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P.Petra No. 60 : Official Letter

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60. OFFICIAL LETTER

Inv. 84b
Field. No. XIII
Glass Plate 316
Plates LXXXII–LXXXIII

left margin ca. 3 cm (?)
right margin 1 cm

ca. 530–600

This roll has the same inventory number as **59** (Agreement on Lease of Vineyard). Its fragments bear the numbers B₃C 1–40, while the fragments of **59** have the codes B₁, B₂, B₃A, and B₃B. Hence, the present text must have lain very near the latter fragments. It is, however, clearly a separate roll, opened from the outermost layer towards the core of the roll (frs. 1–18), with the counterlayers continuing from the core to the outermost layer on the other side of the same roll (frs. 19–40). Frs. 37–39 contain text on both sides.

The letter proper was written in a wide column (55 cm) along the fibers. The first line begins in fr. 4 and ends in fr. 22, giving the long name and the title of a magistrate, λαμπρότ(ατος) ἄρχων. This Flavius Marianos may have been the governor of Palaestina Tertia. The line was written in a large, flamboyant, upright hand with occasional very small letters (*alphas* and *upsilons*). The second line gives only the name of the addressee, Theodoros, son of Obodianos (frs. 6–8). The hand is similar but perhaps not the same, and the letters are much smaller. The contents of the letter begin in the third line (frs. 4–19), written by the same hand as that of the second line, with letters of a height in between those of the two first lines. Traces of a fourth line follow. As the height of the column's preserved part is 8 cm and the width of the Petra rolls was generally 26–29 cm, the column could have contained around four more lines, but of course the letter may have been shorter.

Among the Petra papyri, there are no comparable letters from a high magistrate to a single addressee,¹ nor are they common in the Greek papyri from Egypt. The layout of the letter is similar to that of P. Cair. Masp. III 67281 (538–40), Φλ(αύιος) Ἰωάννη[ε Μηνᾶς Ἰ(?)]ουκτινιαγ[ὸς Δημος]θένης Κυρ[άτων Ἡ]λίας Θε[όδωρος(?) Διό]σκορος ὁ μεγ[αλ(ο)πρεπέτατος] ἄρχ(ων) τῆς Θηβαΐ[ων ἐπα]ρχείας / Ἀ[πολλῶτι] Ἰσακίου. See also two orders of a *praeses*, ChLA XLI 1193 (541) and 1195 (531). Both of these letters begin with the name and title of the magistrate sender, written with large letters and in a very wide column, continuing (by another official hand) with the text of the order. In the former, no addressee is mentioned, while the latter is addressed, in the last line of the column, to the inhabitants of Aphrodito. In both documents, another much smaller column follows, with more details of the order.

The letter by Flavius Marianos is, on the left, preceded by an empty space of ca. 9 cm, consisting of three fragments (leftward, towards the beginning of the roll, frs. 33, 3, 34). Then follow, again leftward, frs. 2, 35, 1, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 (from 36 onwards marked as *verso*), which, together with the *recto* fragments missing in between, must have occupied ca. 42 cm in the original papyrus. The length of the combined fragments was

1. The official letter 78 contains an order by an unknown magistrate to the defensor civitatis and other officials of Petra, but, as the beginning is lost, we do not know to whom the letter was addressed.

thus at least 106 cm and quite possibly more, since fr. 38 seems to contain two layers. The fragments 2–1 and 35–40 were written *transversa charta*, so that the text begins from fr. 2. That is, if all the papyrus sheets had been glued together, the first lines on these fragments would have been in the middle of the roll and the last lines at the beginning of the roll. It is, however, improbable that the official letter would have been glued after the other texts in this way. Thus, the text *transversa charta* (see p. 179) was probably written on separate sheets (possibly two), and was wrapped around the main document (for similar cases, see Introductions to 6–11, 19, and 25–27). The fragments are so meager that nothing can be said of their contents nor of their relationship to the letter of Flavius Marianos. If they indeed form one or more separate sheets, the empty fragments 34, 3, and 33 must be divided between two documents. As the text *transversa charta* begins quite near the right edge of fr. 2, frs. 34 and 3 may form the upper margin (ca. 6 cm) of this text, while fr. 33 forms the left margin (ca. 3 cm) of Marianos' letter.

MAIN DOCUMENT

→

- 1 † Φλ(άουιος) Μαρριανός Ἰωάννης Σέργιος Ναρσῆς Σούμμος Σ[.]. τιανός Μεγέθιος λαμπρ(ότατος)
 ἄρχων vac.
- 2 vac. **m2** † Θεοδώρῳ Ὀβοδιανοῦ vac.
- 3 τῶ[ν] ε[ν] μ[ε]μβ[ρ]ολαιογρ[ά]φῳ τὸ ἐπιτήδειον ἀποδο[θ]ήτω τῷ ἐπιζητε . . . πίετιν ἀγαθὴν κα[ὶ] γραμμάτων
 εἶδησιν· θατέρου γὰρ ἐλείποντος
- 4 traces

1 Φλς Pap. λαμπρ Pap. 3 ἐλείποντος

TRANSLATION

(Lines 1–3) † Flavius Marianos Ioannes Sergios Narses Summos Spartianos? Megethios, the illustrious governor (?) † To Theodoros, son of Obodianos. Of the notarial documents, the appropriate one should be given to whosoever requests (?) good faith and acknowledgement of the text. For if the other one is missing . . .

COMMENTARY

1 † Φλ(άουιος) Μαρριανός: the sender's name and title, written in large letters, occupies the entire first line. This is common in official letters or orders sent by a high official as, e.g., in ChLA XLI 1195.1 = P. Cair. Masp. I 67030 (531), Φλ(άουιος) Θεόδωρος Μηνᾶς Ἰουλιανός Ἰάκκωβος ὁ μεγαλο[π]ρε(πέτατος) κόμ(ης) καὶ ἄρχ(ων) τῆς Θεβ(αίων) ἐπαρχεί[α]; P. Flor. III 293.1 (544/5), Ἰωάννης Θεόδωρος Μηνᾶς Ναρσῆς Χνουβάμμων Ὠρίων Ἐφαιετος ὁ ἐνδοξ(ότατος) κυαίετ(ωρ) δοῦξ (καὶ) ἀγουετάλι(ος) τοῦ Θεβ(αίων) ἔθν(ου). The Marianos in our document is not known from other sources.

Ναρσῆς: Narses is an Armenian name. In the Greek papyri from Egypt, it is found six times, carried by two *duces*, Ioannes Theodoros Menas Narses etc. (quoted above), and Marianos Michaelios Gabrieliios Sergios Bacchios Narses etc. (P. Cair. Masp. I 67005.1 [568]), but also by people of lower status, as also in epigraphic sources.

Σούμμος: in the Greek papyri from Egypt, the word σούμμος (Latin *summus*) is found only as a definition of rank, e.g., CPR VI 76.8 (3rd c.), []αφω σούμμο εἴληε Μαυριτανῆ[ς]; Rom. Mil. Rec. 76 = P. Hamb. I 39 (179?) *passim*, σούμμο κουράτορι. It is, however, also a personal name, found in three Greek grave inscriptions in Palaestina Tertia (I. Pal. Tertiae Ia 265, Ib 20, 25), once in Arabia and thrice in Macedonia. We take it here as a name, since we believe the two following words to be names as well, though their reading is uncertain (see below).

Ϛ . [.] . τῖανός: this is very probably a Latin name, ending either in -τιανός or -ציανός. There is a spot of ink visible at the fragment's left edge just before the uncertain *tau*, which could be from its horizontal, beginning with a curve like the *taus* of the third line. There is no other example of a *tau* with a tail curving to the right, but, on the other hand, the lower part of most *taus* in this document is missing, and the hand of the second and third lines may be different from that of the first line. The curved letter might also be the lower part of a *sigma*. The first letter of the name, linked with the last *sigma* of Summos, has a curved lower part, which suggests either a *sigma*, *omikron*, or *epsilon*. After this first letter, two vertical tails of letters are visible, the second one possibly ending in a curve to the right, perhaps from a *lambda* or *pi*. Between the first letter and this one, there may be space for a small letter written high up, like the *alphas* and *upsilons* of this hand. The last visible trace on the big fragment is a low, slightly diagonal stroke at the right edge, which could be from an *iota* or *rho*. Of the numerous names ending in -τιανός or -ציανός, no obvious candidate can be found, with Ϛτ[α]τιανός or Ϛτ[α]ציανός being too short, though Ϛπ[α]ρτιανός might be possible.

Μεγέθιος: the exact position of the upper fragment is not certain, and thus we cannot be sure of the reading. The *iota* of the name is written differently from the other *iotas* in the same line, as a downward stroke from the *theta*. It is very unlikely, though, that the name could be abbreviated. Another Megethios, a father of Panolbios, is found in 5 8, 13.

λαμπρ(ότατος) ἄρχων: this combination of an honorific title and an office is not found elsewhere in the Petra papyri, nor is ἄρχων in the first place. In the Greek papyri from Egypt, the combination occurs once, in P. Princ. III 137.1, 4, where the exact rank of the *clarissimus* magistrate is unknown. In view of the grand personal name and the text's layout, the magistrate in question could be the governor of Palaestina Tertia, whose seat was Petra. The somewhat less exalted title λαμπρότατος was appropriate for him, because the governor of Palaestina Tertia had a slightly lower rank than his colleagues in Palaestina Prima and Secunda. In similar expressions, as in the examples quoted at the beginning of this note, the title is usually preceded by an article.

2 † Θεοδώρῳ Ὀβοδιανοῦ: the line with the addressee's name is indented 11 cm. In P. Cair. Masp. III 67281.1–2, quoted above, the whole text was written by the same hand, while in ChLA XLI 1193 and 1195, the letter was written by a second hand, marked as read by a third and fourth hand, marked as approved by a fifth hand, and continued in the next column by a sixth hand. Here, the address and the following text were written in similar but smaller letters than those of the official's name. As the rest of the text is missing, we do not know if it was followed by *legi* and *r(ecognovi)*. Since this was a letter sent personally to Theodoros, not containing any order to a larger audience, such remarks would not have been needed.

3 τῶ[ν] Ϛ[υ]μ[β]ολαιογρ[ά]φῳ: in the short gap before the *sigma*, there is enough space for the *nu* of τῶ[ν], though the dative τῶ is also possible. However, the next word certainly ends with *nu*. The usual meaning of the word is “notary.” Here, we suggest that the word refers to a “notarial document,” cf. τὸ ἔγγραφον (very common in the Petra papyri), ἀντίγραφον, and χειρόγραφον, used as substantives, and the verb συμβολαιογράφω in 39 144. It seems that Theodoros had submitted to Marianos two documents, or perhaps rather two copies of a document, one of which is meant with the following τὸ ἐπιτήδειον (where only the neuter article and the beginning of the word are certain), while the other is indicated by θατέρου γὰρ ἐ<λ>λείποντος. Similar use of the plural partitive genitive is often found at the beginning of official letters, see, e.g., SB XX 14587.2 (308), τῶν δοθέντων μο[ι] βιβλιδίω]ν ὑπὸ - - ἴσον ἐπιτελέσσεται ὅπω[ς] φανερόν κα[τα]τ[η]ρήσει οἷς ἠξίωσεν; SB XX 1588.24 (212), τὸ ἔτερον τῶν ἐπιδοθέντων βιβλιδίων [ἐν ἀρχαίῳ τῆς] πόλ[εως] ὑπ[ο]κ[ο]λληθῆ[τω].

τὸ ἐπιτήδειον: the end of the word is uncertain, since only the upper parts of the letters are visible. The *tau*, beginning with the curve typical of the non-cursive *tau* of this hand, seems clear. Of the following three high-reaching letters, the first is probably *eta* (*iota* is possible but offers no sense), the second could be *iota* or *delta*, and the third is certainly *epsilon*. After that, traces of four to six letters follow before the unambiguous *delta*. We thus may have a word beginning ἐπιτηδε-: ἐπιτήδευμα does not give a suitable sense (the phrase τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα is frequent in papyri in the meaning “by profession”); ἐπιτήδειον could be understood as “the appropriate (document),” though especially the *omikron* is difficult to read.

ἀποδο[θ]ήτω τῶ ἐπιζητε . . . : here, too, the reading is very difficult. Of the ink in πο and [θ]ή, almost nothing is visible, but the imperative would be natural in the context and an obvious explanation for the double τω. The following dative would then give the document's intended recipient. He might be an official but, though there are many alternatives beginning with ἐπι- (e.g., ἐπικριτής, ἐπίσκοπος, ἐπίσταμος, ἐπιστάτης, ἐπιστήμων, ἐπίτροπος), none of them seems palaeographically possible. Of the letter after ἐπι-, a longish horizontal stroke is visible, which could be from a *tau* (this time without the curved beginning) or *zeta* but not from a *sigma*, since there are no traces of the curve connected with the horizontal. The next high vertical stroke could be from *iota* or *eta*, followed by a possible *tau*, a certain *epsilon*, and unidentifiable traces of perhaps two or three letters. The word might be a form of ἐπιζητέω –e.g., τῶ ἐπιζητοῦντι πίετιν ἀγαθὴν καὶ γραμμάτων εἶδεντι would give an appropriate sense: “to anybody requesting good faith and acknowledgement of the text.” However, the surviving ἐπιζητε-, where the second *epsilon* is certain, is not compatible with this. Perhaps the scribe could have written the participle as ἐπιζητεῦντι. The horizontal stroke of the *epsilon* clearly turns downward, which rather suggests the combination ει; this document contains no combination ευ for comparison. At the next fragment's left edge, faint traces of a high vertical *iota* may be discerned, which could be from the ending -ῖτι.

πίετιν ἀγαθὴν κα[ι] γραμμάτων εἶδεντι: the same exact phrase does not occur elsewhere in papyri, but there are similar expressions with either εἰς or πρὸς, see, e.g., P. Cair. Masp. I 67002.8 (567), εἰς ἄκραν εἶδεντι; I 67020.14 (566–73), πρὸς εἶδεντι; III 67314.47

(569–70), πρὸς πίστιν καὶ ἀσφάλειαν; P. Ness. III 24.11 (569), πρὸς ἀσφάλειαν καὶ εἴδησιν ὑμετέραν καὶ τοῦ δημοσίου λόγου τοῦτο τὸ ἐπίσταλμα πεποιήμεθα πρὸς σέ. Here, however, there seems to be no *sigma* before πίστιν. In the Greek papyri from Egypt, ἀγαθὴ πίστις translates Latin *bona fides* only twice, in P. Mil. II 48.13 (549) and P. Münch. I 8.24 (540), while καλὴ πίστις occurs a few times. In Petra, only ἀγαθὴ πίστις is attested (29 202, 218; 59 30; restored in 1 77; 18 54; 30 176; 50 133), cf. 18 54–55 comm.

θατέρου γὰρ ἐλείποντος: the fate of “the other” document remains unknown. Obviously we have here a genitive absolute with the participle ἐ<λ>λείποντος, though certainly only a single *lambda* was written. Otherwise, we would have to read ἔλειπον τὸ, which would leave the *sigma*, written with a curved line-filler, alone in the line-end. The sense might be “for if the other (document) is missing,” cf. P. Flor. III 384.12 (489), οὐδενὸς ἐλλείποντος (of the equipment of a bath), or “for as the other document lacks [+ genitive, e.g., signature].”

THE SEPARATE FRAGMENTS WRITTEN *TRANSVERSA CHARTA*

For a general description of Folds 33, 3, 34, 2, 35, 1, 36–40, see above. The first three folds are empty. On the next folds, mostly just some letters or traces are visible. In the following, we give only the identifiable words. For indexing purposes, they are identified with “Frs.” and line numbers.

Frs.

→

1	] ἐμοῖς [	Fold 35
2	]κόστου ἐνάτου [	Fold 1
3	] τρίτου βιο[	Fold 37v
4	] ἐμοῖς γράμμ[ασι	Fold 38v
5	] προσηγραμ[μεν-	Fold 38v

2 ἐνάτου 5 προσηγραμ[μεν-

1 Folds 2–37v are written in largish, clear, upright letters, probably by the same hand. This means that the side marked as *v(erso)* represents the same side of the papyrus where the main letter was written, though the *recto* sides of the fragments in folds 37 and 36 better resemble the shape of fold 35. Fold 36v is glued to the Japanese paper, which means that the *recto* side was empty, while folds 37–39 have writing on both sides.

2 The text consists of two fragments, with the *epsilon* divided between them, if the placing is correct. This may refer to the year of the Arabian era, which in this case probably falls between 439 (544–45) and 479 (584–85), since Theodoros was born in 512–14 and was certainly living in the early 580’s but not necessarily in the 590’s (see Introduction, p. 2).

4–5 The lines are on two different fragments, which may represent two folds, since in both fragments there are traces of another line that do not seem to belong together. Both lines are written by a new hand, with practised but much smaller and more oblique letters than the preceding folds. On the next folds 39v and 40 (with no mark *r* or *v*, the other side empty), there are only traces. On the *recto* side of fold 37, there are traces of three lines, written in big letters with a thin *kalamos*. In the second line, there is a big *phi* possibly followed by a *lambda* with an abbreviation mark, probably from Φλ(άουιος). The *recto* side of 38 is written in middle-sized capitals, with a thicker *kalamos* than the preceding fold. On line 2, a cross is visible. The *recto* side of 39 has letters on four lines, possibly by the same hand as the preceding fold.

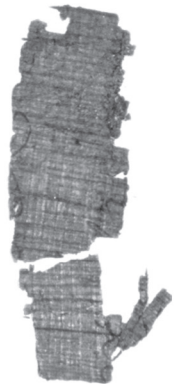
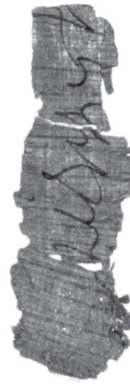
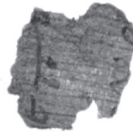
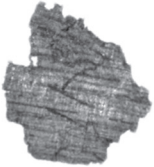
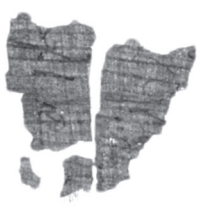
M. KAIMIO, M. LEHTINEN

P. PETRA V 60: THE RECONSTRUCTED ORDER OF THE FRAGMENTS

B₃C

40 – 39_{RV} – 38_{RV} – 37_{RV} – 36_{RV} 1 35 2 34 3 33 4 32 5 31 6 30 7 29 8 28 9 27 10 26 11 25 12 24 13

23 14 22 15 21 16 20 17 19 18





Frs

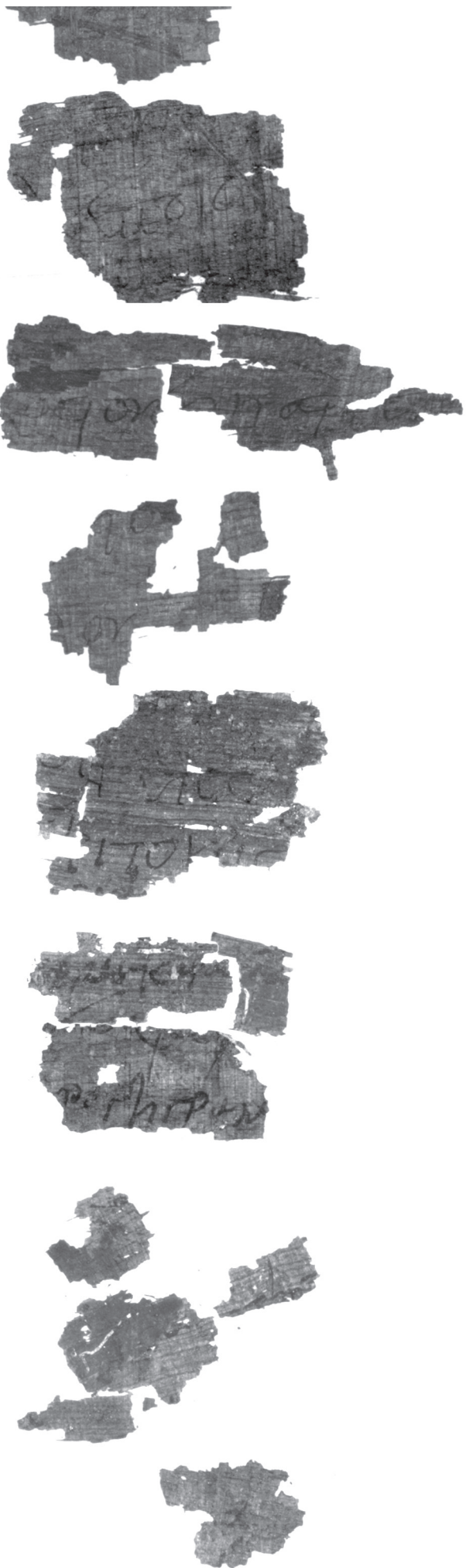
1

2

3

4

5

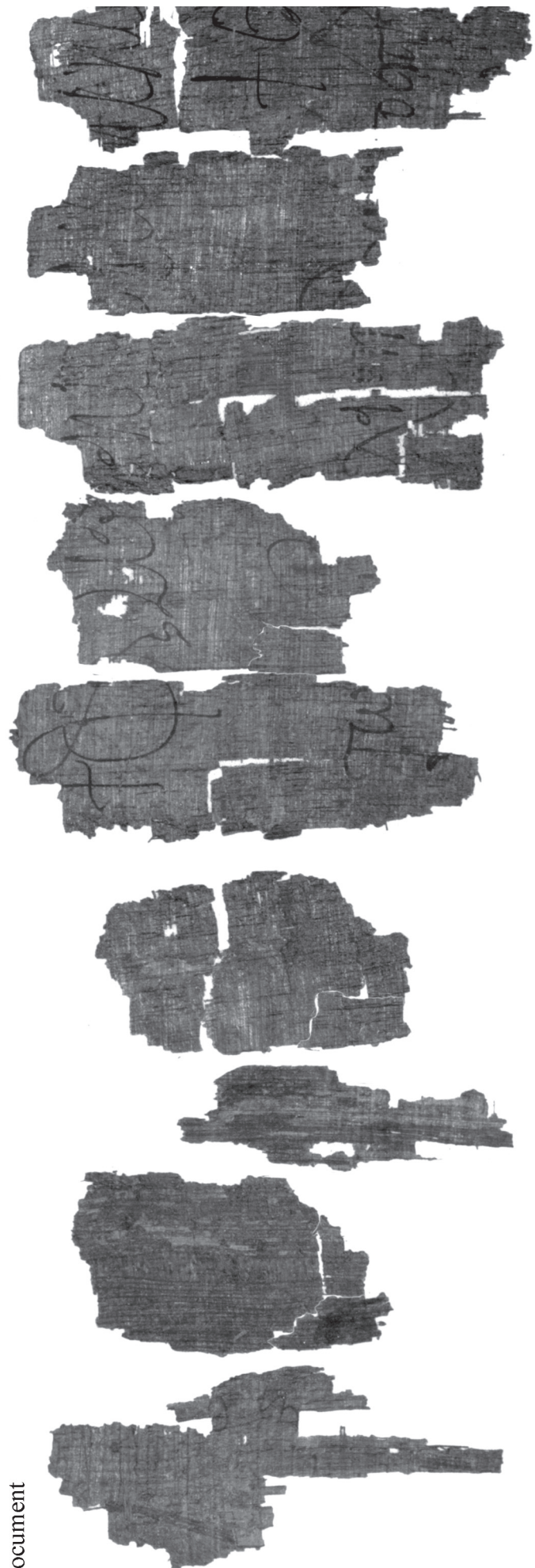


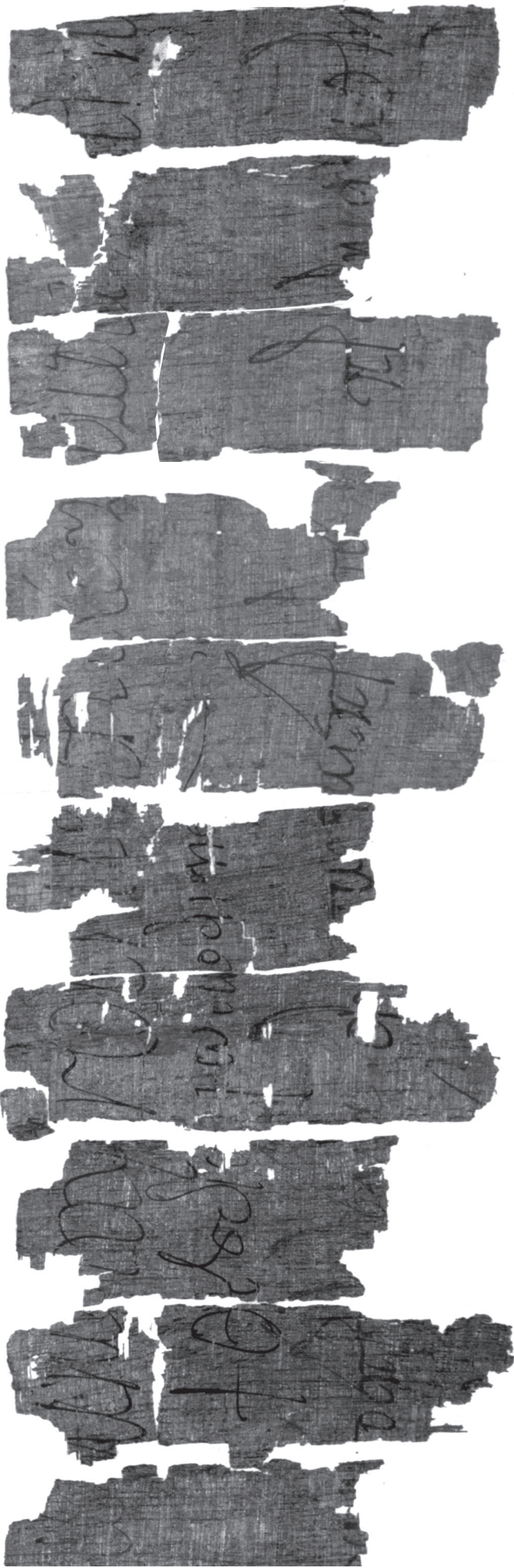
Main document

1

2

3





1
2
3



1
2
3