Latin Texts

57. Letter¹

P.Bas. I 1B+C recto 6.4×27 cm V-VI CE Italy

Three fragments, light brown in colour, which can be joined to one another with fragment b (6.4 x 12.2 cm) placed to the left of fragments c1 and c2 (5.4 x 6.8 cm + 4.7 x 5.6 cm). They are in very poor condition: all of them are damaged along the edges, and in fragments c1 and c2 many fibers have been stripped from the surface. Traces of an adhesive substance are clearly visible in each fragment (b: lower left corner and upper right corner; c1: upper left corner and lower right corner, with further traces on the surface; c2: lower edge, with further fainted traces on the surface). Traces of a similar substance can be detected both in 3 and in the modern label (cf. Huebner's outline of the collection's history, §II.2 above). Since the label describes all the fragments belonging to inv. 1 as «Bina folia papyri», it is likely that at some point fr. b and c were glued together in a single piece. According to the standard width of Italian early medieval papyri (P.Ital.), the original document (a roll, or probably a sheet) could have had a width of ca. 33–35 cm, but the length of the text in each line and the width of the margins cannot be estimated with reasonable accuracy. The original height cannot be calculated. The ink is black. The text is written across the fibres. The writing is a calligraphic and very regular new Roman cursive. It is slightly inclined to the right, with only a limited number of ligatures. Good parallels can be found in Italian papyri of the late fifth and sixth centuries, such as P.Ital. I 1 (445–445 CE), 12 (491 CE), and 27 (late VI – early VII CE, but with more ligatures). Ink analysis: carbon.

Only a few words are preserved in this papyrus. The previous editor, J.-O. Tjäder, considered it as a portion of a public or private document concerning religious issues (Tjäder, *Revisione*, 22; other editions are *ChLA* I 1a and *P.Ital*. II

¹ The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement n° 636983); ERC-PLATINUM project, University of Naples "Federico II". The edition was completed during a stay in Paris financially supported by UniNA and Compagnia di San Paolo, in the frame of Programme STAR.

57. Letter 249

54). His interpretation could be maintained, but the expressions contained in the fragment find most of their parallels among late antique Latin epistles. This suggests that the fragment probably belonged to an epistolary text. Since most late antique Latin official letters are written along the fibers (e.g. P.Ital. II 44 and 55; P.Ryl. 609; P.Vindob. inv. L 169: cf. Internullo, Studi Medievali 58), one can hypothesize that the papyrus is a copy of an official letter (a similar case occurs in P.Ital. I 1), or less likely a letter written on behalf of a private individual by a notary (like P.Ital. II 32). The mention of a prefect and of bodies of saints could indicate that the document concerned relationships between lay authorities and ecclesiastic institutions. Given the content of the verso, the best hypothesis is that this letter was written from a lay authority to an ecclesiastical one, and concerned the endowment of a church, in which some bodies or relics of saints were preserved. A similar context can be found in late antique epistles preserved in the so-called Collectio Avellana (II 187, p. 644–645; 233, p. 707–710; 239, p. 738–739).

```
1 domni p[r]aef[ec]ti [: domni praef[ecti ...]u[..]d[......] J.-O. Tjäder 2 sanctorum [.] ra ... [.] ra ... [.] id ... [: sanctorum [.] ran[.]ra[..]e[.]d[....] J.-O. Tjäder 3 praefect[o ...] d[..]ocant[...] ... [.]d ... [: praefect[o] d[..]ocant[...]no[......] J.-O. Tjäder 4 traces of two letters under the second r, most probably i and p; et ... e ... [...] ... [..]or ... [.] ... no ... e[: et te[... \pm 26] J.-O. Tjäder
```

[...] be removed, the men of the lord prefect [...] and the body of the saints [...] to me by the lord prefect [...] signed and [...]

1 tollatur: the verb is very frequently found in late antique epistles, and could mean either 'to remove, eliminate', especially in epistles expressing commands, or 'to raise, to extend upwards', especially in arengae and more philosophical sentences. For the first case cf. CASSIOD. Var. 3, 31, 23: «si vero tale aliquid moderna praesumptione temptatum est, sine dubitatione tollatur»; 4, 16, 12: «quatinus excessibus tollatur licentia»; COD. IUST. 3, 28, 32: «ipsa condicio ... quodcumque onus introducens tollatur»; 3, 33, 15 pr.: «utrum omnis usus fructus ... an totus tollatur vel ex parte deminuatur, ex parte autem apud eum resideat?». For the second case cf. ENNOD. Epist. 3, 34, 22: «Nihil est equidem quod non a veritate in altum ambitioso tollatur eloquio»; COD. IUST. 5, 4, 28, 1: «quantum vir in altum tollatur, tantum et coniux eius decrescat». When con-

sidered together with the 'men of the prefect', the verb seems here to fit the first case.

homines domni p[r]aef[ec]ti: given its conjunction with an authority (a prefect), homo has here the meaning of 'subordinate', as in P.Ital. I 1, 3 (epistle of the ex-cubicularius Lauricius): «conduct[o]res vel homines nostros»; SYMM. Ep. 2, 31: «homines meos scis esse multatos»; 5, 96; 6, 12; 9, 137; GREG. M. Ep. 6, 42 (sent to an abbot whose name is not preserved): «armati homines vestri, sicut audivimus, in episcopium irruerent»; 9, 66 (sent to Domitius presbyter et abbas): «latores vero praesentium, sicut revera homines vestro»; 9, 83 (sent to Iohannes bishop of Syracuse): «invasi subire homines vestros iudicium». The expression domnus praefectus occurs in SYMM. Ep. 3, 87; 6, 56; ENNOD. Ep. 8, 23; 8, 35; 9, 16; 9, 21. As already noted by Tjäder, Revisione, 21, the form domnus is usually employed during Late Antiquity in rank titles.

2 et corpora sanctorum: these words probably refer to a church, in which the bodies of saints or their relics were preserved. Late antique epistles dealing with this matter can be found in: GREG. M. Epist. 4, 30 (concerning holy relics): «Nam corpora sanctorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum tantis in ecclesiis suis coruscant miraculis atque terroribus, ut neque ad orandum sine magno illic timore possit accedi»; Collectio Avellana II 187, p. 644–645 (sent by the emperor Justinian to pope Hormisda).

3 mihi a domno praefect[o: for domnus praefectus see the commentary to line 1.

id [.]reca. [.]: Tjäder (Revisione, 21–22) read d[.]ocant[.] and proposed restoring the lacunae with d[ev]ocant[ur, that is with a verb meaning 'to summon', 'to divert (from one activity, occupation, situation, etc.) to another'. After the restoration (2018) different letters can be spotted, but their exact meaning is not clear. When considering the previous words (mihi a domno praefecto), a possible restoration could be id [p]recatu[r. If it is the case, the sentence should mean 'as I have requested from the lord prefect' and refers to a former petition (precatio, prex or preces) addressed by the sender to the prefect.

4 suscribtam et e. e. Tjäder read the line as follows, suscribtam et tel, and proposed et telstium suscribtionibus firmatam as a possible restoration. On the basis of the joined occurrence of suscribere and testis, he suggested identifying the fragment as a protocol of gesta municipalia (so, a public document) or as a private document. Nevertheless, the very faded traces of ink between et and e suggest more prudence is needed. The reading must be rejected. As for the typology, according to other Italian papyri, the feminine participle suscribtam (a technical term meaning 'signed, subscribed') can refer both to a private deed (a chartula: cf. e.g. P.Ital. I 16; 18–19; 20; 25; Salomons/Tjäder/Worp, ZPE 123) and to a public document (designated with pagina in P.Ital. I 10–11; II 44) but

57. Letter 251

indirect evidence shows that the participle could also refer to an epistolary text (epistula, littera/litterae): cf. AUGUST. Ep. 83: «ut epistulam ... subscriptam non differas mittere»; 177: «subscriptas litteras misimus»; 105: «mitte eandem epistulam tuam subscriptam manu»; cf. also GREG. TUR. Franc. 5, 49: «epistolam subscriptam»; 6, 24: «epistolam ... regis subscriptam protulit»; 6, 32: «epistolam sacerdotum manu subscriptam detulit». In this case, the text would mention a further epistle (public or private) dealing with the same subject matter as the papyrus.



P.Bas. II **57**