

Punctuation and abbreviating signs in Latin documentary papyri, ostraka and tablets from Roman East (BC I – VII AD)

Napoli, 04-06.07.2022



PLATINUM



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

Il y a grand mérite à déchiffrer les documents latins d'Égypte : ce sont les plus difficiles qui soient proposés au métier de papyrologue.

C. Préaux, ‘H. A. Sanders, A Latin Marriage Contract ...’ (rev.), *Chronique d'Égypte* 30 (1940) : 297–8.



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- **Updating the extant studies** with new sources and a renewed look



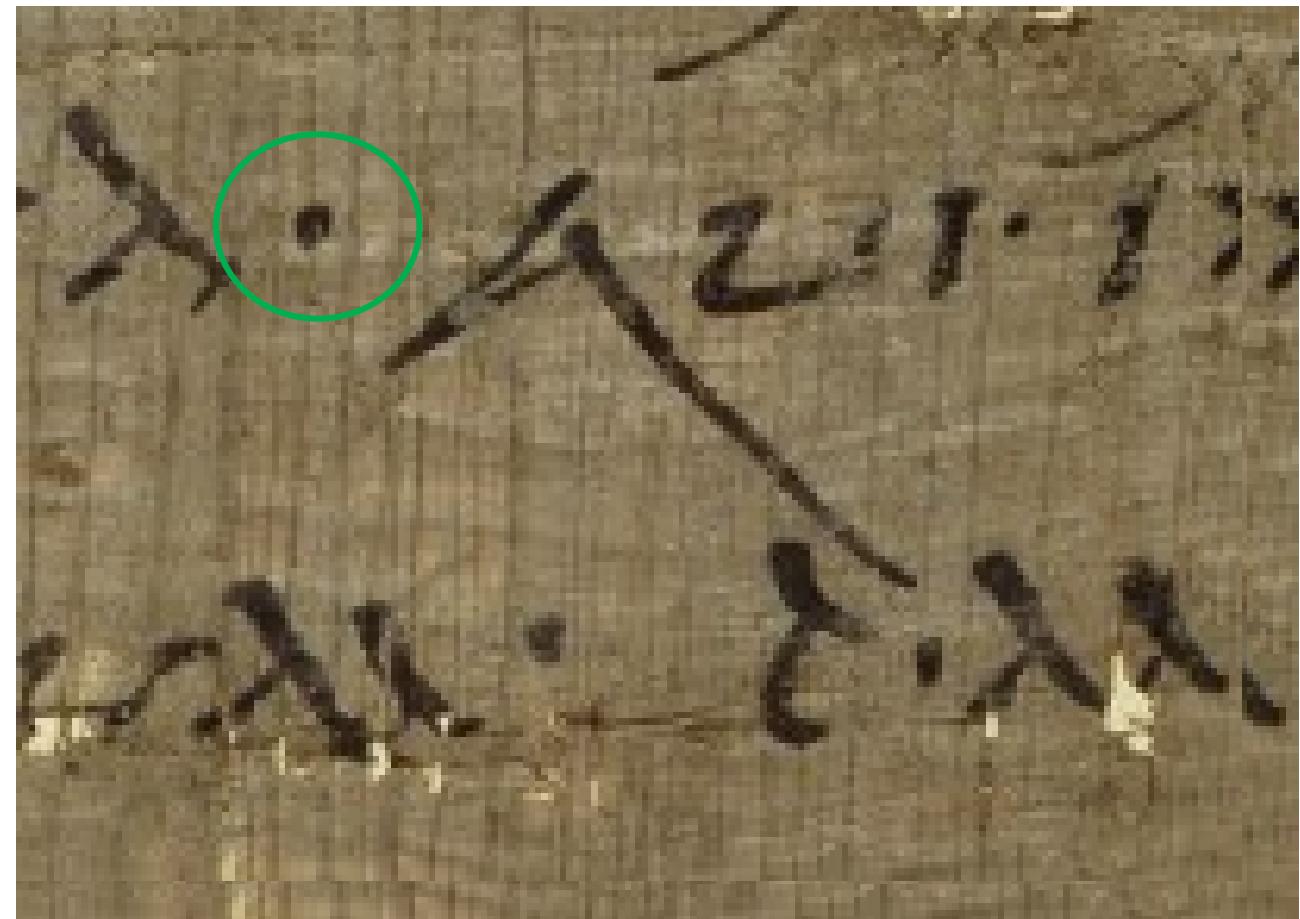
How to present my data?

- Every sign in its shape and history
- A chronological prospect
- Further considerations

1. The signs: a list

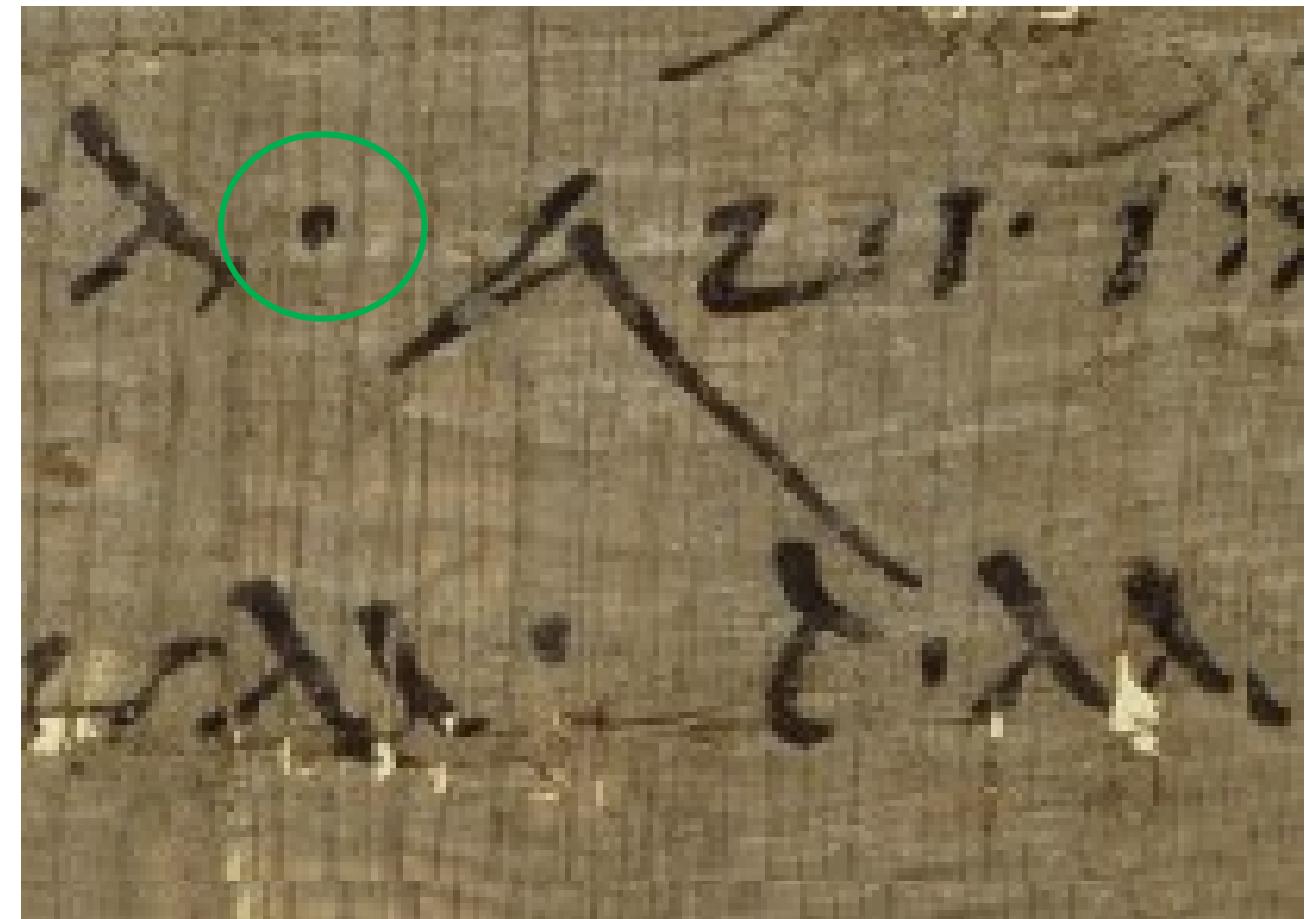
1. The medial dot, or *interpunctum*

- Caesarem · qui, Caes(arem) · qui



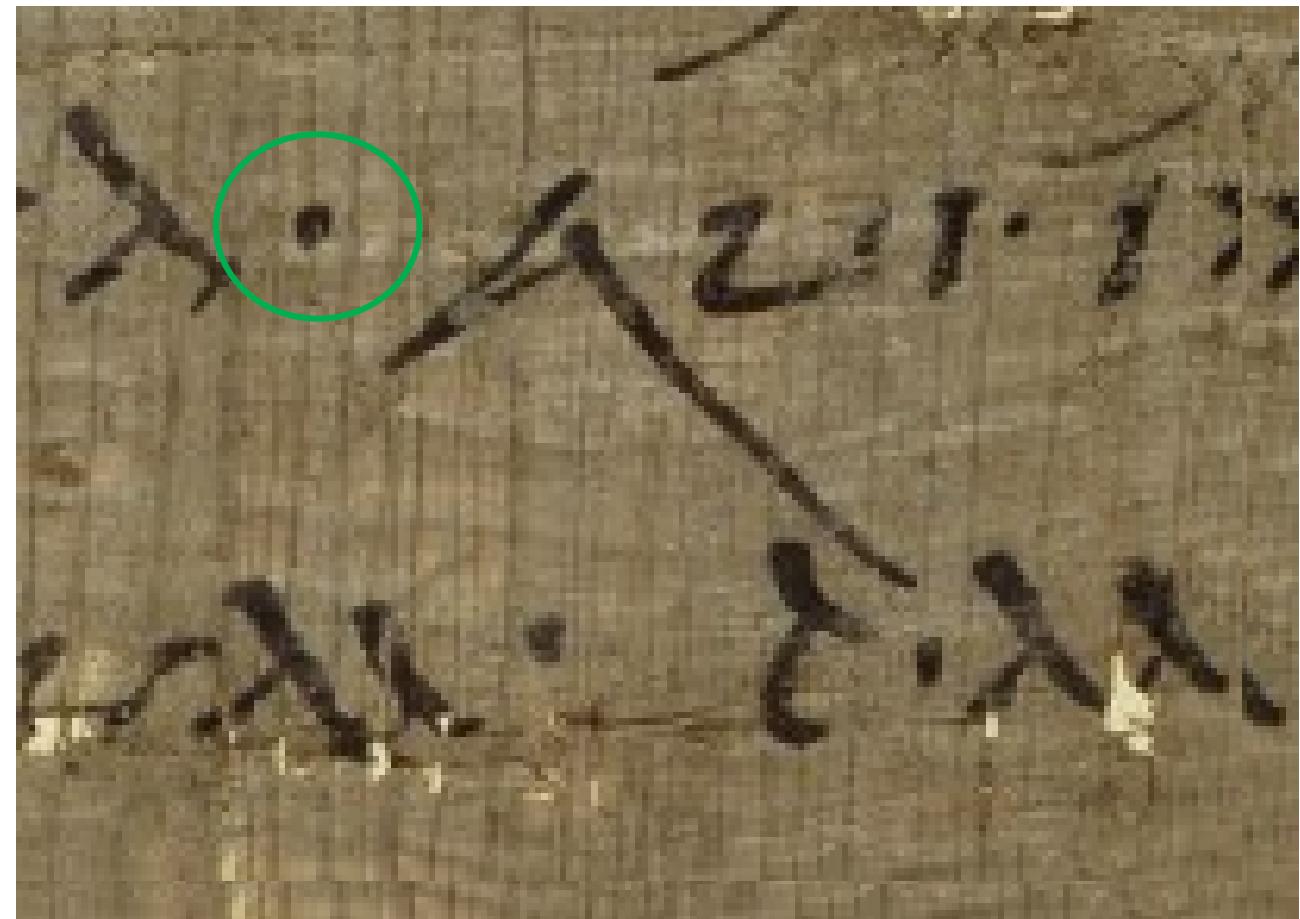
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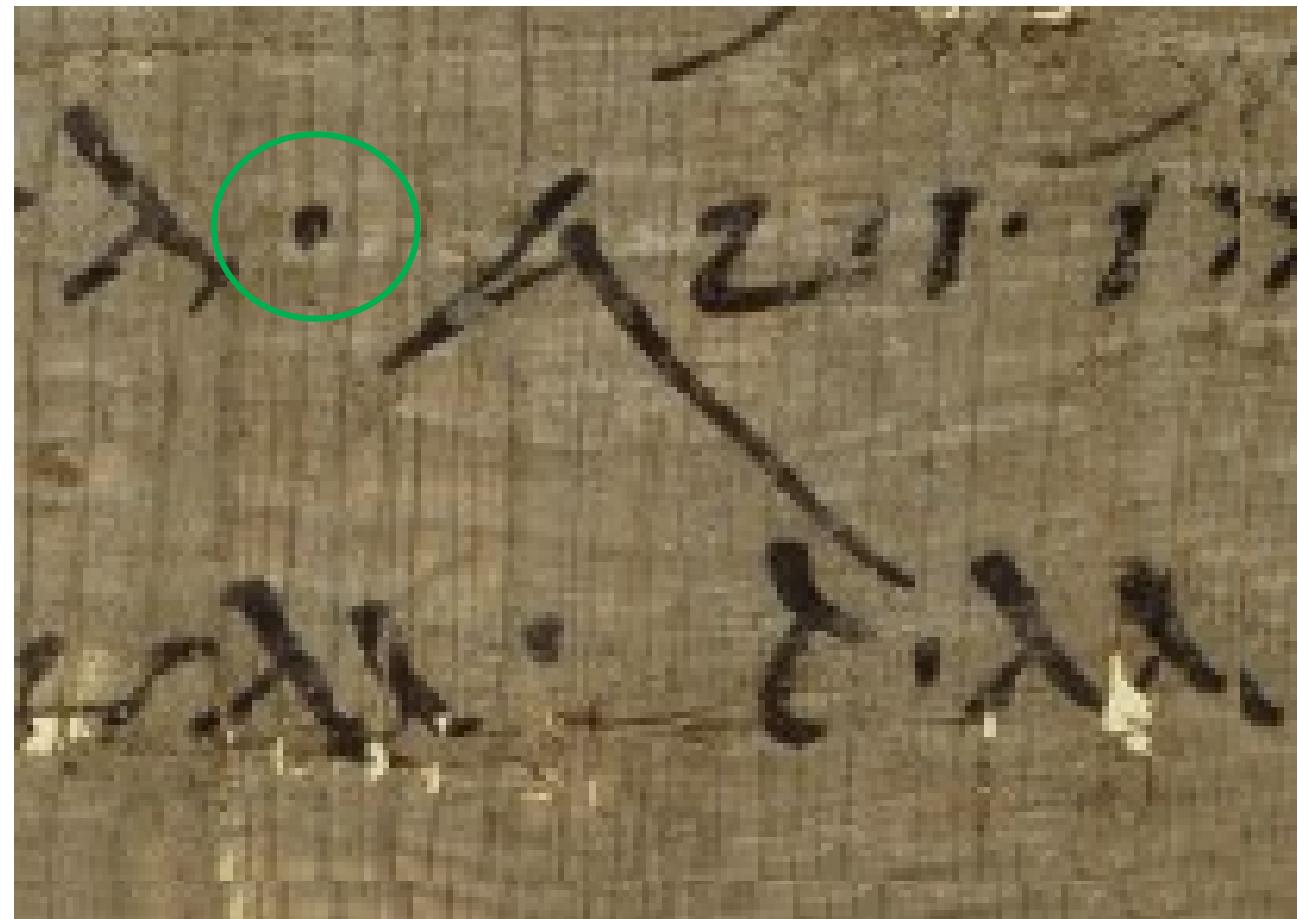
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 - Apparently, a great idea for *divisio verborum* – so great that they **dropped** it in the wink of an eye (during 1 AD)



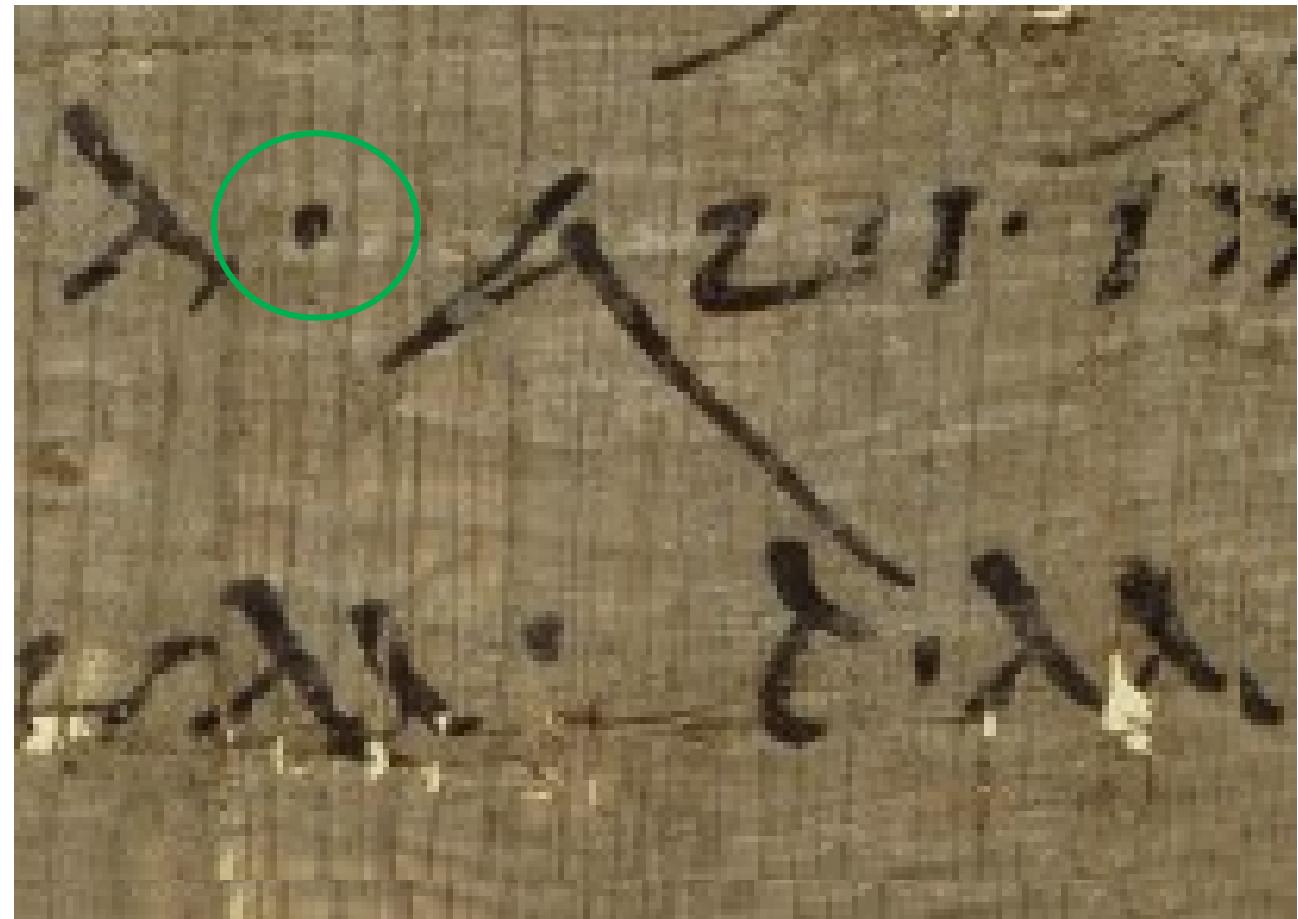
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 - *interpunctum* ≠ ***distinctio*** (which pertains to the speech)



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 - *interpunctum ≠ distinctio*
 - The abbreviating dot and the punctuation dot are two different entities (Giovè)



‘Il punto sembra comunque avere il compito primario di dividere le parole, e non è di fatto possibile supporre che valga per distinguere le abbreviature. Se si deve **escludere per il punto un valore abbreviativo**, è innegabile che questa stessa funzione venga assunta da una serie di segni diacritici che sono attestati in singoli casi nei papiri di questo secolo, ma la cui presenza si intensificherà nel tempo’ (Giovè Marchioli, p. 41).

Two distinct signs?

□ ... *u(irum)•fortem • co(n)s(ulem)•Scipionem • qui ...*

Two distinct signs?

- ❑ ... *u(irum)•fortem•co(n)s(ulem)•Scipionem•qui* ...
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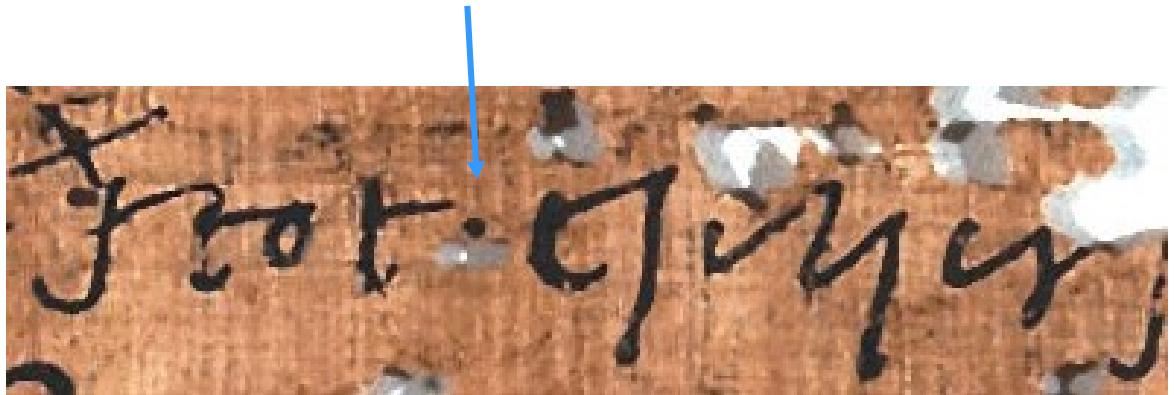
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- Both between complete words, and after abbreviated ones

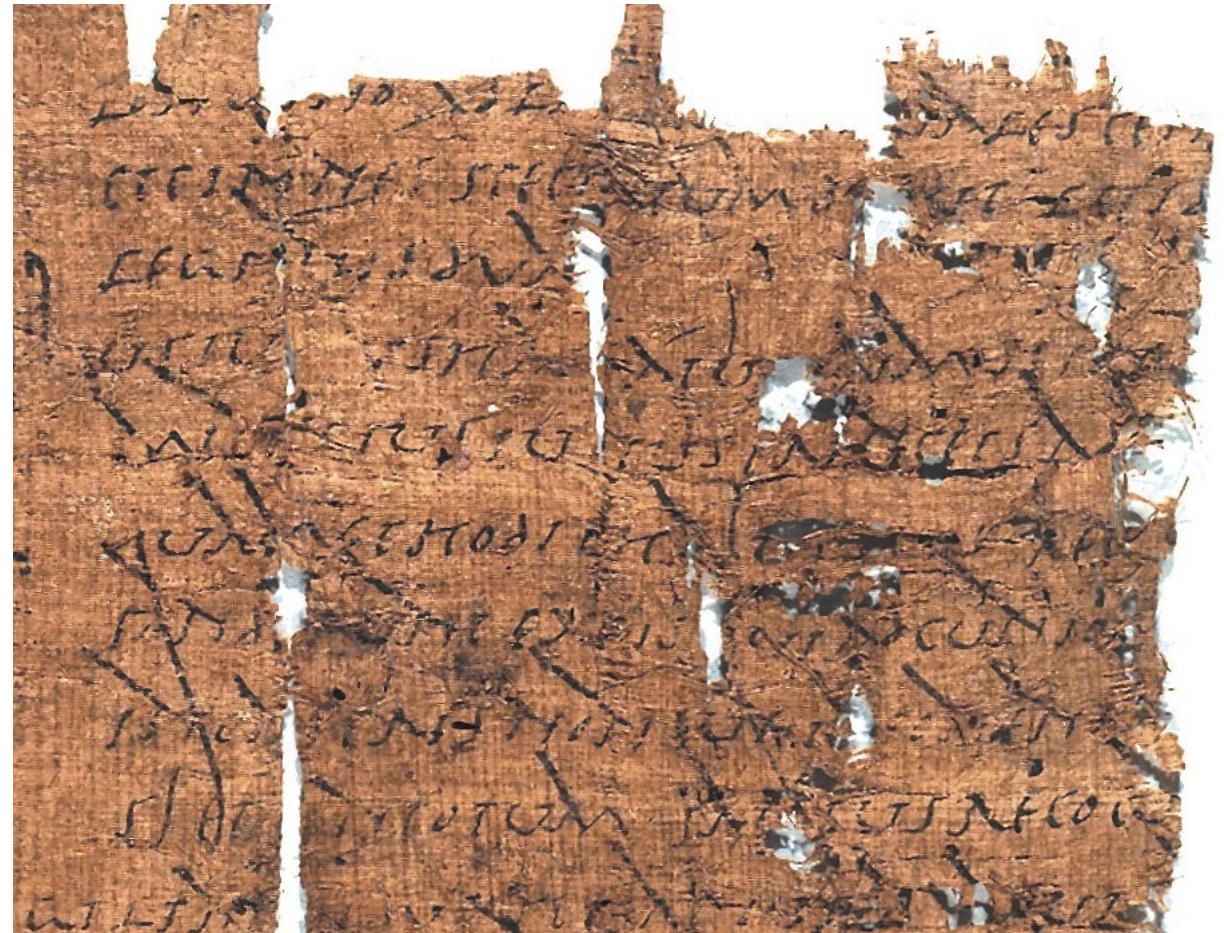


sop(ondit) · C. Iulius



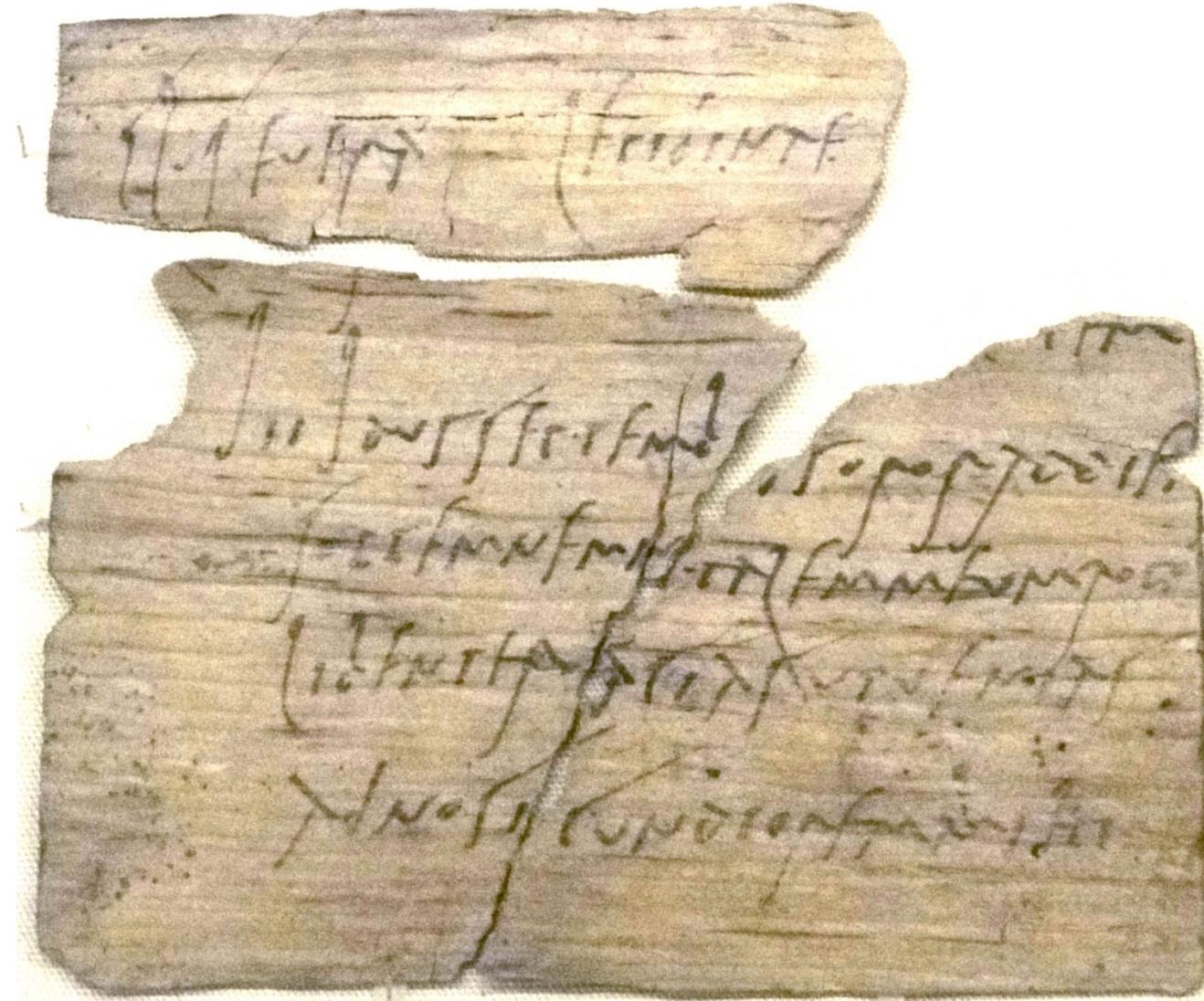
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- Some documents are entirely **devoid** of it: *PSI XIII 1307*, e.g.



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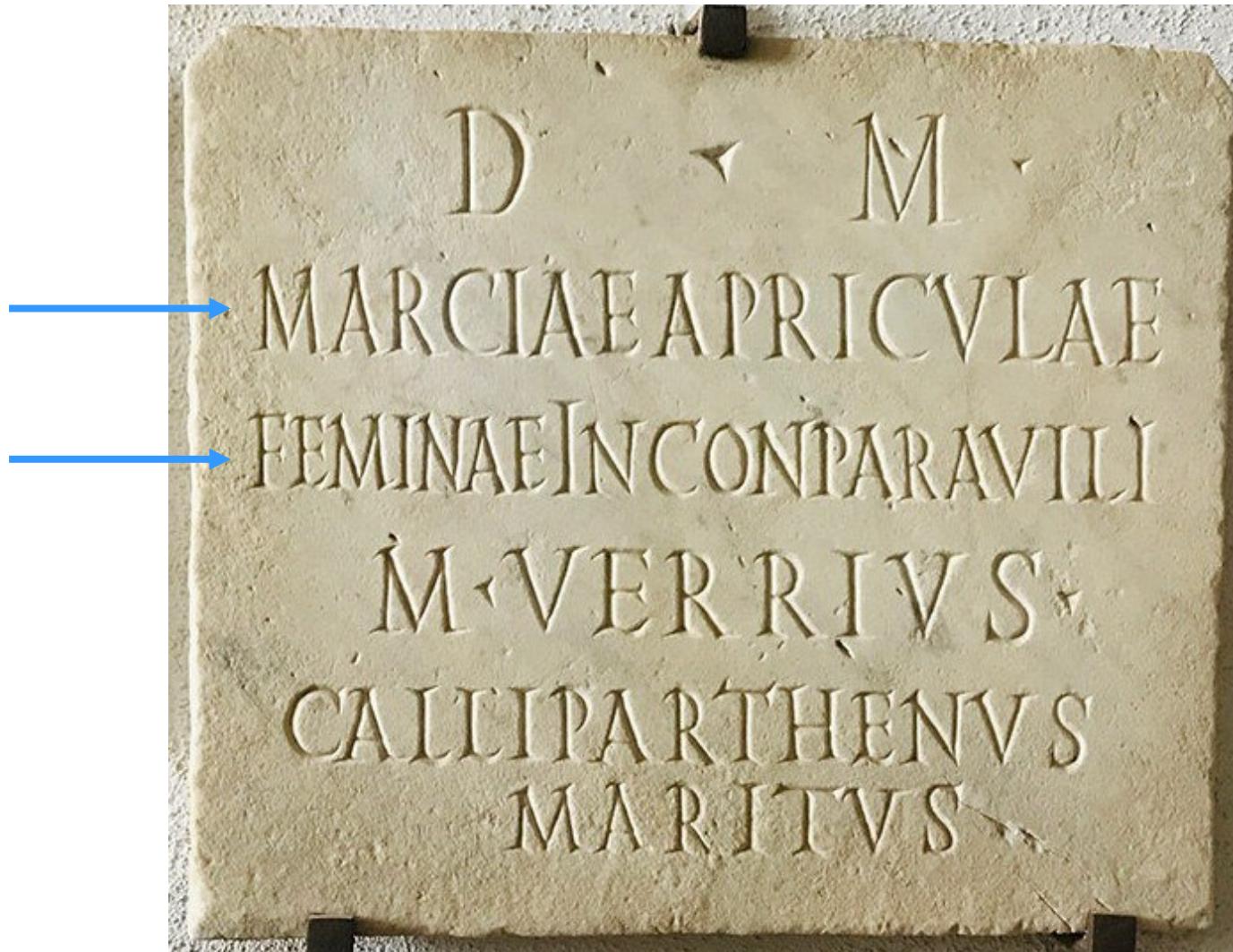
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- Vindolanda!



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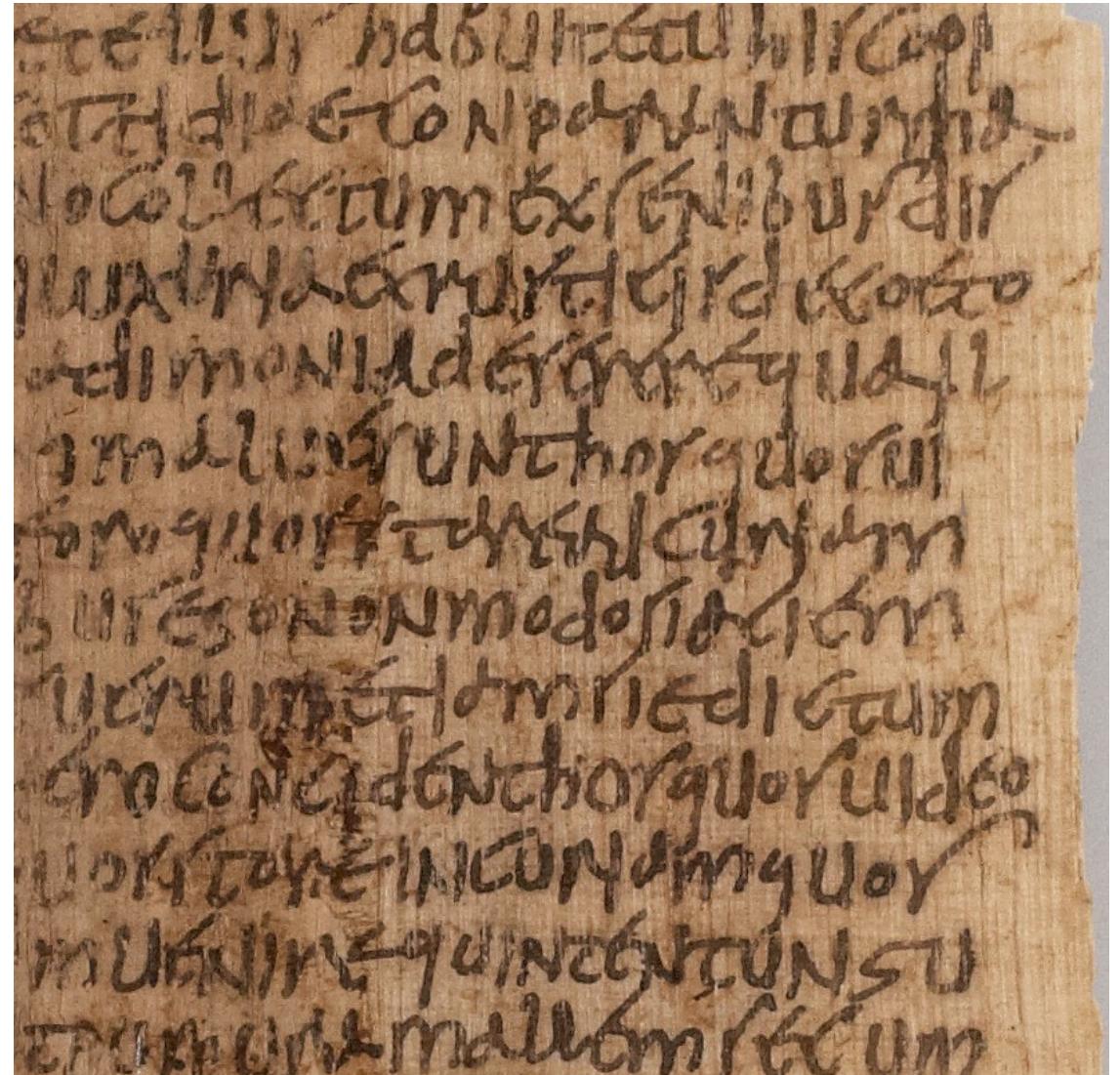
(Cuma, *porta Mediana*, II AD)



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(P.Duke inv. 798 + P.Monts.Roca inv.
129-149: Egypt, IV AD)



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QVINT. *inst.* 7, 9, 6 *sic apud Graecos contendunt Λέων et Πανταλέων, cum scriptura dubia est, bona omnia Leonti an bona Pantaleonti relicita sint.*

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 - Military lists in columnar format, documents referring to internal proceedings of single **military bureaus**
 - Receipts, official letters, contracts – where they were **useful**, or felt as a necessary (inherited?) feature: scribal education still dictated by the **West**?

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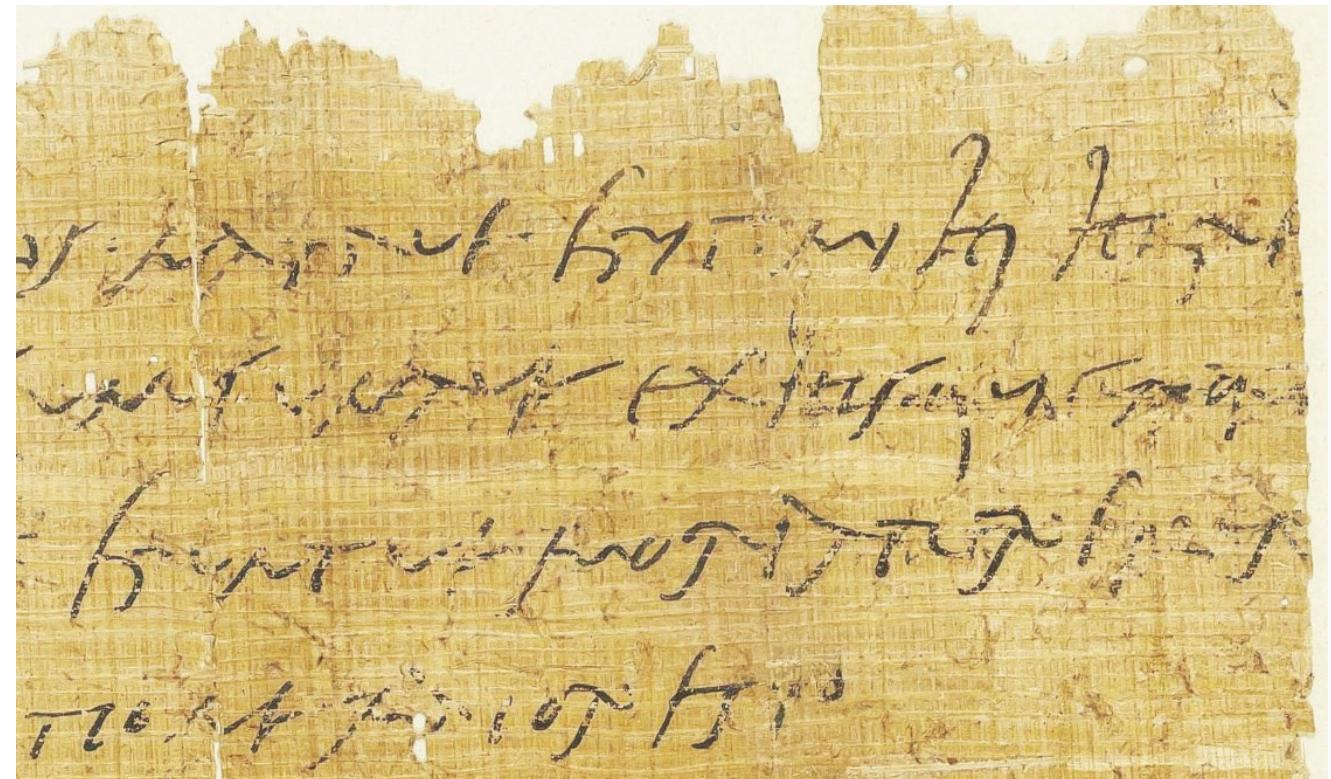
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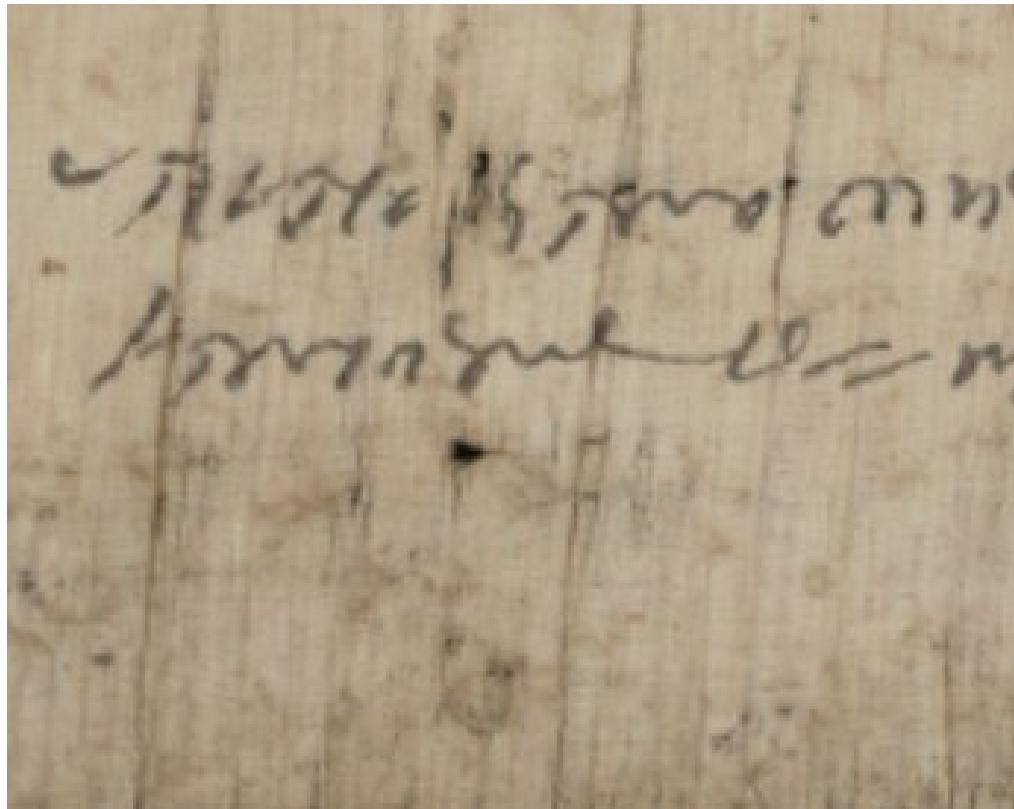
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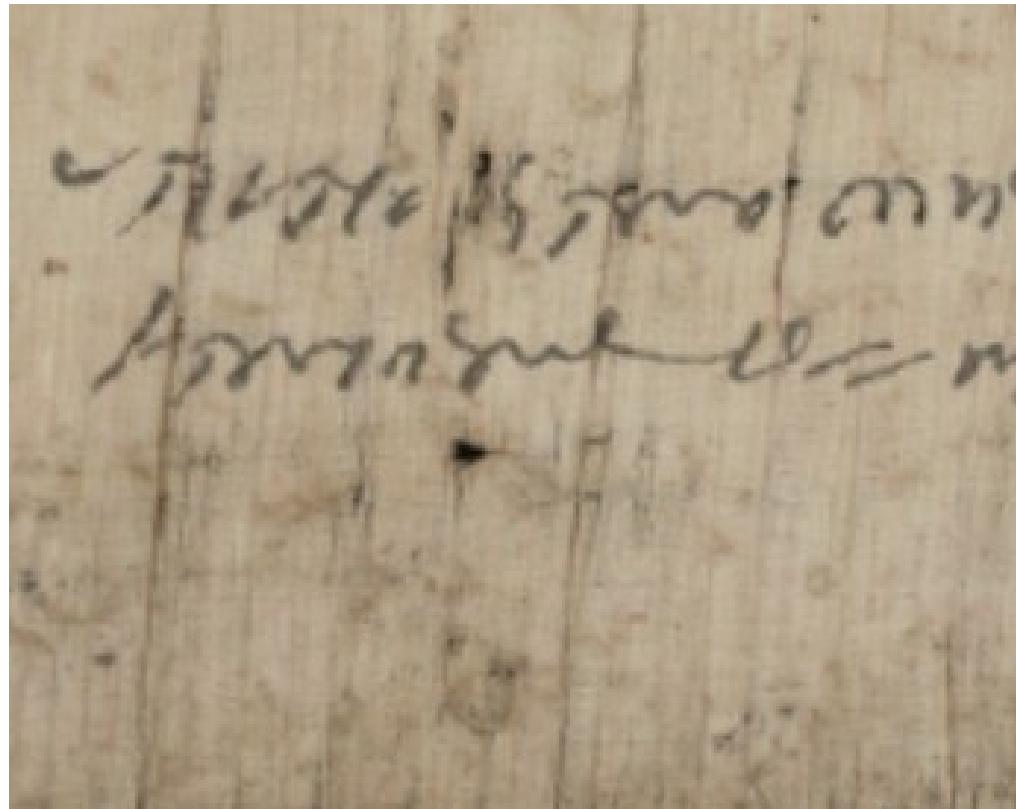
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A REQUEST FOR A *TUTOR*

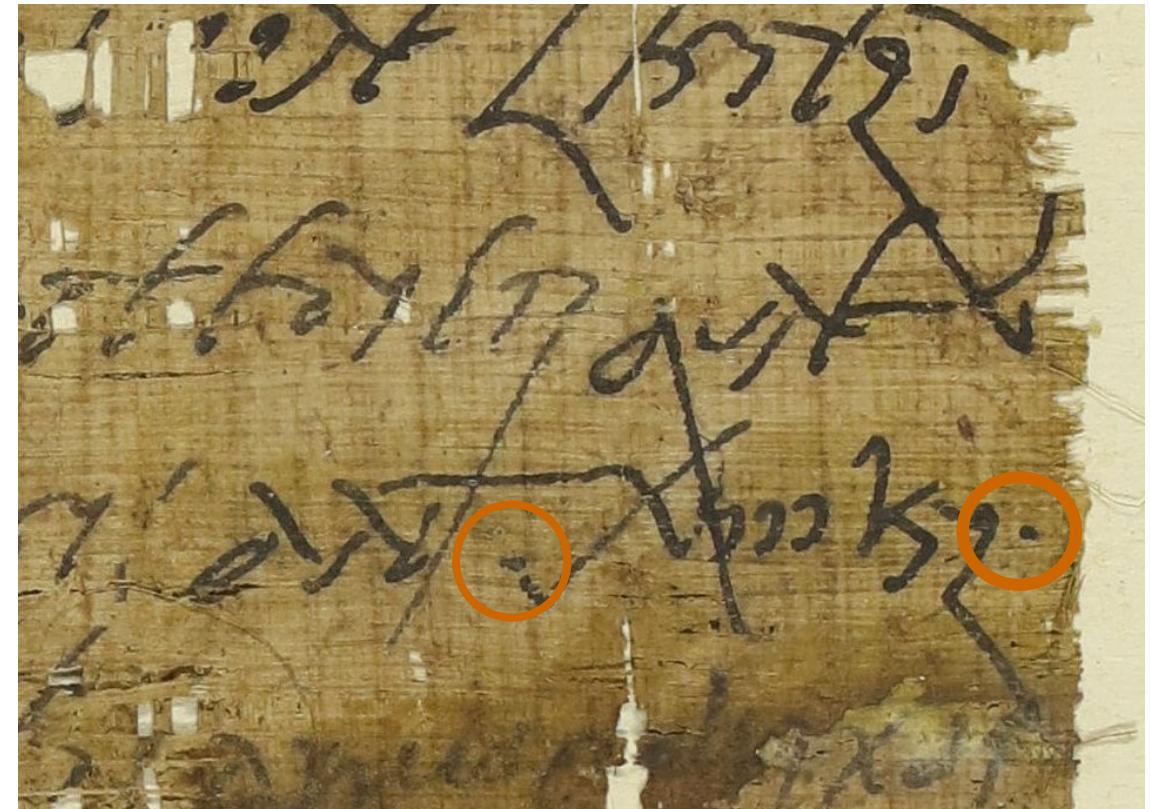


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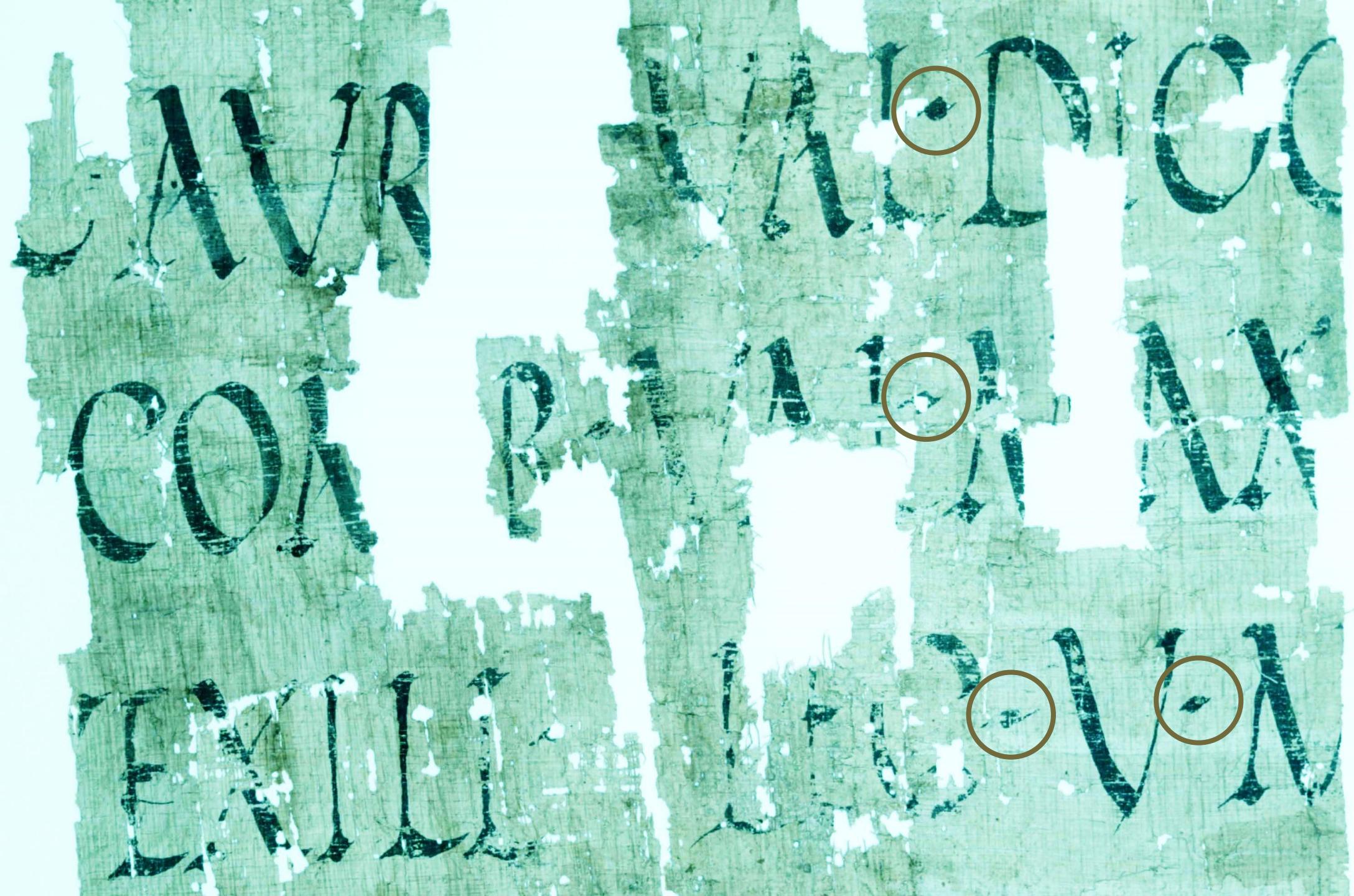
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'HIGH' TEXTS: SB I 1010 (AD 249) – A REQUEST
FOR *AGNITIO BONORUM POSSESSIONIS*



P.Oxy. XLI
2950 – late
III AD –
dedication
to Diocletian
and
Maximian

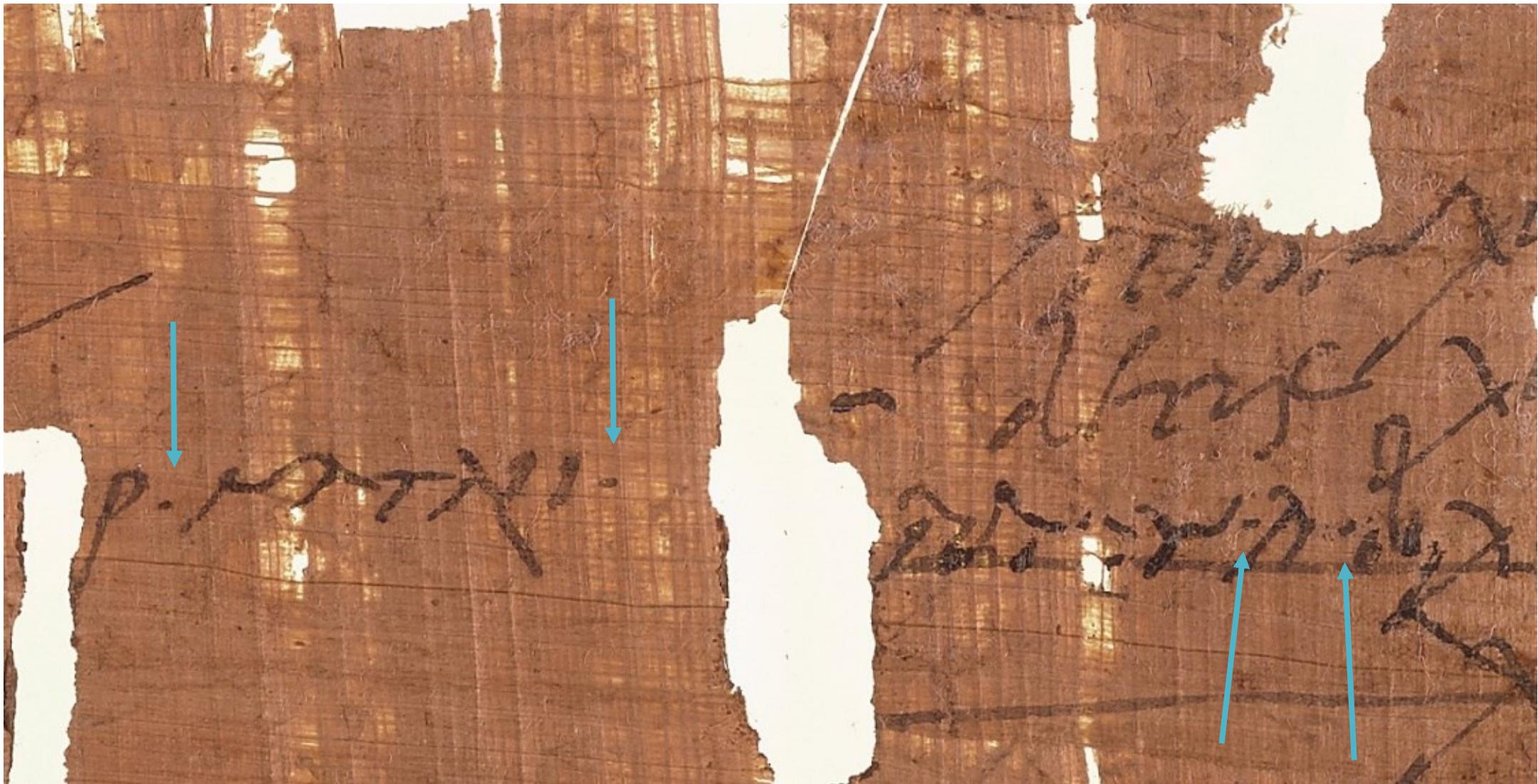


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- The scribes can retrieve them when they need abbreviation markers: see e.g. the **marginal annotations** in *P.Dura 100* (AD 219)

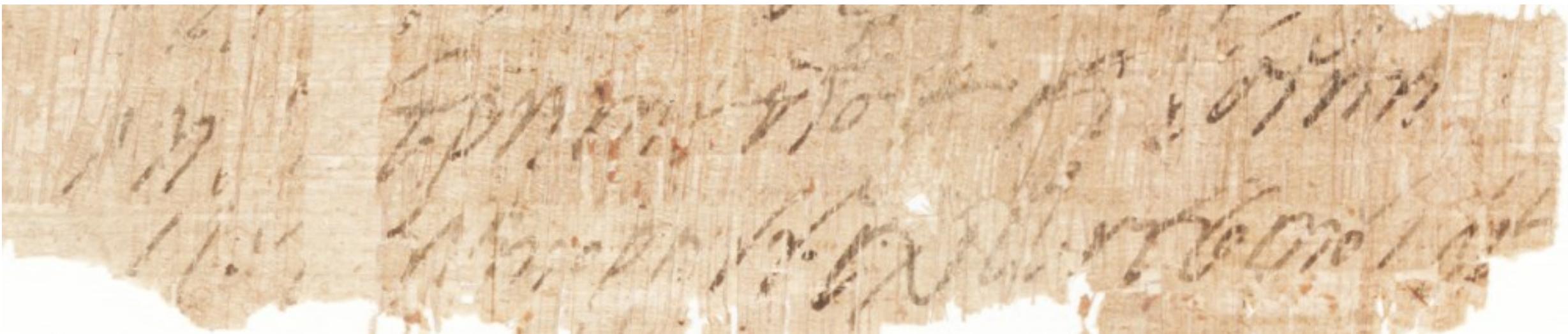


- Appad(ana)·, ad sacra<s> himag(ines)·, auir·, coh(ortis)· I· ascol·, disposit·, m·, mal·, m· amb·, Max(imo)·, p(ro)·, sig(nifer)·, singul(aris)·, etc. – and often after full names

P.Vindob. inv. L 78 verso – AD 342 – Latin official document

|⁴ -ante et · primario uet(eranorum) et ea iunn(iorum) . [

|⁵ [i]ll(ustris)· Vetranio pp(raesentibus) s(upra)s(criptis)· ex ll(itteris)· recognoui de[



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- ≠ ἄνω στιγμή

n(ota) a(rmo) d(extro)



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- One can summarize its appearances in a **single slide**

- P.Berol. inv. 25053 (after AD 212): *p(urus)*
- SB I 1010 (AD 249): *u(iro) p(erfectissimo), t(utore) a(uctore)*
- P.Dura 95 (AD 250–1): *n(umerus) p(urus)*
- P.Dura 97 (AD 251): *n(ota) f(emore) a(rmo) d(estro), s(ine) n(ota)*
- ChLA IX 404 (AD 277–82): *p(rae)p(ositi)*
- ChLA X 436 (III AD): *diametr-, epimetr-*
- P.Oxy. XLI 2952 (AD 311–4): *u(ir) p(erfectissimus) a(gens) u(ices)*
- P.Sakaon 33, 34 (AD 318–21): *Arsinoit(um) in secret(ario)*
- P.Oxy. LXIII 4381 (AD 375)
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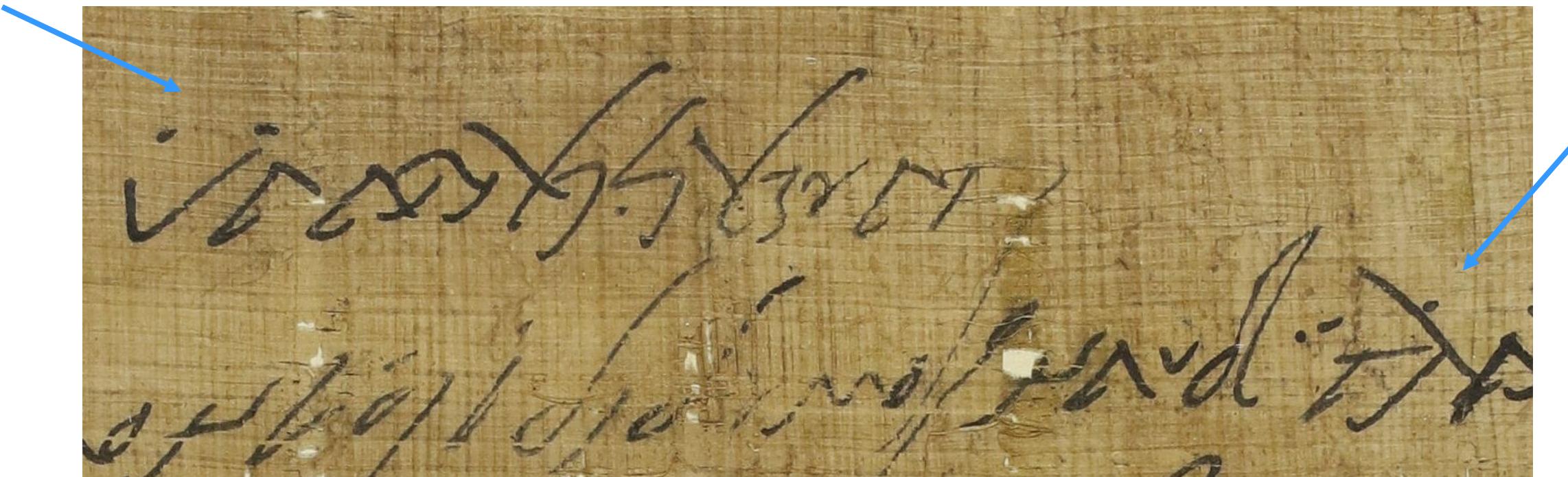


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- Not incidentally, a beautifully written manuscript: *SB I 1010 (AD 249)*

1.1 **u**(iro) **p**(erfectissimo), 1. 2 **t**(utore) **a**(uctore)



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- *Agnitiones bonorum* (*SB I 1010, P.Thomas 20*), military and fiscal accounts
- After Diocletian, again a military document and **court proceedings**
- Never after AD 415
- Never found **alone**

2. The high dot

SB | 1010

- *u(iro), p(erfectissimo), t(utore)
a(uctore), M*
- *praef(ecto)·, inpub(ere)·,
heredib(us)·, dat(um)· | kal(endas)·*
- *q̄(ui) ē(t)*
- *b̄(onorum) p̄(ossessionem)*
- *co(n)ss(ulibus)*

P.Vindob. inv. L 76

- *uet(eris), uu(iris) cc(larissimis),
Fl(auio), AA(ugustis)*
- *leg(ionis), opt(ione)*
- *Gem̄(inae), d̄d̄'(omini)s*
- *Kal(endas)/*
- *n̄n̄(ostris), cons(ular-)̄*

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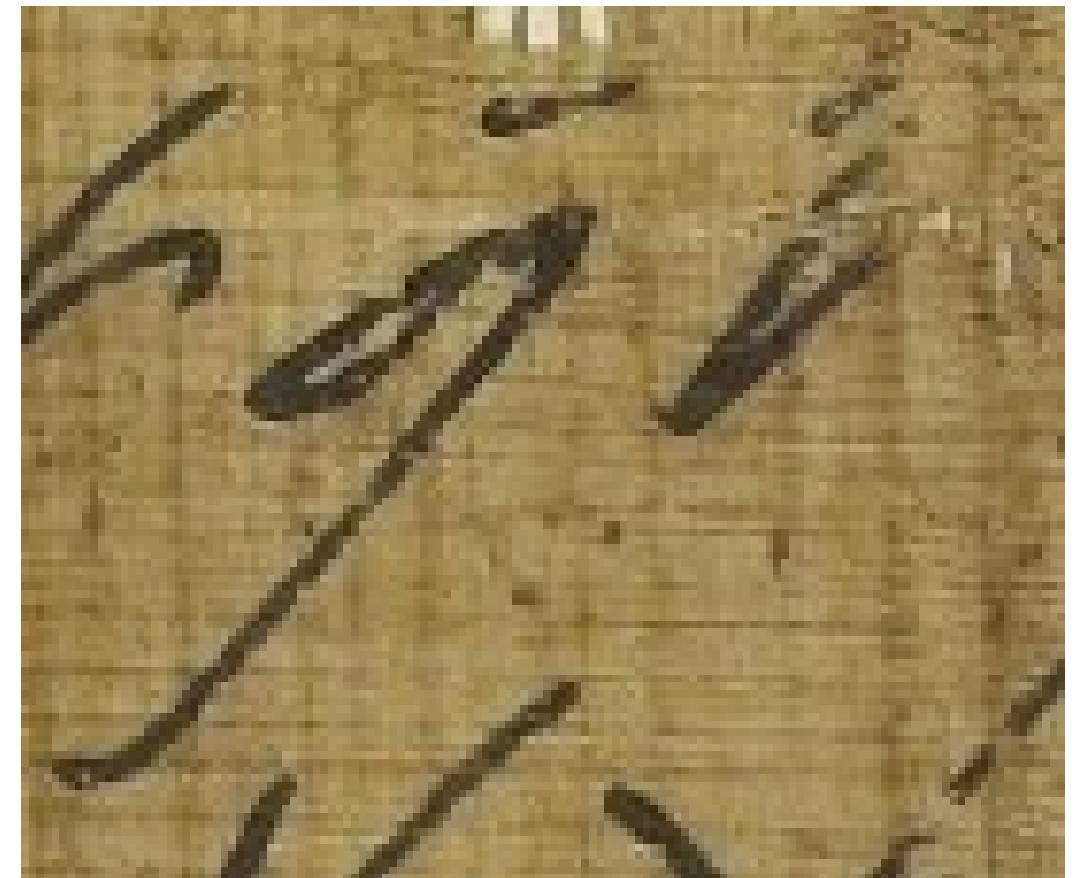
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- It is not a displaced or mistaken version of the medial dot
- One finds it in Egypt and in Dura-Europos: **it is not a local fact**
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3. The horizontal bar

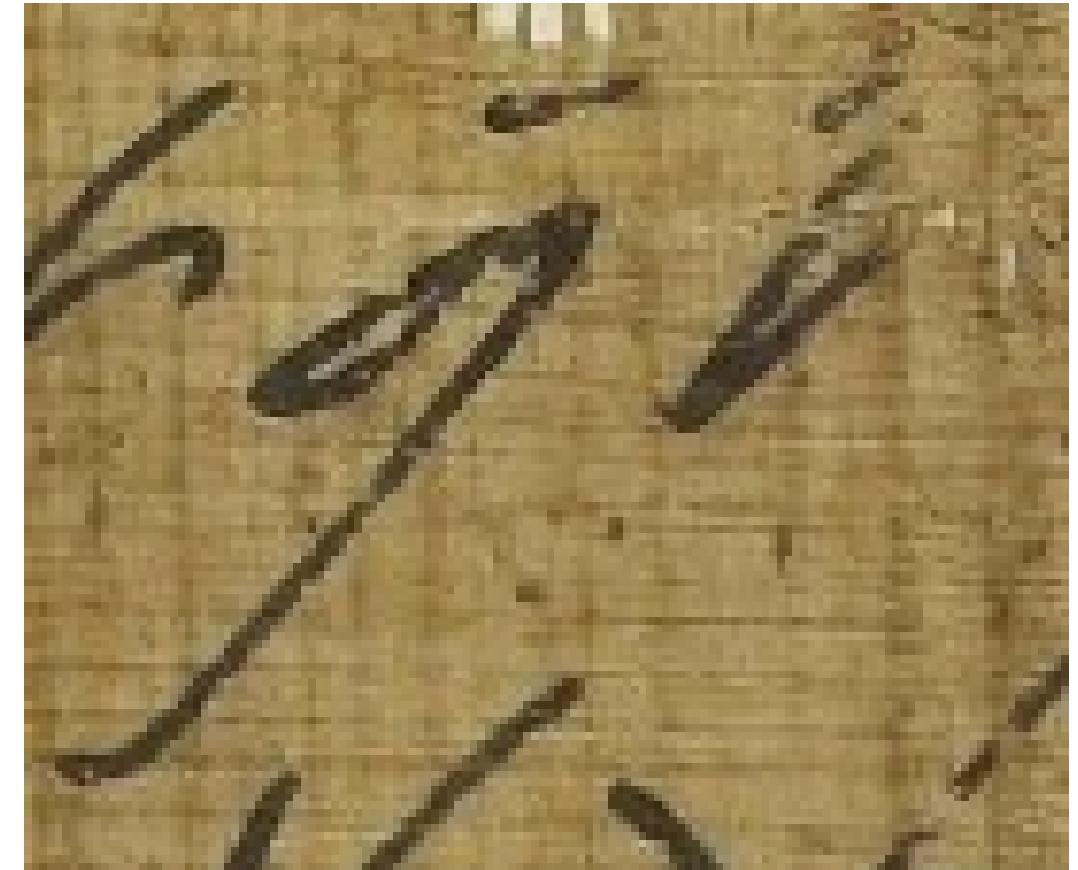
$$\bar{q}(ui) \ \bar{e}(t)$$



3. The horizontal bar

- *Titulus*
- Its main usage is on **stone**: it marks figures (XXVIII) or multiplies for 1000 (XXVIII = 28.000)

$\bar{q}(ui) \bar{e}(t)$



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 - *O.Bu Njem* (AD 253–9)
 - *O.Gascou* 1–17 (IV–V AD)

- P.Lond. inv 2851 (AD 105): *q(ui) m(ilitare) c(oepit)*
- *ChLA* XLII 1212 (AD 113–7): *n(ostri)*
- P.Berol. inv. 7124 (AD 131): *d(olo) m(alo)*
- P.Vindob. inv. L 98 verso (AD 152): *n(ostri)*
- P.Gen. inv. Lat. 8 + *P.Grenf.* II 108 (AD 167): *Aug(usto) III*
- P.Berol. inv. 14107 *recto* (AD 197–232): *reliq(ui)*
- P.Princ. inv. Bell II 64 (II AD): *dr(achmae)*
- P.Berol. inv. 25053 (after AD 212): *n(umerus)*
- P.Hamb. inv. Gr. 409 (AD 222–9): *n(umerus) p(urus)*
- *P.Mich.* III 164 (AD 242–4): *ordd(inati)*
- *SB* I 1010 (AD 249): *q(ui) e(t)*
- *P.Dura* 95 (AD 251): *r(euersi)*
- *P.Thomas* 20 (AD 269–70): *q(ui) e(t)*
- *SB* XVIII 13851 (AD 293): *d(omino) n(ostro)*
- P.Vindob. inv. L 165 (IV–V AD): *cumq(ue)*

3. The horizontal bar

- Much rare when employed to mark abbreviations: II–III AD, mostly
- One can summarize its appearances in a single slide
- **The distribution is uneven:**
testaments and agnitiones bonorum

- P.Berol. inv. 7124 (AD 131): *d(olo) m(alo)*
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- One can summarize its appearances in a single slide
- **The distribution is uneven:**
testaments and agnitiones bonorum ... but also military documents

- P.Lond. inv 2851 (AD 105): *q(ui) m(ilitare) c(oepit)*
- P.Berol. inv. 7124 (AD 131): *d(olo) m(alo)*
- P.Mich. III 164 (AD 242–4): *or dd(inati)*
- SB I 1010 (AD 249): *q(ui) e(t)*
- P.Thomas 20 (AD 269–70): *q(ui) e(t)*

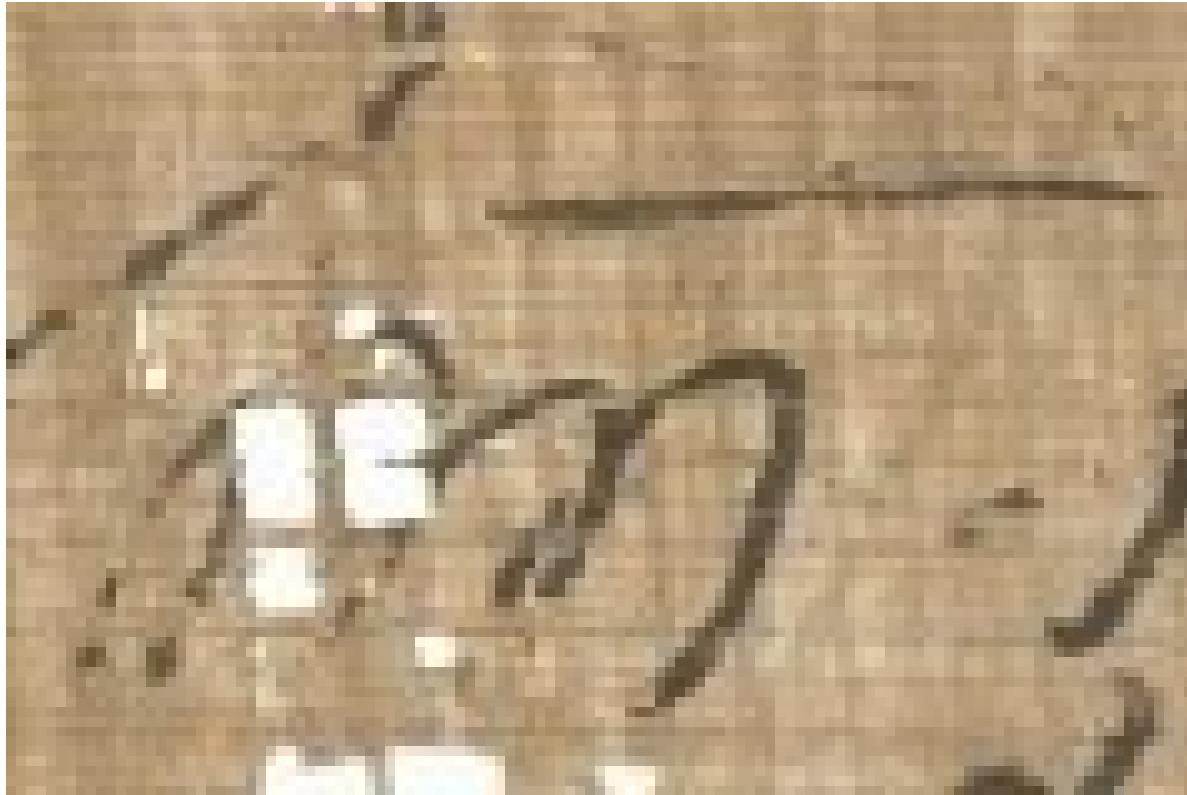
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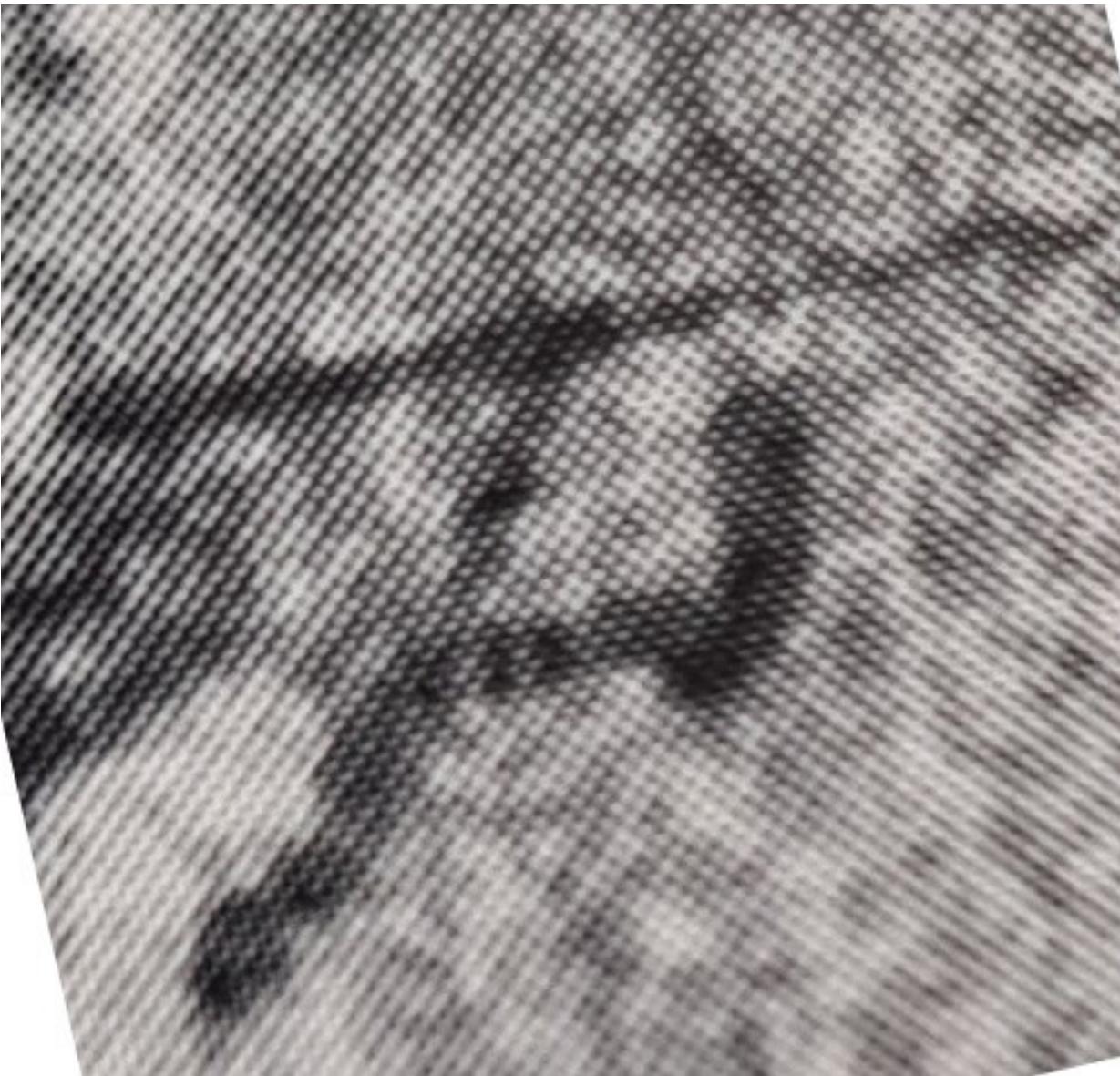
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The shape



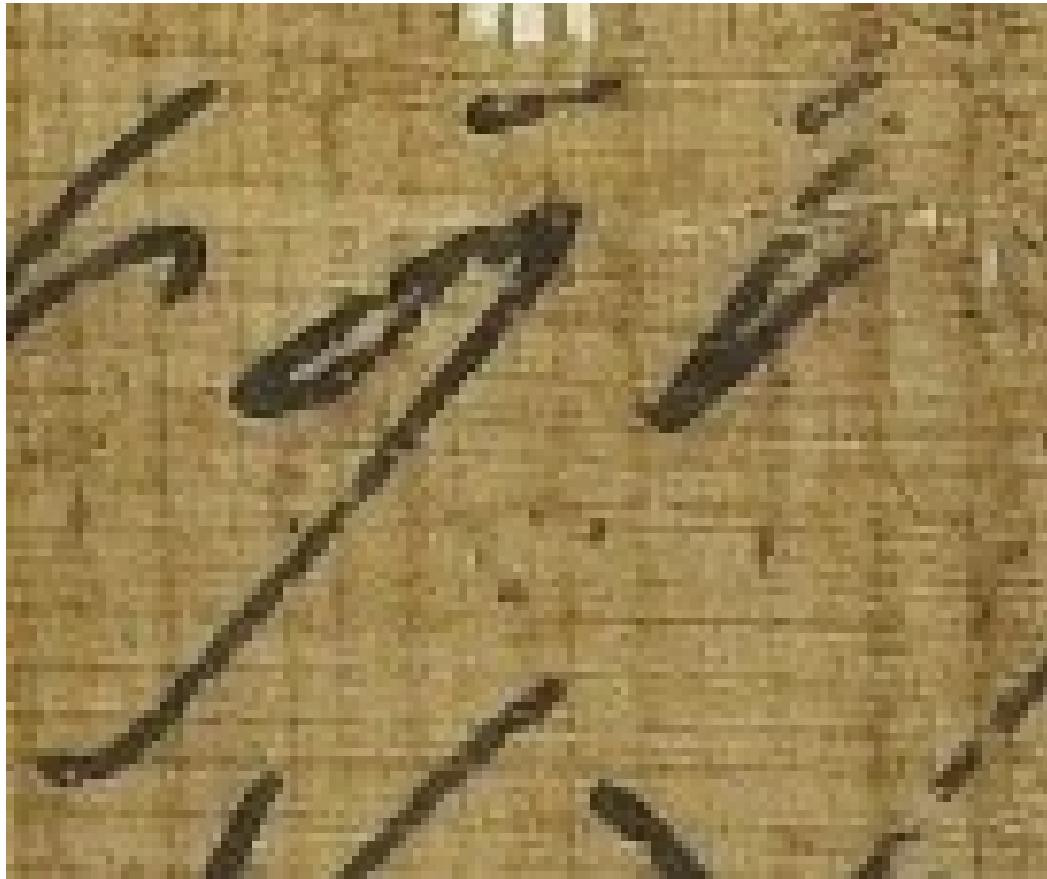
The shape

- HORIZONTAL
- P.Berol. inv.
7124: *d(olo)*
m(alo)



The shape

- HORIZONTAL,
slightly pointing
upwards
- *O.Bu Njem 9:
n(umerus)*



The shape

- APEX-like
- SB I 1010:
 $q(ui)$ $e(st)$



The shape

- Slightly CURVILINEAR
- *P.Mich. VII 460:*
p(raeside)
p(rouinciae)



The shape

- CUTTING strokes
- *P.Dura* 95:
r(euersi)
- Giovè Marchioli:
inscriptions

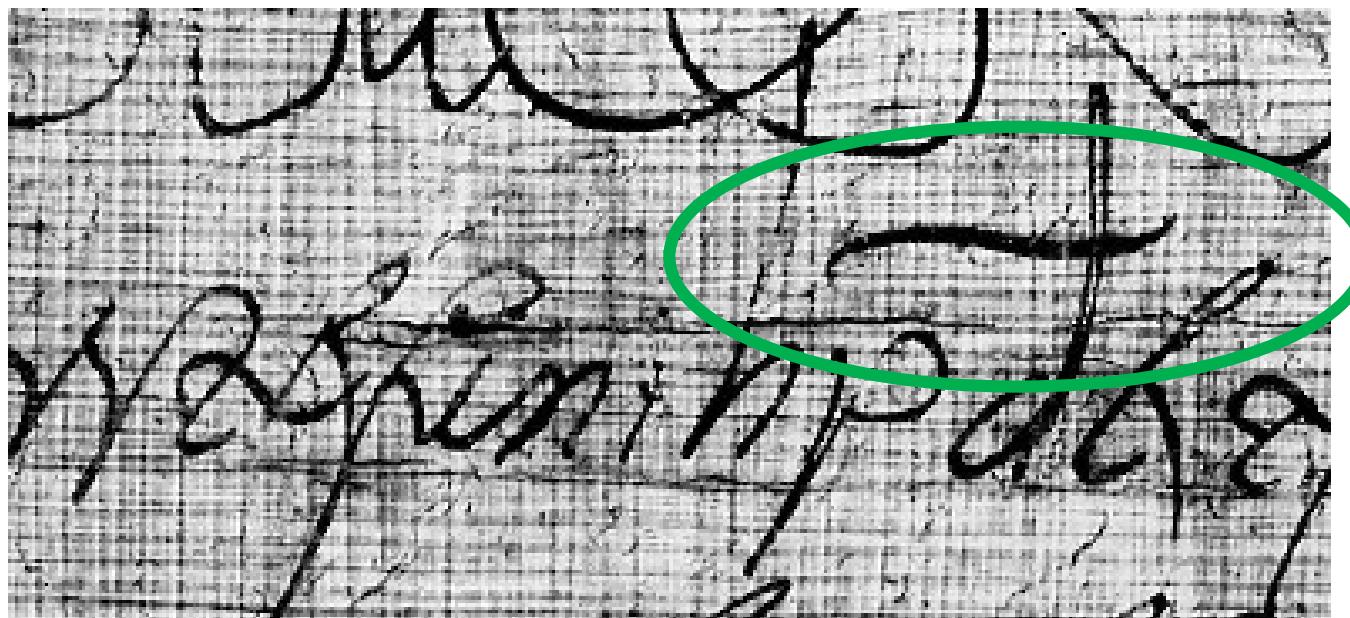
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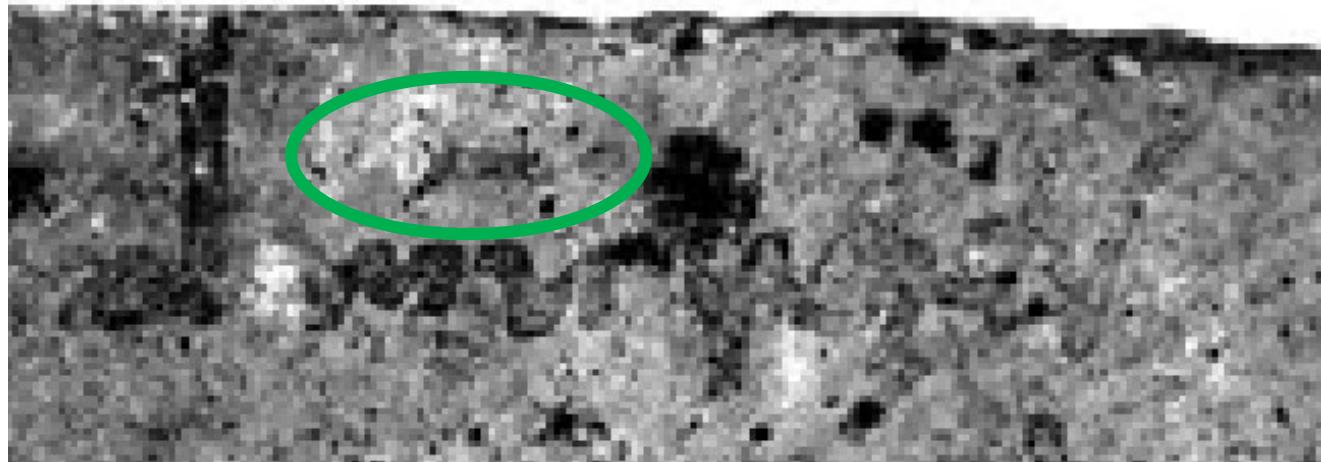
*... Stephani **h**(onesti) **p**(ueri) de it ...*



The shape

- The WAVY LINE
- *P. Ital. I 8*
(Ravenna, AD 564)

... ***d***(o)m(ini) ***n***(ostri) regis



The shape

- The WAVY LINE
- *O.Gascou. 1*
(Henchir el-Maïz, AD 508–9)

4. The short oblique bar (or apex)

- ...but not *those* apexes

nín'umerorum



4. The short oblique bar (or **apex**)

- ...but not *those* apexes
- II–III AD and a bit of the IV; some resurfacing in the VI

nín'umerorum



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- P.Heid. inv. P. Lat. 7 (AD 115–6)
- ChLA X 420 (AD 127/8–71)
- P.Berol. inv. 7124 (AD 131)
- P.Heid. inv. P. Lat. 12 (AD 138)
- SB XII 11043 (AD 152)
- P.Hamb. I 72 (II AD)
- P.Vindob. inv. L 74 (II–III AD)

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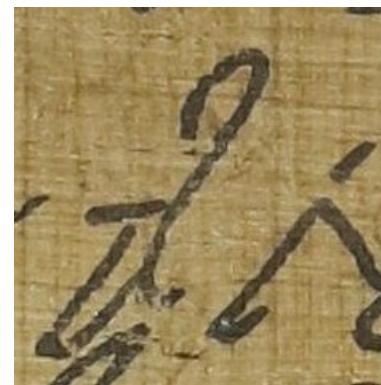
- *P.Dura* 56 (AD 208 c.)
- *P.Dura* 60 (AD 208 c.)
- *P.Diog.* 10 (AD 211)
- *P.Dura* 74 (AD 211–51)
- P.Berol. inv. 25053 (AD 212)
- *P.Brook.* 24 (AD 214 or 215)
- *P.Dura* 66 (AD 216)
- *P.Dura* 55A (AD 218–20)
- *P.Dura* 100 (AD 219)
- *P.Dura* 64 (AD 221)
- *P.Dura* 54 (AD 222–35)
- *P.Dura* 92 (AD 222–35)
- *P.Oslo* III 122 (AD 238–42)
- *P.Dura* 89 (AD 239)
- *P.Dura* 121 (after AD 239–41)
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- *P.Oxy.* LXXXIII 5363 (AD 244)
- *SB I* 1010 (AD 249)
- *P.Dura* 95 (AD 250–1)
- *P.Dura* 105 (AD 251–6)
- *P.Thomas* 20 (AD 269–70)
- P.Berol. inv. 14099 (III AD)

4. The short oblique bar

- Again: II–III AD and a bit of the IV
- This time, **specific typologies** – and a **geographically determined** distribution
- **Military papyri** – with exceptions, e.g. *fr'(umentaria)* in P.Vindob. inv. L 74 recto, *b'(onorum) p'(ossessionem)* in SB I 1010 and *P.Thomas* 20



iug(era) fr'(umentaria) II



b'(onorum) p'(ossessionem)

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- Again: II–III AD and a bit of the IV
- This time, **specific typologies** – and a **geographically determined** distribution
- Among the abbreviated words, those beginning with **n** are the favourites

<i>b(onorum)</i>	<i>Palmyr(enorum)</i>
<i>p(ossessionem)</i>	<i>poster(ius)</i>
<i>b(ouem) m(arem),</i> <i>f(eminam)</i>	<i>p(rae)p(osit(i)</i>
<i>dec(urio)</i>	<i>prid(ianum)</i>
<i>dd(omini) nn(ostri) (X 8)</i>	<i>rat(io) stip(endii)</i>
<i>Fl(auio)</i>	<i>sesquiplicar(ii)</i>
<i>Fort(is)</i>	<i>s(upra)s(criptus)</i>
<i>fr(umentaria)</i>	<i>u(iro) p(erfectissimo)</i>
<i>legg(atis)</i>	
<i>mil(iti)</i>	
<i>n(on)</i>	
<i>n(umerus) p(urus) (X 5)</i>	

4. The short oblique bar (or apex)

- ...but not *those* apexes
- II–III AD and a bit of the IV; some resurfacing in the VI
- Specific typologies and perhaps geographically marked (?)
- **Dura-Europos** has the lion's share

- *P.Dura* 56 (AD 208 c.)
- *P.Dura* 60 (AD 208 c.)
- *P.Diog.* 10 (AD 211)
- *P.Dura* 74 (AD 211–51)
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P.Dura 55A (AD 218–20)

4. The short oblique bar

- Again: II–III AD and a bit of the IV
- This time, **specific typologies** – and a **geographically determined** distribution
- Among the abbreviated words, those beginning with *n* are the favourites
- **Durene** evidence amounts to roughly half of the total – and *n'* appears also in letters from **high commandoes**



P.Dura 64 letter A (AD 221)



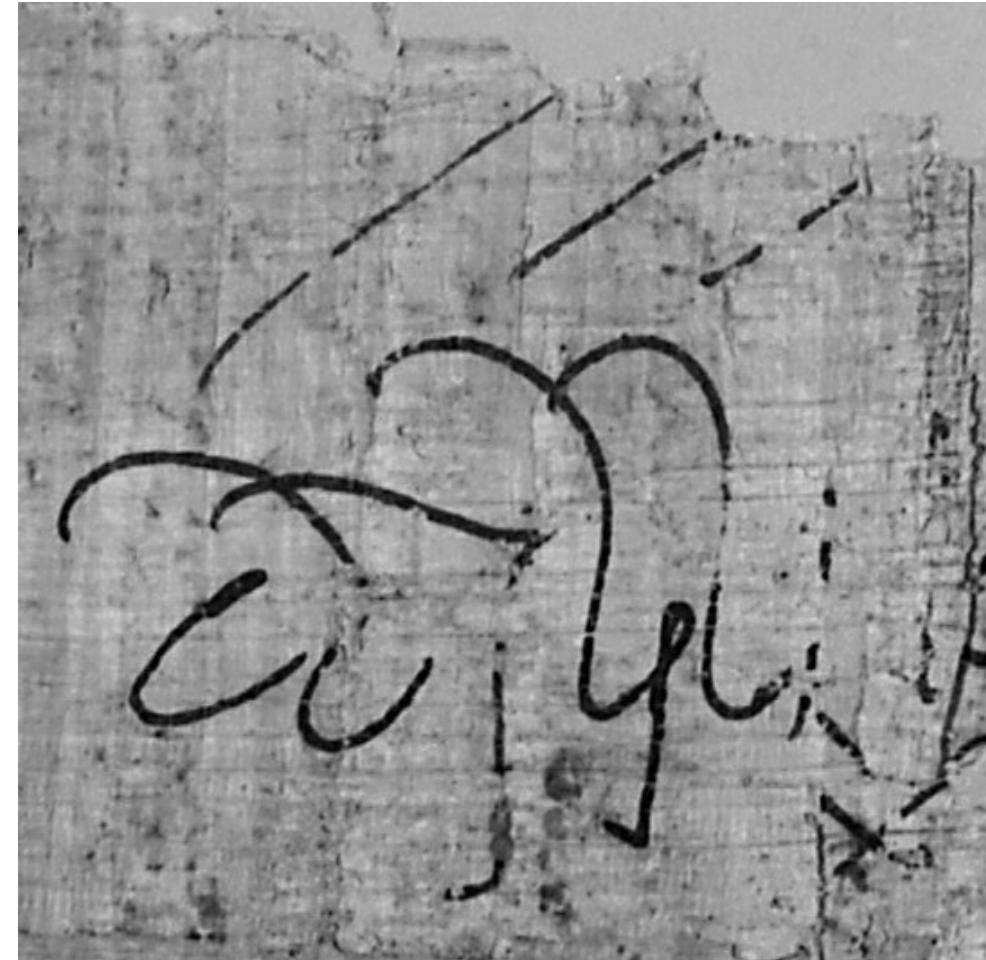
P.Dura 60 letter B (AD 208 c.)



4. The short oblique bar

P.Sakaon 34, l. 1 D'd'(omnis) n'n(ostris) ... (AD 321)

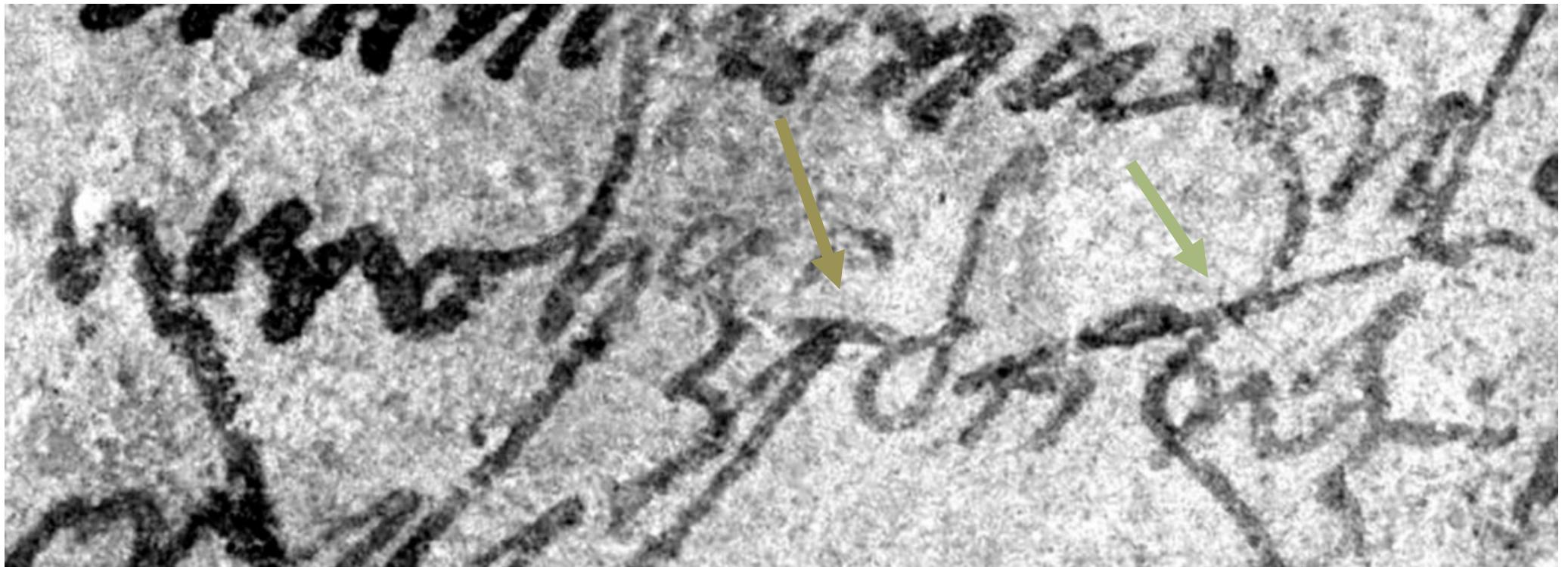
- Again: II–III AD and a bit of the IV–VI
- This time, **specific typologies** – and a **geographically** determined distribution
- Among the abbreviated words, those beginning with *n* are the favourites
- *d'(omnis) n'(oster)* and derivates still pop by in the IV AD. The sign dwindles to **nothing**



4. The short oblique bar

- ...but: *O.Gascou 17 (AD 526–7)*

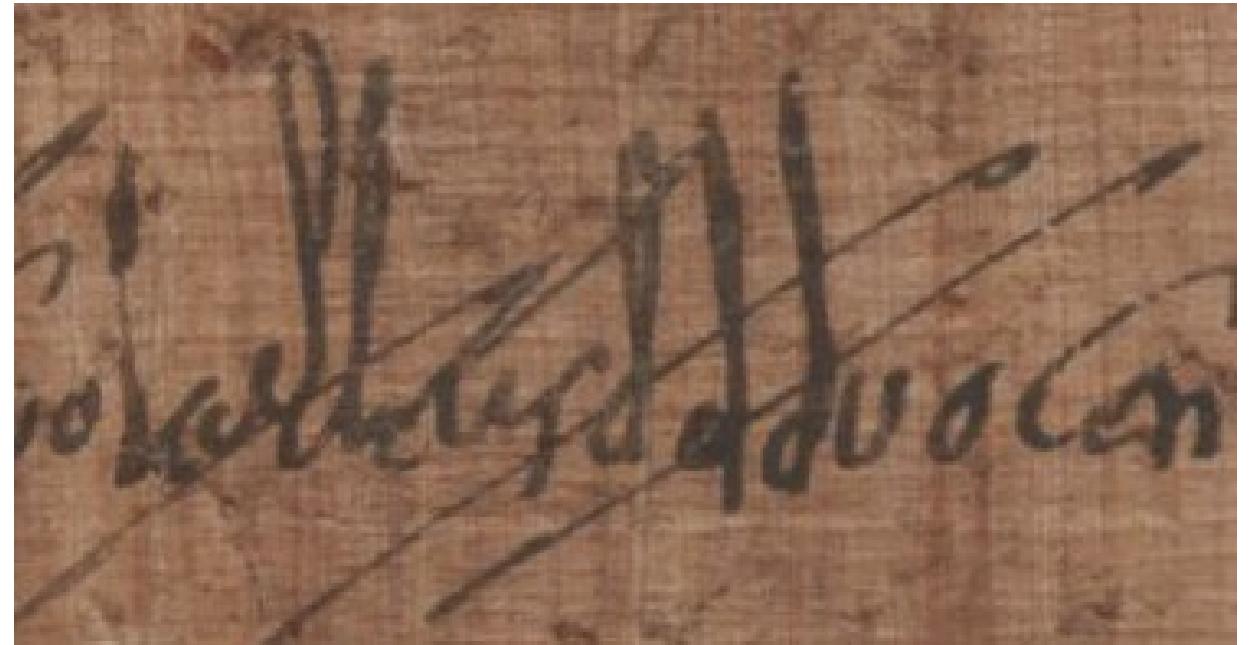
l. 4 *Carthag' (inis) d(omini) n(ostri) reg(is)*



5. The slash

- The great **celebrity** of Late Antiquity
- ‘Oblique titulus’ (Giovè Marchioli)

Ka~~H~~(endas) eas~~dd~~(em) duo



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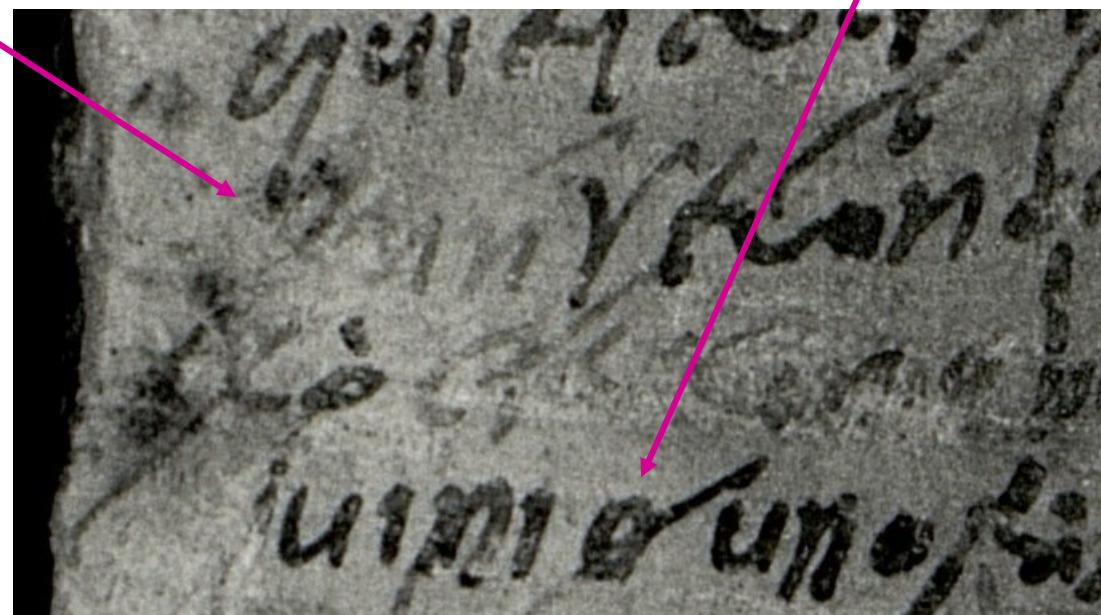
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 - P.Berol. inv. 7124 (AD 131): *recitat(um)*
 - P.Cairo Cat. inv. 10745, P.Princ. inv. Bell II 64, ChLA X 436 (II – III AD): *d(enarii)*
 - P.Mich. VII 449 (II AD): *-q(ue)*
 - P.Ross. Georg. V 18 (AD 212–3): *d(ixit)*

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ann(o) secundo

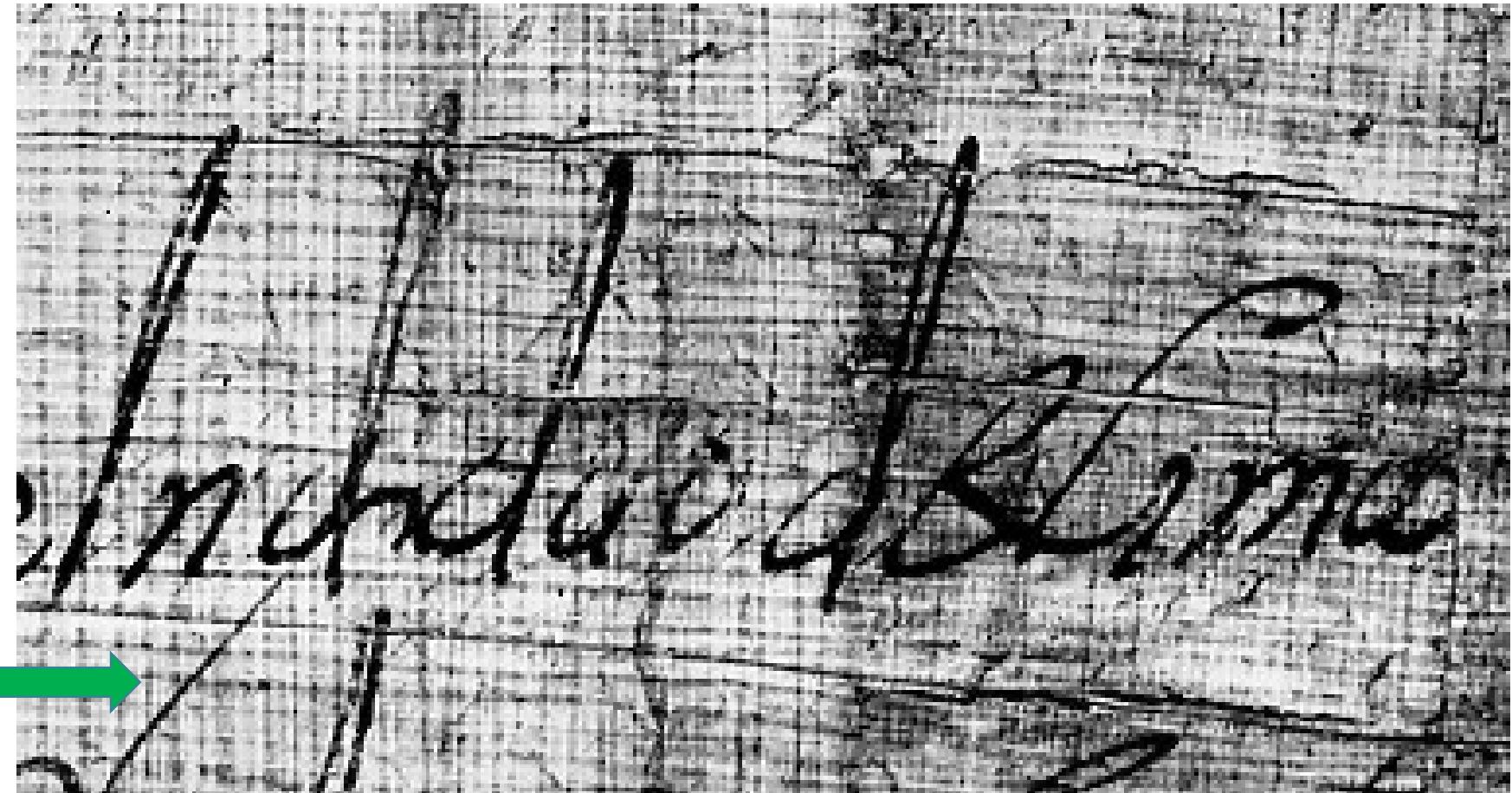
uini o(rci) uno



O.Capsa inv. s.n. (AD 437–532)

P.Ital. I 8 (Ravenna, AD 564)

in d(ictione) duodecima



5. The slash

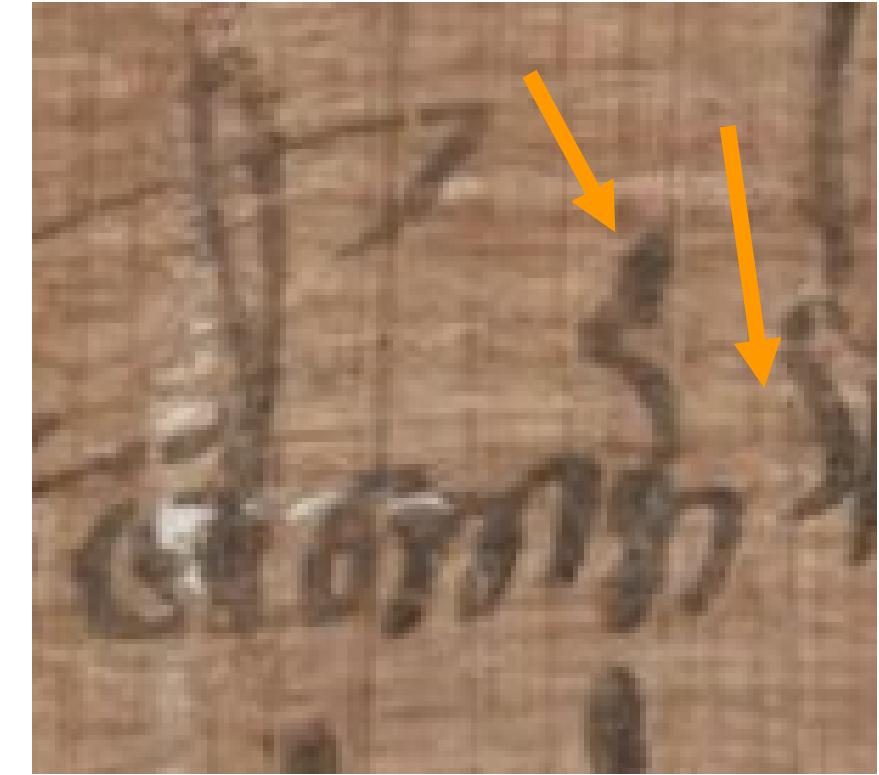
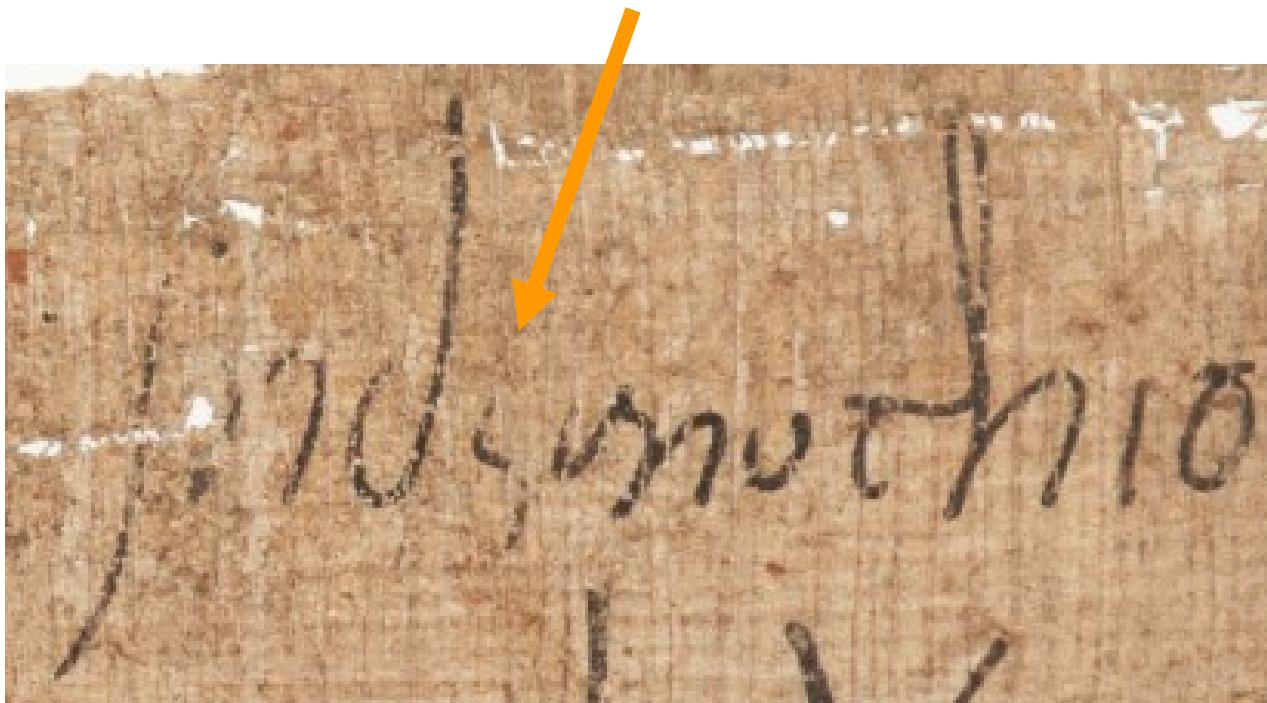
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- Much rare before Diocletian, but attested –
- Its **sudden appearance and rapid dominance** suggest that it was introduced by the **higher echelons**
- The **other signs** did not disappear at once, but dwindled into nothing, surviving often in the **less formally elaborated documents** (e.g. P.Vindob. inv. L 76, military register for the *annona*)

6. The flourish

- The co-protagonist of Late Antique documents together with the slash: it's **everywhere in Egypt**



dom(ini) s n(ostri) s Honorii

ind(ucto) s Anuthio

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- It almost automatically shortens **Fl(auius)**

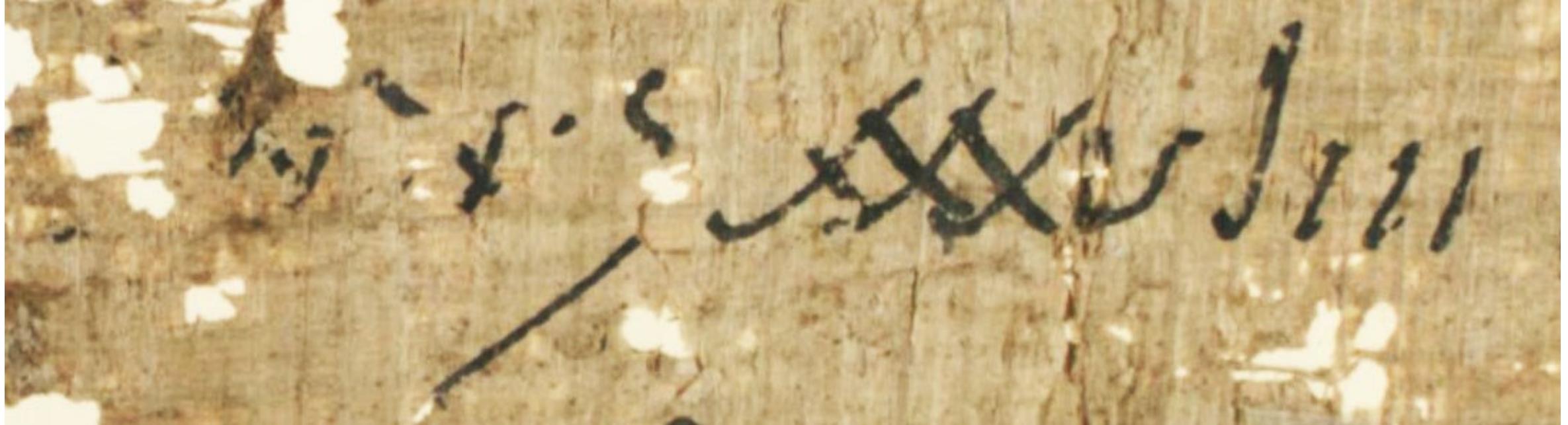
(7) and (8): the leftovers

(7) The diploma

- Mostly a **punctuation** sign
(Marichal, Giovè Marchioli)

(7) The **dipla**

- Mostly a **punctuation** sign
(Marichal, Giovè Marchioli)
- An **abbreviation** device in only **two** unambiguous cases



P.Mich. VII 442 (II AD) l. 2 ... *qnn*(orum) · > XXXVIIII ...

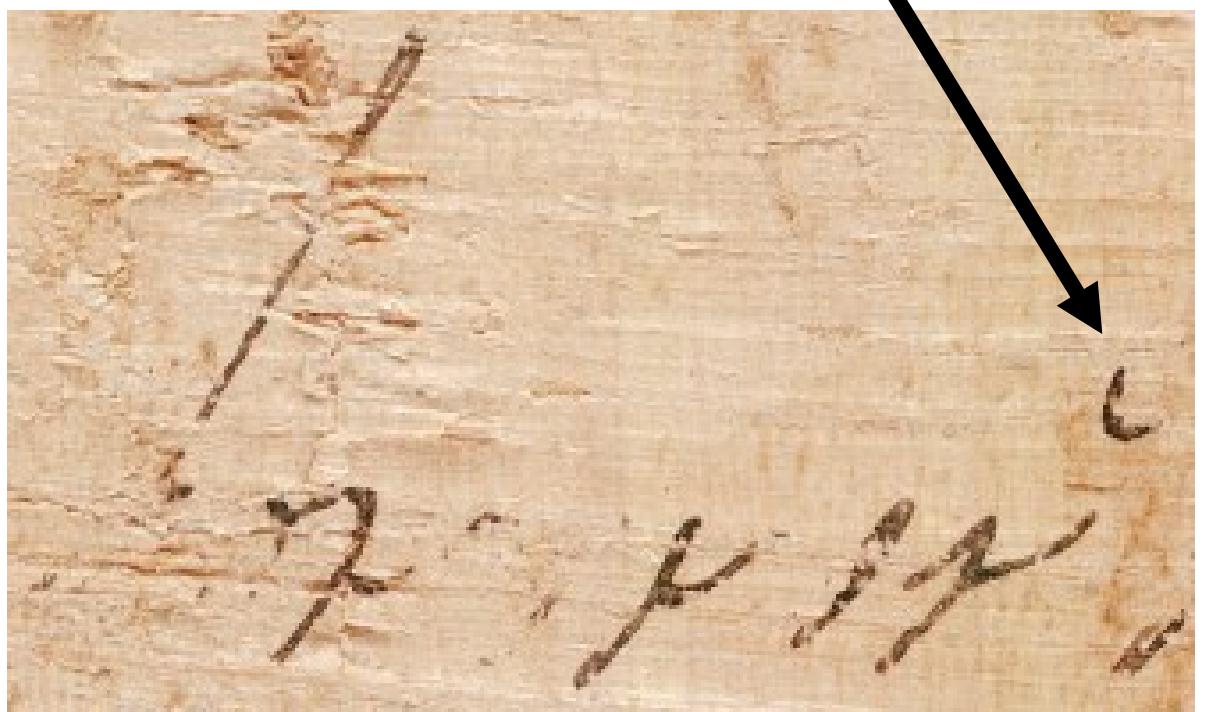
PSI VI 730 (II AD) l. 2 *catellam tet(arton) X s(emis)* · > ...



8. The circles

- Mainly **circular or semi-circular strokes**, open to the bottom and to the left

domini n(ostri)^c

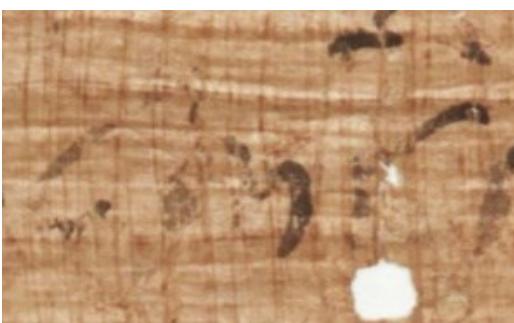


6. The leftovers

- Mainly **circular or semi-circular strokes**, open to the bottom and to the left
- The letter **n** is a favourite, once again
 - *P.Mich.* II 449, *ChLA* X 436 (II AD): *m(adius)*
 - *P.Dura* 100 (AD 219): *m-*
 - *P.Dura* 102 (AD 222–8): *N(onas)*
 - *P.Dura* 88 (AD 230–40): *n(ostri)*
 - *P.Dura* 95 (AD 250–41): *N(onas)*
 - *P.Vindob.* inv. L 76 (IV–V AD): *nn(ostris), conss(ularis)*

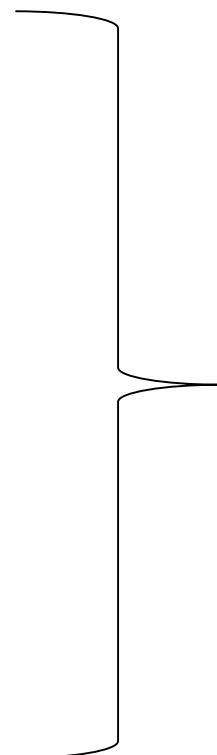


Very un-official document with
low production standards





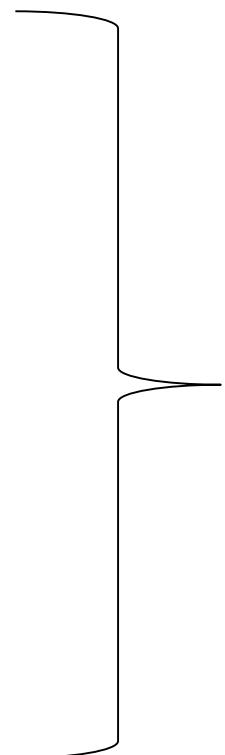
P.Dura 100: ad m- (???) –
certainly not *ad mo(dios)*



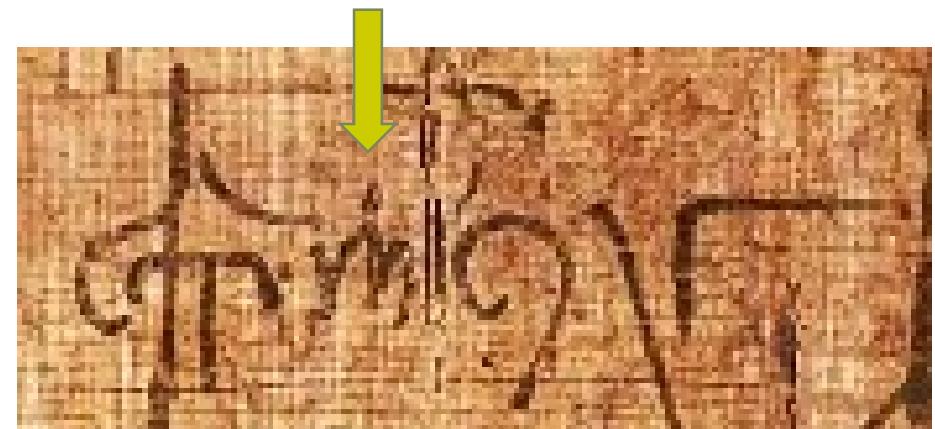
mo(dius): m°



P.Dura 100: *ad m-* (???) –
certainly not *ad mo(dios)*



mo(dius): m^o



σίτου *m^o(dii)* σλγ
P.Lond. V 1663 (AD 549)



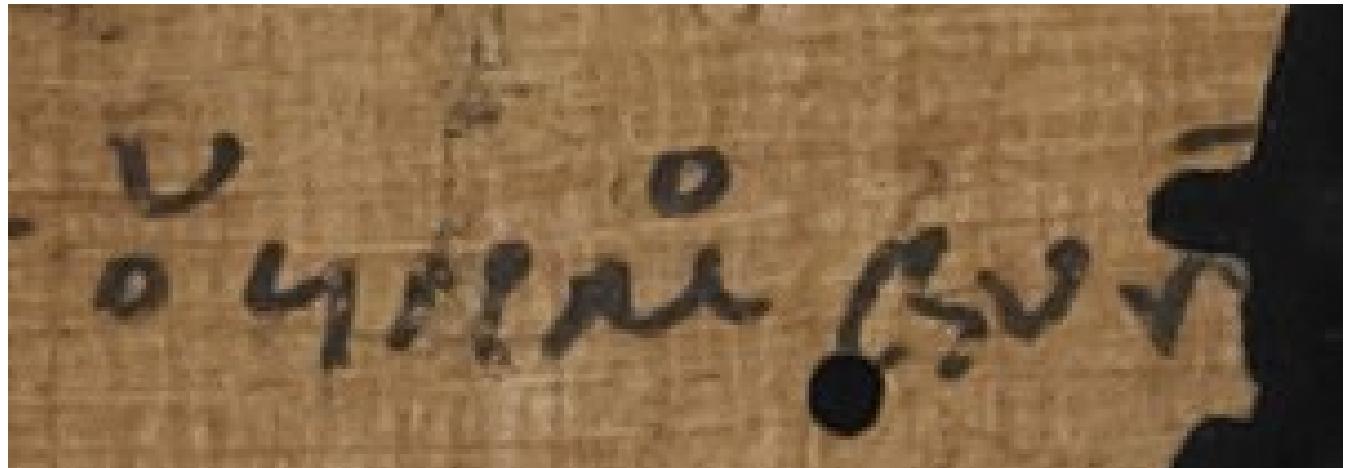
P.Dura 100: *ad m-* (???) –
certainly not *ad mo(dios)*



σίτου ***m^o***(*dii*) σλγ

P.Lond. V 1663 (AD 549)

οὕ(τως) ἦν μό(νον) ἐν ἐτ(έρωι)





Languages of the Byzantine Empire, 580 AD

[purple square]	Greek
[blue square]	Latin
[orange square]	Berber
[maroon square]	Coptic
[brown square]	Aramaic
[yellow square]	Armenian
[pink square]	Anatolian Languages
[green square]	Proto-Balcanic Languages

Time after time after time

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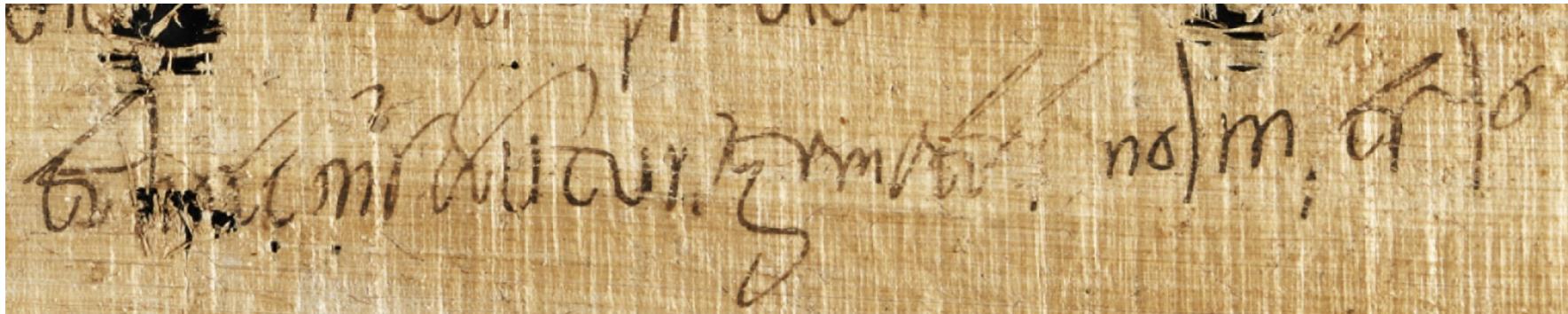
- The **maximum diversity** of **II-III AD**, where signs other than the m.d. appear and thrive (but the m.d. never really disappears): **high dot, bars, slash, circular strokes**

‘Il III secolo si rivela, secondo i dati del censimento, un **secolo-chiave** nella storia del sistema abbreviativo, e proprio attraverso le sue innovazioni prepara alla complessa situazione del IV secolo’

Giovè Marchioli, p. 72

Time after time after time

- From I BC to I AD: the reign of the *interpunctum*, or **medial dot**
 - Two major **breakups**:
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- The **maximum diversity** of II-III AD, where signs other than the m.d. appear and thrive (but the m.d. never really disappears): **high dot, bars, slash, circular strokes**
- The **extinction event** triggered by Diocletian (**IV-VI AD**): the takeover of **slash** and **flourish** (and some relics of dots and bars, no further than the IV)



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|¹⁴ ... Et hoc consecutus **agam** aeterno imperio
|¹⁵ uestro **maximas gratias**

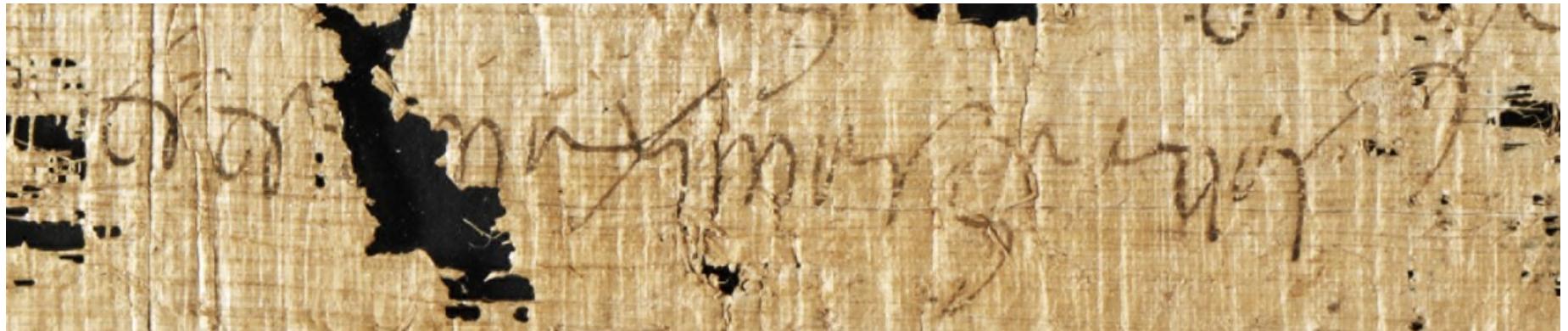


PLATINUM

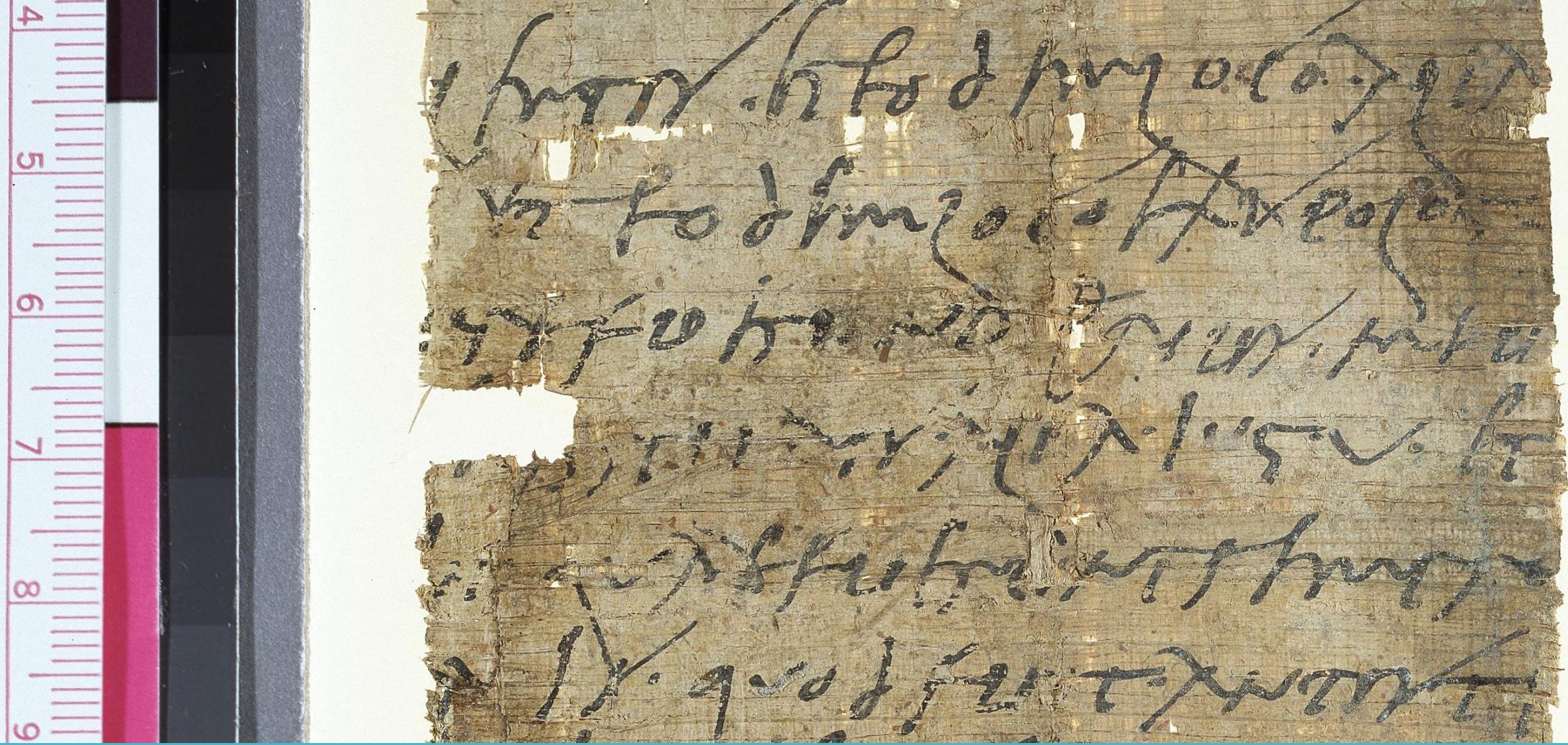


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Thanks for attending this paper!



THANK YOU! – giulio iovine2@unibo.it

Università di Bologna ‘Alma Mater Studiorum’ / University of California Berkeley

Further points

- The Latin and the Greek abbreviating system: A. **Blanchard**

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- *Interpunctum* and *titulus* vs. no real punctuation system > several solutions

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- *Interpunctum* and *titulus* **vs.** no real punctuation system > several solutions
- Reciprocal influence? Not much – more like **absorption**

Further points

- Can we make a clear distinction between documents **heavily abbreviated, scantily abbreviated, or not abbreviated at all?** Do we have a **degree of shortening** which matches the degree of elaboration of the document?

The stuff of bureaus

- Lists, morning and daily reports, accounts, family-, status- and inheritance-related documents:
heavily abbreviated
- **Personal letters**, or at any rate official letters meant for the perusal of an individual: **very few abbreviations**, or none at all

The stuff of bureaus

P.OXY. XLIV 3208 (I BC-I AD)

|¹ Suneros Chio suo plur(imam) sal(utem).
S(i) u(ales) b(ene est). Theo adduxsit ad me
Ohabim |² regium mensularium
Oxsyrychitem qui quidem mecum est
locutus |³ de improbitate Epaphraes. Itaque
nihil ultra loquor quam [[no]] |⁴ ne patiarus te
propter illos perire. Crede mihi, nimia
bonitas |⁵ pernicies homin[i]bus est ‘vel
maxsuma’. Deinde ipse tibi demonstrabit |⁶
qu[i]t rei sit qum illum ad te vocareis. Set
perse{r} vera: |⁷ qui de tam pusilla summa
tam magnum lucrum facit |⁸ dominum
occidere volt. Deinde ego clamare debeo,
siquod video |⁹ devom atque hominum
[[fidem si tu ista non cuibis.]] |¹⁰ Tuum erit
vindicare ne’ alio libeat facere.

ChLA XLII 1212 (AD 113–17)

|¹ M. Rutilio Lup[o] praef(ecto)
Aegypti |² ab C. Valerio S[a]turninio
tirone.

|³ Rogo domine [dig]num me |⁴ iudices
ut pr[obe]s militem |⁵ in cohorte u[t
po]ssim bene-|⁶-ficio tuo sub sig[ni]s
Imp(eratoris) |⁷ domini **n(ostri)**
mili[tar]e genioque |⁸ tuo gratias
ag[am]

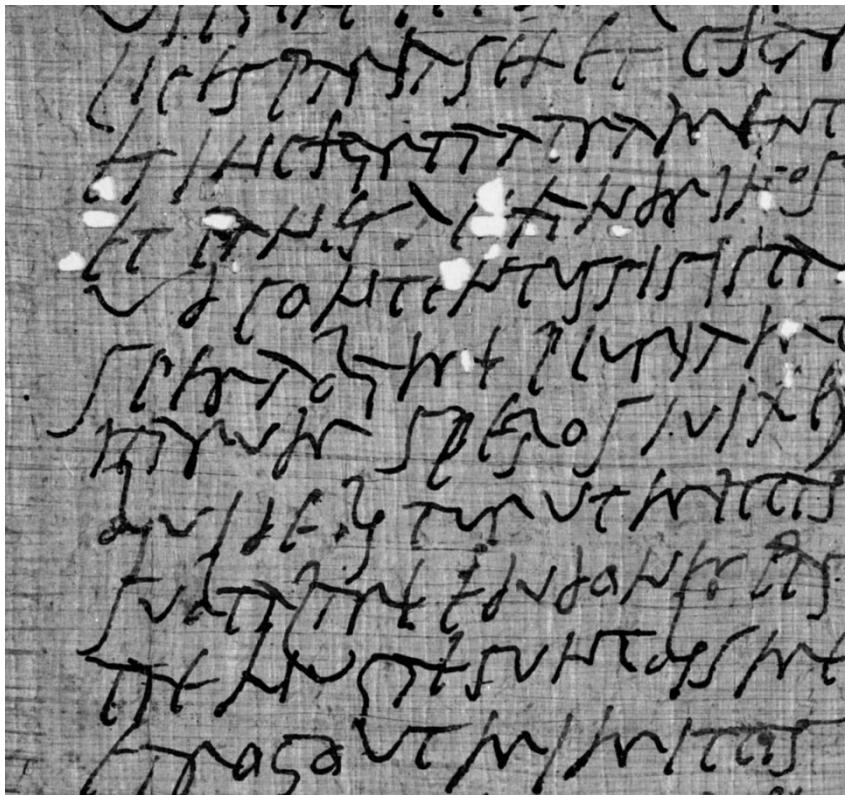
|¹ [Fl(aius) Cons]tantinus Theofanes **com(es)** et uir **inl(ustris) com(es) deuu(otissimorum)**
domm(esticorum) et rei **mil(itaris) Th[e]b(aici) lim(itis)** 'Fl(aui)o' Ver'te siue Theodoti[o]

|² **u(iro) d(euotissimo) trib(un)o** Hermupoli **deg(enti)**.

|³ [Cum] opdulero sacra iussione domini nostri Anastasii piissimi ac triumfatoris semper
Augusti |⁴ [e] qua n]umeris supplementi causa i[u]niore robustis corporibus adsociarentur,
Heracleon filium Constantini |⁵ [ortum e] ciuitati Hermopolitana 'in' uexillatione prudentiae
tuae pro tempore credita edictio mea militare prae[cip]it, |⁶ [eiusq]ue nomen si ex gen<t>e
oritur militari et neque curialis nec praesid*k*ialis est nec inuecill[o c]orpore n[ec] |⁷
[inualid]us nec censibus adscriptos matriculis eiusdem numeri inseri facito, annonas ei ex die
Iduum |⁸ [.] m Sabiniano et Theodoro uiris clarissimis consulibus ministrari curaturus
cum ceteris |⁹ [contuberna]libus suis munis militaribus o[p]eram nauaturo ita tamem si
octauum decimum annum |¹⁰ [compleui]sse dinoscitur.

P.Ryl. IV 609 (AD 505): *epistula probatoria*

The stuff of bureaus



- **Personal letters**, or at any rate official letters meant for the perusal of an individual: very few abbreviations, or none at all
- **Tiberianus and Terentianus**, whose writing ability is adequate, but not outstanding, **avoid abbreviations, abbreviating signs, and ligatures**, contenting themselves to stick to the serviceable old Roman cursive they have learnt (*P.Mich. VII 467–VIII 472*)

Further points

- Can we make a clear distinction between documents **heavily abbreviated, scantily abbreviated, or not abbreviated at all?** Do we have a **degree of shortening** which matches the degree of elaboration of the document?
- What are the words scribes like to abbreviate **more than others?**

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- *Dolo malo, stipulatus, spopondit, quae infra scripta sunt, supra scriptus, testamentum fecit, bonorum possessionem*

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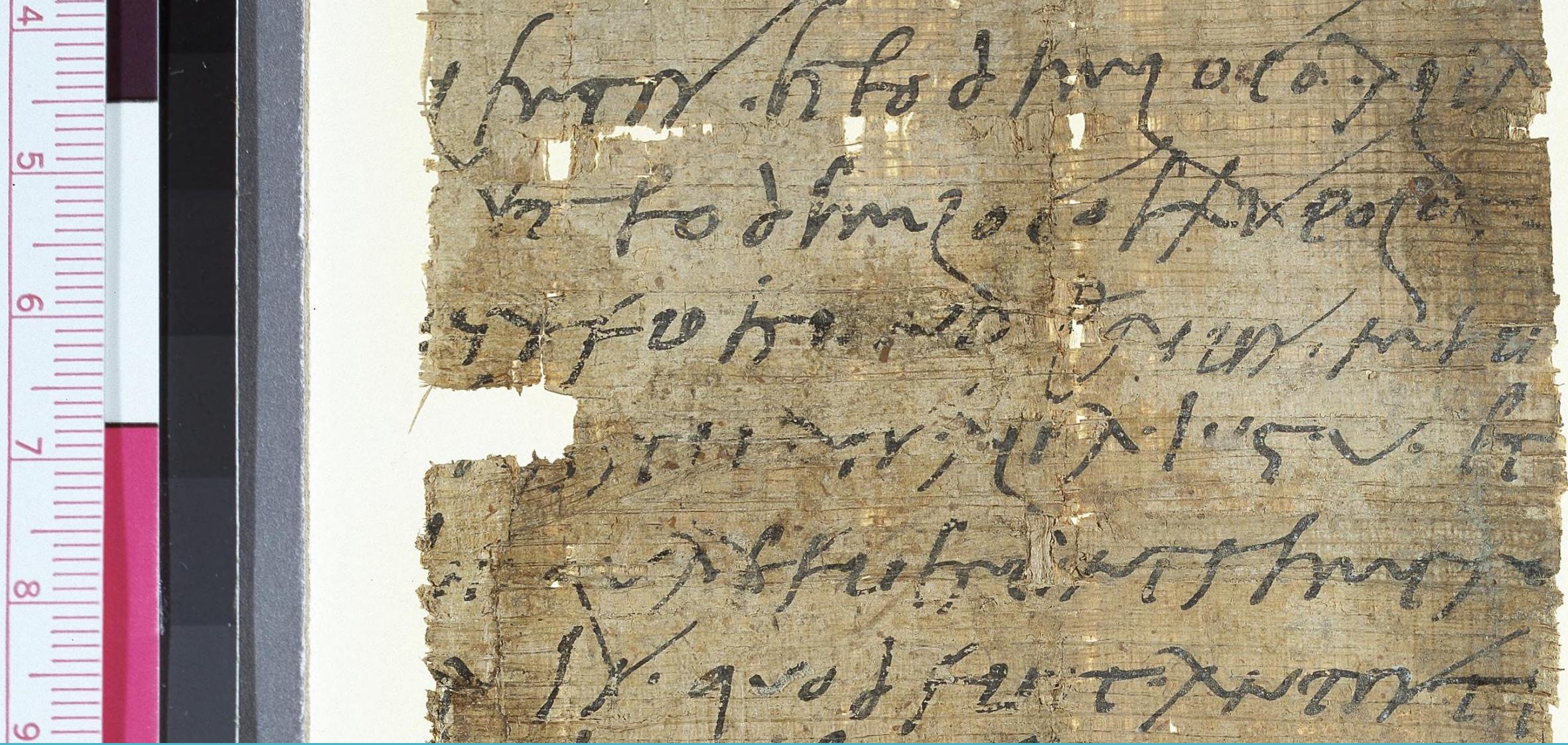
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- There is, overall, **little evidence** for abbreviations: some are attested only once so far, and often not understood



THANK YOU! – giulio iovine2@unibo.it

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