

APLA

The Asia Pacific Leadership Academy

Ancient Letter-Writing



APLA PMM Special Topic 2018

Ancient Letter-Writing

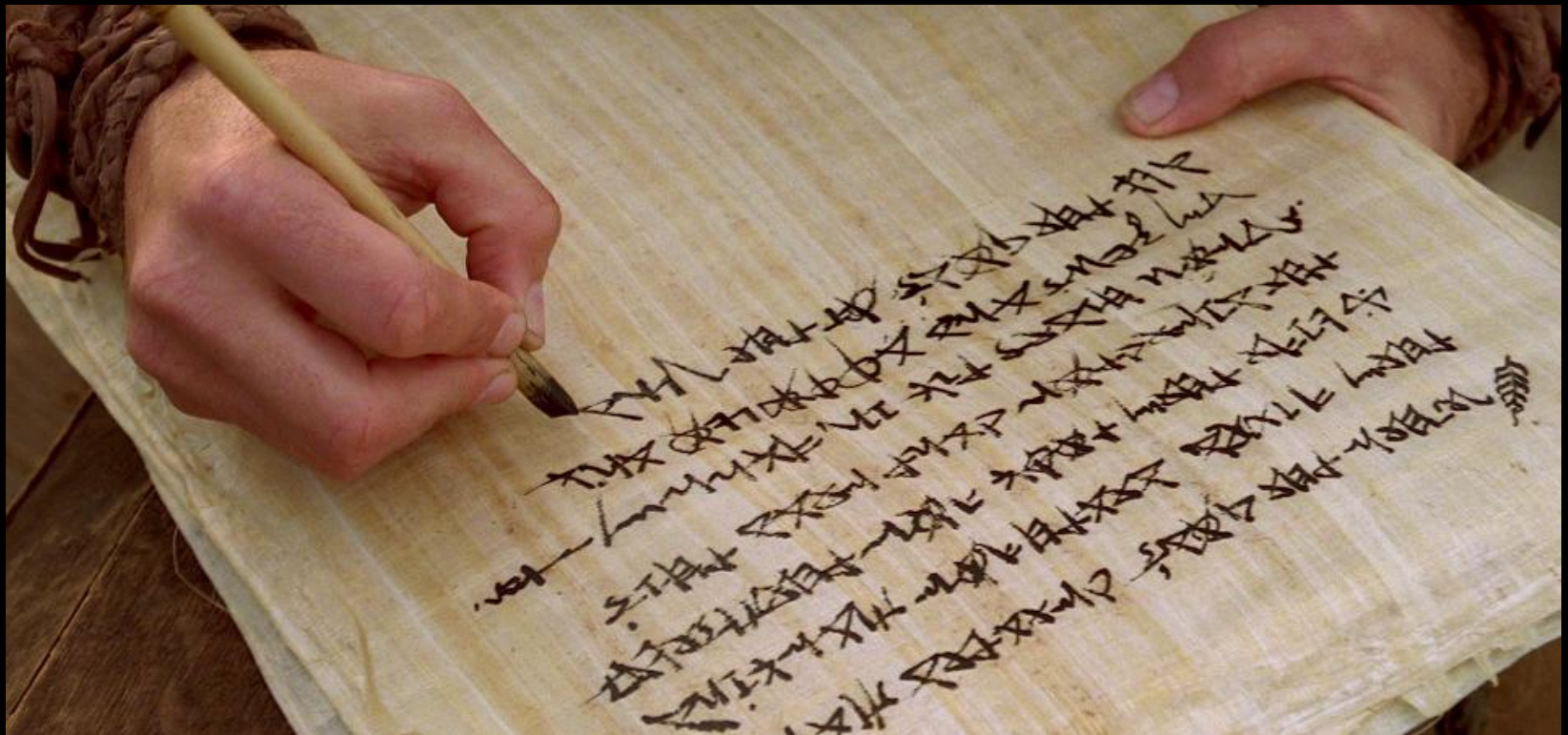


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Handwritten text on a piece of aged, textured paper, possibly a fragment of a document or manuscript. The text is written in a cursive script, likely a form of Arabic or Persian calligraphy, and is arranged in four lines. The paper is heavily worn, with significant damage, including large tears and missing sections, particularly on the right side. The ink is dark and appears to be applied with a quill or similar instrument.

Greco-Roman Culture



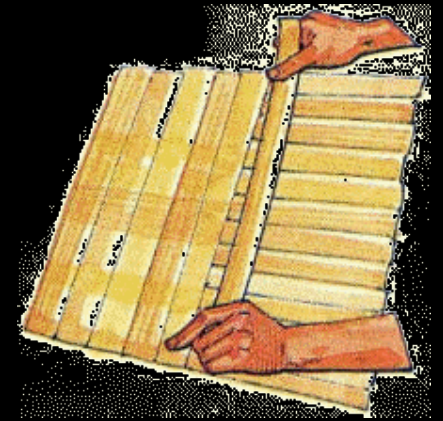
Papyrus Plant



Papyrus Reed



Papyrus Sheet



Papyrus Sheet and Scroll





Papyrus Sheet and Knife



Sample ancient letter



- ∞ Loeb Select Papyri, I, 99
- ∞ From 154 BC
- ∞ Spelling has been edited and regularized

σαραπιων

πτολεμαιο και απολλωνιο τοις αδελφοις

χαιρειν

ει ερρωσθε ερρωμεθα δε καυτοι

συγγεγραμμαι τη εσπερου θυγατρι

ποιησεισ αποστειλαι μοι ημιχουν ελαιου

ερρωσο

κη

παραγενου

serapion

to ptolemai and apolonios, brothers

greetings

if you are well, we too are well

i have made contract with the daughter of hesperos

you would do well to send me half a chous of oil

be well

21(st) come attend

Format of Paul's Letters (Greco-Roman)



- ❧ Greeting – name of the sender and that of recipient; wishes for good health
- ❧ Main body – variable length
- ❧ Farewell
- ❧ Signature (optional)

Length of Paul's Letters



- ∞ Average length – 1,300 words
- ∞ Philemon: 335 Grk words
- ∞ Romans: 7,114 Grk words

1. A New Form?



- ✧ Epistles are several times longer than the average letter of the ancient times.
- ✧ We could say that Paul invented a new literary form, the epistle.

2. Communal Nature



- ☞ Aside from the theological character in its contents, observe the communal nature of its address.
- ☞ Paul's letters exhibit "group mentality."

3. Scribal skills



- ∞ Paul often employed a skilled scribes called an *amanuensis*.
- ∞ His letters explicitly mention secretaries six times (Rom 16.22; 1 Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11; Col 4.18; 2 Thess 3.17; Phlm 19).
- ∞ Paul writes the final greeting with his own hand (1 Cor 16:21, Gal 6:11, Col 4:18, 2 Thess 3:17)

WELLOYACNDY
WLPdΔLOYM.MO
TE NOC YOY
DOW



4. Hassles and Costs



- ❧ There was no postal system in the Roman Empire.
- ❧ You would have to either 1) bring the letter yourself, 2) ask around until you find someone going to or passing through the intended destination, 3) pay a reliable courier.
- ❧ Before writing a letter, one would have to seriously consider various costs.

Order of Paul's Letters



- ∞ Depends on length
- ∞ Longest (Romans) to shortest (2 Thess),
for those written to churches
- ∞ Longest to shortest, for those written to
individuals

Reflection



- ❧ How can you be more like Paul in the ways you encourage the fellowship?
- ❧ How can you be more like Paul in your concern for brothers and sisters?
- ❧ How can you use employ elements of local culture (or your own context) to advance God's kingdom?

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