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## Applied Category Analysis for Interpreting a List in the Late Antique Documentary Tradition: Some Preliminary Considerations\*

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### Introduction

From the third to the eighth century CE some historical phenomena can be studied in continuity.<sup>1</sup> Documentary practice is certainly one of these. The basic textual frame of “Barbarian” documents is recognizable as part of a Roman “discourse.” This fact is fundamental evidence for the derivation of the early medieval documentary practice in the West from the late Roman world.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, however, this fact constitutes the main obstacle to our understanding the process of derivation in all its aspects.<sup>3</sup>

This paper will not follow long-term developments of specific documentary typologies. Rather, it is concerned with a mode of written communication connected to a particular need that emerges as a constant in the whole documentary tradition of the period, regardless of questions concerning the *longue durée*: the need to represent a sequence of

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<sup>1</sup> The period is defined by two overlapping terms: Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. On the one hand, for medievalists the early Middle Ages refers nowadays to the period from the fourth/fifth to tenth century CE. On the other hand, the current model of a “long” Late Antiquity covers the period from the third to the eighth century CE, though there is still a strong debate about the periodization. For more details and bibliography see Cameron 2015, 4. For the notion of “continuity” see Wickham 2005, 12–14.

<sup>2</sup> A classic remains Steinacker (1927) 1977. Fundamental surveys are Classen 1977a and 1977b.

<sup>3</sup> On this question, see Ghignoli 2009, Ghignoli and Bougard 2011, and Rio 2009.

“things” within the written records produced for pragmatic purposes by bureaucrats, official scribes, notaries, and individuals.<sup>4</sup> The paper attempts to reflect on the possibility of framing significant features in the “practice of writing a list” within the rich transmission of documentary papyri of late Roman and Byzantine Egypt. The aim is to assemble a minimal number of critical elements useful for comparative analysis of similar practices attested in the very poor transmission of documentary sources in the late Roman and post-Roman West. The specific goal is to interpret a sixth-century Latin documentary papyrus; a fragmentary list recently added to the group of Italian papyri edited by Jan Olof Tjäder.

## 1 List, inventory, and the others

The terms “list,” “catalogue,” “table,” and “index” are currently used as scientific terminology in fields ranging from information science to lexicography and computational linguistics. The same can be said for the words “catalogue” and “inventory,” which are employed respectively in the fields of library science and archival science as technical terms. The specificity of all these terms in each field, however, is somehow based on the meaning they have in everyday language.

In Italian both the words “elenco” and “lista” imply the idea of a certain intrinsic order meaning a series of items (words, objects, etc.).<sup>5</sup> The same idea is implied in the definition of “Verzeichnis” and “Liste” in German,<sup>6</sup> whereas in French the term “liste” seems to convey the idea of an order, but with regard to the external written structure of the series of names or things rather than to the internal one, because the items are “le plus souvent inscrits l’un au-dessous de l’autre.”<sup>7</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), a “list” is “a catalogue or roll consisting of a row or series of names, figures, words, or the like. In early use, esp. a catalogue of the names of persons engaged in the same duties or connected with the same object,” whereas a “catalogue” is “a list, register, or complete enumeration, and in this simple sense now obsolete or archaic.”<sup>8</sup> The Italian term “catalogo” means a list is not only systematic, but also ordered (“genericamente, elenco ordinato e sistematico di più oggetti della stessa specie”).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For reflection on the “need” to write a list, the starting point remains Goody 1977.

<sup>5</sup> See the entries for “elenco” and “lista” in Istituto Treccani-Enciclopedia Italiana, Vocabolario online: <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/elenco/>>, <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/lista/>>, accessed on 08.18.2020. Also see the entry for “indice”: <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/indice/>>, accessed on 08.18.20.

<sup>6</sup> See the entries for “Verzeichnis” and “Liste” in Duden Wörterbuch online: <<https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Verzeichnis>>, <<https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Liste>>, accessed on 08.18.20.

<sup>7</sup> See the entry for “liste” in Larousse Langue Française online: <<https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/liste/47418#definition>>, accessed on 08.18.20.

<sup>8</sup> See <<https://www.oed.com>>, accessed on 10.06.20, for the entry “List, noun 6,” and “Catalogue,” which notes that catalogue in the simple sense of complete enumeration is considered “obsolete or archaic.”

<sup>9</sup> See the entry for “catalogo” in Istituto Treccani-Enciclopedia Italiana, Vocabolario online: <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/catalogo>>, accessed on 08.18.20. The same meaning is in German: see the entry for “Katalog” in Duden Wörterbuch online: <<https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Katalog>>, accessed on

As for the other terms, in English the concept of order is apparently implied in the definition of a “table,” which is, according to the *OED*, “a systematic arrangement of numbers, words, symbols, etc., in a definite and compact form so as to show clearly some set of facts or relations, esp. an arrangement in rows and columns, typically occupying a single page or sheet.”<sup>10</sup> Turning to “inventory,” the first and proper meaning of the word in English is related to the semantic area of inheritance law, from which it derives its figurative meaning of “a detailed account” and thus its use as a synonym of “list, catalogue.”<sup>11</sup> In contrast, in Italian, “inventario” is a written list in which all the objects *in a given place* and *at a given time* are systematically and accurately described.<sup>12</sup> The next term, “register,” primarily refers in both Italian and English to a “book or a volume in which important items of information of a particular kind are regularly and accurately recorded and a collection of entries so created.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, an “index” in English is “an alphabetical list, placed usually at the end of a book, of the names, subjects, etc. occurring in it,”<sup>14</sup> with the word “indice” in Italian having the same meaning.<sup>15</sup>

When dealing with the large number of late antique documentary papyri, “list” and “inventory” (more rarely catalogue, register, or index) are the words usually employed to describe and classify any text consisting of a sequence of words or groups of words that are written next to each other and not (or not necessarily) connected to each other syntactically.<sup>16</sup> Many such texts survive from Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The choice of an appropriate modern term to define them is possible only when we can define or guess at the circumstances of creation of the document and at its function with a certain degree of plausibility. It is often impossible *a priori* to establish the origin and the function of a list. Indeed, even when it is theoretically possible, it is not easy.

The issue of the choice of a modern word might arise, on the other hand, by translating ancient terms present in the text of a documentary papyrus whenever the context and the experience of the papyrologist suggest that they mean a written text structured (more or less) as a sequence of items. Also in this circumstance, the choice of a definition from the range of different modern terms available, as we have seen, depends on our understanding of the

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08.18.20. The Italian “ruolo” (from the French “role,” derived from late Latin *rōtulus*; i.e., “rotolo”) has the specialized meaning of a systematic and ordered list of persons belonging to the same organization: <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/ruolo/>>, accessed on 08.18.20.

<sup>10</sup> See the entry “Table, II. 14. A,” *OED*, accessed on 10.06.20.

<sup>11</sup> See, respectively, the entries “Inventory 1” and “Inventory 2.a,” *OED*, accessed on 10.06.20.

<sup>12</sup> See the entry for “inventario” in Istituto Treccani-Enciclopedia Italiana, Vocabolario online: <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/inventario/>>, accessed on 18.08.20. Apparently, the meaning of the French “inventaire” and the German “Inventar” is more specialized and connected to property and inheritance: <<https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/inventaire/>> and <<https://www.duden.de/suchen/dudenonline/Inventar>>, accessed on 08.18.20.

<sup>13</sup> See the entry “register I.1.a,” *OED*, accessed on 10.06.20; the noun is considered obsolete in the meaning of “catalogue.” For comparison see the entry “registro” in <<https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/registro/>>, accessed on 06.10.20.

<sup>14</sup> See the entry for “Index 5.b,” *OED*, accessed on 10.06.20.

<sup>15</sup> See the entry for “indice,” <<https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/indice/>>, accessed on 10.06.20.

<sup>16</sup> The French terms “liste” or “catalogue,” however, are preferable as “archilèxemes,” at least in French, in order to describe the lists transmitted within ancient literary texts: Loriol 2020, 22.

nature and function of the document cited in the papyrus. Searching the English definitions mentioned above in the Trismegistos (TM) database of words in Greek papyrological texts is an interesting experiment that illustrates this sort of hermeneutic circle at work.<sup>17</sup>

In late antique and early medieval documentary sources, the items more frequently listed (separately or in combination) are personal names, place names, role names, names of objects and animals, and numerals expressing dates or amounts of something (money, goods, or livestock). In some cases, the list item consists of a phrase or phrases, given without verbal elements in the vast majority of cases. This happens when a scribe has to list, for instance, books, documents, or textiles. We have good reason to think that the word order was designed in a way considered adequate for the purpose. Since the purpose of a list is often the unknown factor in criticism, on which the criticism itself depends, the textual structure of the item in a written sequence arranged as a “list” has the value of a primary source.

## 2 The part and the whole

*P.Lips.* I 123 (TM 22445) is a sort of collaborative text. What we observe on the *recto* of the papyrus is a stratification of three texts arranged one below the other in a unique column, written by three different hands (in at least two different times) for a total of twenty-two lines.<sup>18</sup> It starts as a sort of “cover letter” accompanying the delivery of four official journals, and ends up becoming the proof of the delivery itself. In the first text (*anagraphê*)—the “cover letter”<sup>19</sup>—the provenance, nature, and purpose are clearly stated, and Philiskos, *strategos* of Mendes, is expressly declared the sender of some official journals that are to be stored in the record-office of the Alexandria city district Patrika. It closes with the date April 10, 136 CE, which is written in final position (hand 1: ll. 1–14).

The second text is a statement by the person who materially brought the journals from the office of the *strategos* to the Patrika archive. It is presumably an autograph. It has no dating formula. We can guess that it was written immediately upon delivery (hand 2: ll. 15–16). The third text is the acknowledgment of receipt. Written in the Patrika archive in the name of the *bibliophylax* (the keeper of the archive, Markos Ulpios Phainippos Tryphonianos), it attests that the four rolls entered the archive on April 15, 136 CE (hand 3: ll. 17–22.). A horizontal line

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<sup>17</sup> This database is a “new addition to the Trismegistos universe” in cooperation with Alek Keersmaekers; for further information about coverage and accuracy see <<https://www.trismegistos.org/words/about.php>>, accessed on 08.20.2020. Results of a search performed on 08.22.20 state that “list” is a translation of: διαγραφή (which can be translated also as “payment and certificate”), γραφή (also translated as “catalogue” and “return”), απαιτήσιμον (as “list of lands subject to dues”), παραδοχή (also translated as “collection”), βρέβιον (also translated as “inventory” and as *brevis*, in Latin), αναγράφιον (also translated as “index”), μεταλόγιον (as “secondary list”), and σύγγραφος (as “inscribed list”). “Inventory” is a translation of βρέβιον (also translated as “list”) and σκευογραφία. “Catalogue” is a translation of κατάλογος (also translated as “enrolment” or “register”) and γραφή (also translated as “list”).

<sup>18</sup> Digital image available at <[http://papyri-leipzig.dl.uni-leipzig.de/receive/UBLPapyri\\_schrift\\_00001230](http://papyri-leipzig.dl.uni-leipzig.de/receive/UBLPapyri_schrift_00001230)>, accessed on 10.29.2020. German translation: Scholl 2000, 9. English translation: Kruse 2014, 83.

<sup>19</sup> The best translation of the term *anagraphê* is in German, *Versandnachweis*; Scholl 2000, 9.

was drawn, probably by the same hand three, under line 22 and part of line 21, in order to frame—and therefore to close—the final text.<sup>20</sup> In the empty space below the line, the number of rolls was written again by hand three at a distance of 6 cm.

The former “cover letter” was returned to the sender as proof of delivery for preservation in his archive. This can be deduced by analyzing the structure of the short text written on the verso, where someone (hand 4) summarized the document.<sup>21</sup> The dorsal note is a sequence of three elements: 1) a definition of the document (“Receipt of the keeper of the archive in the Patrika”); 2) the timespan covered by the journals delivered as a whole (“from Hadrianus 21 to Phamenoth 4”—i.e., December 18, 135–February 28, 136 CE); and 3) the number of the delivered rolls (“in 4 rolls”). The key element is the first: it evidently shows that the note was written from the point of view of the former “sender” of the cover letter. In conclusion, the dorsal note communicates the information needed to manage that written record effectively in the archive of the *strategos* Philiskos, who can therefore be considered the final recipient of the papyrus.<sup>22</sup>

The papyrus, which Ludwig Mitteis classified as “Aktenablieferung an das Archiv,”<sup>23</sup> is included in a recent anthology of documents concerning law and legal practice in Egypt with the title “List of journals followed by endorsements.”<sup>24</sup> A list is actually present (in the first text), which contains a section that serves to communicate the material transferred from Mendes to Patrika and is structured as a short list. The list starts after the phrase εἰσὶ δέ near the end of line five, immediately after the presentation of the sender and the nature of the document (Παρά Φιλίσκου στρατηγού Μενδ[ησί]υ ἀναγραφὴ ὑπομνηματισμῶν κ[ατ]αχωρισθέντων εἰς τὴν ἐν Πα[τρ]ικῶν βιβλιοθήκην τοῦ εἰκοστοῦ ἔτους Ἀδ[ριαν]οῦ Καίσαρος τοῦ Κυρίου: ll. 1–5),<sup>25</sup> and it ends at line twelve, before the dating formula (ll. 13–14). It consists of four “items” (ll. 5–11) plus a summation (l. 12). The four items each have two elements. The first element offers precise chronological information and is structured in the format “from ... to” (ἀπὸ ... ἕως), with the addition of the conjunction “and” (καὶ) before the second, third, and fourth items in a manner equivalent to the modern semi-colon. The second element indicates the precise number of rolls in each instance. The summation that concludes this list at line twelve indicates the total number of rolls in question, viz. four or one roll for each “journal”:

5      Καίσαρος τοῦ Κυρίου. εἰσὶ δέ· ἀπὸ κα  
         Ἀδριανοῦ ἕως Τῦβι κα τὸμ(ος) α,  
         καὶ ἀπὸ κβ Τῦβι ἕως Μεχείρ ε τὸμ(ος) α,

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<sup>20</sup> This is done to prevent additions; the x-shaped signs drawn by hand 3 at the end of lines 11, 12, and 14 have the same function (Scholl 2000, 11). The horizontal line is indicated as “Schnörkel” in the *editio princeps* (Mitteis 1906, 335). The horizontal line is indicated as “*monogr.*” in the *Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri (DDbDP)*: <<http://www.papyri.info/ddbdp/p.lips;1;123/>>, accessed on 10.29.2020.

<sup>21</sup> Scholl 2000, 12. In the *editio princeps* this text is attributed to hand 3; Mitteis 1906, 335.

<sup>22</sup> See also Scholl 2000, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Mitteis 1906, 334.

<sup>24</sup> Kruse 2014, 82–83, where *anagraphê* is translated as “list” (see above, note 18).

<sup>25</sup> Here and below the text follows the transcription in *DDbDP*: <<http://www.papyri.info/ddbdp/p.lips;1;123/>>, accessed on 10.29.2020.

καὶ ἀπὸ ς Μεχείρ ἕως κα τοῦ αὐτοῦ  
 μηνὸς τόμο[ς] α  
 10 καὶ ἀπὸ κβ Μεχείρ ἕως ι Φαρμούθι  
 τόμος α  
 γ(ίνεται) [όμοῦ] τόμοι δ.

The fact that the second item starts and ends on the same single line (l. 7) is apparently random. The list is communicated without the need for an arrangement different from that of the previous portion of text (ll. 1–5). It might perhaps be explained by assuming that the list was not the core item for the scribe of the first text and that he knew in advance that the main function of that papyrus sheet was to receive the acknowledgements of both delivery and receipt (second and third texts) and that its final destination as a completed document would be the same as its origin.

Another sample of a “list” transmitted without breaking the “normal” text alignment in the writing frame is BGU 2 610 (TM 69916 [140 CE]), a Latin document.<sup>26</sup> The list begins at line two, since line one contains the dating formula and the word *ue[terani]*, which introduces the series of names of veterans residing in Alexandria. The names are written one after another on the same line. The text has blank spaces which separate one item from the next. Since all of the text is a pure sequence of names (apart from the first line), we cannot exclude the possibility that the blank space here performs its usual function as a marker of major pauses within a paragraph.<sup>27</sup>

P.Sakaon 1 (TM 13025 [February 27, 310 CE])<sup>28</sup> is a fiscal declaration from Theadelphia (Batn el-Harit) that is preserved intact, dated, and written in Greek with the subscription of the author in Latin. Within the text of the declaration (an *apographé*), there is a portion indicating the personal names of the taxpayers and the tax amounts. This portion is arranged in tabular format in the modern sense of the term: the writing lines from line seven to fifteen are actual rows; that is, horizontal sections in which various information relating to the same person is organized so that all elements of the same kind (for different persons) are aligned in the same column. The tabular format gives this portion of the document—and only in this case—a “visual” dimension which is lacking in the samples mentioned above. There is no reason to think that the tabular format was not deliberately designed for this purpose. In other words, it is clear that the textual scheme of the table was applied for its functionality, as it was a well-known practice used in the administrative and fiscal sphere. Let us imagine for a moment that all the text of P.Sakaon 1 around the central portion containing the table had been lost, it would still not be difficult to recognize it as a fragment of a fiscal declaration of the fourth century CE, for the content of the items is fairly clear and whole documents of this typology are preserved for the period.

<sup>26</sup> Digital image: <<https://berlpap.smb.museum/02208/>>, accessed on 11.02.2020.

<sup>27</sup> Parkes 1992, 10.

<sup>28</sup> P.Strasb. Gr. 1 42. Facsimile in ChLA XIX 685.

The same cannot be said for P.Vindob L8 (395-401 CE), at least while it was separated from P.Vindob. L 125 (395-401 CE). The real nature of the whole papyrus (P.Vindob L8+125), probably originating from Arsinoites (Fayum), which we now cite as ChLA XLIII 1248 (TM 12866), is that of “a short *liber epistularum*”<sup>29</sup> set up by the Roman soldier Sarapio after his discharge from the army, so as to collect the copies (*exempla*) of three letters issued by the higher competent authorities attesting his career steps and therefore his veteran status. The third letter deals with the dismissal of a group of *matriculae*, among whom figures the *decurio* Sarapio. In this case, too, the tabular format seems to effectively serve the purpose of communicating the relevant case information. It is arranged in a careful manner with four columns (role, name, reason for dismissal, and salary) and eleven rows (one for each soldier). The first row contains the name of Sarapio, as *decurio*, according to the role indicated in the first column, who was discharged because of *colicus* (third column) and his *XVIII stipendia* (fourth column).<sup>30</sup>

There is no reason to think that the texts of this dossier are not relatively exact transcriptions of the original letters received by Sarapio.<sup>31</sup> This also holds true for their layout, especially at crucial points such as that in Letter III, where the list of soldiers discharged is announced (l. 10: *et sunt*). Therefore, it seems reasonable to suppose that what we now see at that point of the copy was the same in the original letter. Moreover, we can assume that point in the original letter contained, in all likelihood, an appropriate excerpt from the official military rolls where discharges were recorded in tables.

A table can be read in several directions, following one’s own index finger or a stick: in vertical fashion (from top to bottom and *vice versa*) and horizontally (not necessarily from left to right). On occasion, multidirectional reading generates several different lists within the same textual structure, and these lists can number as many as the columns and rows. For instance, one may scroll the third column of the excerpt of the table of discharged soldiers copied in Letter III and then read a list of diseases or impediments to the status of the Roman soldier: *colicus, debilis, senex, aegrotus, senex, ut supra, colicus, debilis, senex, ut supra, ut supra* (ll. 11–21).<sup>32</sup> The fact that the phrase *ut supra* replaces an item is noteworthy, for it directs the reader’s eye upwards within the same column and to the item written on the line above.

One can easily assume that the use of tables is connected with highly organized milieux such as the fiscal or military administration of the Roman State. For instance, the military administration’s use of “single-column tables” (in other words, lists in the modern sense of the term, where each line corresponds to one item, and each item is written in a vertical series, one below the other) seems frequent in documentary practice. The new edition of the Latin papyri from Dura-Europos offered by Robert Marichal in four volumes of the

<sup>29</sup> The illuminating definition of this piece is by Iovine 2019, 185.

<sup>30</sup> Digital image: <<http://data.onb.ac.at/rep/10206713>>, accessed on 10.29.2020.

<sup>31</sup> On this point see also the considerations in Iovine 2019, 187 n. 82.

<sup>32</sup> It could be worth comparing the structure of this kind of list with that of the “listes nominatives des malades” mentioned in Ricciardetto 2016, 678 n. 3, even though they are written on ostraca in Greek.

*Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* represents a model in studying similar forms of written records.<sup>33</sup> It includes a long introduction which provides a masterly survey of palaeographical and diplomatic aspects of the military roles (*ruoli* in Italian) as documents in the form of lists. Specific graphic signs (points, lines), layout (in most cases designed in single long columns), and the dynamics of written registration (the writing of the main text—i.e., the items in a column; writing additions or corrections, inserted later into the series of lists) are significant features, because they served the pragmatic purposes for which this particular type of document was created. Specific signs and layout were conceived to manage the written lists. This global punctuation system on the one hand represents the document's "grammar of use."<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, it is constitutive of the document itself. All the same, further, critical comparative analysis of all the evidence is needed and a survey of this topic as a whole remains to be done.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the relationship between the external form and formulae of the *laterculi* and the form of list of the documents produced by the military administration is a topic currently being discussed by epigraphers. It seems likely that the *laterculi* somehow reflect the form of the documents produced by the Roman military bureaucracy.<sup>36</sup>

### 3 Documents, fragments, lists

Nearly all preserved documentary papyri are fragments of rolls or codices. Rarely can we read a document as an original whole. The impact and variable extension of this loss of text differs according to the material support on which the text was written (papyrus, parchment, wood, or stone) and the type of medium used to transmit the document (roll or codex, single sheet, single piece of stone/slate, bound tablets, etc.). The writing material and type of support employed make a fragment "different." Whereas writing material is evident, the medium must be inferred, and this makes it even harder to identify the lost original form of a document that is now preserved as a fragment showing only a sequence of words.

The definition of a fragment as a list/inventory/catalogue is given in the first instance on the basis of the internal organization of the surviving text as a sequence of elements, so that it is normal and inevitable to classify it as "list" in the context of an edition. In the context of research and study, however, we need to verify at the outset that what in a fragment appears to be a list really does represent a type of document distinct from the others (letters, contracts, etc.) and therefore that it ought to be classified as such. This procedure might cause distortion

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<sup>33</sup> ChLA VI–IX, published 1975–77. For the importance of the Dura papyri in the history of Latin script, see Zamponi 2021.

<sup>34</sup> In using this expression, I am extending the concept of "the grammar of legibility," introduced by Parkes 1992, 20, to the palaeography of the Latin medieval manuscripts.

<sup>35</sup> Salati 2020, consisting of a global critical analysis of the military documents from Egypt in comparison with the documents from Dura and other proveniences, represents, however, a recent, real step forward on this topic.

<sup>36</sup> See, in particular, Cenati et al. 2017. The word *laterculum* was used to mean "list" from the fourth century CE onwards, mainly in the military milieu. It is adopted, as is well known, by the editors of the *CIL* to indicate those Latin epigraphic monuments erected by soldiers (*praetoriani* and *urbaniciani*) on the occasion of their discharge.



on several levels. It might do so specifically as regards the possibility of hypothesizing an original whole (i.e., the real typology of that document which has survived in fragmentary condition) and in general as regards the possibility of investigating the existence, uses, and circulation of textual patterns that arguably originated in particular spheres of documentary practice, where the list (whether arranged in tables or single columns, on a roll or codex) might instead be properly considered a peculiar form of written communication.

The more documents that are preserved relatively intact (with portions of text arranged as lists or tables), the more feasible it will be to classify the lists in fragments. Increasingly well-studied areas and documentary typologies will greatly facilitate our interpretation of them. This is a well-known basic rule of the critical method.

The current state of knowledge of official archives and registration in Roman Egypt and related written records containing a list such as *anagraphé*, for instance, allows us to make judgements about the nature of a list preserved in a fragment in many cases.<sup>37</sup> As regards lists of books, the work of Rosa Otranto is an excellent starting point in terms of both theoretical questions and criticism, since she deals with the uncertainty regarding the distinction between bibliographical lists and library catalogues and provides the edition of nineteen “lists of books” attested in the papyrological sources.<sup>38</sup> The results of the research of Jean Gascoü on documentary codices and tax-accounting in Egypt form the essential basis for both investigation in that field and source-criticism.<sup>39</sup> Thanks to this basis, for example, Arietta Papaconstantinou has been able to identify an opisthograph papyrus fragment, datable to the early sixth century CE and containing texts arranged in tabular format (rows and columns), as page *recto/verso* of a documentary codex devoted to the registration of tax receipts.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, a significant quantity of fragments will continue to maintain the appearance of pure and simple lists or inventories for a variety of reasons: unknown provenance of the papyrus, no significant elements allowing the papyrus to be dated with relative precision (i.e., within at least two centuries), no significant papyrological data, and no significant textual elements that could make it possible to guess the medium and context of its origin. In such cases we can detect and describe significant “external features,”<sup>41</sup> thereby contributing to a minimal evidential basis for future investigation. This opens the possibility, for scholars dealing with problematic fragments, to engage in critical comparison and historical argumentation, even at minimal levels. This helps to identify among the “large but heterogeneous group of *private notes, lists, and memoranda*”<sup>42</sup> those “lists” that in some way have a formal appearance.

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<sup>37</sup> Steinacker (1927) 1977, 31–41; Montevecchi 2008, 199–201; Kruse 2014, 62–82.

<sup>38</sup> Otranto 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Gascoü 1989.

<sup>40</sup> Papaconstantinou 1994.

<sup>41</sup> According to the terminology of palaeography and diplomatics, which have traditionally been concerned only with Latin texts on papyrus and parchment of the Latin West (Roman and post-Roman) and Greek texts from Byzantium. What is meant here as “external features” overlaps with the concept of the “visual-graphological mode” of a text, and in particular with that of the “typography,” introduced as a critical tool in the ERC research project EVWRIT; see Bentein and Amory 2019, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Palme 2009, 363.

#### 4 Attempts at analysis

In actual practice, there are not many elements available for such analysis. Some have already been illustrated indirectly above: the arrangement of text on the papyrus sheet; alignment; punctuation marks in the sense of any kind of graphic signs employed both to organize the writing of the items within the writing frame and to manage the list later, at the moment of its possible use; the presence and position of possible graphic Christian symbols; handwriting, in terms of ascertaining whether the hand is individual or chancery/bureaucratic and whether the writing is cursive or accurate/calligraphic;<sup>43</sup> and the presence of a sort of “title” or definition as *incipit* of the text, which is perhaps the only internal element useful for a comparison.

On occasion, for instance, the presence of a graphic Christian symbols is omitted from editions. In the edition of P.Vindob. G 20737 (CPR 7 28; TM 35937)—a “Bevölkerungsliste” dated to the sixth to seventh century from Hermopolis, arranged in one column in which each line corresponds to each item of the list—we learn that the sequence is opened by a staurogram only thanks to the printed reproduction.<sup>44</sup> By contrast, the editors of the short collection called “O Kyrios lists” note of one—P. Vindob. G 19611 (SB 16 12745; TM 34888 [V–VI CE]), which probably originated from Arsinoites (Fayum)—that the “Chrismon am Anfang und am Ende stellen sicher, dass die Liste vollständig ist.”<sup>45</sup> It is a noteworthy remark, because it is based on the assumption that a graphic Christian symbol—it is not a *chrismon* but a stylized staurogram—may also have a distinctive function, as a punctuation sign, in a short text of five lines. This assumption is entirely reasonable, but it still has to be proved by collecting similar cases and comparing related practices. For example, a similar graphic symbol appears as the *incipit* in the fragment of the verso page of the documentary codex already mentioned above; the same function is noted *en passant* by the editor also in this case.<sup>46</sup>

A further instance of the presence of Christian graphic symbols in a list is offered by a fragment of unknown provenance, but probably from Byzantine Egypt, which dates to the sixth century CE. Preserved at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden in the von Scherling collection, it has been published as a “List of documents,” with the editor noting it is “apparently the beginning of a list of letters.”<sup>47</sup> The beginning is marked by a splendidly drawn staurogram (Fig. 1), but what is also noteworthy is the well-arranged alignment of the verbal items of the list (note, in particular, the point on line four from which the scribe starts

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<sup>43</sup> That is, in terms of an evaluation of significant common criteria both in the Greek and Latin documentary tradition of the period; see Cavallo 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Zilliacus et al. 1979, 119–21, image 21.

<sup>45</sup> Rom and Harrauer 1983, 111.

<sup>46</sup> Papaconstantinou 1994, 94: “La premiere colonne comporte, sous la croix incipitale, une serie de chiffres (10, 14, 15, 16), en ordre croissant.”

<sup>47</sup> Worp 2013, 37–38.

to write the text, which belongs to the second item of the list) and the position in *ekthesis* of the first word of each item, Χ(ει)ρ(όγραφον); it is expressed in the monogrammatic abbreviation *chi-rho* and as such it seems to perform here too the distinctive (and thus punctuative) function of being the initial sign of an item.<sup>48</sup> Another interesting feature should be noted: the presence of a sort of title/definition (although incomplete here) which serves to communicate the list: Γνώσ(ις) γραμμάτ(ων) γε . [.

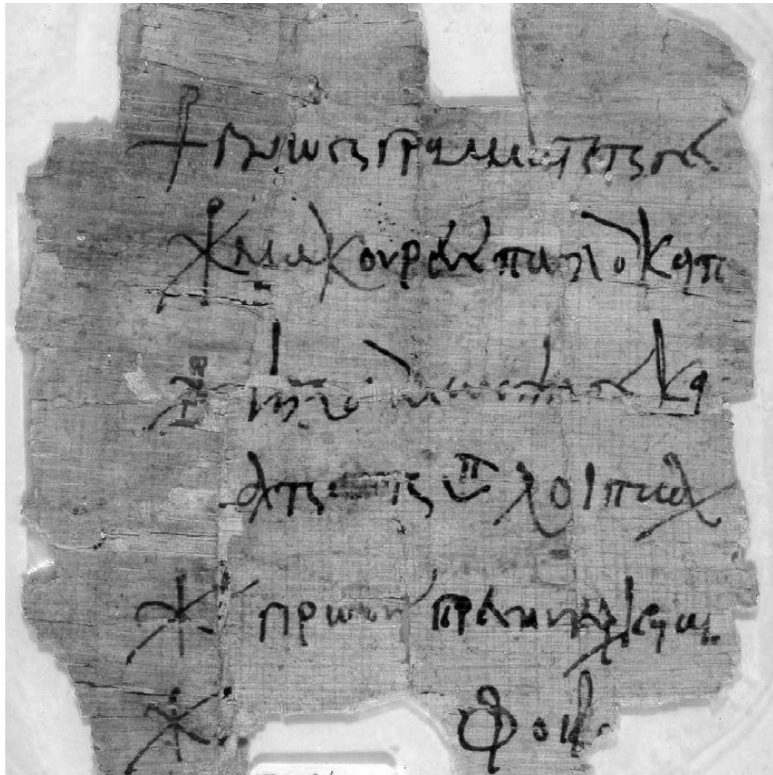


Fig. 1. RMO Inv. no. F 1948/3.5. Image courtesy of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, The Netherlands

The practice of introducing a list with a definition/title, preceded by a staurogram, is also attested in the “O-Kyrios” lists already mentioned. For instance, in SPP 20 259, from Egypt (TM 36635 [VI CE])—Γνώσ(ις) μονναδίων<sup>49</sup>—and in SPP 20 248, from Egypt (TM 38811 [VII CE]), with the lapidary title: Γνώσ(ις). The question posed by the editors makes sense: “Ist irrtümlich die Angabe, worüber eine Liste erstellt ist, ausgefallen?”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> On the use of the monogram *chi-rho* in the meaning of *cheirographon*, a survey is being prepared by Anna Monte within the research activities of the ERC-2017-AdG project NOTAE.

<sup>49</sup> Note that in this fragment, a hand (probably the same hand responsible for the list) traced a line ending with a thick point on the left side of the sheet, near the start point of each writing line corresponding to each item of the list. These could be signs drawn when writing the list (such as punctuations marks) or, more likely, when reading and using the list (for example, as marks in a verification procedure). A digital image of the list is available at <<http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/RZ00001785>>, accessed on 04.21. 22.

<sup>50</sup> Rom and Harrauer 1983, 113. A digital image of the list is available at <<http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/RZ00001775>>, accessed on 11.01.2020.

*Gnosis*, isolated as “lapidarer Titel” or followed by a genitive as specification of the listed objects, seems to have a parallel in the Latin word *notitia* (from *notus*, derived from *nosco*, thus from archaic *gnosco*), which is attested both followed by the genitive (*notitia testium* for instance, in the documentary practice of late antique Ravenna)<sup>51</sup> or followed by *de* and the ablative. *Notitia* emerges in scattered but significant Western documentary sources of the same period (VI–VIII CE) as a text header, in which it is clear that the list is the core of the written record and that the function of the whole document is the written communication of a series of “things.”<sup>52</sup> In the Italian papyri, too, the term *brevis*, which is mainly used to indicate an official return,<sup>53</sup> can bear the meaning of “list,” perhaps because reports often contained information organized in lists or in tables.<sup>54</sup> The same practice continues into the eighth century CE in Lombard Italy.<sup>55</sup> All the same, the word βρέβιον in the meaning of “list” or “inventory” also appears in documentary papyri from Egypt ranging from the fourth to the seventh century CE;<sup>56</sup> in particular, βρέβιον sometimes appears as a title at the beginning of a text with the form of a list.<sup>57</sup>

According to an unforgettable observation by Marc Bloch, “il n’est pas de connaissance véritable sans un certain clavier de comparaison. À condition, il est vrai, que le rapprochement porte sur des réalités à la fois diverse et pourtant apparentées.”<sup>58</sup> Every palaeographer knows that the writing material and form of medium play a role in determining the external features of a text as well as the purpose for which the text was created. Thus, critical comparison in terms of long-term practices within the written documentary culture means simultaneously taking into account the possible persistence of past practices and graphic solutions as well as the contemporary functions and constraints of writing materials and medium on a macrohistorical level.

The Lombard *breve de moniminas* (ChLA XXVI 808 [763–769 CE]) is written on a sheet of parchment (49.2 x 24/16.9 cm), broken in the lower part with a loss of text. It preserves 62 lines, and the items of the list, which begins at line 2, are written one after another on the same line, with punctuation marks (point and colon) and sometimes little blank spaces separating one item from the next. The point of interest is not this external feature, but the phrasing

<sup>51</sup> On this “Zeugenverzeichnis, (*notitia testium*), wahrscheinlich nachjustinianisch,” see Tjäder 1955, 276–77.

<sup>52</sup> With regard to the papyri from Italy, see Tjäder 1955, 406 (*Kommentar n. 7* to the word *notitia* in P.Ital. 1 2, l. 16).

<sup>53</sup> Jones 1964, 405. See also Di Paola 2000.

<sup>54</sup> In fact, Tjäder translates *brevis* both as *Verzeichnis* and *Spezifikation* depending on the case.

<sup>55</sup> A famous example is that of ChLA XXVI 808, the *Breve de moniminas* (*monimen/munimen* is attested in the meaning of valid legal document in the Italian papyri: P.Ital. 2 31, 540 CE, col. iii, l. 8), which contains a list of 99 documents and some valuables written on parchment between March 763 and July 769 in Pisa for (or on behalf of) the Lombard bishop Domnucianus. For new insights and a fresh approach to this text in terms of commentary and critical edition, see Ghignoli 2004, 38–69. Further comments about this *breve* can be found in Brown et al. 2013, 1, 234, 241, 248, 263, 275, however these are based on false elements provided by the previous editions of Luigi Schiaparelli and Jan Olof Tjäder.

<sup>56</sup> The term appears with this meaning at least 12 times, according to the results of a query in TM (made on 05.24.20). For more details about the percentage of *gnôsis* and *brevium* attested, see Clarysse 2020, 114.

<sup>57</sup> For instance: P.Herm. 23 (TM 33475; a list of food products [IV CE]), CPR.9.68 (TM 35335; a list of expenses [V CE]), and SB.18.13266 (TM 36293; a list of accounts [VI–VII CE]).

<sup>58</sup> Bloch 2020, 92.

*Breve de moniminas que reddidet Teuspert Ghittie Dei ancille ...*, which serves to introduce the list of ninety-nine documents and some valuables written on the following lines and represents, at the same time, the definition of this document (which is basically a return) in its entirety. Thus, it makes clear the persistence in the background of the late antique *brevis* and the same communicative function performed by it, although transformed through widespread and intensive use in a different socio-economic context in which documentary texts are now written on a single sheet of a valuable material (parchment).<sup>59</sup>

A critical comparison in terms of external features between the Lombard *breve de moniminas* and late antique lists presenting, in appearance, similar solutions must lead to the conclusion that the choice of arrangement of the sequence of items on the same line in the Lombard *breve* was conditioned by the writing material and by what the use of parchment represented in terms of expense in late eighth-century Lombard Italy. The same writing material, on the other hand, did not prevent the arrangement of accounting records, lists of rents and incomes, and the like in a series of one-column tables on the same parchment sheet at the royal monastery of St. Martin of Tours in Merovingian France in the second half of the seventh century CE.<sup>60</sup> It makes sense to compare, in terms of external features, this practice and that used in the fiscal or military sphere of the late Roman state.

## 5 P.Vic.: A new Latin documentary papyrus containing a list

Not included among the Latin documentary papyri from Italy edited by Jan Olof Tjäder, this papyrus was (re)discovered in 2001 in a drawer of the Civic Museums of Vicenza. Announced to the scientific community some years later,<sup>61</sup> it was presented and discussed for the first time at a conference in Seville.<sup>62</sup> The fragment is currently housed at the Istituto papirologico “Girolamo Vitelli” in Florence, where it has been restored and is waiting to be returned to the Museums of Vicenza. An edition of the papyrus and commentary are forthcoming in a publication authored by myself, Teresa De Robertis, and Stefano Zamponi, which will be published in the editorial series of the Istituto Vitelli.

The size of the papyrus fragment is 24.5 x 30.0 cm (H x W) and this current width may not be so different from the original. The papyrus is badly damaged, in particular on the left and right edges, and the lower edge seems to have been cut clean. Moreover, there are three holes in the middle of the sheet, and many fibers have been removed on the upper side. There are twenty-two lines of text written across the fibers preserved, but the first two of these are almost completely illegible. There is no visible *kollēsis* and the *verso* is blank.

The Latin text is written in a fluent “nouvelle écriture commune” according to the definition of Jean Mallon; that is, it is written in the script commonly known as later Roman

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<sup>59</sup> On the use of parchment from the eighth century CE in Lombard Italy see Internullo 2019a, 540.

<sup>60</sup> Some seventh to eighth-century examples are ChLA XVIII 659 and ChLA XLVII 1404, 1405.

<sup>61</sup> De Robertis 2004, 232, n. 32.

<sup>62</sup> De Robertis, Ghignoli, and Zamponi 2018.

cursive. On palaeographic grounds, it dates to the sixth century CE, and certainly to a period not later than the seventh decade of the century. The mention of *curial(es) Panhormitani* at line seventeen it is not sufficient to prove the Sicilian provenance of the papyrus, but it does demonstrate its Italian provenance and confirms the impression gained from palaeographical analysis.

The fragment contains the final part of a list arranged in one column, wherein each writing line corresponds to one item in the list. The list consists of 22 items, with each containing the summary of the content of a document or a description of documentary material. It is clear that the list was originally designed to be composed of two different sections from two elements: the presence (or the absence) of a numeral at the beginning of the text string of the item and the textual structure of the item.

In the first section, which includes the first twenty lines corresponding to the first twenty items, there is a numeral in sequential order at the beginning of each line; it is followed by a blank space before the beginning of the text of the item, which consists of the summary (more or less detailed) of a written documentary record. The last item of this part is marked by the numeral *XXV* (l. 20). Since twenty lines are preserved and marked by legible or illegible numerals, we can be certain that the upper part of the fragment contained at least a further five lines containing the first five items of this section of the list.

The second section can be observed in the last two lines corresponding to the last two items (ll. 21–22). There is no numeral at the beginning, but an evident blank space, so that the beginning of the text of the first item falls almost exactly under the starting point of the text of the last item of the first section placed on the line above. The same happens for the second and last item. The result is that the items of the second section are perfectly aligned with the ones placed above belonging to the first section. An elegant and distinctive (in terms of size) initial letter *f* of the first word marks the beginning of the two final items (Fig. 2).

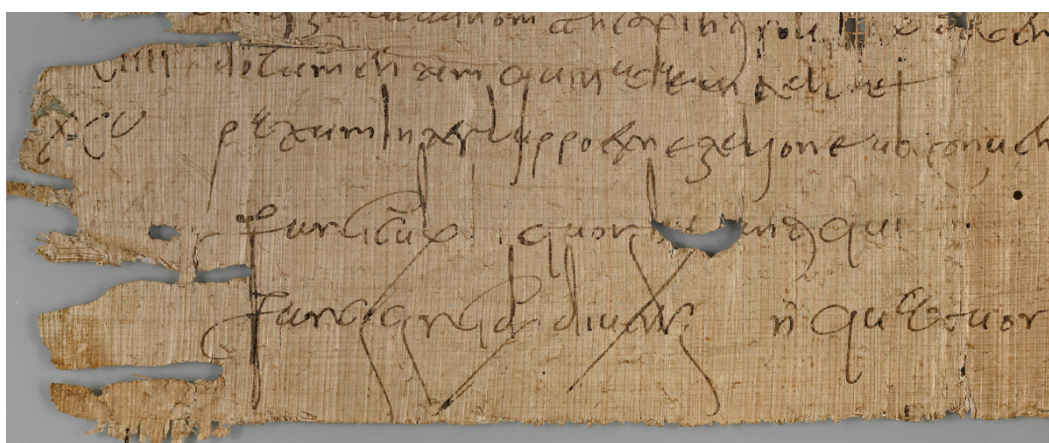


Fig. 2. P. Vic., showing the initial part of lines 20–22. Image courtesy of Teresa De Robertis, Antonella Ghignoli, Stefano Zamponi

In both instances the text consists of the vague description (or so it seems) of “documentary” material. The transcription of the last three lines (ll. 20–22) preserved in the fragment reads as follows:

XXV pactum inter Lупpo et Negelione ubi conuenet eis ut fratres ement

Fascicul(us) in quo s(unt) br(eues) antiqui

Fasc(iculi) scid(arum) diuers(arum) n(umero) quattuor<sup>63</sup>

XXV Agreement between Lupus and Negelio, in order to buy as brothers.

A bundle, in which are old returns;

bundles of diverse official drafts: four, in total.<sup>64</sup>

As we have seen, investigating texts that appear to have the form of a list involves some peculiar difficulties in addition to the usual ones encountered in editing documentary papyri. The original context, the function, and (sometimes) the content itself are nearly always a matter of guesswork. The hands that wrote them nearly always remain unknown, and the same can be said about their recipients and the purposes for which those texts were created. This is true even in the case of documentary papyri from Graeco-Roman and late antique Egypt, where it is easier to suggest institutional or personal contexts despite (or thanks to) the fact that the evidence consists of thousands of fragments. Therefore, in this research context it is possible to investigate texts preserved in the form of lists, also taking into account the external elements illustrated above.

The situation is completely different for the late antique West, where the number of documentary papyri is extremely limited. Among the fifty-nine Latin documentary papyri of Italy edited by Tjäder, only seven fragments contain a list: P.Ital. 1 1 (TM 114798 [September 445–September 446 CE]), P.Ital. 2 47–48 (TM 114845 [first half VI CE, certainly after 510]), P.Ital. 1 3 (TM 382974 [mid-VI CE]), P. Ital. 1 8 (TM 114801 [July 564 CE]); P.Ital. 1 2 (TM 382976 [November 565–August 570 CE]), P. Ital. 2 50, 1 (TM 383097 [590–604 CE]), and P.Ital. 2 53 (TM 783442 [second half VIII CE]).<sup>65</sup>

P. Ital. 1 1, P.Ital. 1 2, and P.Ital. 1 3 do not offer a comparative basis from which to understand P.Vic., because their “lists” are basically in tabular format. In all three cases fiscal matters and the management of landed properties are involved, directly or indirectly, and in all three cases it is very likely that the scribe (i.e., the scribe of the original text in the event they are transmitted in copy) took the “tables” from a “register” that was produced and held

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<sup>63</sup> The reading of the first word of the last line is *fasc* with a sign of abbreviation for each letter *c*; it can be interpreted as a suspension with a double final consonant, marked by a double sign of abbreviation, meaning the plural of the word: *fasc(iculi)*. It is possible to read the second *c* with sign as an independent abbreviated word: *c(um)*; in this case the transcription would be *fasc(iculi) c(um) scid(is) diuers(is)*.

<sup>64</sup> The linguistic features of the late Latin attested in the fragment may justify other translations (in particular for l. 20): these all are discussed in the forthcoming publication on P.Vic. announced above. According to my interpretation, the clearly visible *vacat* on line 22 between *diuers(arum)/diuers(is)* and *n(umero)* performs the function of communicating that *quattuor* is the total amount of all the bundles mentioned in the second section of the list (ll. 21–22), and not of the *fasc(iculi)* mentioned only at line 22.

<sup>65</sup> Here I differ slightly from Internullo 2019b, 657 regarding the selected evidence and the idea that “inventories and lists” can be *a priori* classified as a distinct “type of document” outside the peculiar context of an edition.

either by offices or by a private landowner and existed in the form of a roll or codex.<sup>66</sup> Thus they must be approached via a critical comparison with the use of tables and similar schemes attested in the documentary papyri from Egypt and somehow related to the various Roman administrative milieux.

Another example, P. Ital. 1 8, does not help, because it is an official *gesta municipalia* protocol, which does not preserve the original layout of one *breue* and two *notitiae* (copied respectively at column II, ll. 4–10, column II, ll. 11–14, and column II, l. 14–column III, l. 3) inserted in it with a *chartula plenariae securitatis*. Nor does P. Ital. 2 50, 1 help either. A beautiful example of the continuity of the list in *notitia*-shape mentioned above, it is a list of holy oils brought from the tombs of martyrs in Rome to the Lombard queen Theodelinda in Monza by a certain Johannes in the time of pope Gregory the Great. The text is written on a single papyrus sheet (32.0 x 24.5 cm, H x W). After the “title” written on the first long line announcing the list (*Notitia de olea sanctorum martyrum, qui Romae in corpore requiescunt, id est*), the list is arranged in a two-column table. The left-hand column contains a copy of the text of the labels attached to the ampules (i.e., the authentication of the relics); written on single small pieces of papyrus, some are even preserved in the original. The right-hand column contains the list of the corresponding names of the martyrs to whose tombs the oils belonged. Between the two columns there is a long line representing perhaps a stylized spray of vine. Under the last item of the right-hand column containing the list of names, there is a final short declaration, which represents a kind of dated subscription: *Quas olea sancta temporibus domni Gregorii pape adduxit Iohannis indignus et peccator domnae Theodelindae reginae de Roma*.

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<sup>66</sup> P. Ital. 1 1 (one sheet, fragment) contains the copy of three letters issued by Lauricius, *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, about his private asset in Sicily (a *commonitorium* and two letters of recommendation) and a list (ll. 57–83) compiled in a two-column table (names of *fundi* and *massae*; payments to be due) not perfectly arranged, probably because the copyist disregarded the original alignment of the model. The reason for the creation of this dossier is unclear. According to Tjäder, it is likely that it was created immediately after the original letters, and therefore the date of the papyrus lies somewhere between September 445 and September 446. Tjäder judged only a final annotation (ll. 81–85) to be original and not the result of a copy: see Tjäder 1955, 169–73. P. Ital. 1 2 (one sheet, fragment) contains a copy of a *gesta municipalia* protocol about a debate held before the *exarchus* of Ravenna between November 565 and August 570, about the *patrimonium* that once belonged to the Arian church of Ravenna and was later donated to the Catholic church by the emperor Justinian; lines one to thirteen contain the final part of a well-arranged two-column table (containing the names of the properties, related incomes, and the final amounts due in taxes). It is certainly the final part of a series of tables, according to the declaration made by Honorius, the accounts officer of the *scrinium suburbicarium et canonum*, reported in the following lines, who declares, with regard to the tables, that he had presented *notitias: Secundum iussionem praecelse potestatis vestrae ostidimus notitias superius positas* (l. 16). Tjäder’s translation of the passage is “die oben stehenden Tabellen” (1955, 183). The fragment is evidently a copy written by a notary of the Church of Ravenna not long after the original protocol: Tjäder 1955, 181. P. Ital. 1 3 is a fragment of a papyrus roll on which the text was written in ten columns along the fibers (perhaps an original *gesta* protocol); only two columns are preserved. Each contains a multi-column table in which are recorded rents in produce and in money related to landed properties. In the second column, the table alternates with a short text written on the line. For commentary, see Tjäder 1955, 185–87. For the purpose of this investigation, the most striking features are the disordered way in which the tables are arranged and the number of mistakes and corrections made by the scribe when writing the items. It is as though he were copying data arranged in a way that was too complicated for him to transcribe.



Only P.Ital. 2 47–48 and P.Ital. 2 53 present a structure similar to that of P.Vic. in two important aspects. In all three the list is arranged in one column, where each item is written one below another in a single writing line. The writing line is relatively long as regards the width of the papyrus sheet, because items consist of relatively long text strings.

P.Ital. 2 53 cannot tell us any more than that, however, because it is a fragment in which only four very badly damaged lines (the beginning of each is lost) are preserved, and because this list's four items are descriptions of ecclesiastical textiles that probably belonged to a church in Northern Italy.<sup>67</sup> P. Ital. 2 47–48, instead, is helpful in investigating P.Vic., but only because forty-two of the forty-four preserved items are summaries of the content of documents. We can compare the structure of the summary in both cases in order to frame a possibly widespread use in summarizing documentary records. As a result, it is possible to identify constants or variables by comparing syntax and terminology and taking into account the stage of documentary Latin in the sixth century CE. For example:

P.Vic., l. 18: *XXIII Cauti<o> greca ad nome(n) Theopinti solid[o]r(um) decem et septem*

P. Ital. 2 47–48, A, l. 27: *Cautio greca Pauli facta ad nomen Petri solidorum numero C[...]  
Venanti[o] consule*

P. Ital. 2 47–48 consists of two different papyrus fragments (A and B) preserved in two different places. They were not originally contiguous, but probably belonged to the same roll, according to the masterly commentary of Tjäder.<sup>68</sup> This papyrus is a very problematic source. In his edition, Tjäder entitled the document “Inventar eines Archivs,” but in his dense commentary he explained that “es sich kaum um ein ordentliches Inventar handeln kann.”<sup>69</sup> The original context, function, and nature of this text remain unsolved, for the two lists preserved in the two different fragments are very different from each other as regards the type of documents they summarize.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps only one fact is certain: the documents listed in the two different fragments seem somehow connected to the administrative activity (understood in a broad sense and in terms of both incoming and outgoing documents) either of the *arcarius* of the *praefectus praetorio per Italiam* or of his officials. Any other confident characterization of P.Ital. 2 47–48 is based on a superficial reading of the sources.<sup>71</sup>

Comparing the textual structure of the items of P.Vic. and P.Ital. 2 47–48 is important, but not sufficient for the main issue that both sources raise. How was the text string of each item written? Was it composed by the lists' scribes (or, more probably, by the person dictating) by reading the documents to be listed and summarized, or was it composed by

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<sup>67</sup> Already published by Tjäder (P.Ital. 2 53) and by Bruckner (ChLA I 1b), the papyrus has been recently edited again and commented by Internullo 2020, 252–57.

<sup>68</sup> Tjäder 1982, 186–90.

<sup>69</sup> Tjäder 1982, 188.

<sup>70</sup> And given the fact that in each list fragment there is one item that is not the summary of a document but the description of “found objects,” though containing written records: P.Ital. 2 47–48 A, l. 12, *chartarium ... quod ... inibi inventum est*; P.Ital. 2 47–48 B, l. 11, *cista in qua invente sunt*; Tjäder 1982, 188.

<sup>71</sup> Everett 2013, 75: “A glimpse at the fragments of Ravenna's praetorian prefect's archive—or more precisely, an archival index.”

copying the docket already attached to the documents or the dorsal note written on the *verso*? This is not a philological issue, pure and simple. It is a question of our being able to capture the viewpoint of the “author” of these microtexts, and consequently to suggest a provenance for the documents listed, in order to form a hypothesis about the provenance and the destination of the list itself.

The Italian documentary papyri did not preserve any dorsal notes on the *verso*, and this can be explained by the fact that none is preserved in its entirety.<sup>72</sup> The only Latin examples we have are preserved in the *Tablettes Albertini*, where Latin dorsal notes summarize the Latin acts contained on the polyptych’s interior surfaces,<sup>73</sup> so that a comparison with the structure of these texts is possible. Dorsal notes are well attested, instead, in the documentary tradition of late Roman Egypt, and what we learn from an analysis of their scribe’s “point of view” (as we have briefly seen, for example, above with the dorsal note of P.Lips. I 123) is decisive in the same way as (or, perhaps, more decisive than) the notes on the *Tablettes*.

The first section of the list in P.Vic. is characterized, as we have seen, by the presence of a numeral at the beginning of each line. Both fragments (A and B) of P.Ital. 2 47–48 are damaged on the left side, where 2 cm of papyrus is missing.<sup>74</sup> All the same, it is unlikely that this space was sufficient to host both the necessary free area before the beginning of the writing and the space for a numeral, which must have consisted of more than one alphabetic character. Therefore, this feature of P.Vic. represents a hapax within the Western late antique documentary tradition in the Latin language.

It is necessary to ascertain whether numbered lists comparable with P.Vic. are preserved among Greek papyri fragments from late Roman Egypt, and the examination of the sources is still ongoing. Nevertheless, from the lists preserved in that documentary tradition we learn that if a list serves as a written step in procedures employed by a particularly well-organized milieu, then it is more likely to include as a final item an indication of the amount of the listed objects. In view of this, the series of numerals in the first section of P.Vic. is an economical system to successfully communicate an amount without adding a further line to the list.

Last of all, another external feature of P.Vic. has not yet been mentioned but is equally characteristic and important: the presence of two Christian graphic symbols. The first staurogram is drawn at the end of line 20, containing the last item of the first section of the list. It is written in ligature with the final letter *t* of the final word of the item, *ement*. The second one is drawn at the end of line 22 containing the last item preserved of the second section of the list. Also in this case, the graphic symbol is written in ligature with the final letter *r* of the final word of the item, *quattuor* (Figs. 3 and 4).

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<sup>72</sup> Only two dorsal notes are preserved (in P.Ital. 2 35 and P.Ital. 2 37). Containing few legible words, they are both unpublished; Internullo 2019, 544, n. 42.

<sup>73</sup> For example, T. Alb. 7 (tablet 14a): *instrumentum Uictorini Nugualis de dibersas loca*. On the function of the dorsal notes in the Albertini Tablets, see Conant 2004, 215.

<sup>74</sup> Tjäder 1982, 186.

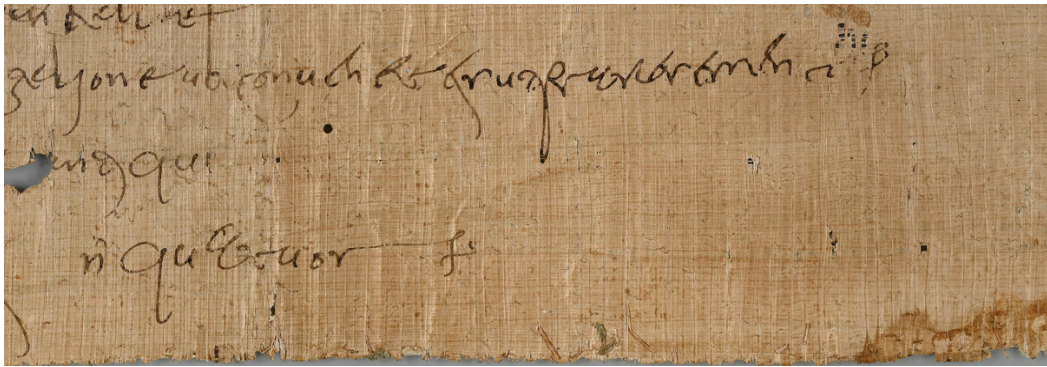


Fig. 3. P. Vic., showing the final part of lines 20-22. Image courtesy of Teresa De Robertis, Antonella Ghignoli, Stefano Zamponi

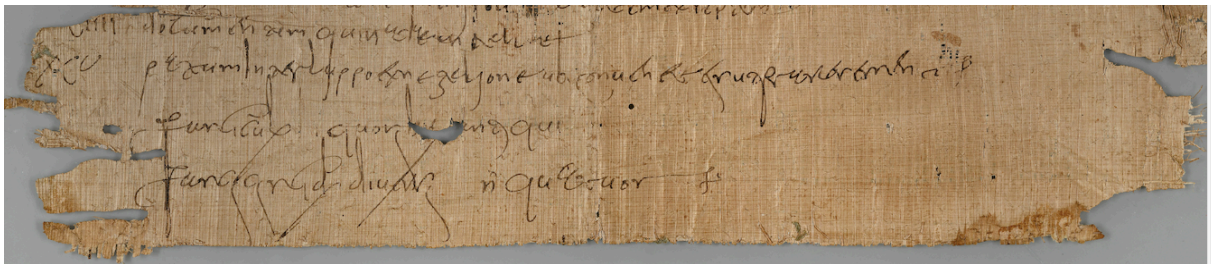


Fig. 4. P. Vic., showing the last three lines (ll. 20-22). Image courtesy of Teresa De Robertis, Antonella Ghignoli, Stefano Zamponi

Thanks to the evidence of the documentary papyri of late Roman Egypt, which attest the use of such graphic symbols as signs to mark the beginning and/or the end of a textual unit,<sup>75</sup> we can assume the same function for the staurograms of P.Vic., and we can conclude that what we have called the “first” and “second” sections of the list were both actually considered by the scribe as “completed” and therefore “closed” parts of the text. Along the lower edge of the fragment there are remains of a lost written line: two visible small traces, both are probably traces of a vertical stroke. The first trace is placed almost at the beginning of the edge, exactly corresponding with the letter *V* of the numeral *XXV* above, on the third-to-last line of the fragment. The second trace is placed under the letter *a* of the word *quattuor* in the last line of the fragment (Fig. 4). This means that the list preserved in P.Vic. is a part of a whole. What kind of document it was, where, when, how, and why it was written are entirely matters of guesswork, for now. To address this, only an extensive and complex commentary can provide the necessary basis with the painstaking exposition of clues and arguments. The forthcoming edition of the papyrus and commentary mentioned above will therefore supplement the initial findings offered here.

<sup>75</sup> On lists, see, for example, the case of P. Vindob. G 19611 mentioned above. For a short overview, see Carlig 2020; for a more detailed study on specific Greek documents, see Amory 2022. Investigating this kind of graphic symbols in the *longue durée* and in a wider documentary context than that of the Egyptian papyri represents one of the objectives of the ERC project NOTAE.

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