P.Masada *724 Revised*[[1]](#footnote-1)

Jerusalem, Israel Museum, Shrine of the Book [inv. 1039-161] 14.5 (w) x 8 (h) cm

Provenance: Masada (excavations led by Y. Yadin in 1963-1965; found in Locus 1039)

Origin: unknown 73 or 74, Spring

The papyrus[[2]](#footnote-2) is written on the *recto* along the fibres, and preserves the upper (2.5 cm) and left (3 cm) margins, whereas it is damaged on the other sides; three lines can be seen. On the *verso*, the papyrus being rotated 90°, the left portions of three lines survive.

The *recto* is written in an elegant old Roman cursive featuring various serifs and characterised by some *litterae notabiliores* (initial *l*, *s* and *t*), as well as some strokes (in *a*, *i* and *n*) exceeding the notional baseline. The closest paleographical parallel is P.Med. inv. 195 (2nd half of the 1st – beginning of the second century). The address on the *verso* (at least l. 1) recalls the *litterae elongatae*, which find parallels in P.Berol. inv. 8906 *verso* (127/128-171), *P.Hib.* 2.276 *verso* (c. 157), *P.Oxy.* 1.32 *verso* l. 1 (second century), and in *T.Vindol.* 2.218 *verso* (c. 97-103). The *mise en page* is relevant: in *recto* l. 1, blank spaces separate words, *salutem* is not at the very end of the line and l. 3 is indented in comparison to l. 1. The scribe wrote accents above long *o* and *u*, and a medial dot in *recto* l. 1. The Greek script shares similarities of ink and tracing with the Latin one.

This poorly preserved recommendation letter is addressed by *Titulenus Vindex* to *Iulius Lupus*: the two names can be read on the *recto* (l. 1), whereas on the *verso* (l. 1) only the second one is visible; the addressee was identified with the prefect of Egypt *Tiberius Iulius Lupus*, who was in office in 73[[3]](#footnote-3). This identification was questioned by Roxan[[4]](#footnote-4), who proposed to identify him with *Publius Iulius Lupus*, *consul suffectus* in 98, who could have been *tribunus laticlavius* in the *legio X Fretensis* during the siege of Masada[[5]](#footnote-5). This suggestion might be supported by the fact that none of the other Latin letters of recommendation dated to the High Empire is addressed to a person with a very high status, but to a ‘*pater*’(P.Berol. inv. 11649; 2nd half of the first century), to a *tribunus militum* (*P.Oxy.* 1.32), and in P.Med.inv. 195, *P.Hib.* 2.276 and *P.Ryl.* 4.608 (2nd half of the first century?) the addressee is simply referred to as *suus*, as in the present text, which implies an equal relationship between sender and addressee[[6]](#footnote-6).

A couple of points are of ecdotic interest. In *recto* l. 3, the name of the recommended person – previously transcribed as *Veṇ[ ̣ ̣] ̣atuṃ [ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣* – can be restored in full as *Veṭ[tium] Ṣatuṛ[ninum*: in fact, the letter read as *ṇ* does not feature an oblique stroke like that of *recto* l. 1 but rather a slightly waved one like that of *t* in the following *do]mesticum*[[7]](#footnote-7); as for the high trace interpreted as *ṃ* in the *editio princeps*, itcorresponds to a curl of an *r* rather than to a serif of *m*, as can be seen in *salutem* in *recto* l. 2. The restoration is compatible with the lacuna, for on the *recto* the scribe tends to write letters very close. Parallel texts are *P.Ryl.* 4.608 *recto* ll. 4-7:  *̣ ̣ ̣]ọnem domini nostri imper[a]|tores serum*(l. *imperatoris servum*) *hominem mih[i] | domesticum et carum rogo, | domine, commendatum hab[eas.]* and P.Med. inv. 195 ll. 3-5: *[ ̣ ̣ ̣]ṃ Prim[i]genium domesti|[cum] ṃeum rọgo commenda|[tum ha]b[e]ạ[s*[[8]](#footnote-8). In *verso* l. 2, the traces do not necessarily point to *a*: the *a*’s on the *recto* (ll. 2-3) are different, for the first stroke consistently exceeds the notional baseline and the second one is oblique, whereas here the first one is far shorter and the second one is nearly vertical; either *m* or μ may be possible. In any case, the name of the sender was presumably written after that of the addressee, and can thus be restored in l. 1 after *Lupó* or in l. 2 (the latter would imply an *a* at the beginning of l. 2).

The presence on the *verso* (l. 3) of a sequence different from the names of the sender and the addressee – that is, the Greek παλατειν̣[ for παλατιν[ – is unclear: the expected formula consists of the name of addressee, usually that of the sender and possibly related epithets[[9]](#footnote-9). The previous editors rightly discarded the possibility it to be an official title and were skeptical about interpreting it as the place from which the letter was written[[10]](#footnote-10). The presence of both Greek and Latin on the *verso* recalls *CEL* I 222 (317-324), where the addressee on the back of the papyrus is referred to as both *dominus suus* and ἡγεμὼν Φοινείκης, and *P.Mich.* 8.469 (c. 114), on which *verso* the Greek address – for the person carrying the letter – lies. Here παλατειν̣[ might identify another addressee (thus, Παλατείν̣[ῳ) who did not need to be indicated in the prescript on the *recto*; the personal name Παλατῖνος finds parallels in *O.Did.* 397 l. 10 (c. 110-115), *SB* 6.9017 n°15 l. 14 (first-second century) and *P.Oxy.* 1.43 *recto* col. VI l. 8 (295).

*recto*

Titulenus V[i]ndex · Lupó  sụ[o]

salútem.

3 Veṭ[tium] Ṣatuṛ[ninum do]mesticum m[eum]

– – –

*verso*

Iúlió Lupó [

̣ ̣[

3 παλατειν̣[

*recto:* **3** Veṇ[ ̣ ̣] ̣atuṃ [ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣ do]mesticum *Cotton – Geiger*

*verso*: **1**a Tituleno Vindice *vel post* Lupó *vel in inferiore linea supplendum* || **2** *vel* a *vel* m *vel* μ*,* a [ *Cotton – Geiger* || **3** *m2?* | *vel* Παλατείν̣[ου *(l.* Παλατίν̣[ου*) Cotton – Geiger vel* Παλατείν̣[ῳ *(l.* Παλατίνῳ*) Bowersock*[[11]](#footnote-11)| *infra hanc lineam* *fortasse* [rogo commendatum habeas *supplendum*

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2. It was first edited by H.M. Cotton and J. Geiger as *P.Masada* 724, then reedited by T. Dorandi as *ChLA* 46.1367and by P. Cugusi as *CEL* 3.80bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On the identification, see *P.Masada* at 62-64; on the date of *Iulius Lupus’* office, see G. Bastianini, “Lista dei prefetti d’Egitto dal 30a al 299p,” *ZPE* 17 (1975) 263-328 at 275, and G. Bastianini, “Lista dei prefetti d’Egitto dal 30a al 299p. Aggiunte e correzioni,” *ZPE* 38 (1980) 75-89 at 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. M.M. Roxan*,* “Review of Hannah M. Cotton, Joseph Geiger, with a contribution by J. David Thomas: Masada II: the Yigael Yadin Excavations, 1963-1965. Final Reports; the Latin and Greek Documents,” *CR* 41 (1991) 458-459 at 458. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For *Publius Iulius Lupus* see *PIR2* I 389 and also *CEL* vol. 3 at 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. As noticed in *CEL* vol. 3 at 177. The social statuses of sender and addressee in the fragmentary *O.Berenike* 2.123 (50-70) cannot be determined. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. I.e., one of the *domestici*,the “members of one’s entourage”, see *OLD2* 626s.v. b. *T* was also another of the possible interpretation of the *editores principes* (*P.Masada* at 66), who discarded it because it does not feature the inclination of the upper stroke; however, such inclination is not that evident in the other *t*’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Rather than *ha]b[eas* (see S. Daris, “Lettera di raccomandazione Latina,” *CE* 45 [1970] 353-355; *ChLA* XXVIII 841; *CEL* I 84), as the top of *a* is still visible. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See e.g. *P.Oxy.* 1.32 *verso*, *P.Mich.* VIII 469 *verso* and 471 *verso* (c. 114), *P.Hib.* II 276 *verso*. Also the place in which the letter was produced can be mentioned, as in *P.Ryl.* 4.608 *verso* l. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *P.Masada* at p. 67; they tentatively also suggested it to be referred to a person involved in carrying the letter. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. G.W. Bowersock, “Review of: N. Lewis (ed.), Judean Desert Studies: the Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters, Greek papyri, Jerusalem 1989; Hannah M. Cotton and Joseph Geiger (edd.), Masada II, the Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963-1965. Final Reports: the Latin and Greek Documents,” *JRA* 4 (1991) 336-344 at 344 n. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)