Dictating Letters in Greek and Roman Egypt from a Comparative Perspective

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Version 1.0 (March 2009)

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Letter writing is one of the most pervasive literate activities in human societies.

Barton and Hall 2000:1

Personal letters are an integral and recently much studied part of classical studies (e.g. Dickey 1996, 2008; Morello and Morrison 2007; Trapp 2003). This is not surprising because many letters supposedly show the Greek and Latin that was used in daily conversations rather than the literary language used to write the great works of literature. In addition, many letters contain information about the day-to-day worries and thoughts of ordinary people. They allow the modern scholar, and also a more generally educated reader, to relate to what is being said in a letter from on average 2,000 years ago. People then and people now seem in their writings to worry about similar things (health, money, love, death), and thus personal letters provide a “human” entry into the world of antiquity. Letters from antiquity have also figured extensively in debates about literacy in the ancient world (Ray 1994; Harris 1989).

The same interest in personal letters can be seen in the field of papyrology that studies the original documents, including many letters, from Egypt. This has led to various

\[1\] In his overview of papyri that mention a specific date, Habermann mentions 4,578 letters (1998:157). A search in the Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis (accessed December 4, 2008) resulted in 7,385 entries (out of a total 56,312 texts in the database, roughly 13 percent), although these may include some texts (re-)published under different numbers.
collections and studies of letters from all periods of Egyptian history. Collections of personal (and other) letters in translation (and in the original language) have been gathered (Bagnall and Cribiore 2006; Kortus 1999; Chapa 1998; Cugusi 1992-2002; Wente 1990; White 1986; Tibiletti 1979; Ghedini 1923; Witkowski 1911) and letters on papyrus have also been studied extensively with regard to their typology, formulas and language (Depauw 2006; Horrocks 1997; Buzón 1984; Exler 1976[1923]).

The main focus of these papyrological studies has been on the contents and format of the personal letters. Papyrologists have given much less attention to the activity of letter writing itself. While this is understandable, given the distance in time, space, and culture between contemporary scholars and ancient texts, it also runs the risk of losing information, and not getting the full picture. As Barton and Hall put it, “[T]he most revealing way of investigating letter writing is to view it as a social practice, examining the texts, the participants, the activities and the artefacts in their social contexts” (Barton and Hall 2000:1).

What I intend to do in this paper is try and go beyond the texts, and discuss the social practice of letter writing in Greek and Roman Egypt. Who were the participants in this activity, what did they do, and what artifacts were involved? In particular I will focus on those letters that were dictated by a person (the author of the letter) to another person who wrote the letter down. What happens when somebody dictates a letter to somebody else? What are the interactions between the author and the scribe? What are the contributions of others in this process? The reason for focusing on dictated letters is that the process of
dictation leaves signs in the texts of the letters (to be discussed in detail below) and thus provides a glimpse of the activity itself, information that is more difficult (although perhaps not impossible) to establish when the letter is an autograph.

In order to help frame the questions to be asked of the ancient source material, I will invoke observations of the practice of dictating letters in a contemporary setting. Of course, a modern society is not ancient Egypt, and we should refrain from making one-on-one comparisons (see Bagnall 1995:90-108), but studying the activity of dictating letters in a contemporary society may provide some interesting points for looking at letter writing in an ancient society.

Mali

The point of comparison for the purposes of the present paper is Mali in West Africa. My family spent the academic year 2005-2006 in a small village (about 4,000 inhabitants) in the south west of this country, next to the Niger river, in the context of my wife’s anthropological fieldwork. Not many inhabitants of the village where we resided were literate, which is true for Mali as a whole as is shown by the most recent United Nations Human Development Index (the latest report can be accessed at http://hdr.undp.org/en/). The adult (15+) illiteracy rate in 2007 was 76 percent (which made Mali rank fourth from below). These numbers, however, include the capital Bamako, where illiteracy rates are much lower (because capital is the main access point to secondary and higher education). Illiteracy rates in villages, and especially among women, are higher, and orality still is the basis of much of village life.
The residency of my wife in the village provided an extra literate person in the village, and one of the few (and for the extended family with whom we resided, the only) literate women. On several occasions, my wife would be asked—especially by illiterate women, to write down letters to family members for them, and to deliver those to the addressee as letter-carrier (there is no regular mail service in the Malian countryside). I was able to observe what happens during the dictation of a letter, and, at the other end, during the reading of a letter. In the following I will list and discuss the most interesting elements that occurred during this process.

Participants

There were several participants in the activity of dictating a letter, each with their distinct role. There were the author of the letter, the scribe (my wife), the addressee (not physically present), and several other people (minors and adults) who were present during the activities of dictating the letter and reading it at its destination. The different relationships between the participants influenced the role each of them played.

The author of the letter always took the initiative to have a letter written only after my wife had announced that she would visit another village. At that time, a person with something to tell another person (mostly a family member) in that other village would approach my wife to have a letter written. In all cases, the persons asking my wife to write a letter for them in our village were women. (In destination villages, men would also dictate to my wife in order to draft an answer to the letter she had just delivered.)
The scribe was the resident anthropologist (my wife). This is important to realize because, although the power relations between author and scribe are frequently (but not necessarily) unequal in terms of literacy, in this case there were also added other inequalities (social and economic). At the same time, that fact that my wife was the only literate woman in the compound provided for the women of the compound a more equal relationship than they would normally have when dictating a letter to a male scribe.

An important participant in the activity of dictating a letter who was not physically present was the addressee of the letter. In all cases these were family members residing in another village than the one where we were staying. Here it is interesting to note that the author of the letter was actually addressing the addressee, although physically not there. For the author of a letter, dictating a letter was a conversation, even if the other side was not responding immediately. On the other end, when the letter was read to the addressee in public, the dialogue continued with the addressee answering and reacting to the contents of the letter as read to her or him by the person delivering the letter (in the cases I witnessed, again my wife).

Letter writing in Mali is not a solitary activity and others were always present during the process of dictating the letter. Most often these were family members, both adults and children. While these others serve as the audience for the dialogue between author, scribe and addressee, they are also active participants in the process. They engaged in a conversation with the author of the letter to add items to mention, or they addressed the
scribe directly for shorter contributions (mostly greetings to the addressee or other family members at the point of destination) to be included in the letter. Others were also present when the letter was read to the addressee.

Activities

The first step in getting a letter written would be to agree on a time and place for the letter to be written. Because the writing of the letter was triggered by an announced departure, there always was pressure to get the letter done, and preferred times were during the mid-day break, or before dinner. For women, household duties like cooking and agricultural activities like weeding the peanut field would take precedence over the writing of a letter, making it difficult for them to find a continuous period of time.

In all cases, the dictating of the letter took place in the open air, either in front of our hut, or in front of the author’s hut, or in the common open space in the middle of the compound. An interesting difference between men and women dictating was that when a men dictated a letter it would take place in a more central part of the compound, whereas when a woman dictated, it would be closer to the hut, but still outside. Although the closeness of the hut provided some privacy, others could hear what was being said, but they would not contribute unless being asked. In both cases, visitors arriving on the compound or children needing attention could interrupt the process of dictation. The author of a letter could leave for a longer or shorter period, after which the dictation would be resumed.
Others were present during the dictation of the letter. Here again, there was an interesting
difference between men and women in that when a man dictated, other adult members
(men and women) of the compound were present, whereas when a woman dictated, she
was, apart from very small children, accompanied by only a close family member (sister
or adolescent child) or sometimes an adult friend.

The adult people who were present during the dictating of a letter, both women and men,
participated actively in the process. They suggested topics to the author of the letter
(remind the author of a death in the family, for example), and offer greetings to the
addressee, and others who were expected to be in the addressee’s company. It was
interesting to note that people would discuss whether people were actually present in the
destination of the letter, in order to decide whether or not greetings to that person should
be included. People who were not expected to be present at the destination of the letter
would not be greeted. Similarly, only people present during the writing of the letter
would send greetings. Nobody would offer greetings on behalf of a person who was not
present, as we in the Western world would feel free to do. The scribe was expected to
include the greetings that were offered by those present in the letter.

The scribe wrote down the actual words of the author of the letter. There is no formal
letter writing tradition in the local language spoken in the village, so that my wife would
just write down what the author of the letter said, without transferring it to a more literate
“letter-language.” After the dictating process, the scribe read the letter to the people
present, giving them opportunity to change or to add to the contents.
The scribe was an active partner in drafting the letter (compare Kalman 1999:86 for some possible roles of scribes). As mentioned above, the author of a letter often only had one point that (s)he wanted to convey to the addressee, which had led her or him to ask for the letter to be written. When this point was conveyed, the author of the letter fell silent, and the scribe performed an active role in probing what the author (or others who are present) would like to convey in addition. The dictating of a letter is a dialogue, not only over time and space between the sender and addressee (the common definition of a letter, see e.g. Depauw 2006:113), but also in the present between author and scribe (compare Kalman 1999:35-36). In this relationship the inequality between both participants is important to notice and can influence the process, in that people will be more prone to follow the directions of what to further include in a letter of a person perceived to have more power than themselves.

Artefacts

The material aspect of letter writing is often overlooked, although it is an important aspect of the social practice of letter writing (Barton and Hall 2000:8). In Mali, the author of the letter would purchase one sheet of paper (ripped from a notebook) and one envelope (always airmail envelopes) from one of the local stores. Although pens (called “bikki” in the local language) would be present on most compounds (for children’s elementary school work), in most cases, my wife would use her own pen to write the letter, because it often proved quite impossible to find pens quickly, and especially pens in good working order.
Egypt

Now let us look at our Egyptian sources and see whether they can suggest something about the practice of letter writing in ancient Egypt when looked at through the lens of the Malian experiences. In doing this I am very fortunate to have the wonderful collection of women’s letters from ancient Egypt (300 B.C.E. – 800 C.E.) that was recently published by Roger Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore (2006). For comparative material of men’s letters I have used *P.Mich.* VIII, collecting some Roman period private letters from the village Karanis, and Kortus 1999, collecting all letters from the second century C.E. Apollonius archive, both those written by women (and thus included in Bagnall and Cribiore’s study), and those written by men.

It is quite clear that many of the aspects of letter writing seen in Mali also show up in our documents from Egypt. For example, the rush of an announced departure that was present in all cases in Mali also lies behind a second or third century C.E. letter from Egypt, *P.Oxy.* 33 2680 (Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:300-301). In this letter from Arsinoe to her sister Sarapia, the first sentence is: “Since Achillas was sailing downstream, I thought it necessary to greet you in writing.” It is clear that Achillas’s announced departure triggered Arsinoe’s letter. Achillas is also the person taking the letter (and a jar of pickle for the addressee), and may have been the scribe of this dictated letter, although we will never be able to establish this with certainty. Another important aspect of letter writing, the dialogue between author and addressee (and especially the role of the scribe and the reader of the letter in this dialogue), was already discussed for Ramesside Egypt.
(Sweeney 2001:19-22), and also leaves traces in the letters from Greek and Roman Egypt. In *P.Col.Zen. 1 6* (March, 257 B.C.E.), for example, a letter from Simale to Zenon (Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:100-101), the author ends the letter with a reference to the person delivering the letter: “Learn the rest from the person who brings you this letter, for he is not a stranger to us.” This expected continuation of the dialogue via the carrier/reader of the letter is also known from Demotic letters (Depauw 2006:82).

In the remainder of this paper I will focus on one particular aspect of the practice of letter writing, the participants involved. Letter writing in ancient Egypt, like in modern day Mali, also in many cases was not a solitary activity, and others were present, especially when authors dictated their letter to a scribe. These people sometimes leave traces in the written record and allow us to go beyond the texts and try and establish what happened when the letter was written.

Before doing so, it is necessary to briefly line out how papyrologists establish whether or not a personal letter was dictated. To make this distinction, scholars are looking at external and internal markers in their texts. An important external marker of dictation is change of handwriting between body of letter and the final greeting (Bagnall and Cribiore 2006:46-48). Another indication could be if the letter shows corrections in the text that have been added by another person (as shown, again, by a difference in handwriting). When this occurs, papyrologists conclude that another person wrote the main text of the letter, and that the sender personalized the letter by adding a greeting or correcting the text of the letter in his or her own hand. At the same time, it is clear that the person who
dictated a letter in antiquity was not necessarily illiterate, because many of these
greetings and corrections in a different hand showed remarkable ease of writing. This
process of a person, although literate, using the services of somebody else to pen a letter
or other document opens up very interesting discussions about the different uses of
literacy (compare Kalman 1999:136-137 for these different literacies in a more modern
setting).

Internal indicators become apparent when looking at the style and language of a papyrus
letter, with a paratactic style and many direct quotations being signs of a letter being
ddictated to somebody else, even if there is no greeting in a different hand. In their
collection of women’s letters from ancient Egypt, Bagnall and Cribiore mention several
examples of such letters, one of which is reproduced here.

\textit{P.Oxy. 6 932; late second or early third century C.E. (Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:297-298)}

\textit{Thais to her Tigrios, greetings. I wrote to Apolinarios to come to Petne [a village] so that he
might measure out (the wheat?). Apolinarios will tell you how the deposits and the taxes (stand);
the name (is to be) whatever he tells you. If you come, release six artabas of vegetable seed to the
sacks under seal, so that they may be ready, and if you can come up to check the donkey (do so).
Sarapodora and Sabinos greet you. Don’t sell the piglets without me. Farewell.}

There are several indications that make it likely that Thais, the author of this letter,
ddictated it to another person. As Bagnall and Cribiore point out, the language in this letter
is “abrupt” (297) with its short staccato sentences and leaves out necessary grammatical
parts of sentences (such as objects), which are represented in the translation between
parentheses. In addition, the topic changes frequently, suggesting that, in this letter, “a skilled writer [took] down exactly what is being said, rendering it faithfully but not attempting to redraft it” (297). These are the signs papyrologists look for in suggesting that a letter was dictated, even when there is no external indicator present.

This example also shows how it is possible to suggest that others were present during the process of dictating the letter: people are mentioned offering greetings (in the text quoted above Sarapodora and Sabinos). That people who offer greetings that are recorded in the letter also were actually present (as they are in present day Mali) is suggested by some texts in which there is a direct link between greeting and speaking (both recorded by the scribe). For example, in a Coptic letter from the fourth century C.E. (P.Kell.Copt. 11; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:218), there is a direct link between the greeting and saying: “Shai greets you. He says,” and then follows the direct quotation of what he says as recorded by the scribe. The same link between greeting and being present is suggested in a possibly autograph letter (in Latin) from Terentianus to his father (P.Mich. 8 469; Strassi 2008:27-28 [no. 4]). After the salutation, the letter begins with a greeting from the author’s mother, and continues with several requests on her behalf: “My mother greets you and asks” (line 3). We should assume that when Terentianus is writing these requests from his mother, she is present.

Whenever we find people offering greetings in letters, therefore, it is to be expected that these people were present when the letter was dictated. This opens up a possibility to discuss participants in the practice of letter writing other than author, scribe and
addressee also for ancient Egypt. And given the differences in participants noted above for Mali between letters dictated by women and men, it is worthwhile to first compare the participants (i.e. people greeting) in letters sent by women and those by men.

Indeed we find in letters sent by women that, overall, fewer persons offer greetings to the addressee and/or others than in letters sent by men, and of these there are more women. As a rule, these women appear also to be younger relatives of the author. Men do offer greetings in letters sent by women but in these cases it is often likely that the scribe of the letter is identified, who adds his own greetings to the message dictated by the woman. In letters sent by men, conversely, more men offer greetings, whereas women are more mentioned in their role as mother or sister. Let us consider some examples.

Children

In a number of early second century CE letters sent by the woman Eudaimonis to her son Apollonios (see Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:139-163 and Cribiore 2002 for the women’s letters in this archive), Heraidous, sometimes introduced as “young Heraidous” or “the little one” offers her greetings (P. Alex.Giss. 58; P. Brem. 63; P. Giss. 21). Heraidous is the granddaughter of Eudaimonis who was apparently staying with her grandmother while her father and (sometimes) mother (see P. Giss. 23) were away. Interestingly, also in modern day Mali adolescent girls stay with their grandmother rather than with their parents, before and even after marriage as long as the husband has not collected the bridal gifts in full. I think we have indeed to imagine an early teenager who is present when her grandmother dictates letters (compare Cribiore 2002:156).
Similarly, other children who offer greetings in women’s letters are identified by name. In *SB* 6 9122 (ca. C.E. 57), a letter from Herennia to her father Pompeius (see Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:126-134 for the women’s letters from this archive), her son “little” Pompeius (and therefore the addressee’s grandson) offers his greetings to his grandfather and grandmother. Here again it is likely that we have to envision a younger boy being present when his mother dictated a letter to his grandfather.

Children, however, are not always deemed worthy of a name in correspondence, and often we find a reference to nameless “children” who are greeting the addressee. Their being mentioned in the letter, however, does suggest that they were of an age that they could talk and that they were running around while the author dictated the letter. This happened both when women and men dictated. For example, in *P. Mich.* 8. 464 (Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:347-348), a letter from Apollonous to probably her husband who is away, the children offer their greetings. In a letter from Chairemonianus to one or more persons whose names are lost because the papyrus is broken off at the beginning, “the children” offer their greetings, “each by name,” making clear that the addressee knows these children.

*Women*

In other women’s letters without an archival context there are also female greeters mentioned who seem to have been present when the letter was dictated. In most cases it is impossible to establish whether we are dealing with female relatives here, or with friends,
or with servants. For example, in a late second century C.E. letter from Nike to Berenike (P. Mert. 2 82; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:266-267), a certain Hieratike offers her greetings. It is impossible to establish whether we are dealing her with a (grand)daughter or with an adult female friend. Similarly, in P.Oxy. 1 114 (II-III C.E.; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:295-296) an unidentified woman offers her greetings to another woman who is residing with the unknown addressee of this letter: “Xanthilla greets Aia and all her people.” In one letter we may have the female servant offering her greetings (SB 5 7572; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:283): “Rodine salutes you.”

The identification of female greeters by name in women’s letters contrasts with the identification of female greeters by role in letters written by men. As a rule, instead of finding women offering greetings in letters sent by men, we find references to “my mother” or “my daughter”. Similarly, where women tend to identify children who offer greetings by name, men mention more “children” without name. This is clear from a number of letters, written in Latin, sent by Terentianus to his father Tiberianus. In these letters, his mother includes her greetings to the addressee (P.Mich. 8 467 and 468; compare P.Mich. 8 469 discussed above) but she is not introduced by name: “my mother greets you” (P.Mich. 8 467, 32; 468, 46). In the same letters the father (by name in 467,32, nameless in 468, 46) and nameless brothers (467,32; 468,47) offer their greetings, suggesting that Terentianus when dictating these letters is actually in the presence of his family. In a Greek letter from Valerianus to Socrates, which was the result of dictation as is suggested by the greeting in a second hand, the latter’s daughter offers her greetings (P.Mich. 8. 506): “Your daughter greets you” (lines 11-12). This
presents the interesting question of what Socrates’ daughter is doing in the presence of Valerianus, and the most likely explanation is that she is his wife, but she greets Socrates in her role as daughter and that is how she is introduced.

Men

Men do offer greetings in women’s letters from ancient Egypt, but they are few and can sometimes be shown to be the actual scribe of the letter. This is especially clear when the male greeter introduces himself in the letter with a first person singular, “I.” In *P.Mert.* 282 (Late second century C.E.; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:266-267), a letter from Nike to Berenike, the male scribe introduces himself towards the end of the letter: “I, Sarapammon, greet you.” That he is not the only one present, is clear from the continuation of this sentence, “and Hieratike greets you,” who, as discussed above could be a younger relative, friend or even servant of the author. In *P.Oxy.* 7 1067 (third century C.E.; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:273) Helene writes to her brother Petechon. Without a change in hand, the letter continues with some remarks from the addressee’s father, suggesting that he was the scribe of Helene’s letter: “And I, Alexandros, your father, greet you warmly.” In a Coptic letter from the sixth-eighth century C.E. (*O.CrumST* 360; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:240), the letter ends with a greeting from the scribe: “I, Daniel, write greeting Apa Pesynthios and all the monks by name.”

It is likely that many men who offer greetings in women’s letters in the third person singular also were the scribes of the letter. This is especially true for those men who offer their greetings at the very end of the letter. In *P.Fouad* 75 (64 C.E.; Bagnall-Cribiore
2006:133-134), for example, the letter ends with Alexandros offering his greetings:

“I, Alexandros greets you, as do his children.” Given that there appears to be no change of hand, it is likely that Alexandros was the scribe of the letter, who, unlike the examples discussed before, refers to himself in the third person singular to continue the style of the letter where the female author is the first person singular. It is not surprising that his children remain nameless, as we have seen above. Similarly, a letter from Isidora to her daughter Sarapias (P.Mich. 8 514; third century C.E.; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:269-270) ends with greetings from Apollos, who also is identified as the sender of the letter in the address on the back. Again, there is no change of hand, so that it is likely that Apollos is the scribe of the letter who adds his own greetings at the end: “Apollos salutes you and your children.” In P.Neph. 18 (mid-fourth century C.E.; Bagnall-Cribiore 2006:207-208), Poueris adds his own greeting to that of the author of the letter, Taouak: “I [=Taouak] greet all yours by name, and Poueris greets all of you.” Again, it is likely that Poueris was the scribe of the letter.

It is unclear how this situation works in men’s letters, although in one case it is clear that the person offering his greeting last is definitely not the scribe of the letter. In P.Mich. 8 472 (Strassi 2008:35-37 [No. 7]), an early second century C.E. Latin letter dictated by Tiberianus, who added a salutation in his own hand (lines 24-25), his son Claudius (Terentianus) offered greetings at the very end of the letter: “Claudius, my son, sends many greetings to you.” The hand of this letter, however, is very different from the hand that is assumed to be Terentianus’ own (see above) in P.Mich. 8 469. In P.Mich. 8 490 (second century C.E.), a letter from Apolinaris to his mother after his arrival in Italy, a
man named Asklepiades offers his greetings at the end of the letter without a change of hand. He may have been the scribe of the letter to whom Apolinaris dictated, but this is by no means certain.

In men’s letters, if men offer greetings, it is often clear that they are connected to the author in either a family, or a professional relationship. This was clear from the letters sent by Terentianus in which (apart from his mother) his father and brothers offer greetings discussed above. In military settings, it is clear that soldiers sometimes wrote letters in the company of their peers. In *P.Mich. 8 466* (March 26, 107 C.E.), for example, six *contubernales* of the author offer their greetings to the addressee (the author’s father). Otherwise, the presence of men offering greetings presents similar problems of identification as for women offering greetings in women’s letters. They may or may not be related to the author of the letter. The only thing that seems certain is that they were present when the letter was written. Thus it is possible to offer suggestions to identify the two men (Chairas and Herodes) offering greetings to the strategos Apollonios in *P.Giss. 76* and *P.Alex.Giss. 51* (compare Kortus 1999:242-244), but it is impossible to identify them with any certainty.

The fact that fewer people and of these more women were present when a woman dictated a letter, observed in modern day Mali, seems to have been also the case in ancient Egypt, where fewer persons offer greetings in women’s letters, and of these more female family members. There is at least one woman, however, who does not fit in this pattern, and this is Tasoucharion, whose second century C.E. dossier is discussed in
Bagnall and Cribiore (2006:176-182). In two of the five surviving letters to her brother Neilos, all dictated to different scribes, a large group of men offer their greetings. In BGU 2. 601, for example, greetings are offered by Didymos, Heliodoros, Ptolemaios, Tiberinus, Sarapion, Satornilos, and Chairemon. Three of these, we know, are her children (Ptolemaios, Tiberinus, and Sarapion), and thus fit the pattern we established above. Satornilus is in one letter (BGU 3 714) introduced as “papa”, and may be Tasoucharion’s and Neilos’ (grand)father. It is, however, impossible to establish who the other men were although we can assume, on the basis of them offering greetings, that they were present when Tasoucharion dictated her letter. In this respect they may be other siblings of Tasoucharion and Neilos, which would suggest that Tasoucharion is no longer living with her husband but has moved back with her children to her family as a result of her husband’s death or (less likely given the presence of her children) a divorce. The last person offering his greetings, Chairemon, may be the scribe of the letter (see above), although this still does not inform us about his relationship to the author Tasoucharion.

It should be noted that people offering greetings are not confined to dictated letters. In a number of cases we also find greetings by other people in assumed autograph letters. This suggests that writing a letter was not only also an oral activity (with reading and writing done aloud, compare Baines 2007:152-156), but also a social activity, with others possibly being present during that process as well. It is not surprising to see that most people who offer greetings in such cases are family members. Thus in two letters written by Eudaimonis herself, whom we also saw above in discussing dictated letters, the granddaughter Heraidous offers greetings to the addressee (P. Giss. 23 and 24). The fact
that persons are offering greetings, therefore, is not a secure guide to identify dictated letters.
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