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DELLA RICERCA

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The Unruly Fragments. Old Problems and New Perspectives in Latin Military Papyri from Dura-Europos (P.Dura 56, 64, 72, 74, 76, 89, 113)

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CHAPTER SIX

THE UNRULY FRAGMENTS. OLD PROBLEMS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES IN LATIN MILITARY PAPYRI FROM *DURA-EUROPOS* (*P.DURA* 56, 64, 72, 74, 76, 89, 113)*

GIULIO IOVINE

This paper presents some of the preliminary results derived from a papyrological reassessment, through direct inspection, of the so-called *P.Dura* 55 to 145:¹ namely, the Latin military papyri from the archive of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*. It is the only paper in this volume not dealing with literary texts; instead, it enters the realm of documents, populated by lists, private letters, contracts and testaments, notices, subpoenae, loans, permits and records, and a thousand further typologies. These two sets of texts (literary and documentary) are usually kept well separated by papyrologists, who generally prefer attending the latter ones, leaving the former to scholars in Greek or Latin literature.² This separation mirrors a strong difference in aim which exists between, for instance, a tragedy of Aeschylus and a list of auxiliary soldiers from a Roman cohort drafted in the same day and in the same Egyptian town. The former text is copied to be perused, annotated and enjoyed by the next generations of readers and scholars; the latter will be discarded in the moment it becomes obsolete, and military lists become outdated at a very quick pace. The works dealt with in the other

* The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement no. 636983); ERC-PLATINUM project, University of Naples 'Federico II'. I wish to thank Francesco Lupi and Francesco Ginelli of the University of Verona for admitting a preliminary version of this chapter to their panel at the 10th Celtic Conference in Classics (Montreal, July 2017), and for including the full version in this book; I also thank R. Matera of Beloit College for a vital check on my English, and finally, for their constant encouragement and support, the whole staff of the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

¹ I prefer not to dwell in this paper on *P.Dura* 54, the *Feriale Duranum* (TM 44772), as there is no real reason to attribute it to the military *milieu* of the town, and its complexity would require a whole paper, rather than a section of it. Cf. Reeves (2005) for a detailed analysis.

² See e.g. Vandoni (1966) 1: “[dalla papirologia] sono esclusi (dopo la trascrizione e la prima pubblicazione, compito del papirologo) i papiri letterari, campo di studio più specificamente filologico, e i papiri scritti in lingue orientali (demotico, copto, aramaico, ebraico, siriano, persiano, arabo) [...]. Il compito principale del papirologo si può definire come lo studio e la pubblicazione dei testi papiracei”. Exceptions, of course, do occur.

papers of this volume were meant to outlast their times; the documents referred to here were discarded when their original context ceased to exist.

That said, something can be pointed out as far as what these documents share with literary fragments. First, they are in Latin: if they do not enter the history of Latin *literature*, they heavily contribute to the history of Latin *language*, which in turn is a priceless tool for literary history. The language of a document teaches us something either if very distant or very close to the language of literature.³ Secondly, they are on *papyrus*. Papyri are the source for some of the most important collections of fragments from Greek literature; all the typical problems connected with those tragic, or comic, or prose fragments (erasures, damage to the fibres, cuts and lacunae, sequences of wormholes and recurring damages, dirt to be removed) are the same problems one faces when dealing with *any* documentary papyrus, let alone the Dura papyri. This is the obvious consequence of the fact that texts on papyrus were discarded in the same place when no longer of use.⁴ Since the methodology is the same, sharing a single individual's experience on some specific fragments with other scholars means potentially producing further knowledge and opening new frontiers, regardless of the differences of content in the scrutinized texts.

The *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* I mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph was an auxiliary cohort of Roman soldiers, of Palmyrene first, then probably Durene extraction, who were garrisoned in the north portion of the town of Dura, a settlement on the right bank of the Euphrates re-founded as a Seleucid colony and heavily Hellenized. Romans came there with Lucius Verus (c. 165 CE) and were forced to go after Shapur I's campaigns in the East: the final siege happened in 256/257 CE.⁵ This long occupation made Dura a pivotal element in the Roman-Parthian (later Sasanian) border, and after the siege, the settlement was abandoned. Like all other units in Roman army, the Palmyrene cohort had an office and an archive, where documents referring to its everyday life and operations were received, produced, and if necessary, stored. During the final siege, Romans resorted to reinforcing the north wall of the town with ramparts in order to face the incoming Sasanian army.

³ Linguistics and sociolinguistics can draw (and have drawn) several important conclusions both from the letter of Terentianus and Tiberianus and their substandard second-century-AD Latin (e.g. *P.Mich.* VIII 468, TM 27081 and 471, TM 27084, 100–25 CE) and from the flourishing sentences of Latin documents from Late Antique Egypt (e.g. *P.Ryl.* IV 609, 505 CE, TM 17309), which mirror the products of coeval prose writers (e.g. Ambrosius, Augustinus) and the laws collected in the *Digestum* and the Theodosian Code. On the weakening distinction between 'documentary' and 'literary' in texts from Late Antique Egypt, see Fournet (2013).

⁴ One of the most famous dumping place for papyri in the history of papyrology is Oxyrhynchus: see the monumental Bowman/Coles/Gonis/Obbink/Parsons (2007).

⁵ A good summary, with bibliography attached, is in Austin (2010) esp. 17–32. See also Welles/Fink/Gilliam (1959) 24; Sommer (2005) 311–312. More on the final chronology of Dura in James (1985); MacDonald (1986); James (2011).

They vacated all the rooms adjacent to that wall, and threw in the fill every available object, including dismissed documents which they did not feel the need of keeping. It was in one of those rooms, the room W13 in the Temple of Artemis Azzanathkona, that fragments from more than a hundred papyri resurfaced in the 1920-30s, when the buried town was excavated by a joint archaeological mission involving Yale University and the *Académie Française des Inscriptions and Belles Lettres*.⁶ A considerable quantity of the papyri and parchments found in room W13 (which constitute the greatest majority of papyri and parchments found in Dura-Europos) were in Latin language, and referred to the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, proofs of whose existence are to be found only in the manuscripts themselves, and in the inscriptions excavated in the city.

This crucial subset of this unique collection has benefited from the editorial attention of J.F. Gilliam, R.O. Fink, C. B. Welles,⁷ R. Marichal⁸ and, partially, P. Cugusi.⁹ The last full edition (Marichal's) dates back to the 1970s, but the papyri themselves were inspected by Marichal in the 1960s, and he subsequently worked with photographs.¹⁰ The time has come for an overhaul, especially from the textual point of view. I have been privileged to be able to inspect the manuscripts directly over a six-month period (April to September 2017) at the Beinecke Library in New Haven; I was provided with two brand new tools, an electronic microscope and high-quality digital images.¹¹

While addressing a papyrological archive which has been left untouched for forty years, the chief and fondest hope of the papyrologist is to find unpublished pieces. Be it a scrap resurrected from the stacks of the library or reassigned to an already known papyrus, or a larger piece simply unheeded by former publishers, one always welcomes fresh additions to one's editorial toil, bearing in mind that in most cases,

⁶ Hopkins (1979) esp. 75–105 for the papyri findings.

⁷ Welles/Fink/Gilliam (1959); Fink (1971). The former book collects all Durene papyri, not just the Latin ones; Fink's book is devoted to documents coming from Roman army, therefore not just from Dura and in other languages than Latin.

⁸ Bruckner/Marichal et al. (1954–). The Latin Dura papyri (and a small bunch of Greek ones from the same milieu) were published by Marichal in volumes 6, 7, 8, and 9.

⁹ In his *CEL*, P. Cugusi has re-published, often with personal supplements and readings, all the official correspondence in the Durene collection (*P.Dura* 55–80).

¹⁰ “En 1966, lorsque j'ai collationné les P. Dura à l'Université de Yale, ceux qui étaient déjà sous verre se trouvaient à la Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, ceux qui étaient encore sous dossier se trouvaient à Winchester Hall dans le bureau de C. B. Welles. Ils doivent tout trouver maintenant à la Beinecke et sont probablement montés sous verre. Mes descriptions donnent donc l'état de la collection tel qu'il était à la fin de 1966. Certaines photographies avaient été prises antérieurement à un moment où la disposition des fragments était différente ; la plupart d'entre elles ont été refaites ; dans certaines cas je les ai conservées telles quelles, à titre documentaire, en indiquant dans le commentaire ou les notes les modifications apportées et le plus souvent retenues dans l'édition” (R. Marichal in *ChLA* VI, p. v).

¹¹ For the images my gratitude must go to M. Custer and E. Doon, both working at the Beinecke Library, who have been most helpful and accommodating.

when previous editors leave something behind, there usually is a good reason for this. Secondly, the papyrologist will take pains to fix any mistake or confusion created by previous publications, such as different numberings of the fragments and consequent confusion for the reader, and will be on the lookout for fragments which have vanished from one edition, and which have reappeared in another, or which have not reappeared at all. The final and probably most feasible aim is to improve the given text with a fresh look, direct inspection, and new tools. Within this framework, I shall present some of my results.

1.

P.Dura 56¹² contains fragments from at least three official letters issued by the chancery of Marius Maximus, governor of Syria.¹³ They are dated by editors around 208 CE.¹⁴ The letters were sent from Maximus to the tribune of the Palmyrene cohort, an otherwise unknown Ulpus Valentinus. After the addressee read them, they were pasted together by a clerk in a probably pre-existing τόμος συγκολλησίμιος, a *liber epistularum* ('book of letters') or type of ancient scrapbook in which all letters concerning horses or cavalymen of cohort were probably preserved. Traces of this inclusion in the cohort's *liber epistularum* are in the commonly attested formula *acc(epta)* 'received', and then the dating formula, *septimum decimum [K]al(endas) A[p]ril[es d(omino) n(o)stro Imp(eratore) A]ntonino Aug(usto) I[II et [Geta Caesare II¹⁵] co(n)s(ulibus)]*, which can be found in the blank space between the sender's and addressee's names and *salutem* (fr. A, ll. 1–2).¹⁶ In fr. A, above l. 1 and in the right section of the upper margin, a few small letters can be read, which Marichal identified as a docket added later to the letter, but which he was unable to read.¹⁷

¹² The first edition is Gilliam (1950) 171–189; then the others follow: Welles/Fink/Gilliam 1959 (*P.Dura* 56); Fink (*RMRP* 99); Marichal (*ChLA* VI 311); and Cugusi (*CEL* I 179). TM 44776.

¹³ For Marius Maximus and his rich *cursus honorum*, see Miltner (1930).

¹⁴ Dates are seen in the texts of the three letters; the most complete one (208 CE) is in letter A, ll. 7–9 *ex die [qu]ar[to . . .] | Iunia[s] [d n Imp Antonino A]ug· III [e]t [[Get[a] | Caesare it[e]r[um]]] cos*.

¹⁵ The erasure of Geta's name from this inserted formula, which cannot have taken place before 212 CE, is conjectural: one infers it from a comparable erasure in ll. 7–9.

¹⁶ The archival annotations 'accepta + dating formula' in Latin documents on papyrus and *ostrakon* are further scrutinized in Iovine (2019).

¹⁷ "Traces très incertaines ... peut-être ajouté lors de l'enregistrement et du collage des lettres" (*ChLA* VI, p. 15).



Parallels for a docket inserted in the upper margin of an official letter can be seen elsewhere in the Dura papyri:

i) *P.Dura* 63,¹⁸ two letters addressed to a Saturninus: an otherwise unknown Agathonius, again in the Dative Case, is added in the upper margin (] *Agathonio*). He is, in fact, the ultimate addressee of the letters themselves, which were forwarded to him (his name appears in the *verso*), after having been sent to *Saturninus*;

ii) *P.Dura* 66,¹⁹ letter *f*—the letter is addressed to somebody we cannot know for certain, but a docket is inserted above, with the name of the cohort's commanding officer, Postumius Aurelianus (] *tumio*), in the Dative Case;


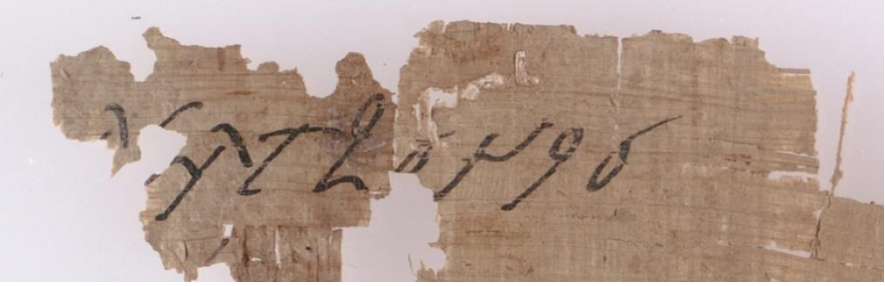
iii) Eventually, *P.Dura* 71,²⁰ addressed to some Artemidorus, has a small name in the Dative Case drawn in the upper margin,] *elio*.



¹⁸ 211 CE, TM 44791.

¹⁹ 216 CE, TM 44795.

²⁰ 219 CE, TM 44800.

<i>P.Dura 66 f</i>	
<i>P.Dura 63</i>	

Given that in two out of three cases (*P.Dura 63, 66*), the added name is the name of the addressee (either the original or a later one), we are allowed to guess that the annotation in the upper margin of *P.Dura 56* is in fact, a name, that it is in the Dative Case, and that it could also be the name of one of the letter's addressees.

Before *i*, which is quite certain, one might see a rather squarely drawn *p*, and after *i* an *o* with (perhaps) a protruding acute accent.²¹ The first visible letter, on the other hand, consists of the left edge of a circular stroke; only weak spots of ink are to be seen after it. Perhaps one is here witnessing the annotation in the Dative Case *Ulpio*. Needless to say, this might be a remark concerning the addressee, *Ulpus Valentinus*. Little do we know of such customs and it seems impossible to clarify the purpose of these annotations; it is perhaps safer to assume they were done by the clerk inserting the letter in the *liber*, for internal purposes.

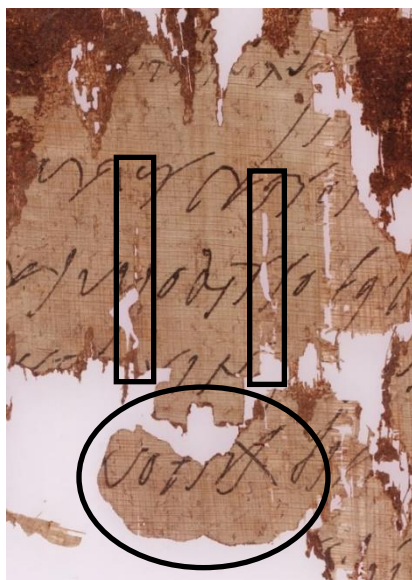
This papyrus also offers occasions to rectify previous editions. As often happens with Dura papyri, the exact number and disposition of the fragments in *P.Dura 56* has undergone many fluctuations in subsequent editions. According to the *editor princeps* Gilliam, this particular papyrus included about forty

²¹ Or so it seems. Evidence of acute accents in Latin literary texts and letters on papyrus is quite attested; not so for Latin documentary papyri (for a full overview, cf. Scappaticcio 2012). It might as well be the case that the protruding stroke of this *o* is nothing but the artificial continuation of the single stroke which was necessary to draw *o* itself. A similar phenomenon occurs in *P.Dura 63*, where the *o*'s of *Agathonio, Saturnino* and *suo* (letter *a* ll. 1–2), as well as the *d*'s in letter *a* l. 4 (*ad*) and 7 (*uendisse*) all feature an ornamental continuation of the stroke employed to draw the circular portion of the letter.

fragments.²² Most of them had probably been rejoined before the *princeps*, as in the 1950 contribution only twelve fragments appear, three of which (*a*, *b* and *c*) offer some articulated text. Gilliam's further edition in 1959 and Marichal's in 1976 have altered the order and names of the fragments due to rejoinings and removals. A further reorganisation, which can be seen from the online images, has been done by the German papyrologist R. Duttonhöfer in the early 1990s.²³ The table given below provides a record of the alterations.

Gilliam 1950	Gilliam 1959	Marichal	Online photos
fr. <i>a</i>	fr. <i>a</i>	fr. <i>a</i>	fr. <i>A</i>
fr. <i>b</i>	fr. <i>b</i> (= <i>b</i> + <i>d</i> + <i>e</i>)	fr. <i>b</i>	fr. <i>B</i> (= <i>b</i> + <i>d</i> + <i>e</i>)
fr. <i>c</i>	fr. <i>c</i> (= <i>c</i> + <i>f</i> + <i>k</i> + <i>l</i>)	fr. <i>c</i>	fr. <i>C</i> (= <i>c</i> + <i>f</i> + <i>k</i> + <i>l</i>)
fr. <i>d</i> (<i>e</i>]x ui Kal [])	joins fr. <i>b</i>	removed from fr. <i>b</i> , becomes fr. <i>h</i>	joins fr. <i>B</i>
fr. <i>e</i> ([]mo cos)	joins fr. <i>b</i> (<i>A</i> pro et <i>Maxi</i>]mo cos)	removed from fr. <i>b</i> , becomes fr. <i>i</i>	joins fr. <i>B</i>
fr. <i>f</i> ([] [] [])	joins fr. <i>c</i> (<i>in</i> [])	idem	joins fr. <i>C</i>
fr. <i>g</i> ([]Marius[])	becomes fr. <i>d</i> (<i>M</i>]arius [<i>Maximus</i>)	idem	idem
fr. <i>h</i> ([] [])	becomes fr. <i>e</i> ([i[]o[])	idem	idem
fr. <i>i</i> ([] d [])	becomes fr. <i>g</i>	idem	idem
fr. <i>j</i> ([]eta [] [])	becomes fr. <i>f</i>	idem	idem
fr. <i>k</i> ([] mo [])	joins fr. <i>c</i> ([] mos [])	idem	joins fr. <i>C</i>
fr. <i>l</i> ([]al[])	joins fr. <i>c</i> (<i>K</i>]al [])	idem	joins fr. <i>C</i>
-	-	fr. <i>m</i> (blank)	fr. <i>h</i> (blank)

As far as the disposition of the fragments in the original roll is concerned, their shape gives us very strong clues, which did not escape scholars.

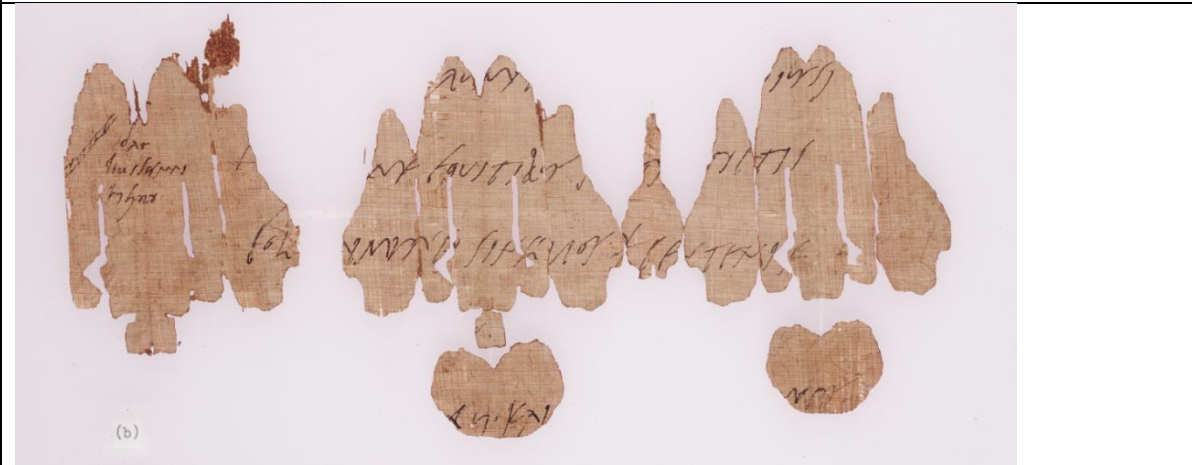


Fr. *A* (here featuring with its right portion) shows a large triangular scrap with two vertical, narrow holes—and below it a smaller, rounder triangle with two round tops. The same shape can be seen in fr. *B* and *C*, smaller and smaller. As Gilliam thought, fr. *B* and *C* followed *A* in the original roll (it is unlikely that they preceded it, as the left margin is clearly visible in letter *A*).

²² Gilliam (1950) 173.

²³ I have obtained this piece of information from Dr Duttonhöfer herself, to whom I am very grateful.

Fr. B



Fr. C

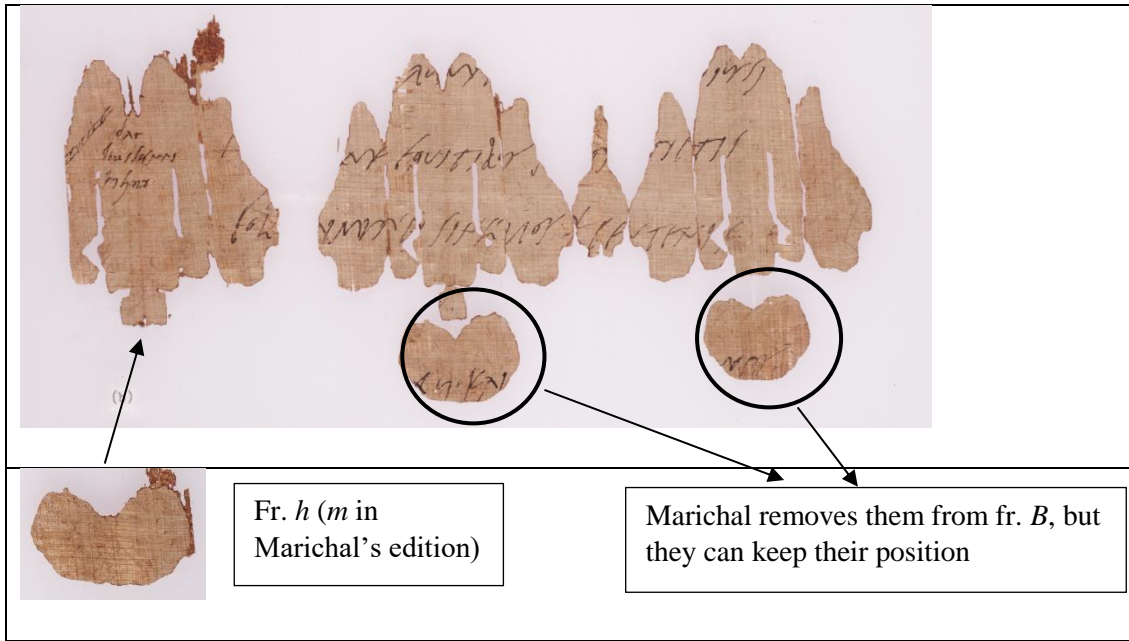


In his edition, Marichal has removed the original fr. *d* and *e* from *B* and renamed them *h* and *i*, but there is no need for that, as their shapes allow us to connect them to the larger fragment; the current disposition of the pieces in the glass frames at the Beinecke Library and Gilliam and Fink’s editions clearly take this into account. By keeping a close association between the main fragments and the smaller scraps, we can see in fr. *B* = letter *B*, ll. 7–8—together with Gilliam and Fink—the dating formula of the *relatio in acta*, [± 11 *e*]x *VI Kal(endas)* [. . . . *Apro et Maxi]mo co(n)s(ulibus)*, i.e. **207 CE**. The fact that this formula precedes the one given in fr. *A* = letter *A*, ll. 7–9 *ex die [qu]ar[to . . .] | Iunia[s] [domino nostro Imperatore Antonino A]ug· III [e]t [[G]et[a] | Caesare it[e]r[um]] co(n)s(ulibus)*, i.e. **208 CE**, and the very likely chronological order observed by *libri epistularum*,²⁴ create a chronological issue, as one supposes the letters in the *liber* to have been pasted together in chronological order. This is what convinced Marichal to separate the scraps from letter *B*.²⁵ However, the shapes of the scraps are a very strong clue. One might



²⁴ Welles/Fink/Gilliam (1959) 219.

²⁵ Cf. *ChLA* VI, p. 19, particularly “mais rien, semble-t-il, n’oblige à considérer **h** et **i** comme appartenant au frag. **B**”.

follow Gilliam,²⁶ and accept that in this particular circumstance the letter *B*, despite following letter *A* in the *liber*, predates it in composition; that the scribe, in short, failed to respect the expected chronological order in the roll he was patching together. Marichal also separated (or kept apart) what is now fr. *h* in the online images, and *m* in his own edition, from the main fr. *B*: its shape is clue enough for us to reconnect the two fragments, filling the only missing portion of the picture.



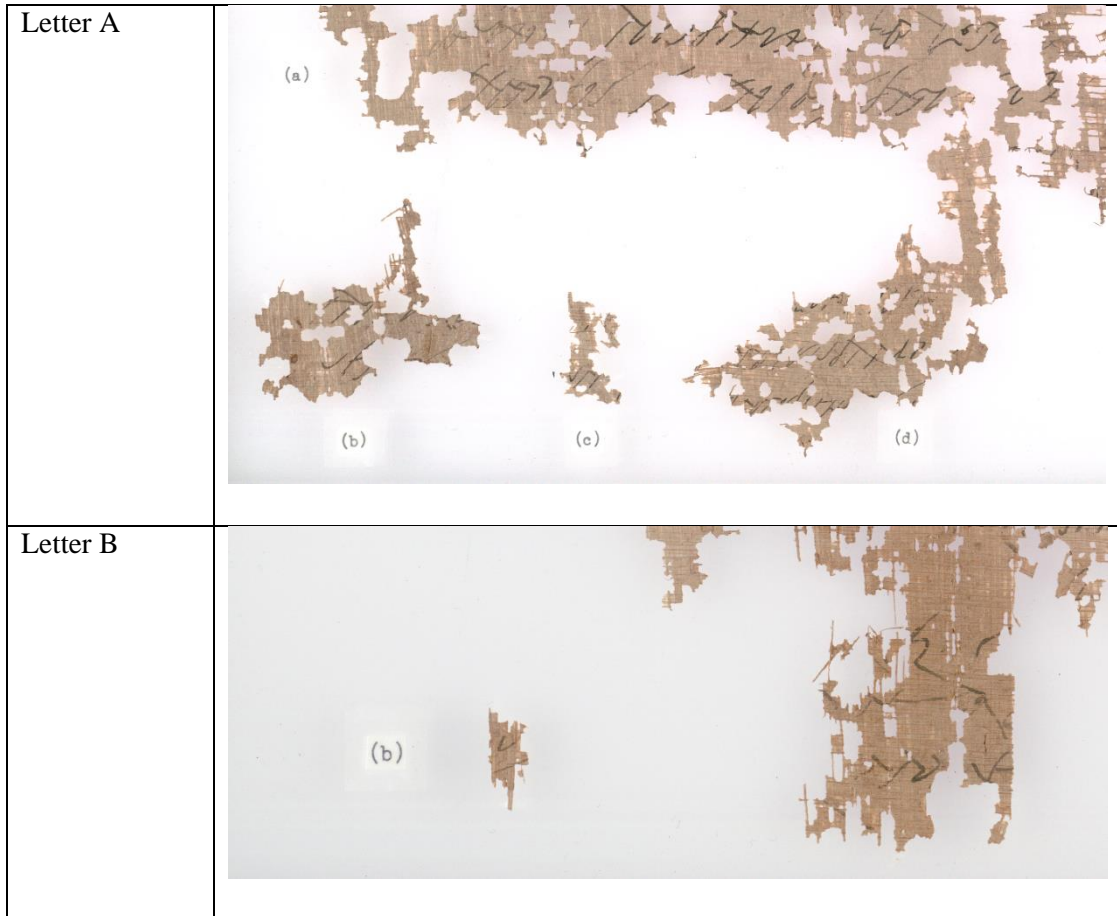
To conclude, it is perhaps safer not to turn upside down, as Marichal does, fr. *l* from Gilliam's first edition, now joining fr. *C* as its smallest scrap. Firstly, the shapes of the preceding scraps clearly show the top of the scrap to be tip-like and sharp, not blunt; secondly, if we accept Marichal's alteration, the resulting *kappa* appears in fact to be oddly written, as if it were dislodged.

Current status	Marichal's edition (upside down)
	
]kal[e]x Ka[

²⁶ “Unless this letter is in fact earlier than **A** and was written in 207, the effective date for the records is earlier than that of the letter by at least several months. I have assumed that the letters were filed in chronological order and were added to the right edge of the roll” (Welles/Fink/Gilliam 1959, 219).

2.

J.F. Gilliam and R.O. Fink, the first editors of *P.Dura* 64,²⁷ which contains, as well as *P.Dura* 56, official correspondence of the cohort, counted in it two fragments: *a* (containing letter *A*) and *b* (containing letter *B*). Gilliam in 1957 and 1959 and Fink in 1971 only have fr. *a*, *b*. But if one looks at the frames today, there are actually six fragments.



In the frame containing letter *A* three smaller scraps have apparently been added, *b*, *c* and *d*; and in the frame containing letter *B*, another tiny scrap can now be found (*b*). These are probably the very same scraps that Gilliam thought of no consequence enough to be discussed in his first editions, and which have been ignored since.²⁸ The most recent edition, produced by Marichal for the *Chartae*

²⁷ First edition in Gilliam (1957) 49–62; then Welles/Fink/Gilliam (1959) (*P.Dura* 64); Fink (*RMRP* 99); Marichal (*ChLA* VI 319); and Cugusi (*CEL* I 199). TM 44792.

²⁸ ‘Some small fragments, containing nothing of consequence, may belong to these letters or at any rate to the same roll. They will not be discussed here’ (Gilliam 1957: 49).

Latinae Antiquiores, features only fr. *d*. Frs. *b*, *c* and the other *b* remained unpublished. I have taken the liberty of publishing them here:

recto, letter A, fr. b

 [- - - dumta-]|¹-xat se . . . [- - -] |² ueşē [- - -]

recto, letter A, fr. b: **1** bottom of an oblique stroke, pointing upwards | bottom of *P*, *B*, less likely *D*, and dot-like trace at the bottom of the writing line; otherwise, the two traces are the basis of a *Q* || **2** *S* or *X*

recto, letter A, fr. b: **1** *fortasse* -ue seş[*vel* seş[quiplicar-

recto, letter A, fr. c

 |¹ [- - -] . [- - - |² - - -] . mar[.] [- - -]

recto, letter A, fr. c: **1** scattered traces, the last letter either a *I* or a *L* || **2** dot-like traces | lower portion of an oblique stroke, pointing upwards, trespassing the writing line from below

recto, letter B, fr. b

 |¹ [- - -] . [- - - |² - - -]s[

Moreover, in the *verso* of letter *A*, the *nomen* of *Iustillus*, so far undeciphered, is perhaps *Aetius* (*A]etio*): before *o*, one can clearly see *e*, *t* and *i*:



One last remark can be made concerning the hands at work on *P.Dura* 64. In both letters, the sender forwards to the addressee a second letter, which was sent by the *uir consularis* and provincial governor to the addressee himself. Reasons for the provincial governor not to send the letter *directly* to the addressee may include the fact that the original letter contained only a section concerning orders for the addressee, the rest of it being intended for the initial recipient and present sender. This second letter apparently begins right after the first one closes, at the bottom of the first column, and continues

in column II. It is generally agreed that the hand working on both letters *A* and *B* is the same; it is likewise the same hand who copies down the two epistles forwarded by the sender of *A* and *B*. One may however remark that in letter *A*, fr. *c–d* the hand, although very similar to the one in fr. *a–b*, is smaller in magnitude. This may suggest that fr. *c–d* come from yet another letter, now missing from the extant portions of the manuscript.

3.

It often happens in the Dura papyri that mention is made of the 20th cohort of the Palmyrenes; in fact, the Dura papyri, together with some Durene inscriptions, are the *only* source for the existence of such an auxiliary unit.²⁹ When the cohort is mentioned, normally after the name of a soldier and his rank (*miles, milites, militibus, eques, equitibus*³⁰), we find *coh*, abbreviation for *cohortis*;³¹ the figure *XX*; and *Palmyrenorum*, sometimes unabridged, often abbreviated in *Palm* or *Palmyr*.³² This is also what one finds in *P.Dura 72*,³³ a small scrap probably coming from official correspondence. One sees the last stroke of the second *X*, then *Palmyr* and a small medial dot, or *interpunctum*:³⁴

²⁹ No list of units or coeval document to the Dura papyri, unless it comes directly from the Palmyrene region, offers any information on the cohort of the Palmyrenes; instead, Greek papyri from *Dura-Europos* mention the σπειρή εικοστή Παλμυρηῶν (*P.Dura 126*, 235 CE, TM 44860; *P.Dura 129*, 225 CE, TM 17235; *P.Euphr.* 14, 241 CE, TM 44672). For inscriptions, see for instance *AE 1923*, 23; 1940, 240; all from third-century CE *Dura-Europos*.

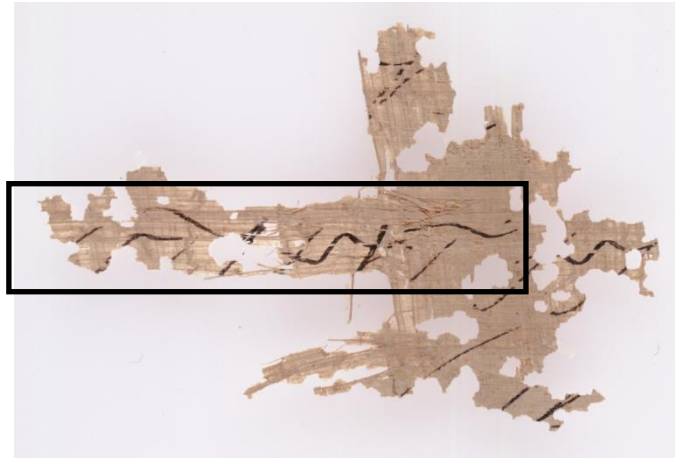
³⁰ See *P.Dura 58* l. 3 *eq(uitibus) [eqq.] coh(ortis) XX [Palmyrenorum (225–235 CE, TM 44780); 66 d recto*, ll. 3–4 [*Milit]es numero uiginti octo, d[omine, cohortis | XX Palmyrenorum]* (216 CE, TM 44795); 76 fr. *c* l. 2 *m[il(-)] cohortis suprascriptae [(222–235 CE, TM 44806); 82, col. I, ll. 1–2 numerus purus militum ca]ligatorum DCCCCXXII[I]I [...]* | *cohortis XX [Palmyrenorum (passim; 223–233 CE, TM 44813)*. Often in the *verso* of official correspondence one finds *cohortis* after *tribuno* in address formulae, when the tribune of the cohort is the recipient of the letter.

³¹ Or *cohorte*? In the whole Durene corpus one only finds *coh* abbreviated, and editors resolve it as *cohortis*. One must bear in mind that there is no absolute certainty in this respect. Latin papyri sometimes feature the ablative instead of the genitive to point the unit to which the mentioned soldier belongs: see e.g. *ChLA XLV 1340* (= *P.Vindob. inv. L 135*), ll. 1–3 *Lucius Caecilius Secundus eques ala Paullini | turma Dicaci, Caio Pompeio militi coh(orte) | A... I[.] Habeti centuria Betiti salutem* (27 CE, TM 16273).

³² Unabridged, e.g., in *P.Dura 82*, col. II 15 (223–233 CE, TM 44813); *Palm* in *P.Dura 82*, col. I 10; II 1; *Palmyr* in *P.Dura 56*, letter *B*, and here in *P.Dura 72*.

³³ Welles/Fink/Gilliam 1959 (*P.Dura 72*); Fink (*RMRP 110*); Marichal in (*ChLA VI 327*); and Cugusi (*CEL I 188*). TM 44801.

³⁴ The *interpunctum* is the small medial dot that Romans used from presumably the earliest stages of their written culture, to separate words from one another. They allegedly felt this custom to be peculiarly Roman, in contrast with the Greeks, which did not use such a tool for the *diuisio verborum*: see Ammirati (2015) 32–33. In papyri, one begins to see



Editors have so far read and reconstructed the letters after *Palmyrenorum* as $\dot{a}n[$. This naturally led them to think that what is to be seen here is the honorific title $\dot{A}n[toniniana$, normally attached to names of legions, cohorts, *alae* and *numeri* during the reign of Caracalla and Elagabalus, who were both *Antonini*, as far as their names are concerned. Other titles are to be found in several papyri and inscriptions; they normally changed when a new Emperor rose to the throne.³⁵ The *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* is *Antoniniana* in several Dura papyri,³⁶ and *Seueriana Alexandriana* in others,³⁷ or even *Gordiana*³⁸ in manuscripts written later in the third century CE, during the reign of Gordian III.

that the *interpuncta* fade at the end of the first century CE, surviving no later than the fourth as markers inconsistently used for abbreviated words.

³⁵ “Gli *auxilia*, come le legioni, le coorti pretorie, urbane, dei vigili, le flotte, il quartiere degli *equites singulares* se non gli stessi *equites*, nel III secolo d.C. aggiunsero, com’è noto, alle altre parti della loro denominazione un soprannome, non però obbligatorio, derivato dal nome dell’imperatore regnante e che cambiava quindi, eccettuato quello di Antoniniana, ad ogni cambiamento di imperatore: tali furono, come risulterà pienamente dall’elenco che darò in seguito, i soprannomi di *Antoniniana*, *Alexandriana* o *Seueriana*, o *Seueriana Alexandriana*, *Maximiana* etc.” (Bersanetti 1940, 105–106, and see also, for an updating by the same author, Bersanetti 1943). Gilliam likewise noted that “epithets such as *Antoniniana*, formed by the reigning Emperor’s *cognomen*, were regularly added to the names of units in the third century ... They changed at the accession of each new Emperor” (Gilliam 1957, 57).

³⁶ *P.Dura* 66 *a recto*, l. 4; *verso*, l. 2; 66 *t*, l. 2; 66 *mm*, l. 5.

³⁷ *P.Dura* 82 col. I l. 2.

³⁸ *P.Dura* 89, col. I, l. 5 and *passim*.



However, if we look again at the manuscript, we would rather read a pretty clear *m* in ligature with an oblique stroke, pointing upwards: this suggests *Ma[ximiniana]*, another imperial title attested for *cohortes*.³⁹ This particular papyrus might perhaps be dated later—not to Caracalla’s or Elagabalus’ reign, but to the short-lived monarchy of the Thracian *Maximinus* (235–238 CE).

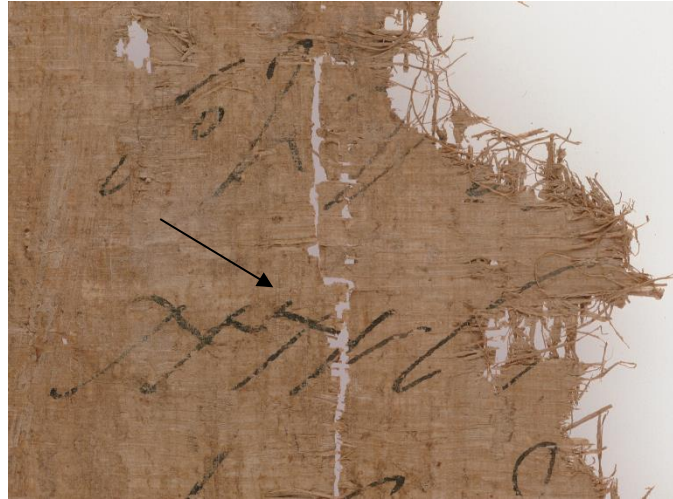
4.

Honorific titles also come to relevance in *P. Dura 74*.⁴⁰ This papyrus consists of two fragments, *a* and *b*, which couldn’t be either aligned or rejoined by former editors. We know, however, that the original document contained official correspondence. In fr. *a*, l. 4, Fink and Marichal believed that *ante* should be read; Marichal, as a paleographer, was not particularly happy with that *t*, which he described as “très mauvais”.⁴¹

³⁹ See Bersanetti (1940) 127.

⁴⁰ Welles/Fink/Gilliam 1959 (*P. Dura 74*); Fink (*RMRP* 97); Marichal in *ChLA* VII 329 (1976); and Cugusi in *CEL* I 186. TM 44803.

⁴¹ “Le *t* est très mauvais, mais peut-être acceptable” (*ChLA* VII, 16).



I agree with Marichal and suggest that the supposed *t* is rather an *a*. We could therefore be viewing the last two syllables of the already seen imperial honorific title of the *cohors*: *-anae*, and then *cp*[, normally an abbreviation for *c(ui) p(raees)*, ‘which you command’. If one considers that the preceding line, l. 3, was occupied by the name of the cohort itself, ll. 3–4 become instantly clearer:

3 *coh(ortis) XX P[almyrenorum - - - i-]*
 4 *-anae, c(ui) p(raees) [*

That is, ‘of the 20th cohort of the Palmyrenes’, then the honorific title, and finally ‘which you command’, a formulaic expression normally used when you are giving orders to the tribune of an auxiliary unit. Unfortunately, this papyrus has no certain dating, and since we only see the end of the title, this could have been any title between Caracalla (*Antoniniana*) and Decius (*Deciana*). There is no way to determine the exact length of the lines in fr. *a*. One can, however, realize that if *Palmyrenorum* was abbreviated *Palm* or *Palmyr*, as it most likely was, the remaining lacuna would have room only for half of the imperial title (e.g. *P[almyr Antonini]|anae*, or *Seueri]|anae* or *Gordi]|anae* and the like), thus determining a very short line if we compare it with other instances of official correspondence in the Dura papyri.⁴²

As I previously stated, *P.Dura* 74, which goes by the catalogue number P.CtYBR inv. DP 21, includes two fragments, *a* and *b*. As far as I know, they have been considered part of the same document, probably on the account of archive records or excavation documents: no absolute certainty in this respect can be gathered from any recurring damage or textual evidence. Fr. *a* features the

⁴² For instance, the aforementioned *P.Dura* 56, or 60, or 64, has apparently longer lines than the perspective line one would have in *P.Dura* 74. Perhaps this might strengthen the possibility of a longer supplement, such as *P[almyrenorum unabridged, and then Seuerianae Alexandri]|anae*.

beginning of a number of lines, is brown and dark in colour, and there are faint remnants of letters on the *verso*; fr. *b* contains middle sections of a number of lines and is lighter in colour; its ink is more vivid and its *verso* is blank. This may mean, however, that they were distant enough in the original papyrus sheet for a change of colour to take place. The reconstruction of fr. *a*, ll. 3–4 proposed above does not match any line in fr. *b*; one must infer that, if fr. *b* is to be aligned to fr. *a*, its first line] *Ka[lendas* must be located lower than l. 4. On the other hand, traces of a dating formula in fr. *a* l. 5 and fr. *b* ll. 1–2 might be of use in proposing a possible alignment of the two portions of the manuscripts:

	fr. <i>a</i>	fr. <i>b</i>
	. [
	s . u . . [
	coh(ortis) XX Pa[<i>lmyrenorum</i>	--- -i-]
	-anae c(ui) p(raees) [- - -]	<i>Ka[lendas</i>
5	<i>Decembris</i> [- - -]	<i>co(n)s(ulibus)</i> s . . . [
	-ri [.]um suor[um - - -]	<i>Idus Ian[ua]ri[as]</i>
	[.]n mil(-) q[- - -]	<i>no co(n)s(ulibus). Opto</i> [
]m[

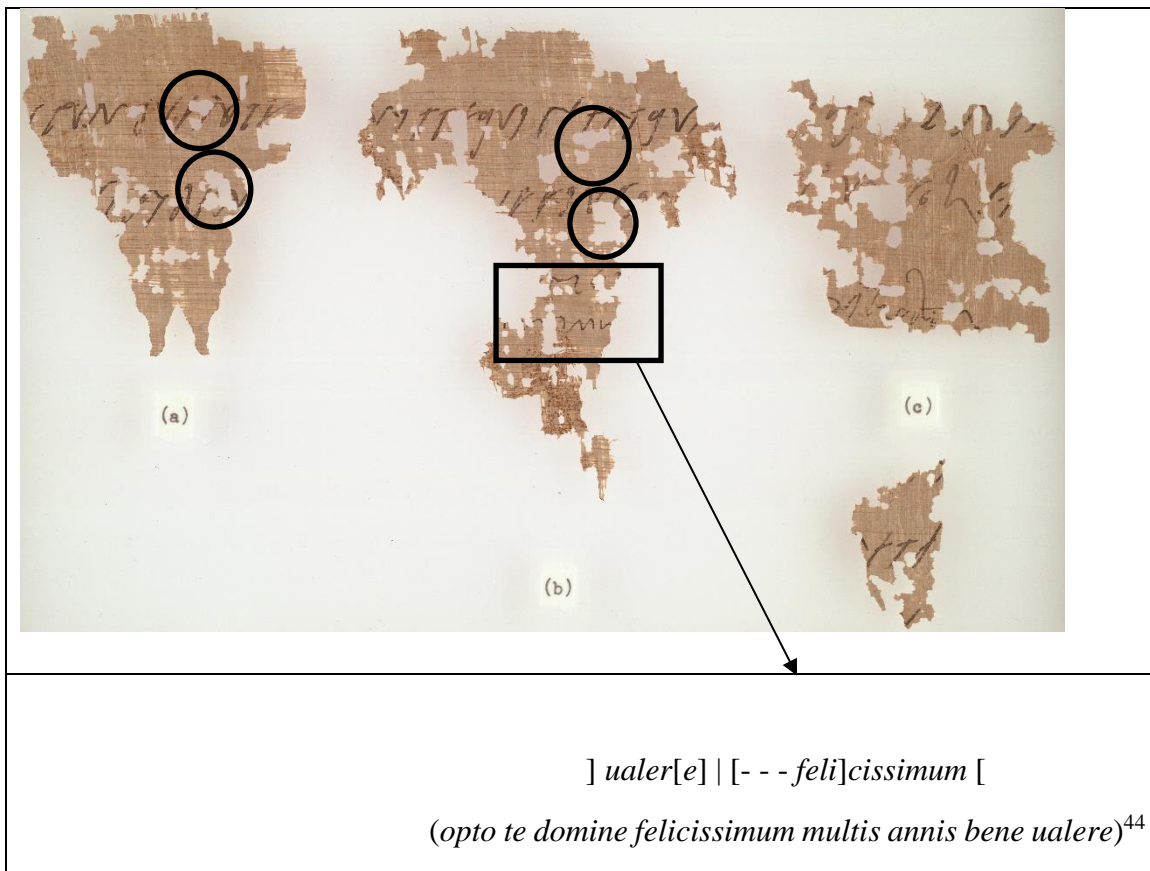
I am not fully satisfied, however, by the fact that at ll. 6–7 of the reconstructed fragment one sees *Idus Ianuarias* and then the consular couple, not together, but split by another sentence where a *miles* is involved. And the lines, we have remarked before, were probably very short. Unless this difficulty is resolved (perhaps *Idus Ianuarias* and the consular couple were part of two different, shorter dating formulae within the text?), this realignment must remain only an attractive hypothesis.

5.

By contrast, a case in which a realignment is verified but does not solve anything either, is *P. Dura* 76.⁴³ This papyrus too preserves at least one, but probably more official letters. It consists of four fragments, three of which (*a*, *b*, *d*) have most probably been written by the same hand. Given the remarkable similarity between fr. *a*–*b* (colour, shape, ink, hand), one would be tempted to align them in some way; this is further suggested by similar wormholes on the surface of the two fragments. There is no clue concerning their disposition in the original roll; however, if they really belong to the same letter, fr. *b*,

⁴³ Welles/Fink/Gilliam 1959 (*P. Dura* 76); Fink (*RMRP* 93); Marichal in *ChLA* VII 331 (1976); and Cugusi in *CEL* I 182. TM 44806.

which contains the *closing greeting formula* normally located in the right portion of the letter, might be placed to the right of fr. a, exactly as it is in current editions.



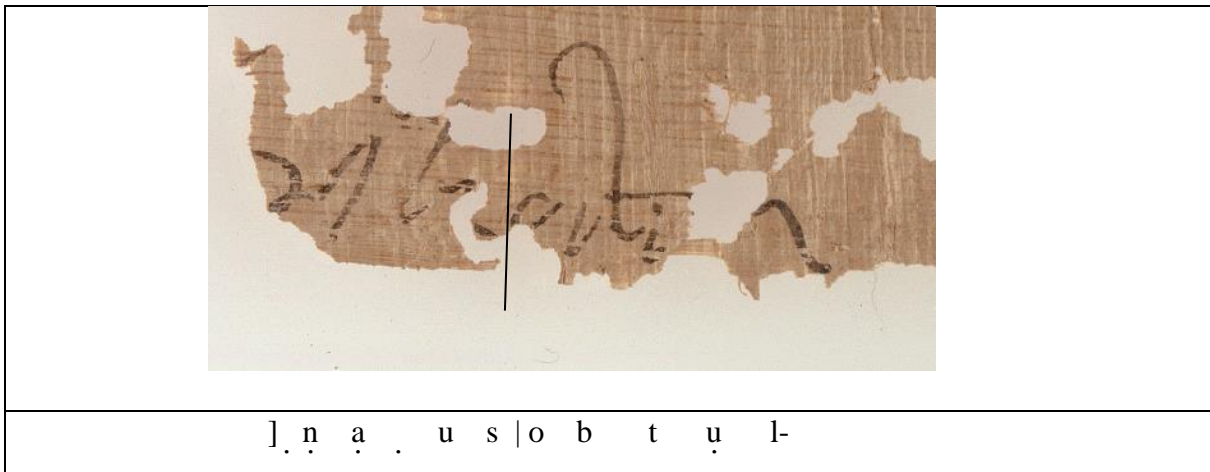
In fr. c, two details deserve a remark. At l. 2, before *coh s·s*[, we can clearly see] *s mi*[l]; the second word may be either *mi*[l](es) or *mi*[l](ites). The sequence has not been detected by former editors. The following abbreviation might therefore be construed as *coh(ortis) s(upra) s(criptae)*.⁴⁵ At l. 3, one can read an almost illegible docket, added by another hand, and written with a high degree of carelessness and informality. The most certain letters to be read form the sequence *obt*.

The sequence *obt* normally matches *obtuli* or *obtulit*, a verb usually employed in Late Antiquity Latin documents to mark the action of ‘bringing’—a letter, a *libellus*, any specific thing—to a higher

⁴⁴ For the salutation formulae in Roman tradition with a focus on how they appear in papyri and *ostraka*, see some discussion – with bibliography attached – in *CEL* II, pp. 60–64 and in *P.Rain. Cent.*, pp. 488–9 (P.J. Parsons).

⁴⁵ For *suprascriptus* in papyri earlier than the fourth century CE, see *P.Mich.* VII 438, ll. 9–10 in *vexil*||*lati*[o]ne *çoh*(ortis) [·] *ş*(upra) · *s*(criptae), and *ChLA* X 445 *recto*, l. 3 *co*h(or-) · *s*(upra) *s*(cripta) (*centuria*) (225–227 CE, TM 69943).

authority.⁴⁶ After *obt*, *ul* might well be read, with *-i* or *-it* omitted in the abbreviation, as customary. Before the verb, a personal name might occur, ending with a very quickly and informally drawn ligature *us*. This name must for the moment remain unclear: one can see perhaps a *n* (in ligature with a preceding letter), and two oddly drawn letters, an *a* and a *p* (less likely an *l*):] . *n̄* *a* . *u* *s* | *o* *b* *t* *u* *l*-. This formula, apparently distinct from the greeting formula *opto te domine*, might point out the physical bearer of this letter (or of these letters), and function as a subscription: ...*us obtul(i)* or *obtul(it)*, ‘I ...*us* (or just ...*us*) brought this’.



6.

P. Dura 89⁴⁷ preserves the fragments of some large *acta diurna*, a typical document employed in the Roman army to note every single daily activity of the unit to which it referred.⁴⁸ When first published by Gilliam in 1950, this amounted to 8 fragments. Seven more were added in his second edition in 1959, and on the first eight he performed two relevant re-joinings, which altered the disposition and names of the fragments. The table below offers a clear account of the current editorial situation.

⁴⁶ See *ChLA* X 463, l. 28 *Fl(auius) · Antirus exceptor obtuli* (ca. 350 CE., TM 17284); *ChLA* XLIII 1245, l. 10 *Fl(auius) Asclepius exceptor obtuli. Edantur* (late fourth century CE, TM 70037); *P.Iand.* IV 68 b † *Fl(auius) Symeonius cornicularius obtul(it)* (sixth century CE, TM 78417).


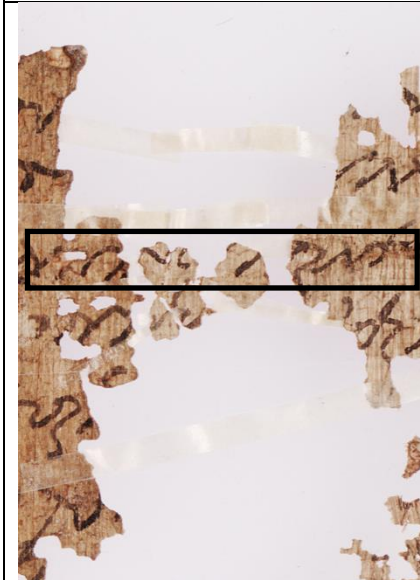
⁴⁷ The first edition is in the aforementioned Gilliam 1950; then come Welles/Fink/Gilliam 1959 (*P. Dura* 89); Fink (*RMRP* 50); R. Marichal in *ChLA* VII 344; CPL 331. TM 44820.

⁴⁸ The term *acta diurna* (or *cottidiana*) is used for the first time by M.T. Rostovtzeff (1934) 367 on account of a passage of Vegetius: *totius enim legionis ratio, siue obsequiorum siue militarium munerum siue pecuniae, cotidie adscribitur actis* ‘For an account of the whole legion, whether of indulgences or of military gifts or of money is written up in the *acta*’ (2.11). See Stauner (2004) 74–90 and Phang (2007) 293.

Gilliam 1950	Gilliam 1959	Fink 1971	Marichal 1974
fr. <i>a + b + c</i>	becomes ‘col. I’	<i>idem</i>	<i>idem</i>
fr. <i>d</i> (<i>A[urelius</i> and <i>III Kal Iun</i>)	joins fr. <i>f</i> and becomes ‘col. II’	<i>idem</i>	<i>idem</i> (fragments are called <i>a b</i>)
fr. <i>e</i> (<i>quod imp</i>)	joins fr. <i>g</i> and becomes fr. <i>b</i>	<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>d</i>
fr. <i>f</i> (<i>Palmyrenorum Gordianae, Avito centurio</i> etc.)	joins fr. <i>d</i> and becomes ‘col. II’	<i>idem</i>	<i>idem</i> (fragments are called <i>a b</i>)
fr. <i>g</i> (<i>P]riscus</i>)	joins fr. <i>g</i> and becomes fr. <i>b</i>	<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>c</i>
fr. <i>h</i> (<i>A[u]rel German[us, ordinatus Aurelius</i> etc.)	fr. <i>a</i>	<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>e</i>
	fr. <i>c</i> (4 illegible lines)	<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>m</i>
	fr. <i>d</i> ([<i>n</i> .])	<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>h</i>
	fr. <i>e</i> (3 illegible lines)	<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>k</i>
	fr. <i>f</i> ([. . . <i>on</i>])	fr. <i>f</i> ([<i>tiron</i> . . .])	fr. <i>l</i>
	fr. <i>g</i> (blank)	<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>g</i>
	fr. <i>h</i> ([<i>es</i>])	<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>f</i>
	fr. <i>i</i> ([<i>us</i> [<i>idem</i>	fr. <i>i</i>

This is not consistent, however, with the current conservation status of this papyrus. The frame of *P.Dura* 89 (P.CtYBR. inv. DP 9) only contains col. I, col. II and fr. *e* in Marichal’s reckoning. Fr. *e* is connected to col. II through a small scrap, which Marichal did not see, and must therefore have been put there later;⁴⁹ this was the right thing to do, as the reconstructed texts both on the *recto* and on the *verso* provide very strong clues for this joining.

⁴⁹ This may also have been done by R. Duttenhöfer.

	<p><i>P. Dura 89 (= DP 9 recto), col. II, ll. 5–6</i></p> <p><i>sunt in [hibernis co]h(ortis) XX</i> <i>Palmyrenorum Gord[ianae]</i></p> <p>(the scrap provides <i>coh</i> and traces of the figure <i>XX</i>, directly to be linked to <i>Pal</i> of <i>Palmyrenorum</i>)</p>
	<p><i>P. Dura 107 (= DP 9 verso), col. II, l. 12</i></p> <p><i>⁂ Heliodori Mocimus Salmes, ⁂ Paulini</i> is now entirely legible</p>

Where are the other fragments? As for *f*, *g*, *h*, *i*, *k*, *l* and *m*, they are currently under conservation process and have been so since many years; nevertheless, I have been granted permission to see them. As for *c* and *d*, they were not to be found in the Beinecke Library, nor anywhere else to my knowledge.

A final remark. When publishing fr. *l*, which should be *f* in Gilliam’s reckoning, Marichal was very uncertain, as the fragment he had before his eyes, and which he therefore published, clearly was not what Gilliam and Fink believed it to be.⁵⁰ Marichal saw two lines, while Gilliam saw only one,

⁵⁰ “G. et F. ... ne transcrivent qu’une ligne ... Peut-être s’agit-il d’un autre fragment que je n’ai pas retrouvé” (*ChLA* VII, p. 49).

and very differently written. To solve the riddle, it is necessary simply to turn the fragment upside down. Marichal was actually looking by mistake at the *verso* of the scrap; if one turns the scrap and regains the proper *recto*, it perfectly matches with Gilliam’s earlier description.

7.

P.Dura 113⁵¹ was only described by Fink in Welles/Fink/Gilliam (1959); the actual *editio princeps* appeared in 1971, in Fink’s *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* (Fink 1971). The papyrus preserves portions from a guard roster; the dating is on palaeographical grounds and also relies on the fact that the *recto* (*P.Dura* 85) is dated to about 230 CE, and is probably earlier than the *verso*. Only a handful of names survive.

In the frame now visible at the Beinecke Library, one can see seven fragments: *a, b, c, d, f, g, h*. Editors Fink and Marichal regard fr. *a, b, c* as forming a single fragment, as well as *d* and *h*; and in their editions, they treat them as such. Why they thought so is not evident from the shape of the fragments, nor explicitly stated by them. In the edition I am currently preparing, the layout of the papyrus as it appears in the frame is preserved, so that only fr. *b* and *c* are united in a single fragment. Something is missing from the given list of scraps. Fr. *e*, mentioned by Fink, has been removed from the frame before Marichal worked on his edition, and neither he nor I have been able to inspect it. On the other hand, in fr. *b+c* I have been able to improve the readings in ll. 7–15.



fr. <i>b+c</i> (Marichal 1976)	fr. <i>b+c</i> (Iovine 2021)
<p>] au []us Zab̄dib[ol]š Malch[] rus o [] Them[] (centuria) a Naṣon[i]š Mo [10] au []s l []] [] Zebid[a] . . sam . . [] e a [] au [15]us ma [</p>	<p>] Aur[eli]us Zab̄dib[olus T]h[e]mes Malch[i I]arh[a]boles Them[arsa] Ṣ Naṣon[i]s Mocim[us]nor[. . . .]s Lol . . [] . . [. . . .] Zebid[a The]m[a]rsa[m]s [. . . .]ei . [] Aur[15] Diom[ed- </p>

The names which appear in the improved text are not surprising: we already know these people from other Dura papyri, and names such as Zabdibolus, Themarsas, Iarhaboles or Themes are no strangers to the Palmyrene cohort. Nevertheless, to find them once again in a roster is potentially useful, as a new

⁵¹ Welles/Fink/Gilliam 1959 (*P.Dura* 113, only described); Fink (*RMRP* 12); R. Marichal in *ChLA* IX 368. TM 44845.

prosopography of the soldiers in the cohort will have to take advantage of any source of names in the papyri, no matter how often those names are found.

One last remark: If one looks closely at the last two lines of fr. *b+c*, one finds letters very hard to construe at first sight. Fink's and especially Marichal's solutions, though the most precise possible, fail, I believe, to solve the riddle elegantly. But if we resort to Debernardi's principle,⁵² and turn the papyrus upside down, things start to work.

The papyrus in its current position	The papyrus turned 180°
	
<p data-bbox="276 1155 355 1227">]. []aum[</p> <p data-bbox="276 1263 472 1296">(Fink, Marichal)</p>	<p data-bbox="890 1155 1161 1189">]. al . [(l. 20)</p> <p data-bbox="890 1193 1161 1227">]. us [(l. 19)</p>

One could read] *M*alç[hi,] *P*alm[yrenorum or] çal(igati) .[: the little remains of this text discourage further supplements. Ll. 19–20 of fr. *b+c* most likely belong to another document or to a portion of the original document which was drawn by turning the sheet upside down, perhaps to take advantage of the larger lower margin. More than that, nothing can be said.

⁵² The principle states that an apparently unsolvable sequence of characters in a manuscript can be sometimes understood if one turns the manuscript itself 180°. Written sequences in papyri and *ostraka* are not always and not necessarily all drafted in the same direction and side within the writing frame, and many documents stored in libraries which are not yet deciphered have been mistakenly placed upside down in the glass frames. The principle helps us bearing in mind these difficulties. My gratitude to my colleague D. Debernardi (Genoa) for sharing this insight with me.

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