

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 fainter 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.

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 Hormisdas).

3 *mihi a domno praefecto*: for *domnus praefectus* see the commentary to line 1.

id [.] r̄eca . . [.]: 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]r̄ecaṭu[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*: Tjäder read the line as follows, *suscribtam et te[.]*, and proposed *et testium suscriptionibus 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

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.



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