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## Writing Exercises from Wadi Sarga: *O.Sarga II 1–14*

Jennifer Cromwell\*

**Abstract:** The editions of previously unpublished texts from the monastic complex at Wadi Sarga in the collection of the British Museum. These fourteen ostraca bear writing exercises ('school texts'), primarily alphabets and alphabetic letters or sequences, personal names, and epistolary formulae. Such exercises were not included by W.E. Crum and H.I. Bell in their 1922 publication of texts from the site.

**Keywords:** Coptic, education, writing exercises, monasteries, ostraca

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From the monastic complex at Wadi Sarga survives a large body of textual material, the majority of which is now part of the collection of the department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> In 1922, Walter

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**Vorbemerkung:** I would like to thank the members of staff at the British Museum Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, especially Elisabeth O'Connell, for their assistance with my work on the Wadi Sarga material, as well as Jean-Luc Fournet and Sebastian Richter for their comments on an earlier version of this article. All photographs are by the author; copyright remains with the British Museum (© Trustees of the British Museum). My work on the Wadi Sarga texts was undertaken as part of a project that received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement MONASPOWER No 656205.

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<sup>1</sup> For the excavation of the site, the British Museum's collection, and further bibliography, see E.R. O'Connell, R. Campbell Thompson's 1913/14 Excavation of Wadi Sarga and Other Sites, in *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 21 (2014), 121–192 and E.R. O'Connell, Wadi Sarga at the British Museum: Sources for Study (with Annotated Bibliography), in P. Buzi, A. Complani, & F. Contardi (eds) *Coptic Society, Literature, and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies, September 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup>, 2008* (Peeters, Leuven 2016), 1547–1566.

Crum and Harold Bell published 385 texts from the site, including a number of graffiti that remain in situ (*P.Sarga/O.Sarga*<sup>2</sup>). Over one thousand additional items among the Museum's collection bear text of some description. These texts fall into three broad categories: ostraca (i.e., potsherds reused for the writing of texts), vessel notations, and incised tableware. In addition, over one hundred unpublished papyrus fragments from Wadi Sarga form part of the British Library's holdings.<sup>3</sup>

New examination of the material from Wadi Sarga, both objects and excavation documentation, is currently being undertaken as part of a British Museum Research Project under the direction of Elisabeth O'Connell.<sup>4</sup> As part of the endeavour, I have been studying the unpublished ostraca and papyri. What follows represents the first in a series of articles within which these texts will be published: rather than publish the texts in monograph form, the decision has been made to publish the texts in smaller groups, according to their type, in order to expedite their publication and availability to the scholarly audience.<sup>5</sup>

This first article presents the writing exercises from Wadi Sarga.<sup>6</sup> In the original publication, the editors did not include writing exercises, except

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<sup>2</sup> Both sigla are commonly used to reflect the different supports upon which texts were written. *I.Sarga* is also used in reference to the inscriptions (stelae and graffiti) that Crum and Bell included in their volume.

<sup>3</sup> For the division of Coptic papyri between the British Museum and British Library, see O'Connell, R. Campbell Thompson's 1913/14 Excavation, 135 and O'Connell, Wadi Sarga at the British Museum, 1549.

<sup>4</sup> <[http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research\\_projects/all\\_current\\_projects/wadi\\_sarga.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/wadi_sarga.aspx)> (last accessed: 28.08.2018). For work on the ceramic and glass wares, see the preliminary report in J. Faiers, Wadi Sarga Revisited: A Preliminary Study of the Pottery Excavated in 1913/14, in E.R. O'Connell (ed.) *Egypt in the First Millennium AD: Perspectives from New Fieldwork*, 177–189 (Peeters, Leuven 2014), ahead of her publication of the entire group; for the textiles from the site, see F. Pritchard, Textiles from Wadi Sarga, a 6th–8th-century monastic site in Middle Egypt excavated in 1913/1914, in A. De Moor, C. Fluck, & P. Linscheid (eds) *Excavating, analysing, reconstructing: Textiles of the 1st Millennium AD from Egypt and neighbouring countries. Proceedings of the 9th Textiles from the Nile Valley conference of the research group 'Textiles of the Nile Valley', Antwerp, November 27–29, 2015* (Lannoo, Tielt, Belgium 2017), 60–71.

<sup>5</sup> This decision is contrary to the plan set out in J. Cromwell, New Texts from Wadi Sarga, in H. Takla (ed.) *Proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Coptic Studies* (forthcoming), which provides a general introduction to the textual material. Following publications will follow the numerical sequence established here for *O.Sarga II*.

<sup>6</sup> I prefer the designation 'writing exercises' rather than 'school texts', as already noted in J. Cromwell, Coptic Writing Exercises in the Petrie Museum with a Concordance of its Published Coptic Texts, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 195 (2015), 205, as

for a group of seven mathematical texts, comprising multiplication tables and fractions: *O.Sarga* 22–28.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the large volume of texts from the site, only a small number of identifiable exercises survive and these fall into very standard categories: alphabets, syllabaries, names, and epistolary formulae, as well as pieces that combine multiple exercise types.<sup>8</sup> These exercises reflect a focus on letter-formation and epistolary composition, which is typical of Coptic school texts.<sup>9</sup> The large number of administrative texts and letters from Wadi Sarga demonstrates the importance for the need for literate members of the community, to record and manage its internal affairs as well as communication with other communities. With the possible exception of one ostrakon, it is of note that no texts of a religious nature occur, e.g., Biblical passages (especially Psalms, which are common elsewhere, especially among the ostraca of western Thebes).<sup>10</sup>

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not all exercises are the product of beginner or novice writers, and not all of the exercises published here are in the hands of beginners (e.g., *O.Sarga* II 5). However, as the distinction between the two terms is not clear, and because both terms are used in the scholarly literature, I do use both designations.

<sup>7</sup> This group was later incorporated into *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.*:

*O.Sarga* 22 = *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.* 316; *O.Sarga* 23 = *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.* 317; *O.Sarga* 24 = *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.* 323; *O.Sarga* 25 = *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.* 324; *O.Sarga* 26 = *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.* 327; *O.Sarga* 27 = *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.* 325; *O.Sarga* 28 = *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.* 328.

<sup>8</sup> On the attested types of Coptic school texts/exercises, see the introduction to *P.Rain. Unterricht kopt.* p. 15; see also R. Cribiore, Greek and Coptic Education in Late Antique Egypt, in S. Emmel, M. Krause, S.G. Richter, & S. Schaten (eds) *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit. Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses Münster, 20.–26. Juli 1996* (Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 1999), 279–286.

<sup>9</sup> On the pragmatic nature of Coptic school texts, see R. Cribiore, The Coptic School Exercises in the Collection of Columbia University, in B. Palme (ed.) *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologen-Kongresses, Wien 22–28 Juli 2001*, (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna 2007), 127–130, especially p. 128 (“Coptic education ... seems to have been more in touch with the practical needs of a person acquiring some literacy, who wished to learn to correspond”).

<sup>10</sup> Alain Delattre’s ongoing research on ostraca with Psalm quotations includes the category of texts connected to writing exercises (as opposed to, e.g., religious / spiritual training or quotations within different textual genres such as letters); see A. Delattre, Ostraca des Musées de Berlin portant des extraits des Psaumes en copte, in V.M. Lepper (ed.) *Forschung in der Papyrussammlung. Eine Festgabe für das Neue Museum* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), 287–288. Short Psalm passages appear among the school texts from western Thebes in the collection of Columbia University, which Raffaella Cribiore

In the following editions, basic observations are included about the material aspects of the sherds; more detailed descriptions are available on the British Museum's online catalogue, which may be modified in the future through further collaborative work with ceramicists.<sup>11</sup> In 2013, I photographed the entire body of textual material from Wadi Sarga and the images are included in the British Museum's corresponding online catalogue entries.<sup>12</sup> Online images can, therefore, be consulted alongside the figures provided here. In due course, the aim is to incorporate the editions of these texts in the Museum's catalogue and connect them to the relevant online papyrological tools; e.g., the published *O.Sarga* texts are already partially integrated into APIS.<sup>13</sup>

Only broad VI–VIII dates are provided for most of the texts, a point that reflects the difficulty in dating the Wadi Sarga material. None of the known texts contain an absolute date. A small group of coins found at the site date from the mid-VI to the early VIII century, and fragments of Arabic texts corroborate a post-conquest date for part of this material. However, it is impossible to be more precise than this. In a few instances, the palaeography of the ostraca reflects a date towards the end of this period: *O.Sarga* II 4 and 5 bear minuscule Greek letters of the VII/VIII century. Palaeographic features cannot, though, be used to relatively date the majority of the material.<sup>14</sup>

### Findspots

During the 1913/14 excavation of the site led by R. Campbell Thompson, many of the small finds were marked in pencil or pen with a field number that indicates their findspot within Wadi Sarga.<sup>15</sup> Of the fourteen school

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and I are preparing for publication; see Cribiore, *The Coptic School Exercises*, for a preliminary report on the material.

<sup>11</sup> <[http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/search.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx)> (last accessed 18.11.2018). As the online catalogue does not have doi (digital object marker) addresses for individual catalogue entries, it is necessary to search for items by their EA number.

<sup>12</sup> My work was undertaken as part of an Ancient Egypt and Sudan Postdoctoral Fellowship.

<sup>13</sup> To date, 201 of the published *O.Sarga* texts are included in the Duke Database of Documentary Papyri, i.e., those texts that were 'Greek enough' to be incorporated into *SB XVIII*.

<sup>14</sup> O'Connell, *R. Campbell Thompson's 1913/14 Excavation*, 136.

<sup>15</sup> The site map published in *O.Sarga* (between pages 2 and 3) includes a number of these findspots, but see now O'Connell, *R. Campbell Thompson's 1913/14 Excavation*, 155 (fig. 21), 163 (fig. 34), 164 (figs. 35 and 36), and 165 (fig. 37) for more detailed plans.

texts published here, eight have such marks; the field number recorded on *O.Sarga* II 5 is not certain, though, and is marked by an asterisk on the following table. Most of the texts with identifiable findspots come from throw-outs (i.e., dumps): three from ‘80’, two from ‘70’, and one from ‘43’.<sup>16</sup> *O.Sarga* II 6 is from room 24, among the ‘North houses’.<sup>17</sup>

<i>O.Sarga</i> II	EA number	Field number	Feature
1	70743	80	Throw-out
2	56617	–	
3	55968 + 56612	–	
4	70427	70	Throw-out
5	70756	75*	?
6	70616	24	Room 24, ‘North houses’
7	70308	43	Throw-out
8	69866	80	Throw-out
9	70766	–	
10	70507	–	
11	56685	–	
12	70845	–	
13	70484	80	Throw-out
14	70401	70	Throw-out

### *O.Sarga* II 1–3: Alphabets

#### *O.Sarga* II 1

EA 70743

46 × 69 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of an orange-red pottery vessel. The text is written on the interior; the exterior is ribbed, with cord-marked decoration.

<sup>16</sup> For the throw-outs, see O’Connell, R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation, 132. My preliminary count of the unpublished ostraca from Wadi Sarga shows that almost one-quarter of the material comes from throw-out ‘80’, located at the mouth of the wadi. See especially O’Connell, R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation, 165 (fig. 37), in which architectural features are superimposed on a satellite image of the wadi.

<sup>17</sup> As the plan of the ‘North houses’ in O’Connell, R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation, 155 (fig. 21) shows, room 24 actually comprises three rooms, 24a, b, and c, but it is not possible to further specify the findspot of this ostrakon.

This small sherd contains parts of two lines. The second line bears part of an alphabetic sequence; the letter on the first line may belong to a separate sequence or the practice of an individual letter. The letters are large, rounded, and well-formed.

-----  
 1 [ .? ] . z [ .? ]  
 2 [ .? ] ε ζ η θ [ .? ]  
 -----



*O.Sarga II 1*

**1** There appears to be a trace of only a single letter before ζ, but it is not certain whether this is η, or if the writer was repeating certain letters above the alphabet, as is seen in *O.Sarga II 3*.

**2** As this is such a small fragment, it is not clear how many letters were written on this line. For this reason, the text has not been reconstructed.

### *O.Sarga II 2*

EA 56617

144 × 113 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of a red pottery vessel. The text is written on the exterior; there is a small chip to the top-right corner. The interior is slightly grooved.

The ink is very worn in places and it is difficult to determine how much text may be lost. The first two lines contain the alphabet, below which pairs of letters are written in a column in what seems to be a syllabary in the sequence vowel + beta. A trace along the bottom edge may be another entry in the syllabary, but this is not certain.

1 [ Δ Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η ] Θ Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν [ ξ Ο Π Ρ Σ Τ ]  
 2 Υ Φ Ξ Ω ϖ ϗ ς χ †  
 3 Δ Β *vestig.*  
 4 ε [Β] *vestig.*  
 5 η Β *vestig.*  
 6 *vestig.*  
 -----

3–4 There are possible traces to the right of **β** in each of these lines.



*O.Sarga* II 2

### *O.Sarga* II 3

EA 55968 + 56612

53 × 72 mm; 55 × 105 mm

VI–VIII

Sherds from the body of a pale-red pottery vessel. The text is written on the exterior; the remains of cord-marked decoration are visible along the bottom edge. The interior is slightly grooved.

This ostrakon survives in two pieces but is otherwise complete. The alphabet is written over three lines, with certain letters repeated interlinearly and in all four margins. The hand is large and able to produce the letters well, but without fluency. In the right margin, there appear to be traces of erased letters.

1    z z   β β β γ γ γ Δ Δ Δ  
 2    z   Δ β γ Δ ε ζ η θ ι κ λ μ \m/  
 3    \z/ z   n   ζ ο π ρ σ τ υ φ χ  
 4    vac. ω ϣ ς Ϸ †  
 5    z z z z z z z z

2 Δ here is slightly unusual. While those on line 1 have a short vertical stroke at their top, in this instance the vertical stroke has a hook to the right, resembling a small gamma.



2 At the end of the line,  $\mu$  is written twice, with one letter on top of the other and horizontal lines at both top and bottom (giving the appearance of a monogram).

3  $\tau$  has been written upside down – the horizontal stroke at the base is just visible.

4  $\omega$  is missing from the end of the line, if it was ever written.



*O.Sarga II 3*

### ***O.Sarga II 4–5: Single letter practice (Greek)***

#### ***O.Sarga II 4***

EA 70427

43 × 32 mm

VII/VIII

Small sherd from the body of a pink pottery vessel. The text is written on the interior.

The ostrakon is broken at the right; an unknown amount of text is lost. The beginnings of two lines survive (there do not appear to be any further lines, unless they were written on the now lost side of the sherd), bearing the same letter, written repeatedly: a minuscule form of  $\mu$ , with a long descending left limb. Some scribes at Wadi Sarga practiced biscriptality (that is, using different scripts when writing in Coptic and Greek), so it is not surprising to see texts bearing Greek minuscule letter practice.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> In particular, note the scribe Phoibammon in *O.Sarga* 168, 169, and 171.

- 1    μ μ μ [ .? ]  
 2    μ μ [ .? ]

*O.Sarga* II 4***O.Sarga* II 5**

EA 70756

37 × 87 mm

VII/VIII

Sherd from the body of a drab-coloured pottery vessel. The text is written on the exterior.

This ostracon is complete. There are two lines of text, in which the same letter – ξ – is repeated. In the second row, the letters are less well-formed. It is possible that these were produced by a second writer, attempting to replicate the letter in the first line, the examples of which are more consistent in form and size. The first row comprises seven examples of the letter, preceded and followed by crosses, which demarcate the beginning and end of the exercise. The second line begins with a cursive version of upsilon (υ), flanked by two smaller versions of this letter. Five attempts at xi are then written, below which may be traces of crosses.

- 1    (Hd. 1) + ξ ξ ξ ξ ξ ξ ξ +  
 2    (Hd. 2) υ υ υ ξ ξ ξ ξ ξ

*O.Sarga* II 5

1 The tail of the first ξ curves up into another xi, the strokes of which are not written in a single motion, with an extra stroke completing the letter's tail.

***O.Sarga II 6: Syllabic exercise***

EA 70616

76 × 85 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of a light-brown grooved pottery vessel. The text is written on the interior. The exterior bears three parallel lines of cord-marked decoration.

This ostrakon appears to contain a syllabic exercise. Each line bears two letters, the second of which in each instance is  $\Delta$ , and the first letters follow the sequence of vowels  $\lambda$   $\epsilon$   $\ddot{\imath}$  [  $\cdot$  ]  $\Upsilon$   $\omega$ ; it is difficult but not impossible to read  $\omicron$  in the traces of line 4. The exercise therefore comprises each of the vowels followed by the same final consonant. A chrism appears to mark the beginning of the exercise.

1	$\rho$	$\lambda$	$\Delta$
2		$\epsilon$	$\Delta$
3		$\ddot{\imath}$	$\Delta$
4		$\cdot$	$\Delta$
5		$\Upsilon$	$\Delta$
6		$\omega$	$\Delta$

*O.Sarga II 6*

**3** No  $\Delta$  follows  $\ddot{\imath}$ , however, as the  $\Delta$  on line 2 is so large, it is possible that it should be read together with both  $\epsilon$  and  $\ddot{\imath}$ .

***O.Sarga II 7–9: Names******O.Sarga II 7***

EA 70308

54 × 56 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of a brown pottery vessel. The text is written on the exterior. The interior is slightly grooved and is covered with a dark-brown resinous deposit.

This small fragment contains parts of two lines, which are mostly complete, together with traces of other letters, which are now illegible. The text is written in red ink, which is unusual for school texts, but not excep-

tional.<sup>19</sup> The name written here, Phib is only known from a series of jar labels and an inscribed bowl, in which his name is accompanied by the epithet  $\kappa\omicron\upsilon\gamma\acute{\iota}$ . He is otherwise unattested in any document from Wadi Sarga.<sup>20</sup> Along the bottom edge, the name is repeated, indicating that this is a practice piece rather than a label.

- 1     $\lambda\text{NOK } \Pi-$   
 2     $[\kappa\omicron\upsilon\gamma\acute{\iota}] \phi\text{IB} .$   
 3  
 4     $[\phi]\text{IB} [?.]$



*O.Sarga* II 7

**2** The reading of  $\kappa\omicron\upsilon\gamma\acute{\iota}$  at the beginning of the line is far from certain, and some letters may have been written at the end of line 1, which has since broken off. However, given the frequency of its occurrence with the name  $\phi\text{IB}$  in inscriptions at Wadi Sarga (see n. 20), I feel confident reconstructing it here.

**3** There is a trace of possibly a single letter at the right edge.

**4** As  $\text{IB}$  are faint but beyond doubt, reading the repetition of the name  $\phi\text{IB}$  seems to be quite certain.

### *O.Sarga* II 8

EA 69866

112 × 97 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of a red-brown vessel. The text is written on the exterior.

The beginning of two lines survive. The letters are large (over 2 cm in height) and formed with multiple strokes, which is suggestive of an exer-

<sup>19</sup> For example, a number of school texts in the collection of Columbia University are written in red ink or a combination of red and black ink, e.g., O.Col. inv. 896, 963, 1259, 1298, and 1334; on the publication plans for these texts, see n. 10.

<sup>20</sup> The evidence for Phib among labels is discussed in Cromwell, *New Texts*.

cise. If  $\eta\rho\mu$  is for ‘the man of’, this may be an exercise in which the writer practises his affiliation, which often accompanies names. However, it cannot be excluded (given the size of the letters) that this is instead a jar label.

- 1  $\eta\rho\mu$ [ .? ]
- 2  $\eta\kappa$



*O.Sarga II 8*

1  $\rho$  is faint, but the looped upper element makes it clear that this is  $\rho$  and not, e.g.,  $\iota$  or  $\epsilon$ .

2 The second letter is not clear; it could instead be a poorly-formed  $\Delta$  or  $\epsilon$ .

### *O.Sarga II 9*

EA 70766

116 × 112 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from a red-brown pottery vessel. The text is written on the exterior, which is ribbed. The interior is covered with a dark-brown resinous deposit.

Bibliography: J. Cromwell, The Textual Corpus from Wadi Sarga: A New Study, in *The British Museum Newsletter: Egypt and Sudan* 1 (2014), 17.

This large sherd contains a number of exercises, produced by at least two writers. It includes names, the Coptic letters of the alphabet, and doodles (spiral patterns and the head of a man, with a single horizontal eyebrow).

- 1 (Hd.1)  $\text{ⲉ} \Delta\text{N}\text{O}\text{K} \Delta\text{N}\text{O}\text{Y}\text{B}\text{I}\text{O}\text{N} \eta$ [ .? ]
- 2  $\eta\Delta\text{M}\text{O}\text{Y}\text{N}$
- 3 (Hd.2)  $\eta\Delta\text{B}\text{O}\text{K}$  *vac.*  $\Delta\text{N}\text{O}\text{Y}\text{B}\text{I}\text{O}$ [N .? ]
- 4 (Hd.1?)  $\eta \epsilon \chi \text{z}$
- 5  
-----

“I, Anoubion the [...]. Pamoun. Pabôk. Anoubio[n ...].”

*O.Sarga* II 9

**1** The final letter may alternatively be  $\tau$ , but  $\eta$  is more likely in this context of male names.

**3** The same formation of  $\mathfrak{B}$  is written in  $\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{B}\mathfrak{W}\mathfrak{K}$  and  $\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{O}\mathfrak{Y}\mathfrak{B}\mathfrak{I}\mathfrak{O}\mathfrak{N}$  in line 1, but  $\mathfrak{A}$  is different, as is the overall size and aspect of the writing on lines 1 and 3, suggesting the presence of a second hand that produces (or imitates) letter forms used by hand 1.

**3**  $\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{B}\mathfrak{W}\mathfrak{K}$  is a Coptic version of the ancient Egyptian name *P<sup>3</sup>-bh* (literally: “The One of Bouchis”). The Coptic version is not as common as its earlier version or Greek Παβουχις, but is attested at Kellis (*P.Kellis* V [= *P.Kellis Copt.* I] 12 [ $\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{E}\mathfrak{B}\mathfrak{W}\mathfrak{K}$ ] and 47).

$\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{O}\mathfrak{Y}\mathfrak{B}\mathfrak{I}\mathfrak{O}[\mathfrak{N}]$ : The writer has copied the name written above, but has confused (or misunderstood) a couple of the letters. The fourth letter,  $\gamma$ , is retraced over an earlier letter (perhaps  $\mathfrak{N}$  or  $\mathfrak{K}$ ), and  $\mathfrak{I}\mathfrak{O}$  are joined by an unusual ligature-stroke at the top of iota.

**4** This line, with the Coptic (i.e., non-Greek) letters of the alphabet, appears to be in the same hand that wrote lines 1 and 2, but this attribution is not certain.

***O.Sarga II 10: Words and letters***

EA 70507

43 × 49 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of a buff-coloured pottery vessel. The text is written on the interior, which is burnished. The exterior is grooved.

The presence of the repeated writing of ς on the final line suggests that this is an exercise—the other text provides no clear indication of function. It is possible that an older text was reused to practice writing individual letters.

- 1 [ .? ] .ϣ [ .? ]
- 2 [ .? ] ϣωπε [ .? ]
- 3 [ .? ] . . ενιη ϛϣ [ .? ]
- 4 [ .? ] ϣϛ vac. ς ς ς ς ς

*O.Sarga II 10*

1 The first trace may belong to τ or π – only a vertical stroke and part of a horizontal crossbar survive.

4 ϛ may instead be ε.

***O.Sarga II 11–14: Epistolary formulae******O.Sarga II 11***

EA 56685

58 × 101 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of a light-brown pottery vessel. The text is written on the exterior, which is ribbed. The interior is covered with a yellow-brown resinous deposit.

Part of a single line survives, the beginning of which is lost. As no traces survive above, and the space below is blank (apart from the field number, which is written in blue ink), this appears to be the full length of the text. This epistolary formula is common in school texts (see also *O.Sarga II 12* and 14 below).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, *P.Rain. Unterricht Kopt.* 156–162, 167, 170, and 171. For this formula in letters, see A. Biedenkopf-Ziehner, *Untersuchungen zum koptischen Brieffor-*

1 [ .? α]ΥΩ ΤΙΩΙΝΕ ΕΡΟΚ

“[...] and I greet you”



*O.Sarga* II 11

### *O.Sarga* II 12

EA 70845

67 × 102 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of a brown pottery vessel. The text is written on the exterior, which is ribbed. The interior is covered with a dark-brown resinous deposit.

The text is incomplete: the left and upper margins are preserved, together with the beginning of four lines of text. At least five letters are missing from the initial formula and this may represent the total extent of the lost text. It is possible that this was an actual letter, but the nature of the handwriting suggests that it is a practice piece.

1 † ΖΑ ΘΕ ΜΕΝ Ζ[ΩΒ ΝΙΜ .? ]  
 2 ΤΕΩΙΝΕ ΕΤ . [ .? ]  
 3 ΩΤ ΕΔΔΕΙΔ [ .? ]  
 4 ΚΝΑΤ[ . . . ] . . . [ .? ]  
 - - - - -



*O.Sarga* II 12

2 l. ΤΙΩΙΝΕ (for †ΩΙΝΕ)

“Before [every th]ing [...] I greet the [...] Father David(?) [...] You will(?) [...]”

2 While εη[ is possible at the end of the line, if what follows in the lacuna is the feminine noun [ΜΝΤΕΙ]ΩΤ, ‘Fathership’, then the letter can confidently be read here as the definite article τ.

*mular unter Berücksichtigung ägyptischer und griechischer Parallelen* (Würzburg, Gisela Zauzich, 1983), pp. 84–93 (“Der ωΙΝΕ-Gruß”) and 239–243 (“Tabelle IX”).



3 ⲉⲗⲗⲉⲓⲁ: The reading of most of these letters is far from certain, with the final three being particularly problematic and producing what would be an unusual spelling of David; such aberrant readings by a novice writer are not necessarily surprising, though. David, otherwise, is an uncommon name at Wadi Sarga (the only published attestation of the name is in *O.Sarga* 128.4, a list of names possibly for tax purposes<sup>22</sup>).

### *O.Sarga* II 13

EA 70484

72 × 78 mm

VI–VIII

Sherd from the body of a pale-red pottery vessel. The text is written on the exterior.

The top and right sections of the ostrakon are lost, but the left and lower margins are preserved. Only formulaic sections survive; it is therefore difficult to determine if this is actually a practice piece. The handwriting suggests that it is to be understood as such, but this is not conclusive proof. In terms of genre, at Wadi Sarga the phrase ⲛⲛ ⲟⲩ(ⲉ)ⲓⲣⲏⲏⲏ ⲛⲁⲙⲏⲏ only occurs on commemorative stelae: *I.Sarga* 31.13–14, 35.10–11, 37.8–9, 38.10–11, 42.7–8, 43.7, 57.4–5, as well as the variant ⲛⲏⲛ ⲟⲩⲓⲣⲏⲏⲏ ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧ[ⲉ] ⲛⲁⲙⲏⲏ in *I.Sarga* 29.16–18 – for which there may in fact be sufficient space, as the amount of text lost is unknown.<sup>23</sup> However, the phrase also occurs as part of final epistolary formulae in other corpora, e.g., the early eighth century Frange dossier: *O.Frange* 25.12, 127.13–15, and 591.5–7. It is possible that this sherd belongs to an epistolary practice piece, but it may also be connected with the production of stelae. With the loss of almost all the preceding text, the precise nature of this piece cannot be determined.

- 1 [ . ] . . . ⲉⲛ [ .? ]  
 2 ϣ ⲛⲛ ⲟⲩⲓⲣ[ⲏⲏⲏ .? ]  
 3 ⲛⲁⲙⲏⲏ

2 l. εἰρήνη



*O.Sarga* II 13

<sup>22</sup> Among the unpublished wine receipts are two occurrences of another David, a camel driver (EA 56662 and 56727).

<sup>23</sup> It also appears on stelae from other sites; for references, see H. Förster, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2002), 231–233.

“[...] peacefully. Amen.”

1 The final letter is most likely  $\mathfrak{n}$ , not  $\mathfrak{m}$ , on the basis of the initial vertical stroke, which is in contrast to the form of  $\mathfrak{m}$  on line 3.

### *O.Sarga* II 14

EA 70401

44 × 83 mm

VI/VII

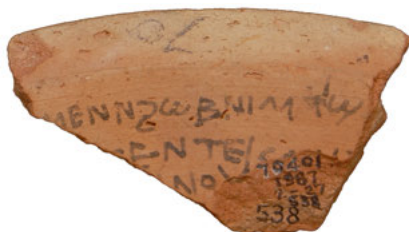
Sherd from the rim-section of a buff-coloured pottery bowl, with slightly flaring sides and everted ledge-rim. The text is written on both sides of the sherd's base, but neither on its side nor its rim.

Bibliography: J. Cromwell, A Coptic Epistolary Exercise from Wadi Sarga, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 99 (2013), 272–275.

The same epistolary formula is repeated on each face. It is difficult to determine how much text is lost from both the left and right sides, as well as the bottom (at least on the exterior, which preserves more lines of text than the interior).

Interior

- 1 [2Δ Θ] Η ΜΕΝ ΖΩΒ ΝΙΜ ΤΩΙΝΕ [.] ? ]
- 2 [.] ? ] [.] ? ] ΩΙΝΕ vac.

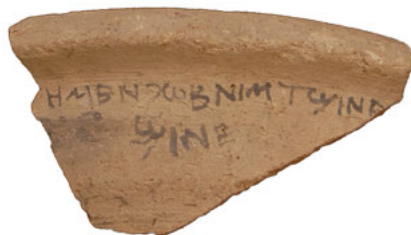


*O.Sarga* II 14

“[Befor]e everything, I greet [...] greet.”

Exterior

- 3 [.] ? ] ΜΕΝ ΝΖΩΒ ΝΙΜ ΤΩ [.] ? ]
- 4 [.] ? ] . Ε ΝΤΕΚ . . [.] ? ]
- 5 [.] ? ] . ΝΟΥ[ΤΕ? .?] ? ]



*O.Sarga* II 14

“[Before] everything, I gr[eet...] your [...] Go[d?...]”

1. 3 l. τωινε or †ωινε

**1 τῶινε:** There is a mistake here and in line 3; the 1sg pronoun should be  $\tau$  or  $\tau\iota$ .

**3  $\alpha\lambda\ \theta\eta$**  can be reconstructed at the beginning of the line.

Concordance: Publication, Inventory, and Trismegistos Numbers

<b><i>O.Sarga II</i></b>	<b>EA number</b>	<b>Trismegistos number</b>
1	70743	394822
2	56617	393238
3	55968 56612	393216 393233
4	70427	394522
5	70756	394833
6	70616	394708
7	70308	394408
8	69866	394039
9	70766	394843
10	70507	394602
11	56685	393303
12	70845	394916
13	70484	394579
14	70401	244116