to religious – but practical – matters. The sender is ill and cannot attend a festival; so, he asks the recipient, in case he attends the festival in question, to request on his behalf an unnamed abbot to give a donation (εὐλογία) to another abbot, a certain Prokopios.<sup>66</sup>

The letter contains many linguistic choices giving the text an imperative tone. First of all, the sender submits two thematically relevant requests. The first, basic directive has three parts found in different parts of the text (ll. 2; 3–5; 9; see Appendix). Its third part (l. 9) closes the main body of the letter, which could also be considered as a marker of imperative tone:

(14) καὶ ἂν μὲ (l. μὴ) ἐξέλθεις (l. ἐξέλθης) γράψον αὐτῶν (l. αὐτῷ).

‘If you do not go out, write him.’

(P.Ness. III 50, 9; early VII CE)

There is also a subsidiary request (ll. 7–8), repeating the basic directive:

(15) ἐπαρακλέεσθαι. (l. παρακλήθητι) χάρισεν (l. χαρίζειν) με τῷ (l. τὸ) καθίκον (l. καθήκον) τοῦτο.

<sup>64</sup> See Kraemer’s remark in the introduction to the letter (1958: 139), who, among others, notes the following: “The fact that Patrick calls himself simply ἡγούμενος . . . seems to indicate, unless he was not giving his full title, that he was not yet reader or priest . . . The tone of deference with which he addresses Stephan and the air of authority in which the reply is couched clearly reflects a considerable difference in rank between the two men”.

<sup>65</sup> This Georgios is not the same person as the recipient of the letters P.Fouad 86–89.

<sup>66</sup> For more information on the context, see Kraemer’s introduction to the letter (1958: 144).

‘You are requested to grant me the favor, **which is my due.**’  
(P.Ness. III 50, 7–8; early VII CE)

The noun καθίκον (l. καθήκον) (‘due’) presents the satisfaction of the basic request as an obligation of the recipient. The sender exercises some pressure on the recipient because he is obviously worried about the arrangement of the issues of which he speaks. This is obvious from ll. 2–3, which supplement the basic request:

(16) ἐπ<ε>ιδὴ ἀσθενῶ καὶ οὐ δύναμαι ἐξελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ἑορτὴν τοῦ ἁγίου Σεργίου.

‘Since I am sick and cannot go out to the festival of St. Sergios.’  
(P.Ness. III 50, 2–3; early VII CE)

Moreover, being superior to the recipient makes him feel free to ask him in a somehow persistent and implicitly strict way to satisfy his requests. However, although stressed and socially superior, he does not forget to use politeness strategies. In the textual unit of the request, we find the use of the imperative ἐπαρακλήθετι (l. παρακλήθητι) [‘you are requested’] supplemented by the infinitive χαρίσεν (l. χαρίζειν) [‘grant the favour’]. Both words compensate for the formulation of the noun καθίκον (l. καθήκον), which is included in the same subsidiary directive.

There are also some politeness strategies outside the textual unit of the directives. The letter begins with the conventional form of salutation (l. 1), which is presented as the main communicative goal of the sender.

(17) πρ<ὸ> ἡμῶν πάντων γράφω καὶ ἀσπάζομαι (l. ἀσπάζομαι) τῶν (l. τὸν) ἀβ<β>ᾶν Ζόνινων (l. Ζόνινον).

‘**Before everything** I am writing to send greetings to Father Zoninon.’  
(P.Ness. III 50, 1; early VII CE)

Moreover, the sender wishes the recipient to be healthy (l. 8):

(18) ἀγυένον (l. ὑγιαίνων) διελθ[ε].

‘Abide in good health.’  
(P.Ness. III 50, 8; early VII CE)

In conclusion, Georgios obviously does not want to displease the recipient of his request by seeming rude; furthermore, such a writing behaviour would not suit his status. Thus, he uses all the above-mentioned commonplace politeness strategies in order to display his respect to the recipient, who is also a member of the clergy.

### 4.3 The place of the selected texts in the politeness-imperative tone continuum

The place of the examples in the politeness-imperative tone continuum presented in Section 3 could be as follows:

**Table 1:** Politeness–imperative tone continuum.

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The request letter per se as an expression of respect towards the recipient: **P.Fouad 88, P.Fouad 89.**

Requesting by counting greatly on over-politeness strategies; the sender is absolutely dependent on the recipient to solve an urgent problem (= solicitation).

The urgent tone or the critical mood of the sender are compensated by over-politeness strategies: **P.Ness. III 50; P.Fouad 86; P.Fouad 87.**

There is neither a problem nor any kind of emotional involvement. The tone is not at all imperative. The sender may use some common politeness strategies: **P.Ness. III 47.**

There is an imperative tone due to urgency. The sender may seem worried. Although he/she pays attention to not being rude, politeness strategies are not relied on.

There is (again) an imperative tone due to urgency. The sender displays over-strictness without blaming the recipient. Even if there are some politeness strategies, they certainly are not depended on.

There is a clear imperative tone due to the sender's intention to blame the recipient. The markers of the imperative tone are dominant.

The tone of the letter is severely critical or even threatening. No politeness strategies are used.

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As can be seen in Table 1, imperative tone never prevails courtesy in the examined corpus; what is more, in two examples, P.Fouad 88 and P.Fouad 89, the expression of reverence itself was the primary goal of the writer. Cases like these could be regarded as a small but distinct category of papyrus request letters.

## 5 Conclusions

The analysis of the selected corpus revealed that each letter contains a variety of linguistic choices and strategies. Both politeness and imperative tone are codified

in many different ways and interact to serve the main communicative goal of the sender. Each one of the senders of the six letters under study resorts to a different set of strategies depending on the content, the status of the correspondents and their relationship; cf. e.g. the case of P.Ness. III 50 and of P.Fouad 87 as opposed to P.Fouad 88 and 89.

The similarities observed in the selected examples allow us to assume that (male) members of the clergy or of monastic orders wrote in a distinct way differentiating them – to some extent – from other letter-writers. In all six letters, politeness constitutes a priority, whereas impoliteness markers seem to be completely inappropriate, especially when the recipient is higher in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

An additional similarity between the six selected examples is the striking accumulation of honorific names, as well as words and phrases related to religiousness. Amphilochos Papathomas (2007: 508–510) attributes the abundance of these linguistic elements in clerical letters to the fact that these letters were obviously considered as proofs of the writer’s deep Christian faith. Finally, letters like P.Fouad 88 and 89 show that religious persons could go so far as to write request letters only to display their respect to their superiors and, consequently, their absolute humbleness.<sup>67</sup> In this case, the request letter per se constitutes an expression of over-politeness and Christian virtues. This type of letter is similar in style to common solicitations, in the sense that the sender makes an effort to seem over-polite and appears to be completely dependent on the recipient. Nevertheless, the senders of these two letters do not ask the recipient to help them solve a problem; all they ask the recipient is to pray for them. Politeness here is something more than a priority – it is the *reason* for writing this letter.

All in all, the scrutiny of the interaction between politeness and imperative tone strategies as defined in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 in the selected epistolary texts leads to the assumption that these letters bear a set of common features; although the imperative tone is not absent, politeness strategies are always dominant. This “special” quota of imperative tone and politeness could be considered indeed as a Byzantine “ecclesiastical” style of letter-writing. A thorough examination of a larger corpus and the comparison of the papyrological evidence to the literary production coming from the same period may help us reach more concrete conclusions.

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<sup>67</sup> P.Herm. 8 and 9 (IV CE; see BL X 85), as well as P.Lond. VI 1925, 1927 and partly 1924 (mid-IV CE), all sent to ascetic men and belonging to dossiers, offer close parallels to these request letters.

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## Appendix

### P.Fouad 86 with BL VIII 133; X 77; XI 82

(Possibly Aphrodito, Antaiopolite nome [see BL VII 58; XII 73]; VI CE)

†

- 1 † γνωρίζομεν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ πατρικῇ ἀγιοσύνη ὡς κατὰ τὴν εἰκάδα ἐβδόμην τοῦ
- 2 παρόντος μηνὸς Πέτρος ὁ Πενταπολίτης, ἐπιστὰς τῶ εὐαγεῖ μοναστηρίῳ
- 3 Ἀφροδιτοῦς ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀντιόου, ἐπιδέδωκεν τῶ θεοφιλεστάτῳ ἀββᾶ
- 4 Νόνᾳ γράμματα Μηναῖ τοῦ Ἀρσᾶ, ἀπαντήσαντος αὐτῷ κατὰ τὸν Παβείτ,
- 5 περιέχοντα αὐτὰ τὰ γράμματα ὅτι ᾿ποίησον ἀγάπην εἰπεῖν τῶ θεοφιλεστάτῳ
- 6 ἀββᾶ Ἀνδρέᾳ ὅτι προλαμβάνω καὶ ἀνέρχομαι εἰς Ἀντιόου καὶ πάντα τὰ

- 7 καινότερα μανθάνων γράψω ὑμῖν. ὄϊδεν γὰρ ἡ ὑμετέρα ἀγιοσύνη τοῦς  
 8 τρόπους τοῦ ἀνδρός, κἄν μὴ γράψωμεν μάλιστα ὅτι οὐ μετρίως ἐλύπησεν ἡμᾶς  
 9 τὸ ἐμπόδιον τῆς ἀνόδου αὐτῆς· ἐὰν γὰρ εὐῤῥη παρρησίαν πρὸς τὸν ὑπερ-  
 10 φυέστατον στρατηλάτην καὶ ὕπατον, οὐκ ἔχει ἡσυχάσαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ γονιορτὸν (l. κονιορτὸν)  
 ἐγερεῖ  
 11 πάντως κατὰ τῶν μοναστηρίων καὶ καθ' ἑνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν. πρὸ πολλῶν δὲ  
 12 οὐ πάνυ ἡμερῶν ἤμεθα γράψαντες τῷ θεοσεβεστάτῳ ἀββᾷ Μηνᾷ τῷ τοῦ οἰκονόμου  
 13 λαβεῖν γράμματα παρὰ τοῦ λαμπρο(τάτου) κυρίο[υ] Κομιτᾶ τοῦ Ἰζᾶνκη πρὸς τὸν  
 14 [με]γαλοπ[ρ]ε(πέστατον) Πετεῶχωντα, ὑπομιμνήσκοντα αὐτὸν περὶ τῶν κακῶς  
 πραχθέντων  
 15 [ὑπὸ ...] μετὰ Πελαγίου τοῦ μαγ[ι]στρου] ἐν Λίνου πόλει (l. Νείλου πόλει) κατὰ τὸν πέρυσι  
 χρόνον,  
 16 ἵνα μὴ εὐῤῥη παρρησίαν, καὶ μ[έ]χρι τῆς δεῦρο οὐδὲ ἀπόκρισιν ἐδεξάμεθα  
 17 περὶ τούτου. παρακληθῆ οὖν ἡ ὑμ[ε]τέρα πατρικὴ θεοφιλία κατὰ νοῦν ἔχειν  
 18 περὶ τούτου πρὸς τῷ τῆ ὑμετέρα σπουδῆ περιαιρεθῆναι τὸν ἀνόσιον ἐκ τῶν  
 19 μοναστηρίων ἡμῶν. ταῦτα γράφοντες, πλεῖστα προσκύνομεν (l. προσκυνούμεν) καὶ  
 ἀσπαζόμεθα  
 20 τὴν ὑμετέραν πατρικὴν ἀγιοσύνην, περιπτυσσόμενοι αὐτὴν τῆ τοῦ Πνεύματος  
 21 ἐνώσει. †  
 verso  
 22 δεσπό(τη) ἡμῶν ὡς ἀληθ(ῶς) τὰ πάντα θεοφιλεσ(τάτῳ) κ(αί) ἀγιοσ(άτῳ) πατρ(ι) ἀββᾷ  
 Γεωργίῳ προεστ(ῶτι) μο(ναστηρίου) Μετανοίας,  
 23 † Ἰωάννης ἐλεειν(ός) προσκ(υνητής).

## Translation

‘We inform your paternal holiness that on the twenty-seventh of the present month, Petros from Pentapolis, who arrived at the holy monastery of Aphrodito (coming) from Antinoe, gave to the abbot Nonas, who is the dearest to God, a letter of Menas, son of Arsas, who replied to him on the issue of Paveeit. The content of this letter was the following: “Be so charitable as to tell the abbot Andreas, who is the dearest to God, that I’m taking the lead and I am going up to Antinoe, and I will write to you all the news that I will learn.” For your holiness knows this man’s character, even if we do not write to you first and foremost that the fact that you were impeded to come up here saddened us to a great extent; because if he [i.e. the above-mentioned person] finds the courage to speak out being near the most extraordinary *magister militum* and consul, he will not be able to remain quiet; instead he will raise dust by all means against the monasteries and each one of us separately. It was only a few days ago, when we wrote



to Menas, the most pious abbot, the steward's son, asking him to receive by *vir clarissimus* lord Komita, son of Tzanke, a letter for *magnificentissimus* Petechon, reminding him of the bad actions committed by . . . [the aforementioned person] together with the magister Pelagios, in Neiloupolis, last year, so that he [the aforementioned person] will not find the audacity, and we have not received any reply about this issue so far. We beg, therefore, your paternal piety not to forget to remove as soon as possible this unholy person from our monasteries. In writing this, we make you many reverences and salute your paternal holiness embracing you in the unity of the Holy Spirit. (address) To our lord, who is truly dearest to God in all things and holiest Father, abbot Georgios, provost of the monastery of Repentence. Ioannes, the piteous worshipper.<sup>68</sup>

### P.Fouad 87 with BL VI 41; VII 58

(Possibly Aphrodito, Antaiopolite nome [see BL VII 58]; VI CE)

- †
- 1 Ἐκατὰ τὴν δευτέραν τοῦ παρόντος μηνὸς Φαμενώθ
  - 2 κατέλαβεν τὸν ὄρμον τοῦ μοναστηρίου Ἀφροδιτοῦς ὁ μεγαλοπρ(επέστατος)
  - 3 κόμες Ἰωάννης, πέμψας μοι γράμματα τῆς σῆς θεοφιλοῦς εὐτεκνίας,
  - 4 καὶ ἐκ τούτων γνοὺς τὴν ῥώσιν αὐτῆς, ἐδόξασα τὸν δεσπότην Θεόν·
  - 5 προετρεψάμην δὲ τὴν αὐτοῦ μεγαλοπρέπειαν ἀνελεῖν (οἱ ἀπελεῖν) εἰς τὰ
  - 6 μοναστήρια καὶ ἐπισκέψασθαι τὴν τούτων διοίκησιν. οὐκ ὑπέσχετο
  - 7 τέως τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, ἀλ<λ>' ὅμως ὡς ἐξήλθαμεν τῇ τρίτῃ ἔωθεν
  - 8 εἰς τὸ κτήμα τὸ λεγόμενον Περνίς, μετεστειλάμην αὐτὸν ἐκεῖσε,
  - 9 ὄφειλων διαλεχθῆναι αὐτῷ τὰ εἰκότα ἰδιαζόντως πρὸ τοῦ ἀνάπλου
  - 10 ἡμῶν, καὶ φθασάσης τῆς αὐτοῦ μεγαλοπρεπείας, κατέλαβον (ἰ. κατέλαβον) καὶ
  - 11 οἱ εὐλαβέστατοι ἀδελφοὶ τοῦ μοναστηρίου Στρατονικίδος, κατα-
  - 12 κράζοντες Ἱερημίου τοῦ προεστῶτος, καὶ λέγοντες μυρίας βίας
  - 13 περὶ τῆς ἀνατροπῆς τοῦ μοναστηρίου, περὶ τε τῶν τούτου χρεῶν
  - 14 ἐπὶ τοῦ χρόνου τῆς διοικήσεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀκούσας ὁ αὐτὸς μεγαλοπρ(επέστατος)
  - 15 ἀνήρ τὰ παρ' αὐτῶν λεχθέντα, μάλιστα ὅτι οὐκ ὑπάρχει σήμερον
  - 16 τῷ μοναστηρίῳ ἐκεῖνῳ εἷς ξέστης ἐλαίου, καὶ ἓν κνίδιον οἴνου,
  - 17 καὶ δέκα ἄρτάβας σίτου, ἠγανάκτησεν πάνυ κατὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἱερημίου,
  - 18 καὶ οὐ συνεχώρησεν αὐτὸν ἀνελεῖν μεθ' ἡμῶν ἕως τῆς Βαῦ †,
  - 19 ἀλλὰ ἀφῆκεν ἐν τῷ μοναστηρίῳ Ἀφροδιτοῦς, ἄχρι ἀποθέσεως
  - 20 τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ σὺν Θεῷ μετὰ τὴν διοίκησιν τοῦ πρώτου μοναστηρ(ίου)

68 A French translation is offered by Marrou (1939: 186–187).

21 τῆς Βαῦ. λουπάζεται γὰρ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ τετρακόσια νομίματα  
 22 μικρῶ ἢ πρὸς, ὑπὲρ μόνης τῆς διοικήσεως τοῦ μοναστηρίου  
 23 ἐνὸς ἐνιαυτοῦ τῆς πρώτης ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος), χωρὶς τῶν ἄλλων χρεῶν  
 24 τῶν δαν<ε>ιστῶν συντεινόντων εἰς ἔτε[ρ]α τριακόσια δεκατέσ<σ>αρ(α) νο(μίματα)  
 25 καὶ κατ' αὐτὴν {αὐτὴν} ἡμέραν ἀντεπ[έ]ρασεν μετὰ τῶν θεοσεβεστ(ά)τ(ων)  
 26 ἀδελφῶν Ἰακώβου, Ἀγαθοῦ, Φοιβάμμωνος, βουλόμενος ἅμα αὐτοῖς  
 27 βερέτοις (l. βερέδοις) προλαβεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἄντινούου, καὶ πρὸς εἶδησιν τῆς  
 28 ὑμετέρας θεοφιλοῦς εὐτεκνίας ταῦτα γέγραφα. ἀνέρχεται (or ἀπέρχεται) δὲ  
 29 μεθ' ἡμῶν Ἰερημίας, ὁ προσεστῶς τοῦ μοναστηρίου Ἀφροδιτοῦς  
 30 ἕως τῆς Ἄντινούου. ἀσπάζομαι πρὸ πάντων τὴν σὴν ἀδελφικὴν  
 31 θεοφιλίαν ἐν Κυρίῳ, μετὰ πάντων τῶν {των} σὺν αὐτῇ καὶ ἀγαπούντω(ν) (l. ἀγαπώντων)  
 32 αὐτὴν ἀδελφῶν. οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς ἐν Κυρίῳ·  
 33 τὸ μοναστήριον τρυτῶν ἀκάλως κεῖται. † Φαμενώθ γ/, ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) β/.  
 34 μὴ ὀλιγορήση (l. ὀλιγορήση) δὲ ἡ ὑμέτερα θεοφιλία κατὰ τοῦ γραμματιφόρου·  
 35 ἐπειδὴ ἐκράτησα αὐτὸν ἐνταῦθα ἄχρι παρουσίας τοῦ μεγάλ(ου) κόμι(τος),  
 36 καὶ εἶθ' οὕτως ἀπέλυσα αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς †.

verso

37 † τῷ τὰ πάντ(α) θεοφιλε(στάτῳ) πν(ευματ)ικῶ ὑἱῷ ἀββᾶ Γεωργίῳ πρ`ὸ εστ(ῶτι)  
 38 † ἀββ(ᾶ) Ἄνδρέας ἐλεεινός.

## Translation

‘On the second day of the present month Phamenoth, *magnificentissimus* comes Ioannes arrived at the port of the monastery of Aphrodito, and sent me a letter of your supreme blessedness, which is dear to God, and, after having learnt from this letter that you are well, I praised God, my lord. And I urged his magnificence to come up to (or: depart for) the monasteries and inspect their administration. He has not promised to do so up to this time; however, when we got out of the field called Pernis on the third [of Phamenoth], at earliest dawn, I sent him there, since I felt obliged to have a discussion with him in private about the right issues before our putting out to sea; and when your magnificence arrived [before we did], the most pious brothers of the monastery of Stratonikis also arrived and screamed against Ieremias, the provost, and told about [his] countless acts of violence, about the upheaval from which the monastery suffered, and about his debts during the year of his administration; and when the *magnificentissimus* man listened to their words himself, and in particular that today there is not even one sextarius of oil, one knidion of wine or ten artabae of grain in that monastery,

he got furious with the aforementioned Ieremias and he did not permit him to come up with us until Bau; however, he allowed him to remain in the monastery of Aphrodito, until his words are recorded (?)<sup>69</sup> with God's help after the administration of the first monastery of Bau. His account has indeed less than forty solidi — or a bit more — than it should have for the sole administration of the monastery during the one and only year of the first indiction, without taking into account the other debts to the usurers, who will seek three hundred and fourteen solidi more; and on the same day, he passed to the other side of the river together with the most pious brothers Iacobos, Agathos, Phoibammon, planning to continue his route until Antinoe with the same post-horses; and I have written this text in order to keep your supreme blessedness, which is dear to God, informed. Ieremias, the provost of the monastery of Aphrodito, comes up with us until Antinoe. First of all, I salute your brotherly piety in the Lord, as well as all of the brothers who live with you and love you. The brothers who live with me greet you in the Lord; the monastery is unwell. 3 Phamenoth, 2<sup>nd</sup> indiction. May your piety not be angry with the letter-carrier; because I kept him here until the noble comes arrives, and only then I let him come back to you. (address) To my spiritual son, who is absolutely dearest to God, abbot Georgios, the provost. Abbot Andreas, the piteous man.<sup>70</sup>

## P.Fouad 88

(Possibly Aphrodito, Antaiopolite nome [see BL VII 58]; VI CE)

†

- 1 ⲡ καὶ νῦν τῆς εὐκαιρίας δραξάμενος τοῦ γραμματιηφόρου μονάζοντος
- 2 κατερχομένου μετὰ τῶν γραμμάτων τοῦ ὀσιοτάτου (l. ὀσιωτάτου) ἀββᾶ Ἀνδρέου
- 3 πρὸς τὴν ὑμετέραν πατρικὴν ἀγιοσύνην [γε...φ.] γέγραφα πρῶτον μὲν
- 4 προσκυνῶν καὶ προσφθεγγόμενος αὐτήν, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ παρακαλῶ
- 5 μνησθῆναι τῆς ἐμῆς βραχύτητος ἐν ταῖς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν αὐτῆς

**69** On the translation of ἀπόθεις, see Gascou (1976, 168): “. . . ἀπόθεις désigne normalement l'action et le résultat de rassembler, d'emmagasiner, et il en résulte que l'ἀπόθεις τῶν λόγων ne se rapporte pas à la reddition des comptes, mais à leur rassemblement, soit dans des archives, soit auprès d'un service de vérification comptable” [“. . . ἀπόθεις normally designates the action and the result of gathering, of storing, and it follows that the ἀπόθεις τῶν λόγων does not relate to the rendering of accounts, but to their collection, either in archives, or with an accounting audit service”].

**70** A French translation is offered by Marrou (1939: 192–193); see also Gascou's remarks (1976: 163–177; see BL VII 58).

6 εὐπροσδέκτοις λιταῖς. ἔγνω γὰρ καὶ νῦν, πρὸς τὴν δύναμιν τῶν  
 7 ὑμετέρων γραμμάτων, τὸ σταθε[στε]ρὸν καὶ ἀμετακίνητον τῆς  
 8 ὑμετέρας ἀγαθῆς προαιρέσεως εἰς ἐμέ, τὸν ἐλάχιστον αὐτῆς ἀδελφὸν  
 9 καὶ υἱόν, καὶ παρακαλῶ αὐτὴν ταύτην βεβαίαν ἔχειν μέχρι παντός·  
 10 ἐπειδὴ οὐ μετρίως δέομαι οὐ μόνον τῶν ὑμετέρων εὐχῶν ἀλλὰ καὶ  
 11 συγκροτήσεως ὑμετέρας οὐκ ὀλίγης. † ἀσπάζομαι δὲ τὸν τε  
 12 θεοφιλέστατον κοινὸν πατέρα, καὶ τὴν κοσμιωτάτην κοινὴν μητέρα,  
 13 καὶ πάντας τοὺς σὺν ὑμῖν ἐν Κ(υρί)ῳ, δέσπο(τα) θεοφιλέστατέ μου πάτερ. †  
 14 † Φαμενώθ γ/†.

verso

15 † δεσπό(τη) ἐμῷ ὡς ἀληθ(ῶς) τὰ πάντα θεοφιλε(στάτῳ) (καὶ) ἀγιωτ(άτῳ) πατρὶ π(νευματι)κῷ  
 ἀββᾶ Γεωργίῳ, προεστ(ῶτι) Μετ(ανοίας)  
 16 † Ἰωάννης, ἐλάχ(ιστος).

## Translation

‘Now also, finding an opportunity by the monk and letter-carrier, who descends towards your paternal holiness holding the letter of the most holy abbot Andreas, I have written this letter first and foremost in order to make obeisance to you and salute you; secondly, I beg you to remember me, the least of all, in the prayers that you address to God, which are accepted (by Him). Once again, thanks to the power of your letter, I came to know your stable and immovable benevolence towards me, the least of all your brothers and your son, and I beg you to keep it [i.e. your benevolence towards me] as strong as it is now for ever; because I am in great need not only of your prayers but also of your full approval. I salute our common Father, who is dearest to God, and our common mother, who is the most virtuous, and all the people who live with us in the Lord, my master and most pious Father. 3 Phamenoth. (address) To my lord, who is truly dearest to God in all things and holiest spiritual Father, Georgios, provost of the monastery of Repetence. Ioannes, the least of all.’<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> A French translation is offered by Marrou (1939: 198); see also Kim’s commentary and German translation (2011: 115–119).

**P.Fouad 89 with BL VII 58; XI 82**

(Possibly Aphrodito, Antaiopolite nome [see BL VII 58]; VI CE)

†

- 1 εὐκερίαν (l. εὐκαιρίαν) εὐρών τοῦ γραμματηφόρου ἀναγκῆον (l. ἀναγκαῖον) ἡγησάμην  
γράφειν
- 2 προσκυνῶν καὶ ἀσπαζόμενος τὰ εὐλογημένα ἴχνη τῶν εὐλογημένων
- 3 ποδῶν τῷ ἐμῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη, μετὰ καὶ πάντων τῶν
- 4 συνόντων θεοφιλεστάτ(ων) ἀδελφῶν τῷ ἐμῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη (l. δεσπότη), καὶ
- 5 παρακαλῶ τὸν ἐμὸν δεσπότην μνησθῆναι τῇ ἐμῇ ταπ<ε>ινώσει ἐν
- 6 ταῖς πανοσίαις καὶ εὐπροσδέκταις εὐχῆς (l. εὐχαῖς) τῷ ἐμῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη,
- 7 ἄχρη (l. ἄχρη) ἀξιώση μαι (l. με) ὁ Θεὸς καὶ κατὰ πρόσωπον προσκυνῆσαι τὸν
- 8 ἐμὸν ἀγαθὸν δεσπότην. οὐ παύομαι γὰρ νύκτα{ν} καὶ ἡμέρα<ν>
- 9 εὐχόμενος πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Χρ[ι]στὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας καὶ
- 10 διαμονῆς τῷ ἐμῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη, καὶ πάντων τῶν ἀγαπούντων (l. ἀγαπώντων)
- 11 τὸν ἐμὸν δεσπότην ἐν Κ(υρ)ίῳ, δέσπο(τα). Φαμ(ενώ)θ, β', ι(ν)δ(ικτιώνος) α' †.
- verso
- 12 σὺν Θ(ε)ῷ. τῷ ἐμῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη, μετὰ τ(ὸ)ν Θ(εό)ν, προεστ(ῶ)τι, † Ψοῖος, ἐλάχ(ιστος)
- 13 δοῦλος.

**Translation**

‘Now also, finding an opportunity by the letter-carrier I thought it was necessary to write to you, in order to worship and salute the blessed prints of the blessed feet of my virtuous lord, and of all the brothers, who are the most pious, and who live with my virtuous lord; and I beg my lord to remember my insignificance in his all-holy prayers, which are accepted by God, until God will think me worthy to make obeisance to my virtuous lord also in person. For I do not cease to pray night and day to Christ the Lord for the salvation and the perpetuity of my virtuous lord and of all those who love him in Lord, my master. 2 Phamenoth, 2<sup>nd</sup> indiction. (address) With God’s help. To my virtuous lord, the provost, with God’s help. Psoios, the least of all slaves.’<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> A French translation is offered by Marrou (1939: 201).

**P.Ness. III 47 with BL IV 23**

(Nessana, Palaestina; probably before 605 CE)

- 1 † πάντων πρότερον (l. πρότερον) γράφω προσ[κ]ινῶ καὶ ἀσπ[ά]ζω σ]ε τὸν ἐμοῦ  
 2 γνήσιον (l. γνήσιον) φίλων (l. φίλον) ὄντα, δέσποτα. θέλεσων (l. θέλησον) δέξασθ[αι παρ]  
 ἂ [το]ῦ γραμ-  
 3 ματεφώρου (l. γραμματηφόρου) σκάρου λ(ίτρας) ὠγδωέκωντα (l. ὀγδοήκοντα) κεφαλὰς  
 μεγάλας εἴκωσι (l. εἴκοσι)  
 4 καὶ εἰς ταῦτα πρωκάλυμμα (l. προκάλυμμα) ποιῆσε (l. ποιῆσαι) τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ μου  
 Ἀνακλᾶ  
 5 ὅτι ἐδέξω (l. ἐδέξω) αὐτὰ καὶ εὐχου ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ διὰ τῶν (l. τὸν) κύριων (l. κύριον) †.  
 verso  
 6 † δεσπ(ό)τ(η) ἐμῶ [τὰ] π(άντα) θεοφιλ(εστάτῳ) (καὶ) πάσ(ης) τ[ι]μ(ῆς) (καὶ) προσκυνησεως)  
 ἀξ(ίω) γνη(σίω) φι[λ(ω)]<sup>73</sup> † Στεφάνῳ Βικτωρίῳ  
 7 διακ(όνῳ).  
 8 † Πατρικίος ἡγούμενος †.  
 9 ἐδεξάμην τὰ γράμ<μ>ατα τοῦ ἐμοῦ δεσπότου κ(αὶ) φίλου  
 10 δ(ιὰ) Πτολομέου ἅμα κ(αὶ) ὀψάρια ις (οἱ κ) λιτρῶν ὀ ἑσταθμί-  
 11 σθεν (l. ἐσταθμίσθην) αὐ[τ]ὰ παρουσίᾳ Πτολεμέου φυλοποντη (perhaps: καὶ φυλότονται  
 [l. φυλάττονται]) ἄχρισ οὐ  
 12 ἔλθεις (l. ἔλθης) ἔρε (l. αἶρε) δὲ κ(αὶ) τὰς ἄλλας εἴκωσει (l. εἴκοσι) λίτρας κ(αὶ) ὀλίγα ἀλικά.

**Translation**

‘Before writing anything else, I send respectful greetings to you, sir, for you are my true friend. Please accept from the letter-carrier eighty pounds of sea fish, twenty large heads. In return give my man Anaklas the protection of a note that you have received them. Pray for me to the Lord. (address) To my Lord, greatly beloved of God, and my friend, worthy, with God’s help, of all honor and reverence: Stephan son of Vicrorius, deacon. From Patrick, abbot.’

(The reply:)

‘I received by Ptolemy the letter of my lord and friend, together with 16 (or 20) pickled fish, by weight 70 pounds. I weighed them in the presence of Ptolemy and . . . until you come. Get (?) the other 20 pounds, and a few salt fish.’<sup>74</sup>

73 On this reading, see Hagedorn (2008: 131); for a different reading, see BL XIII 203.

74 This translation is offered by Kraemer (1958: 140).

**P.Ness. III 50**

(Unknown provenance; early VII CE)

- 1 † πρ<ὸ> ᾗ μ' ἐν πάντων γράφω κ[αὶ ἀ]σπάζομαι (l. ἀσπάζομαι) τῶν (l. τὸν) ἀβ<β>ᾶν Ζόνι-  
 2 νων (l. Ζόνινον), ἔπ<ε>ῖτα παρακαλῶ σε ἐπ<ε>ῖδη ἄσθενῶ καὶ οὐ δύ-  
 3 ναμι (l. δύναμαι) ἐξελεθ<ε>ῖν εἰς τὴν ἑορτὴν τοῦ ἁγίου Σεργίου ἐὰν  
 4 ἐξέρχῃ (l. ἐξέρχῃ) {ε}ῖνα παρακαλέσῃς (l. παρακαλέσῃς) τῶν (l. τὸν) ἐγούμενων (l. ἡγούμενον)  
 ἦνα (l. ἦνα)  
 5 δώσῃ (l. δώσῃ) τῶν (l. τῶ) ἀβᾶν (l. ἀββᾶ) Προκῶπιν (l. Προκωπίω) τὴν εὐλογίαν μου ἦνα  
 (l. ἦνα)  
 6 μὴ ἀναγκασθῆ (l. ἀναγκασθῆ) μετὰ τὴν ἑορτὴ<ν> ἐξελεθ<ε>ῖν . καὶ αὐτῶς (l. αὐτὸς) ἐπα-  
 7 λάσετε (l. ἀπαλλάσσηται) τοῦ ἀναλώματος (l. ἀναλώματος) καὶ μὲ ἀναπα<ύ>ειν. ἐπα-  
 8 κλέθετι (l. παρακλήθητι) χάρισεν (l. χαρίζειν) με τῷ (l. τῷ) καθίκον (l. καθῆκον) τοῦτο.  
 ἄγυένον (l. ὑγιαίνων) διελεθ[ε]  
 9 καὶ ἐὰν μὲ (l. μὴ) ἐξελεθ<ε>ς (l. ἐξέλθῃς) γράψον αὐτῶν (l. αὐτῶ). †  
 verso  
 10 (hand 2) τ(ῶ) ἀβ(βᾶ) Ζωνίνω Γεώργιος ἐλέξει  
 11 θε(οῦ) ἐπίσκοπος.

**Translation**

‘Before everything I am writing to send greetings to Father Zoninon.<sup>75</sup> Next I beg you, since I am sick and cannot go out to the festival of St. Sergios,<sup>76</sup> if you go, to beg the abbot to give Father Procopios my donation so that he will not be forced to come out after the festival. Thus he will himself be relieved of the expense, and I may rest in peace (?). You are requested to grant me the favor, which is my due. Abide in good health. If you do not go out, write him. (address) To Father Zoninon. From George, by the grace of God bishop’.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> I prefer this transliteration to ‘Zunayn’ proposed by Kraemer (see fn. 77).

<sup>76</sup> I prefer the transliterations ‘Sergios’ and ‘Prokopios’ to ‘Sergius’ and ‘Procopius’, which are proposed by Kraemer (see fn. 77).

<sup>77</sup> This translation is offered by Kraemer (1958: 145).

