

Greek Letters of Introduction from Egyptian Christians

Friday 18th June 2004

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Deissmann (1927, reprinted 1965) was the first to relate the literary form of Hellenistic letters to their social context. He distinguished between business or family "letters" (which he called "real" letters), and the literary "epistles" which were akin to formal speeches (which he called "non-real" letters).

Stowers, in relating form to context, wrote that early Christianity was "a movement of letter writers" (Stowers, 1989:15) with more than nine thousand Christian letters available for study. In particular, he described "letters of mediation" as the "commending" type of letter (systatikos) that was used in early Christianity to facilitate the passage of people between communities (Stowers, 1989:153). The people who were recommended usually carried the letter with them and it often provided credentials to help them complete their purposes.

The normal opening of Hellenist letters in Egypt was: (A to B, $\chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\iota\nu$), i.e. A says to B, greetings! There was an exception to this form when it was modified by the status of the recipient. An inferior writing to a superior would take the form: (to B, A $\chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\iota\nu$)¹. Some Christian letters have a third type of opening form, i.e. ($\chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon$ to B, A). This seemed to be in connection with the head of one Christian community writing to another community and may represent the idea of taking on the status of a servant.

Chan-Hie Kim in his study of Egyptian Hellenistic letters of recommendation has detailed their general formal structure as follows.

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¹ Lecture notes from Llewelyn, S.R.

A first group of Christian letters of recommendation (P.Col.11.298, PSI.15.1560, SB.16.12304, P.Oxy.8.1162, SB.3.7269) that have an (A to B, χαίρειν) opening will be compared with Kim's structure. A family letter has been added (PSI.1412) to these for normalising purposes, and because it possibly mentioned a Christian named Sôtas.

Then a second group of Christian letters of recommendation (P.Alex.29, PSI.3.208, PSI.9.1041, P.Oxy.12.1492, P.Oxy.36.2785) that have the (χαίρει to B, A) form of opening will also be compared with Kim's structure. Although P.Oxy.12.1492 is not a letter of recommendation, it was a letter of Sôtas and is included for normalising purposes.

Finally, two letters with lost openings are compared. One was a Christian letter of recommendation (P.Oxy.56.3857) and the other (P.Berl.Sarisch.11) contained a request for such a letter to be written.

The First Opening for Letters of Recommendation

A to B, χαίρειν 1. Opening².

1a. Salutation formula: an expanded version of A to B χαίρειν

	Document	Sender: A	Addressee(s): to B	Greeting: χαίρειν
59	PSI.1412 II/III	[Σαρα]πάμμων	Ὀλυμπιά[δι τῆ ἰ]δία [μου μ]ητρὶ καὶ Διδύμη καλ ...	πλείστα χαίρειν
65	P.Col. 11.298 III/IV	Θωμάς καὶ [...]μας καὶ οἱ σὺν ἡ[μῖν] πάντες	Παύλῳ τῷ [...] ἰωτ ... πε.[.]οῖς	[...πλ]εῖ[σ]τα [χα]ίρειν.
68	PSI.15.1560 = SB10.10255 III/IV	Θεωνᾶς	Μηνσουρίῳ ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ	χαίρειν
69	SB.16.12304 = P.Berol.8508 III/IV	Ἡρακλίτης π(α)π(ᾶς)	το[ῖς κα]τὰ τόπον συλλειτουργ[οῖς] ἀγα<πη>τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς	ἐν [κ(υρί)ῳ] χαίρειν τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν
71	P.Oxy.8.1162 IV	Λέων πρεσβύτερος	τοῖς κατὰ τόπον συν<ε>ιτουργοῖ πρεσβυτ[έ]ροις καὶ διακόνοις ἀ[γ]απητοῖ[ς] ἀδελφοῖς	ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ θ(ε)ῳ χαρᾶ χα[ί]ρειν.
0	SB.3.7269 IV/V	Τύραννος	τοῖς κατὰ τόπον [ἀ]γαπητ[ο]ῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ	χαίρειν.

As regards the senders, two of the six letters had titles for the writer (SB.16.12304, "Papa": P.Oxy.8.1162, "Presbyter"). This was perhaps to affirm that the letter was from one Christian community to another. P.Col.11.298 was clearly from a community: "Thomas and ...mas and all those with us".

² The numbers in the left column are the Macquarie Conspectus numbers, where applicable.

Three writers did not include the writer's title or indicate relationship. The family letter PSI.1412 did not need it. P.Col.11.298 was specific to an individual who may have had a title. SB.3.7269 was a general letter to wherever the person went. Thus, there seemed to be no preferred position on including information about the writer.

The addressees were either named individuals (PSI.1412, P.Col.11.298, PSI.15.1560) or undesignated places where ever the bearer would go (SB.16.12304, P.Oxy.8.1162, SB.3.7269). Kim saw the word τόπος as referring to "the place where the local church [was] located" (Kim 1972:103) and Judge (*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 20, 1977, 81) saw τόπος as an institution i.e. it represented the churches themselves.

The undamaged letters describe the relationship between the senders and addressees in two out of three of the terms: "mutual ministry", "love" and being "in the Lord".

According to Turner (1963:78), χάριεν (the present infinitive) was the "wish-infinitive" of the letter style. It probably represents an imperative. The greeting was just χάριεν in two letters (PSI.15.1560, SB.3.7269), wishing "the very best" in two letters (PSI.1412, P.Col.11.298) and "in the Lord" was added when it was missed for the addressees (SB.16.12304, P.Oxy.8.1162), (thus completing the trilogy of terms "mutual ministry", "love" and being "in the Lord"). These last two also add "joy" and "brother".

Kim's argument that this standard opening was used when addressing a community and not an individual does not seem to hold (Kim 1972:103).

A to B, χάριεν 1b. Opening health wish formula

Such sentiments as "if you are well, we also are well" (Stowers, 1989:153) and expressing obeisance to a god for the addressees' health (Kim 1972:6) were not included. This may be due to the association of "health" with the goddess Hygiene (Ψύγεια) or the idea that a Christian has a different type of preservation.

It may be that P.Col.11.298 has expanded this section into an exhortation. It reads:

ἔπειδὴ τοῦ[...ν]τκα ...ν..ελεξαμεν επε.δ[...] πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀσπάσασθαί σε προ ... [...]εως ἀσφαλίσητέ περὶ τὸ τη[...]φον κ.[...]. καὶ περὶ τῆ[ν] με λήτην καὶ [τ]ῆν ἡμῶν θείαν ἄσκησι· Θεὸς δ[ὲ] πα[.]ας καὶ ..υμ[ε]ῖν ἐν πάσι βοηθῶν τοῦ δια[...]. εμοῦς...αν τῆς κ[α]κώσεως τοὺς διδ[.]ς[.]σου[...].ων καὶ προτρέπω επιπαρ.θονδε τῆι μελέτηι καὶ τῆι θει[ότ]ητι μέχρις οὗ τέλεον τῆς ἀναπαύσεως ὑμῶν τύχητε.

It has the greeting ἀσπάσασθαι, an assurance of protection from danger (ἀσφαλίσθητε), divine discipline (θείαν ἄσκησι) and God's help in everything (ἐν πᾶσι βοηθῶν). It spoke of means to achieve "health" through meditation (τῆι μελέτῃ) and holiness (τῆι θει[ότ]ητι).

A to B, χαίρειν 2. Background

	Document	2a. Identification formula	2b. Background reason
59	PSI.1412 II/III		
65	P.Col.11.298 III/IV	τὸν ἀδιδούντα τὰ γρ[ά]μματα κατηχ[ο]ύμενον πιστὸν	
68	PSI.15.1560 = SB.10.10255 III/IV	κατηχούμενον Σερήνον ...	[π]αραγενόμενῃν [π]ρὸς σέ
69	SB.16.12304 = P.Berol. 8508 III/IV	Π.[...] ... πε	παραγινόμενον π[ρὸς] ὑμᾶς
71	P.Oxy.8.1162 IV	τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν Ἀμμώνιον	παραγινόμενον πρὸς ὑμᾶς
0	SB.3.7269 IV/V	τὸν ἀδελφ[ὸ]ν ἡμῶν Εὐδαίμονα	ἐρχόμενον πρὸς ὑμᾶς

The bearers were described as "catechumens" in two letters (P.Col.11.298, 68) and as "brothers" in two other letters (P.Oxy.8.1162, SB.3.7269). It was not applicable in the family letter (PSI.1412) and unreadable in SB.16.12304. PSI.15.1560 seems to have had a three-line vacancy so that the name "Serenus" could be added later. Four of the five applicable letters have the bearers name explicitly (PSI.15.1560, SB.16.12304?, P.Oxy.8.1162, SB.3.7269) and the other has an unnamed but faithful catechumen (P.Col.11.298). It would then seem that it was preferable to have the name explicitly, but there were cases where the name was either unknown at the time of writing or added later in a prepared "form letter".

The identification of the person as a catechumen or brother seemed to be sufficient reason for recommending the person. The occasion was that they were coming to or by the addressees. Three of the five relevant letters had adverbial participles in 2.b (PSI.15.1560, SB.16.12304, P.Oxy.8.1162). According to Kim (1972:112) they expressed the idea of "when they come to you", however Sirivianou (1989:116) suggested that Treu's words "der zu euch kommt" (who comes to you) is better. SB.3.7269 had a synonym and P.Col.11.298 had the same idea expressed in terms of handing over the letter.

A to B, χαίρειν 4. Appreciation

There was no appearance of such phrasing as: “by doing this you will have my gratitude” (Stowers, 1989:154). Kim (1972:113) drew attention to the fact that the verbs used in the request were second person aorist imperatives and there was no occurrence of “the polite request phrase, καλῶς ποιήσεις”. As mentioned above “receiving in peace” was probably a reminder of the requirement of hospitality, so no overt statement of appreciation would have been seen as appropriate.

A to B, χαίρειν 5. Closing.

	Document	Colleagues	5a. Closing health wish formula	5b. Closing Salutation
65	P.Col.11.298 III/IV	προσαγορεύσατε παντα [...]	...	τον ...ς Θωμ[ᾶ]ς ιυ[...].α #325 Παύ[λω]
68	PSI.15.1560 = SB.10.10255 III/IV	δι' οὗ σὲ [καὶ] τοὺς σὺν σοὶ [πά]ντας ἀδελφ[οὺς] [ἐγ]ὼ καὶ σὺ[ν ἑμοί]
69	SB.16.12304 = P.Berol. 8508 III/IV	δι' οὗ ὑμᾶς καὶ τοὺς σὺ[ν ὑμῖν] ἐγὼ τὲ καὶ οἱ σὺν [ἑμοί] ὑμᾶς ἡδέως προσαγ[ορεύ]ω.	ἐρρωσθαι ὑμᾶς εὐχομαι κ(υρί)ω μνηα ρθ	[...]ς π(α)π(ᾶς) τοῖς κατὰ τόπον συλλειτουργοῖς ἀγητοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐν κ(υρί)ω χαίρειν
71	P.Oxy.8.1162 IV	δι' οὗ ὑμᾶς καὶ τοὺς σὺν ὑμῖν ἐγὼ δε καὶ οἱ σὺν ἑμοί ἡδέως ὑμᾶς προσαγορεύεσθαι κ(υρί)ω.	ἐρρωσθαι ὑμᾶς εὐχομαι ἐν κ(υρί)ω [θ](ε)ῶ.	Εμμ(ανουή)λ μάρτ(υς). ρθ (= ἀμήν).
0	SB.3.7269 IV/V	δι' οὗ ὑμ[ᾶς] προ]σαγορεύω ἐγὼ δε καὶ οἱ [σ]ὺν ἑμοί πάντα[ς] τοὺς σὺν ὑμῖν ἀδελφούς	ἐ[ρ]ρωσθα[ι] ὑμ[ᾶ]ς εὐχόμεθα ἐν κ(υρί)ω	

Four of the five letters (PSI.15.1560, SB.16.12304, P.Oxy.8.1162, SB.3.7269) have a relative clause so that the senders (as a community) can greet the addressees (as a community) through the person of the bearer, e.g.. “through him, I and those with me, greet you and all the brothers with you”. P.Col.11.298 seems to have already given this kind of communality in 1.b where it had “we said ... to you to greet you on behalf of ... (ελεξαμεν επε.δ[...] πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀσπάσασθαί σε προ...).

The closing health wish formula “I pray you are all well” (ἐρρωσθαι ὑμᾶς εὐχομαι) was a common formulation among non-Christians during the second to fifth centuries CE (Kim :115). In the closing salutation there were various *nomina sacra* added, such as an abbreviated “in the Lord” ἐν κ(υρί)ω and ρθ. ρθ was an isopsephism, that is the number 99 represented the sum of the numerical equivalents found from the letters of the word “amen”, i.e. 1+40+8+50 =99 (Sirivianou, 1989:16).

The Second Opening for Letters of Recommendation

A second group of Christian letters of recommendation that have the (χαίρει to B, A) form of opening are compared with Kim's structure.

χαίρει to B, A 1. Opening.

1a. Salutation formula

	Document	Greeting: χαίρειν	Addressee(s): to B	Sender: A
64	P.Alex.29 III	[χ]αίρει ἐ[ν κ(υρί)ῳ],	[ἀγα]πητὲ ἀδελφε [...] Μάξιμε,	[...]ας σὲ προσαγορεύω·
66	PSI.3.208 III/IV	χαίρει ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ,	ἀγαπητὲ [ἄδ]ελφε Πέτρε,	Σώτ[ας] σὲ προσαγορεύω·
67	PSI.9.1041 III/IV	χαίρει ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ,	ἀγαπητὲ ἀδελφε Παύλε,	Σώτας σὲ προσαγορ(εύω) ·
88	P.Oxy.12.1492 III/IV	χα[ί]ρει	ἱερ[ε]ῖ υἱ[ὲ] Δημητρι[ανέ],	Σώτας] σὲ πρ[οσαγορεύω·]
72	P.Oxy.36.2785 IV	χαίρει ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ	ἀγαπητὲ πάπα Σώτα	πρεσβ(ύτερε) Ἡρακλέους πολλά σε προσαγορεύομεν.

The first three (P.Alex.29, PSI.3.208, PSI.9.1041) are letters of recommendation by the one person (Sôtas), who may have been the head of a Christian community, in a standardised form. P.Oxy.12.1492 is a recommendation of action, probably by the same writer and approximately contemporary with the letter of Psenosiris (P. Grenf ii.73). P.Oxy.36.2785 was a response from a community to Sôtas that reflected Sôtas' style.

The commonly used present infinitive greeting (χαίρειν) was changed to the present imperative χαίρει. It no longer conveyed greetings (as a predicate) but acted as if it were direct speech. Kim saw this as being "more personal and familiar" (Kim :105). However with the addition of "in the Lord" (ἐν κυρίῳ), it may be more formal as an echo an early liturgical formula. Being derived for example, from a conflation of Luke 1:28 to Mary, "Hail, ... the Lord is with you" (χαίρει ... ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ) and Romans 16:8 "Greet ... my beloved in the Lord" (ἀσπάσασθε ... τὸν ἀγαπητόν μου ἐν κυρίῳ) and Romans 16:22 "Greet you ... in the Lord" (ἀσπάζομαι ὑμᾶς ... ἐν κυρίῳ). P.Oxy.12.1492 has the phrase "holy child", which may represent a vocation rather than a relationship.

The identity of the addressee also reflects the direct speech mode, with "beloved brother" being in the vocative. Being in apposition to the addressee's name, it was almost a title.

The writer appears without title. As indicated before, the style (to B, A) may suggest the idea that the writer was the servant of the addressee.

χαίρει to B, A: 1b. Opening health wish formula

With *χαίρει* already used, there is now place for an opening health formula, e.g. “*Ἰ Σότας send you best wishes*”. However *προσαγορεύω* (send you best wishes) was used in place of *ἀσπάζομαι* (greetings), possibly because *ἀσπάζομαι* had associations in this place in the letter with praying for health from the gods.

χαίρει to B, A: 2. Background

	Document	2a. Identification formula	2b. Background reason
64	P.Alex.29 III	[τ]ὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶ[ν] Δ[ίφ]ιλον	ἐρχόμενον π[ρὸ]ς σε
66	PSI.3.208 III/IV	τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν Ἡρακλῆν	
67	PSI.9.1041 III/IV	τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἡμῶν Ἡρώνα καὶ Ωρίωνα καὶ Φιλάδελφον καὶ Πεκύσιν καὶ Νααρῶυν κατηχομένους τῶν συναγομένων καὶ Λέωνα κατηχούμενον ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου	
88	P.Oxy.12.1492 III/IV		τὸ κοινὸν [...] εὔδηλον καὶ τὸ κοι[νὸν] σωτήριον ἡμῶν [...] ταῦτα γὰρ ἔστιν τὰ ἐ[ν τῇ] θεία προνοία.
72	P.Oxy.36.2785 IV	τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν Ταίωνα	παραγινόμενην πρὸς σε
72	P.Oxy.36.2785 IV	καὶ ἄν(θρωπ)ον κατηχούμενον ἐν τῇ Γενέσει,	

For convenience, P.Oxy.36.2785 in the table was split into two parts. The bearers of the letter were identified by name and described as “our brothers” or “our sister”. As also with the (*A to B, χαίρειν*) type of letter, two of the letters (PSI.9.1041, P.Oxy.36.2785) have some described as “catechumens”.

There was the additional information in PSI.9.1041 about catechumens being “of the gathering” or as receiving instruction in “the first stage of the gospel”. Kim (1972:111) suggested that the comparison meant that some were senior and one was junior.

P.Oxy.36.2785 probably did not have a name, because before and after “anon” there are spaces which are not representative of the letter generally. “Anon” may be an abbreviation of a “man” whose name was not known when the letter was written and the person was ready to leave. The reference to Genesis may mean that he was starting his studies or that he finished the gospels and was moving on to more advanced study.

Again, being a catechumen was deemed sufficient reason for recommending the person, and the occasion was their arrival at the addressee's place. The occasion of P.Oxy.12.1492 was an impending decision that the addressee had to make.

χαίρει to B, A: 3. Request Period

	Document	3a. Request clause	3b. Circumstantial clause	3c. Purpose or causal clause
64	P.Alex.29 III	προσδ[έξ]αι ἐν [ε]ιρήνῃ		
66	PSI.3.208 III/IV	παράδεξαι [κ]ατὰ τὸ ἔθος,		
67	PSI.9.1041 III/IV	πρόσδεξαι ὡς καθήκε[ι].		
88	P.Oxy.12.1492 III/IV	εἰ οὖν ἔκρινας κατὰ τὸ παλ[αίων] ἔθος δοῦναι τὴν ἄρ[ο]υραν τῷ τόπῳ, ποιήσον αὐτὴν ἀφορισθῆναι ἵνα χρήσωνται, κ[α]ὶ ὡς εἴαν κρίνης περὶ τοῦ ἔ[ρ]γ[ου] θάρρει		
72	P.Oxy.36.2785 IV	παράδεξαι ἐν εἰρήνῃ		
72	P.Oxy.36.2785 IV	εἰς οἰκοδομὴν παράδεξαι		

Similarly with the (*A to B, χαίρειν*) type of letter, the request was to "receive" the person into fellowship, "in peace", "as is proper", "as is fitting", or "for edification".

P.Oxy.12.1492 recommended actions rather than a person. The giving of land "to the place (τόπος)" may refer to giving land to the church. "See that it is separated" or "marked out" (ποιήσον αὐτὴν ἀφορισθῆναι) seemed a necessary part of this. Part of the Libyan nome was called the Aphôrismenê in the third century BCE.

χαίρει to B, A: 4. Appreciation

As with the (*A to B, χαίρειν*) type of letter, no overt statement of appreciation was given.

χαίρει to B, A: 5. Closing.

	Document	Colleagues	5a. Closing health wish formula	5b. Closing Salutation
64	P.Alex.29 III	δι' [οὔ] σε κ[αί] τοὺς σὺν σοὶ ἐγ[ὼ] καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ προσαγορεύομεν.	ἐρρωσθαί σε εὐχομαι,	ἀγαπητὲ ἀδελφε ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ
66	PSI.3.208 III/IV	δι' οὐ σε καὶ τοὺς σὺν σοὶ πάντας ἀδελφούς ἐγὼ καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ προσαγορεύομε(ν).	ἐρρωσθαί σε ἐν θ(ε)ῷ εὐχομαι.	
67	PSI.9.1041 III/IV	δι' ὧν σε καὶ τοὺς σὺν σοὶ ἐγὼ καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ προσαγορεύω	ἐρρωσθαί σε εὐχομαι	ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ, ἀγαπητὲ ἀδελφε.
88	P.Oxy.12.1492 III/IV	πάντας τ[ο]ῦ[ς] ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου ἅπαντ[ας] προσαγόρευε.	ἐρρωσθαί ὑμᾶς εὐχομαι	τῷ θεῷ διὰ παντός καὶ ἐν παντί.
72	P.Oxy.36.2785 IV	δι' ὧν σε καὶ τοὺς παρὰ σοὶ ἀδελφούς ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ σὺν ἡμῖν προσαγορεύομεν.	ἐρρωσθαί σε ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ εὐχομέθα,	ἀγαπητὲ πάπα ςδ (=204)

As also with the (A to B, χαίρειν) type of letter, the senders (as a community) greet the addressees (as a community) through the person of the bearer, with similar phrasing.

The closing health wish formula followed the same formula as before, e.g. "I pray for your health in the Lord". PSI.3.208 added "in God" but left out the closing salutation.

In three letters (P.Alex.29, PSI.9.1041, P.Oxy.36.2785), the closing salutation repeated statements about the addressees, e.g. "beloved" (P.Alex.29, PSI.9.1041) and "beloved papas" (P.Oxy.36.2785). In P.Oxy.12.1492, the closing salutation reflected on the impending decision with sentiments on providence.

Indeterminate Opening

Indeterminate: 1. Opening.

	Document		Addressee(s): to B	
70	P.Berl.Sarisch.11 IV
73	P.Oxy.56.3857 IV	...	τοῖς κατὰ τόπον ἀγαπητοῖς ἀδελφοῖς καὶ συνleitουργοῖς.	

The addressees in P.Oxy.56.3857 were addressed in the style of the (A to B, χαίρειν) letters, but the salutation must have been before the addressees, i.e. perhaps (χαίρειν, A to B) or just (A to B) or (A, χαίρει to B). Whatever form it took, it was a different opening from those discussed.

Indeterminate: 2. Background

	Document	2a. Identification formula	2b. Background reason
70	P.Berl.Sarisch.11 IV
73	P.Oxy.56.3857 IV	τὴν θυγατέρα ἡμῶν Γερμανίαν,	ἐπικουρίας δεομένην, π[αρα γι]νομένην πρὸς ὑμᾶς

The identification in P.Oxy.56.3857 has the briefer style of the (χαίρει to B, A) letters without the "beloved". Germania had a Latin name. She was termed "our daughter" and may also refer to a vocation rather than an actual relative or young female. The background reason was expanded slightly as she "needs assistance and is coming to you". This reason has been found in other letters of recommendation, e.g. P.Köln.II.112.6.

Indeterminate: 3 Request Period

	Document	3a. Request clause	3b. Circumstantial clause	3c. Purpose or causal clause
70	P.Berl.Sarisch.11 IV	... αὐτοῦ θέλον[τος ἢ]μῖν. γράφε οὖν, π[άτ]ερ ἐπίσκοπε, τοῖς πρ[εσβ]υτέροις κώμη[ς..]γνεος, ἵνα προσδ[οκᾶ]ν αὐτὸν συναγόμενον ἐν εἰρήνῃ.		διὰ ἐμὲ τοῦτο ποίησον, πάτερ ἐπίσκοπε
73	P.Oxy.56.3857 IV	προσδέξασθε ἐν εἰρήνῃ,		

The request in P.Berl.Sarisch.11 was for a "father episkopos" to write a letter of recommendation for a third party. The reason given in 3.c was a personal plea, presumably based on a past close relationship. P.Oxy.56.3857 has a standard request to receive someone in peace, as was common to both types of opening.

Indeterminate: 4. Appreciation

Again, there was no overt statement of appreciation.

Indeterminate: 5. Closing.

	Document	Colleagues	5a. Closing health wish formula	5b. Closing Salutation
70	P.Berl.Sarisch.11 IV		ἐρρωσθαί σε εὐχομ(αι) ... ς ...	τῷ ἀγαπητῷ πατρι ἐπισκό[πῳ]
73	P.Oxy.56.3857 IV	δι' ἧς ὑμᾶς καὶ τοὺς σὺν ὑμῖν ἐγὼ τε καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ προσαγορεύομεν. Ἐμ(μανουή)λ (ἀμὴν)	ἐρρωσθαί ὑμᾶς ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ εὐχομαί,	ἀγαπητοὶ ἀδελφοί.

Because it relied on a personal request, P.Berl.Sarisch.11 did not mention colleagues, gave a standard closing health wish and then intensified the plea by adding “beloved” to the closing salutation.

P.Oxy.56.3857 has the common community-to-community greeting, through the bearer. It adds some *nomina sacra* before the closing health wish (which also has a *nominum sacrum*). The closing salutation picked up the description of the addressees as “beloved brothers”.

Conclusions

The letters that have the (A to B, χαίρειν) opening follow a normal, but expanded, salutation formula, without the wish for well-being. The identification of the person as a catechumen or brother seemed to be sufficient reason for recommending the person who had arrived or was to continue on their journey. The request was to extend hospitality and accept them into fellowship. As this was a standard practice, the circumstantial clauses were not needed. As a required duty it was not appropriate to draw attention to any appreciation. The close included a clause for the senders (as a community) to greet the addressees (as a community) through the person of the bearer. The closing health wish formula was relatively standard except for *nomina sacra*. The (A to B, χαίρειν) letters follow the formal structure given by Kim with some small differences.

The letters that have the (χαίρει to B, A) opening may have given the effect of a servant-brother writing formally to brothers who were deemed to be more worthy than the writer. In contrast to the (A to B, χαίρειν) opening, there was place for a simple opening health wish. The identification of the person as a catechumen or brother was also sufficient background reason. Similarly the request was to extend hospitality and accept into fellowship. Again, the circumstantial clauses were not needed and the appreciation clause omitted. The community to community clause was similar, as was the close. This was a minor variation on the previous form.

P.Oxy.56.3857 seems to have had a different opening. For the indeterminate openings, the identification and background were not unusual. Both omitted the circumstantial clause. P.Berl.Sarisch.11 had a causal clause and both had standard closing health wishes.

The results are summarised as follows:

1. Opening.	<i>A to B,</i> <i>χαίρειν</i>	<i>χαίρει to B,</i> <i>A</i>	Indeterminate
1a. Salutation formula	Yes	Yes	N/A
1b. Opening health wish formula	No	Yes	N/A
2. Background.			
2a. Identification formula.	Yes	Yes	Yes
2b. Background reason	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. Request Period.			
3a. Request clause	Yes	Yes	Yes
3b. Circumstantial clause	No	No	No
3c. Purpose or causal clause	No	No	Mixed
4. Appreciation	No	No	No
5. Closing.			
Colleagues	Yes	Yes	Mixed
5a. Closing health wish formula	Yes	Yes	Yes
5b. Closing Salutation	Yes	Yes	Yes

The Christian letters of recommendation generally followed the pattern outlined by Kim, but with minor variations due to their nature. These variations were the omission of the circumstance, purpose and appreciation clauses (3b, 3c and 4) and the addition of the community-to-community involvement.

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