

An unpublished petition from the Sorbonne collection*

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GESHAEM project

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Abstract

The GESHAEM project is a scientific research initiative which aims at enhancing the knowledge of the administration of Ptolemaic Fayyum. Its goal is also to restore and study both the *cartonnages* and the papyri, in Demotic and in Greek, kept in the “Fonds Jouguet Fouilles”, stored at the Institut de Papyrologie of Sorbonne Université in Paris. In one *cartonnage* from Magdôla, a Greek petition to an official (*hypomnêma*) has been discovered and inventoried as Inv. Sorb. 2855, which bears a new name for a *toparchês* in the Fayyum: Philonautês.

Keywords

Cartonnage restoration, Ptolemaic Fayyum, Greek petition

The following paper presents some preliminary results of the project GESHAEM, The Graeco-Egyptian State – Hellenistic Archives from Egyptian Mummies, a scientific initiative funded by the European Research Council (ERC-StG 758907) whose Principal Investigator is Marie-Pierre Chaufray, Researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Bordeaux. The aim of the project is to enhance the knowledge of the administration of the Fayyum during the first centuries of the Ptolemaic rule, thanks to the study of the Fonds Jouguet Fouilles, that is the *cartonnages* and the papyri discovered by Pierre Jouguet during archaeological excavations in the Fayyum.

In 1901 and 1902, the French Government financially supported Jouguet’s diggings in search for papyri. Jouguet drew his attention to the South-Western sites of Medinet Ghôran and Medinet-en-Nahas, the ancient Magdôla: in their necropoleis he discovered hundreds of mummy *cartonnages*. These objects are now kept for the most part in the Institut de Papyrologie of Sorbonne Université,

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founded by Jouguet himself in Paris in 1920: today, they are the responsibility of H el ene Cuvigny, Senior Researcher at the CNRS in Paris and Director of the institute, and Florent Jacques, Keeper of the papyrus collection. Most of the *cartonnages* were dismantled immediately after their discovery, but around 20 *cartonnages* remain in good condition overall and are going to be not only restored, but also studied in their own right by Rapha ele Meffre, Researcher at the CNRS in Paris, analysing both their form and their painted decoration. As an example, a partially squashed gilded mask has been recently going to be reinflated, in order to become one of the masterpieces of an exhibition which will take place in 2023 in Bordeaux, showing the achievements of the project.

Some other *cartonnages* rest in poor conditions: my colleague Pavlos Kapetanakis, as papyrus restorer, consolidates the decorated surfaces whenever still preserved and then extracts papyri from their back. Each step of the process is documented with photographs, allowing us to retrace the original position of each fragment. A condition and restoration report, with references to the photos, testifies in detail the treatment performed on every object, as well as the equipment employed.

Documents coming from *cartonnages* discovered by Jouguet are in both Greek and Demotic. Most of them date from the 3rd and 2nd cent. B.C. and consist essentially of records from official archives.¹ The new papyri receive inventory numbers and both colour and infrared photographs are taken for each side by Professor Emeritus Adam B ulow-Jacobsen, as well as for other fragments which have been previously extracted, but still remain unpublished.

The GESHAEM website (<http://geshaem.huma-num.fr/>) will host not only the *cartonnages* restoration reports, but also an open access digital corpus of the papyri in XML format, the structure of which has been realised by Nathalie Pr ev ot, Ing enieur d' tudes at the CNRS in Bordeaux. The textual part is going to be encoded following the EpiDoc guidelines, while particular attention is given to the metadata describing the papyrus support and the writing: in particular, precise links between surfaces and photos; presence of margins or other distinctive features, such as *koll seis*; identification and numbering of columns and lines; orientation of the writing in relation to the direction of the fibres; languages used. Both these metadata and the photographs are crucial for a digital instrument for automatic image processing, which will facilitate the work of joining the fragments: this is going to be developed by Antoine Pirrone, a University of Bordeaux's PhD candidate funded by GESHAEM, under the direction of Marie Beurton-Aimar and Nicholas Journet, Associate Professors of Computer Sciences at the University of Bordeaux.²

¹ Vanderpe 2009, 221; Vanderpe / Clarysse / Verreth 2014, 17, 24-26.

² Pirrone / Beurton-Aimar / Journet 2018, 1-6.

The *cartonnage* Magdôla SN3

An interesting Greek text has been found inside what might have originally been a breastplate. This *cartonnage* was found in a folder inside a drawer of the Institut de Papyrologie, together with three other pieces coming from Magdôla, all of them in very poor condition: they were partially dismantled at an unspecified moment in the last century and their decoration was almost entirely removed, but the process has not been completed and they have been left unfinished, without even receiving an inventory number. For this reason, it has been named Magdôla SN3 (M_pl.SN3_LU, Magdôla, Plastron Sans Numéro 3, «Magdôla, Breastplate Without Number 3»). Its almost quadrangular surface of 20.9 x 22.5 cm presented several breaks and was partially covered by white plaster, bearing almost no traces of pigments, and by a small fragment of linen; the edges were delaminated, folded or darkened, and a corner was missing (Pl. 1). After mechanical removal of the plaster (partially collected for further analysis) with the tip of a hard brush, some Greek letters started appearing. The ink passed the solubility test, so it was possible to place the *cartonnage* in a humidification chamber with demineralised water. Thanks to the indirect humidification, the fibres became more flexible and it was possible to unfold the upper edge and to remove the linen fragment. Then, successive passages in the humidification chamber allowed the dissolving of the animal glues used to paste the different layers of the *cartonnage* and several papyrus fragments could be separated with a small spatula and extracted. All of them were flattened, cleaned from the rest of the plaster with cotton swabs slightly damped with water, and finally consolidated with small strips of Japanese paper glued with methylcellulose; the latter was used also in direct application with a small brush, in order to put individual fibers back in their place.³

Six fragments with Greek writing extracted during this process were identified as parts of the same document, thus inventoried under the same number, Inv. Sorb. 2855: the photos taken during all the phases indicate the part of the original *cartonnage* they come from. The bigger part of fragment A has been extracted from the upper-left corner, while the smaller section (named here as A' for the sake of clarity) was partially lying under it, turned by 90° counterclockwise (Pl. 2). Fragment B was put on the right of the previous one and also turned by 90° in counterclockwise direction. Fragment C was affected by the same rotation, but put in the middle of the *cartonnage*, a couple of layers under the lower margin of fragment A' (Pl. 3). Fragment D was extracted just left of fragment C, rotated 90° counterclockwise, while fragment E, a small bit of papyrus containing two letters written by the same hand as the other ones, was flipped (Pl. 4). This shows that the document was torn into several pieces in the funerary workshops, before being reused in the manufacture of the *cartonnage*.

³ Type of Japanese paper: Gampi, 12 g/m², pH 7.3; type of methylcellulose: Tylose MH 300 P.

The petition Inv. Sorb. 2855

Even if the small fragment E, bearing just two letters (μα), is not easy to replace and does not convey enough information, the photographs taken of the other ones enable us to recognise which type of text Inv. Sorb. 2855 is (Pl. 5). In l. 3 (at the junction of the first line of fragment B with the third of fragment C), the remaining letters suggest the restoration [ἀδικο]ῦμαι ὑπὸ, «I am wronged by»: this is a common verb introducing the body of a petition, either to the king (*enteuxis*) or to an official (*hypomnēma*).⁴ Other elements shared by these two text types are also visible on fragment A, which preserves the lower half of the document. First of all, an expression in ll. 14-16 used to insist on the truth of the facts exposed, ἐὰν [σοι] φαίνεται ταῦτα ὄντ[α] ἀληθῆ, «if it seems [to you] that these things ar[e] true».⁵ Then, in ll. 18-19 the “pathétique final” ὅπως διὰ σὲ τύχω τοῦ δικαίου, «so that through you I might find justice».⁶ Finally, in l. 20 the greeting εὐτύχει, «farewell».⁷

However, some specific terms standing out on fragment A' lead us to consider Inv. Sorb. 2855 as an *hypomnēma*. The verbs typically employed in such documents to introduce the petitioner's request, ἀξιῶ οὖν σε συντάξαι, «I ask you, therefore, to give orders», appear clearly in the middle of the papyrus in l. 11, rather than the formula used in *enteuxeis* δέομαι οὖν σου προστάξαι, «I beg you, therefore, to command».⁸ Moreover, fragment C partially preserves the upper right corner of the original document, and l. 2 might be read as [π]αρ'Ἀπολλωνίου, «from Apollōnios»: this implies that the opening follows the pattern τῶι δεῖνι παρὰ τοῦ δεῖνος, «to so-and-so from so-and-so», employed in *hypomnēmata*, instead of the formula introducing the petitions to the king, βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίωι χαίρειν ὁ δεῖνα, «to king Ptolemy greetings (from) so-and-so».⁹ The vertical format itself and the writing along the fibres are external aspects that differentiate this petition to an official from the numerous *enteuxeis* written *transversa charta* on a horizontal layout from Magdōla.¹⁰

The matter of the *hypomnēma* probably concerns a non-repaid loan in kind: the petitioner Apollōnios demands the intervention of a *toparchēs*, so that he would fetch the accused in front of the addressee, whose name is lost. The latter's title is badly preserved: the traces of ink in l. 1 could match either [στρα]τηγῶι, «to the *stratēgos*», or [ἐπιμη]λητῆι, «to the *epimēlētēs*». On the verso, the name of the *toparchēs*, only partially preserved on the recto in ll. 12-13, is well written along the

⁴ Guéraud 1931, XXIII-XXV; Di Bitonto 1967, 12-14; Di Bitonto 1968, 68-70.

⁵ Di Bitonto 1967, 47-48; Di Bitonto 1968, 98.

⁶ Guéraud 1931, XXVI; Di Bitonto 1967, 50-53; Di Bitonto 1968, 103-104.

⁷ Guéraud 1931, XXIII; Di Bitonto 1967, 55; Di Bitonto 1968, 105.

⁸ Guéraud 1931, XXV-XXVI; Di Bitonto 1967, 15-19; Di Bitonto 1968, 71-73.

⁹ Guéraud 1931, XXIII; Di Bitonto 1967, 11; Di Bitonto 1968, 62.

¹⁰ Guéraud 1931, XIX-XXII.

fibres: Philonautês¹¹ (Pl. 6). Turned by 180°, there is also an archival note with a summary and a date, but the ink is very faint and difficult to read even with infrared photographs.¹²

Archives from Magdôla in the Sorbonne collection

The *cartonnage* from which Inv. Sorb. 2855 comes was found inside a paper folder of the Institut de Papyrologie bearing only the pen mark «Magdôla»: neither the inventory book of the Institut de Papyrologie nor the notes left by Pierre Jouguet provide any further information. In order to make an attempt to place this petition in its original context and in relation to other texts, only internal evidence can be used. Therefore, it is helpful to summarize the archives to which the published Demotic and Greek papyri in Fonds Jouguet Fouilles undoubtedly coming from Magdôla originally belonged.

Some texts can actually be grouped in ancient archives.¹³ Usually, the name of the writer or of the addressee allows identification of the original holder of the papyri, or at least the office from which they come.¹⁴ P.Sorb. IV 147 of 196 B.C. is a Demotic sale contract for a female donkey, whose purchaser was Lobais son of Imouthês, royal farmer and servant of Sobek in an unspecified Fayyum village: the same person probably wrote the following year a report in Demotic, P.Sorb. IV 148, to a village scribe whose name is lost.¹⁵ Two other texts, dated palaeographically to the second part of the 3rd cent. B.C., have in common the name of Hôros, *kômarshês* of Lysimachis (TM Geo 1275): in P.Enteux. A his intervention is demanded by the petitioner, therefore he might have been the actual receiver of this *hypomnêma*, while SB XII 10858 is a letter sent to him by the cavalryman Zôpyros.¹⁶ Another small archive formed by three texts is the one of Thraseas (TM Arch 65), *epistatês* probably of a village between 235-231 or 210-206 B.C.: he is the addressee of two *hypomnêmata*, SB X 10271 and 10273, and one letter, SB X 10272.¹⁷ Then, nine papyri centre on Nectenibis (TM Arch 148), *kômarshês* of Kaminoi (TM Geo 994) in the district of Polemôn probably around the years 225 and 221 B.C.: he is the addressee of SB XII 10845-10848 and 10871, five administrative letters sent to him by Zephyros, presumably *sitologos* at that time; of SB XX 14404, written by Alexibios, maybe an official responsible for the whole Arsinoites, given that

¹¹ The full text of Inv.Sorb. 2855 will be published soon.

¹² Di Bitonto 1968, 106-107.

¹³ Even if Vandorpe / Clarysse / Verreth 2014, 16 affirm: «Archives consist of at least three texts, not two», I would argue that two not strictly interlinked documents might be considered an archive.

¹⁴ Vandorpe 2009, 227, 237-238; Vandorpe / Clarysse / Verreth 2014, 16-17.

¹⁵ Bakech 2016 a, 39; Bakech 2016b, 44. The archive might have belonged to the village scribe, who could also have written P.Sorb. IV 147.

¹⁶ Boyaval 1976, 217-219.

¹⁷ Boyaval 1966, 67-74.

he resided in the nome's capital; and of one fragment of SB XX 14405, while the other one is a message written by Nectenibis himself, as well as P.Sorb. IV 154, the only Demotic piece of this archive forwarded to the agent of Zephyros.¹⁸ Finally, 97 of the petitions to the king gathered in P.Enteux. come from Magdôla (TM Arch 80).¹⁹ Almost all of them demanded the intervention of Diophanês, *strategos* of the Arsinoites between 222 and 218, and were handed over to him: thus, the whole batch was certainly collected from his office, based in Krokodilopolis.²⁰

A large number of papyri from Magdôla inside the collection of Fonds Jouguet Fouilles still carry writers' or addressees' names and titles. But in some instances, it is not obvious whether these can be linked to other texts, so they remain isolated. P.LilleDem. III 103. col. 1-2 is a money account without exploitable data, as SB III 6319, but the text contained in col. 3 is a loan contract of wine addressed to a certain Kritôn son of Apollônios, simply qualified as «Greek». Another account, P.Lille I 59 verso, concerning the payments for brewing tax and for sureties in several villages of Herakleopolites, bears the name of the writer, Theôn. P.Lille I 3 is a register of official letters from several villages of the district of Hêrakteidês, all addressed to the *dioikêtês* Theogenês. SB X 10448 is a letter from Pasiôn to Antisthenês, whose titles are not mentioned, concerning the desert police in the Oxyrhynchite nome.²¹

Any inquiry relies upon the state of conservation of the writer's or of the addressee's names. Sometimes, none of them are preserved, as is the case of the marriage contract P.LilleDem. I 28. Some other times, it is difficult to ascertain the identity of the writer, like in the official account in money and kind SB XII 10864, maybe recorded by a scribe of a *logistêrion*.²² It happens that the names mentioned were so widespread in Ptolemaic Egypt that any identification is impossible, as for the official letter P.Sorb. I 20, sent by a certain Ptolemaios to Apollônios, or are too fragmentary to be recognised, like in P.LilleDem. I 27, a sale contract where the second party's name is lost despite the document having been copied three times by different witnesses, and in P.Enteux. C, where only the end of the name of the addressee, «-aios», is preserved.

Some texts, even if fragmentary, give at least some hints about the places involved. SB XII 10873 mentions works in Anoubias (TM Geo 186), village in the district of Themistos.²³ Inv.Sorb. 223 + 229 a + 272 + 1373 + 1404 and Inv.Sorb. 229 B + 258 + 271 are two Demotic land surveys: one of them refers to the village of Ibiôn Eikosipentarourôn (TM Geo 885) in the Polemôn district.²⁴

¹⁸ Boyaval 1976, 196-204; Clarysse 1991, 316-323; Vandorpe / Clarysse / Verreth 2014, 26, 255; Chaufray 2016, 59.

¹⁹ All but P.Enteux. 1, 4, 12, 25, 61, 68, 80, 84, 97 and 100-106.

²⁰ Vandorpe / Clarysse / Verreth 2014, 26, 300-301, only proposed by Guéraud 1931, XXXIX-XL. The localisation of the office is implied by some passages in P.Enteux. 22 and 60.

²¹ Boyaval 1967, 89-90.

²² Boyaval 1976, 261-265.

²³ Boyaval 1976, 278-279.

²⁴ Monson 2016, 1620.

For some others, it is very difficult to determine the original archive because of the text type.²⁵ It is the case of some literary fragments, supplying no data concerning the background which produced these specific copies: P.Sorb. I 4 bears approximately 20 verses of the 12th book of the Iliad, while P.Sorb. IV 145 is an excerpt of an Ancient Egyptian sapiential work similar to Ankhsheshonqy.²⁶ The same can be said for some accounts, registers and lists which simply give names of individuals, without any other indication: SB III 6319, an account relating to a cult guild; P.Count 4, a register of population paying salt-tax; P.Sorb. IV 156, a Demotic register of contracts and receipts; SB X 10449, a list of masculine names.²⁷

Other than the above mentioned P.Enteux. A and C, the latter probably being an *hypomnêma* datable to the second half of the 3rd cent. B.C., only one other fragmentary document which probably is a petition to an official has been published until now among the papyri in Fonds Jouguet Fouilles coming from Magdôla. SB XII 10869 was sent to someone holding a title ending with *grammateus*, mentions a *logistêrion* and probably also implies that a previous petition was given to the royal scribe Peteimouthês.²⁸ This document might be dated to the second half of the 3rd cent. B.C., but apparently it shares nothing more than the text type and the discovery place with Inv. Sorb. 2855.

The papyri in Fonds Jouguet Fouilles which come from *cartonnages* found in Magdôla and can be assigned with a certain degree of confidence to a specific reign range from an unidentified Artaxerxes, so from a year between Artaxerxes I's accession to the throne in 465 B.C. and the death of Artaxerxes IV in 336 B.C. (P.LilleDem. I 27), to the year 10, Pharmuthi of Ptolemy V Epiphanês, that is May/June 195 B.C. (P.Sorb. IV 148), but for the most part they date to the last quarter of the 3rd cent. B.C. As far as now, five archives have been identified, three of which are only in Greek: the ones of the *kômarchês* of Lysimachis Hôros, of the *epistatês* Thraseas and of the *strategos* Diophanês. The archive of the *kômarchês* of Kaminoi Nectenibis is bilingual, while the two texts mentioning Lobais son of Imouthês are only in Demotic.

To which archive Inv. Sorb. 2855 might belong?

As already noted, the name of the petitioner in Inv. Sorb. 2855, Apollônios, was too widespread in Ptolemaic Egypt: therefore, the internal elements which can help identify the archive of origin of this petition are just two.

²⁵ Vandorpe 2009, 229; Clarysse 2013, 78.

²⁶ If it is true that «Greek administrators sometimes copied literature in their office» (Clarysse 2013, 70), the provenance of a Demotic literary work is harder to justify: maybe from a temple context, as the documents mentioned by Clarysse 2013, 71?

²⁷ Boyaval 1967, 91-92.

²⁸ Boyaval 1976, 274-275.

The most complete one is the name and the title of the probable final recipient of the *hypomnêma*: the *toparchês* Philonautês, otherwise unattested in the papyrological documentation. Assuming that this text comes from his own archive, until now it would remain isolated like P.LilleDem. III 103, P.Lille I 59 verso, P.Lille I 3 and SB X 10448.

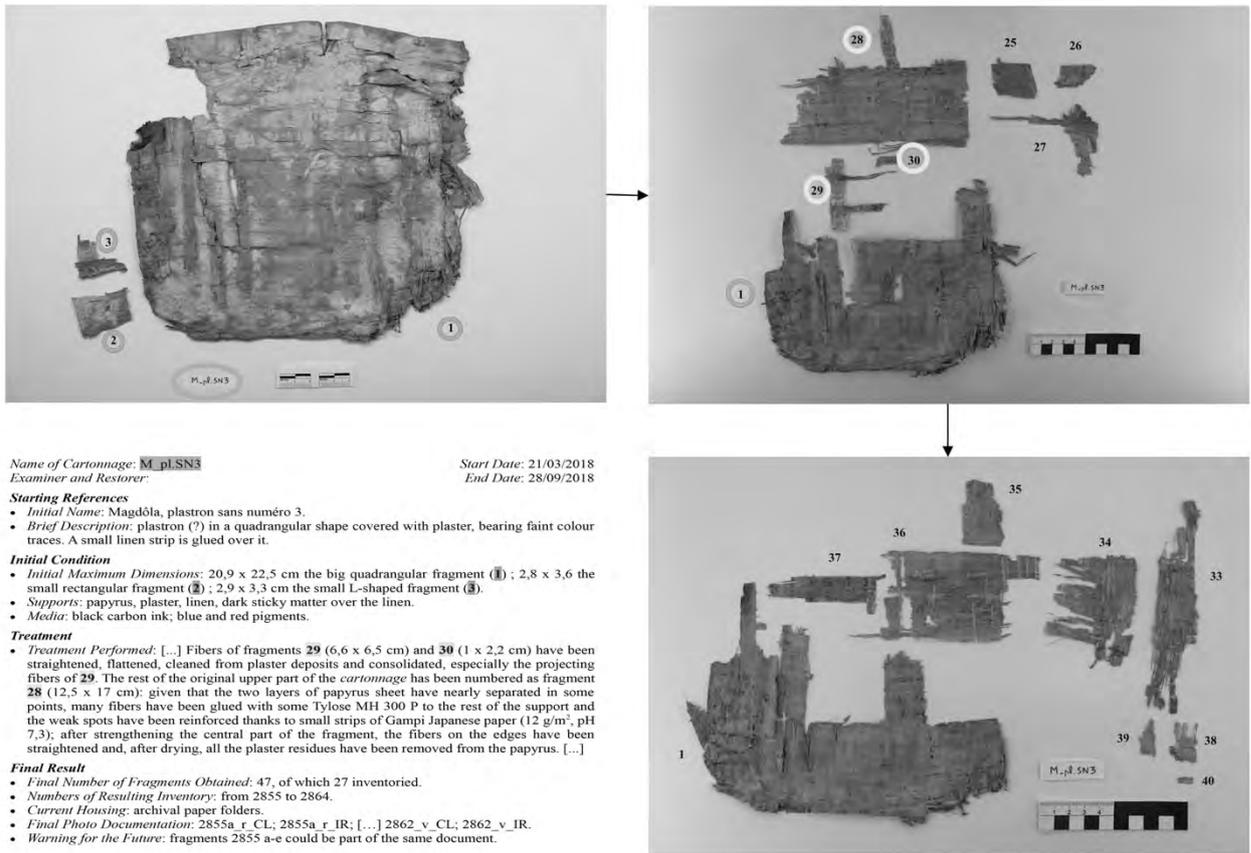
The second option is that this document remained at or was returned to the addressee's office. The proposed restorations for the latter's fragmentary title are *stratêgos* or *epimêlêtês*: in order to be able to give orders to a *toparchês*, he should have been a high-ranking official at the nome level, as the governor or the superintendent of finances.²⁹ That is the reason why this petition cannot be ascribed to the archives neither of a *kômachês* as Hôros or Nectenibis, nor of a village *epistatês* like Thraseas.

Inv. Sorb. 2855 is a petition to an official discovered in Magdôla, but the places where it was written and sent cannot be deduced from the text. Nonetheless, a sound *terminus post quem* is given by the title *toparchês*: neither *toparchai* nor *topogrammateis* are attested in Fayyum before 236 B.C.³⁰ Thus, the only archive that might match both the required officer's ranking and the date is the one of the *strategos* Diophanês (222-218 B.C.): if so, Inv. Sorb. 2855 would be the only *hypomnêma* among 97 *enteuxeis*. In any case, like many of the papyri excavated by Jouguet in Magdôla, this document was brought to funerary workshops from higher-level administrative archives relating to multiple villages, especially in the Themistos and Polemôn districts of the Arsinoite nome.³¹ Hopefully, further discoveries during the GESHAEM project will provide new elements which might shed more light on Inv. Sorb. 2855.

²⁹ Manning 2019, 109-112.

³⁰ Clarysse 1997, 72-76; Manning 2019, 110, 112.

³¹ Clarysse 2013, 70; Monson 2016, 1620.



Name of Cartonnage: M.,pl.SN3

Start Date: 21/03/2018

Examiner and Restorer:

End Date: 28/09/2018

Starting References

- **Initial Name:** Magdóla, plastron sans numéro 3.
- **Brief Description:** plastron (?) in a quadrangular shape covered with plaster, bearing faint colour traces. A small linen strip is glued over it.

Initial Condition

- **Initial Maximum Dimensions:** 20,9 x 22,5 cm the big quadrangular fragment (1); 2,8 x 3,6 the small rectangular fragment (2); 2,9 x 3,3 cm the small L-shaped fragment (3).
- **Supports:** papyrus, plaster, linen, dark sticky matter over the linen.
- **Media:** black carbon ink, blue and red pigments.

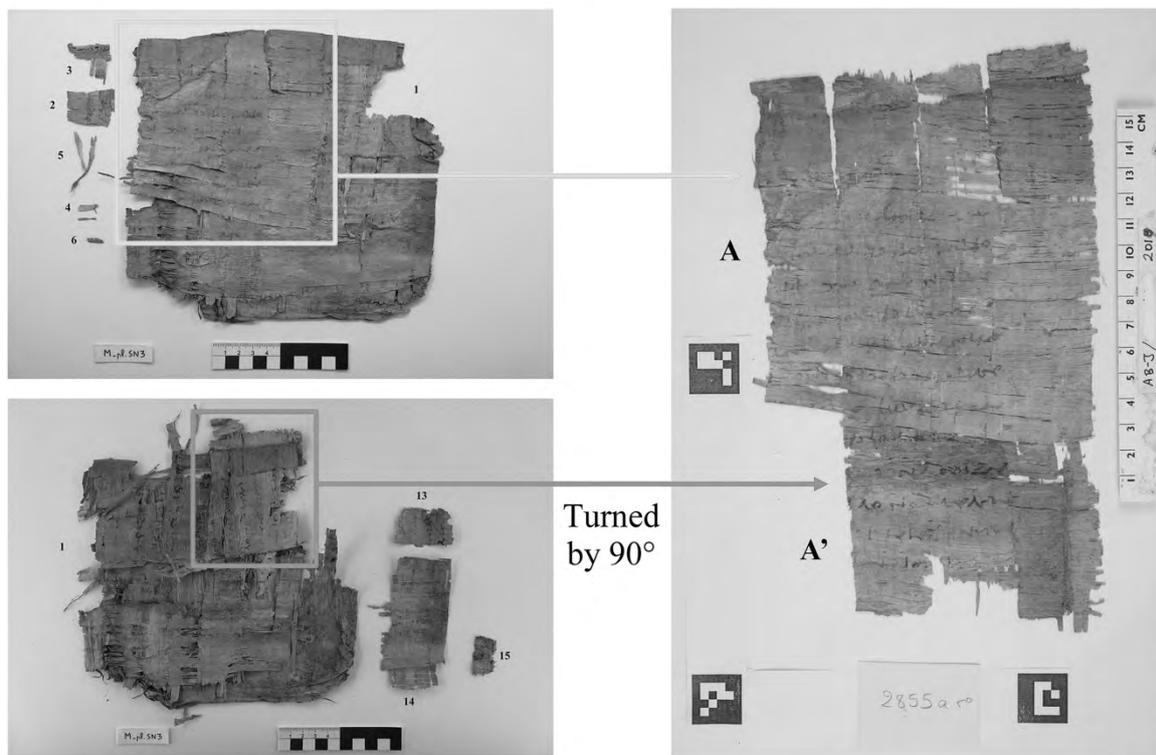
Treatment

- **Treatment Performed:** [...] Fibers of fragments 29 (6,6 x 6,5 cm) and 30 (1 x 2,2 cm) have been straightened, flattened, cleaned from plaster deposits and consolidated, especially the projecting fibers of 29. The rest of the original upper part of the cartonnage has been numbered as fragment 28 (12,5 x 17 cm): given that the two layers of papyrus sheet have nearly separated in some points, many fibers have been glued with some Tylose MH 300 P to the rest of the support and the weak spots have been reinforced thanks to small strips of Gampi Japanese paper (12 g/m², pH 7,3); after strengthening the central part of the fragment, the fibers on the edges have been straightened and, after drying, all the plaster residues have been removed from the papyrus. [...]

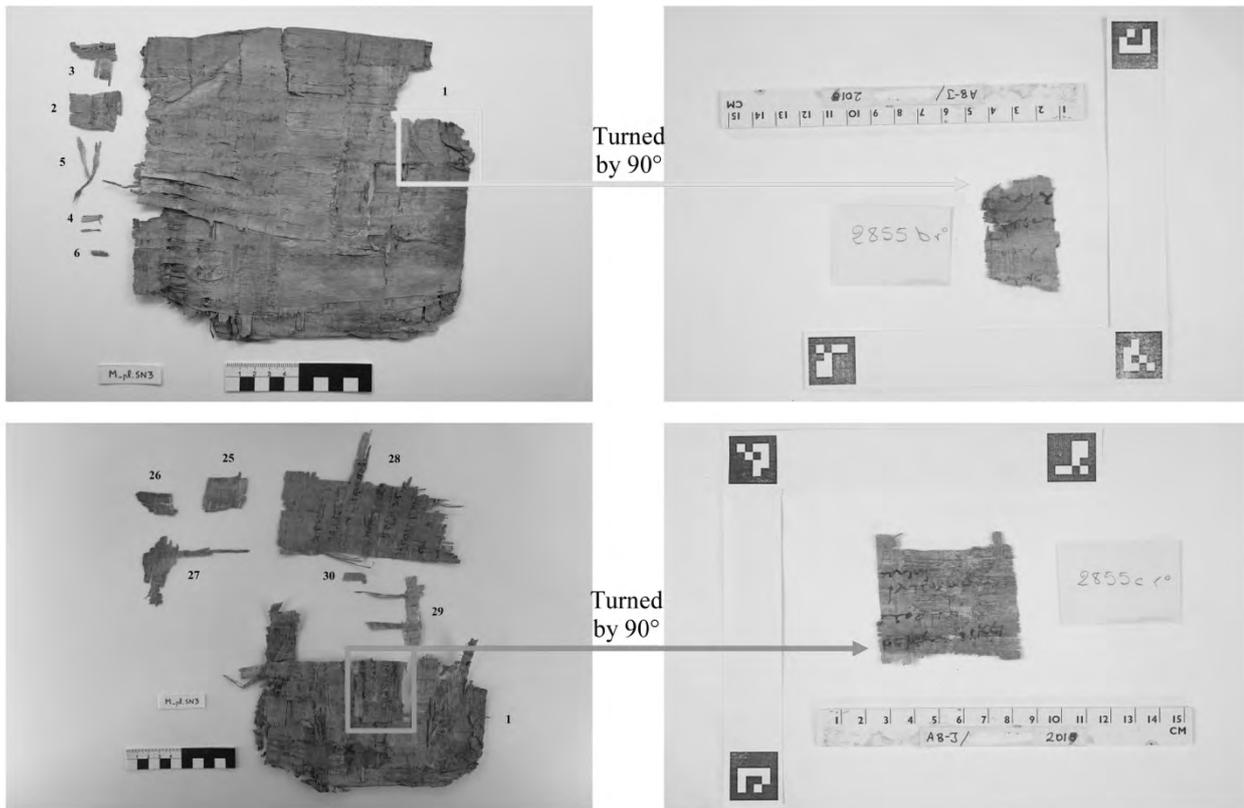
Final Result

- **Final Number of Fragments Obtained:** 47, of which 27 inventoried.
- **Numbers of Resulting Inventory:** from 2855 to 2864.
- **Current Housing:** archival paper folders.
- **Final Photo Documentation:** 2855a_r_CL; 2855a_r_IR; [...] 2862_v_CL; 2862_v_IR.
- **Warning for the Future:** fragments 2855 a-e could be part of the same document.

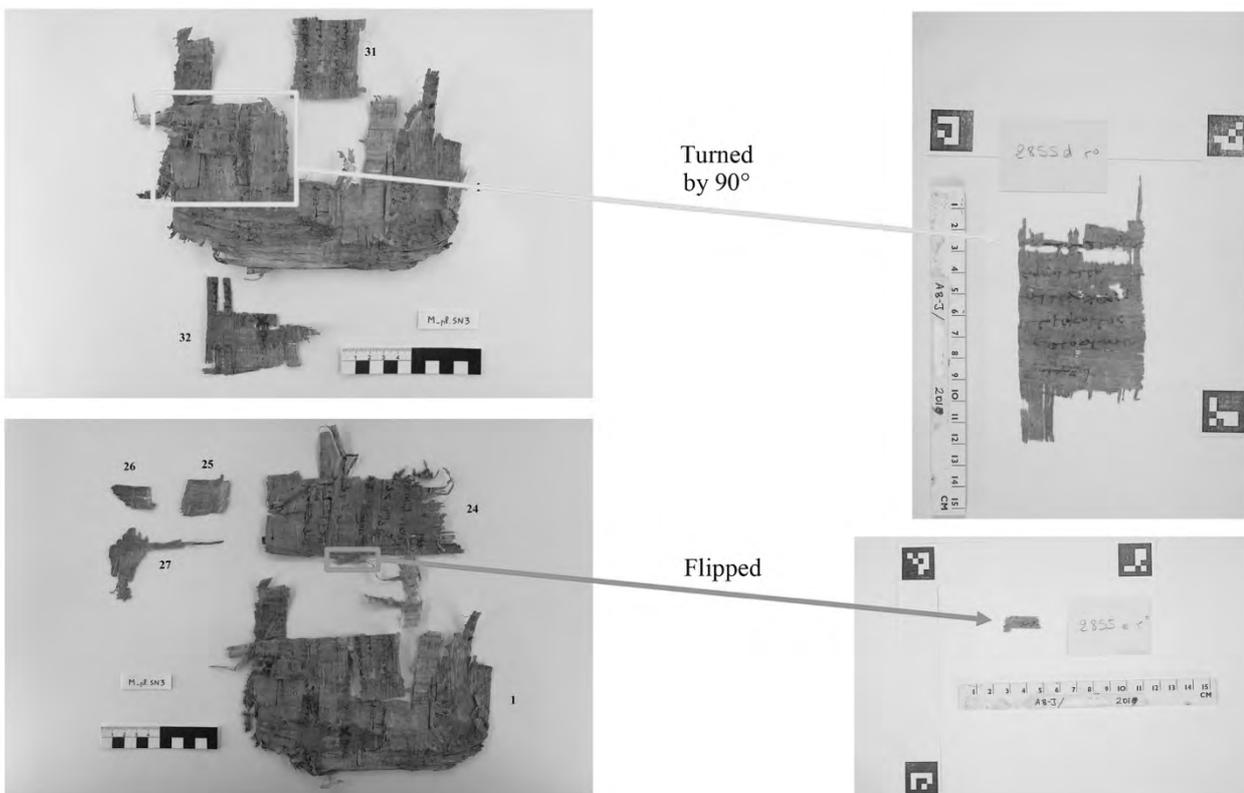
Pl. 1.



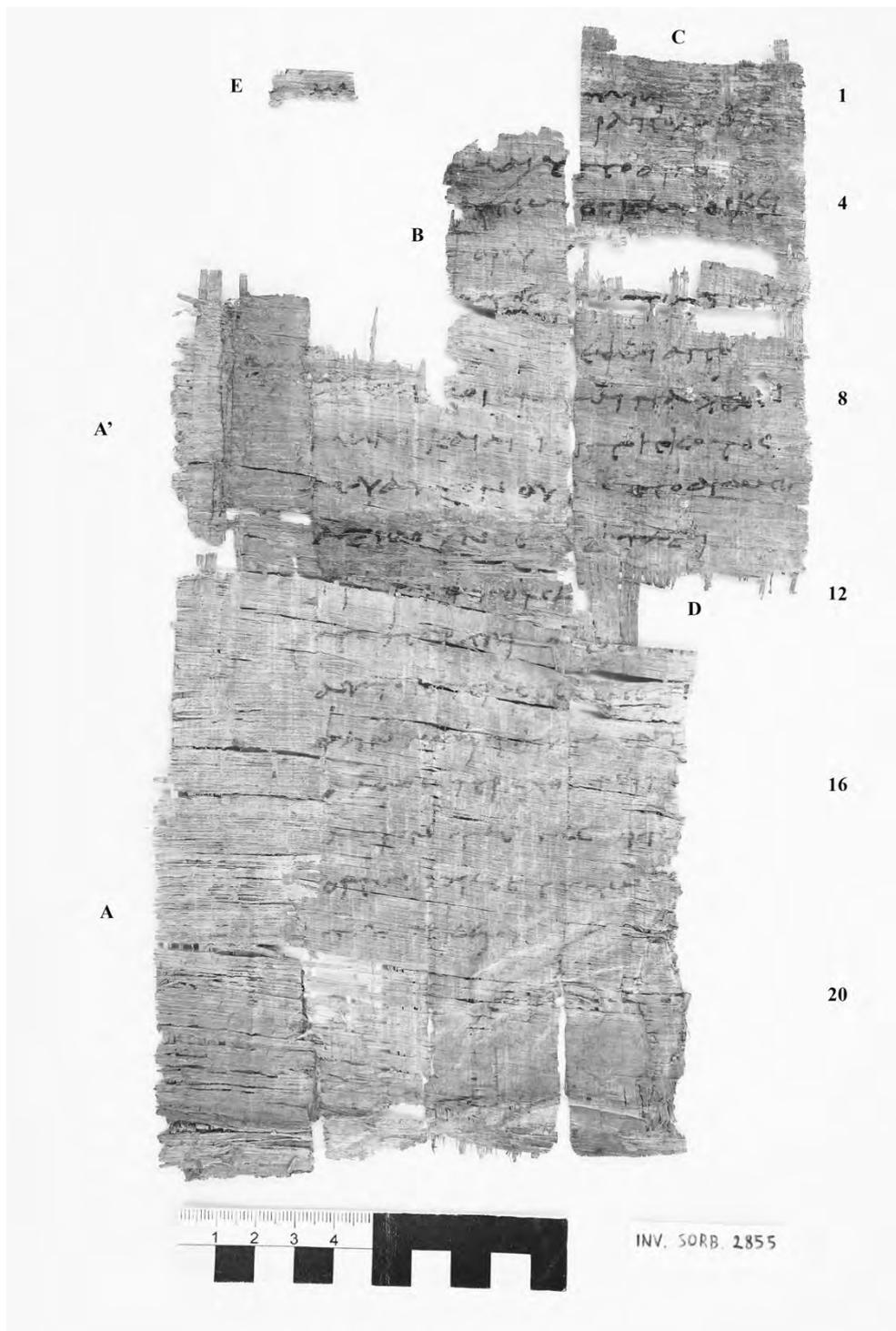
Pl. 2.



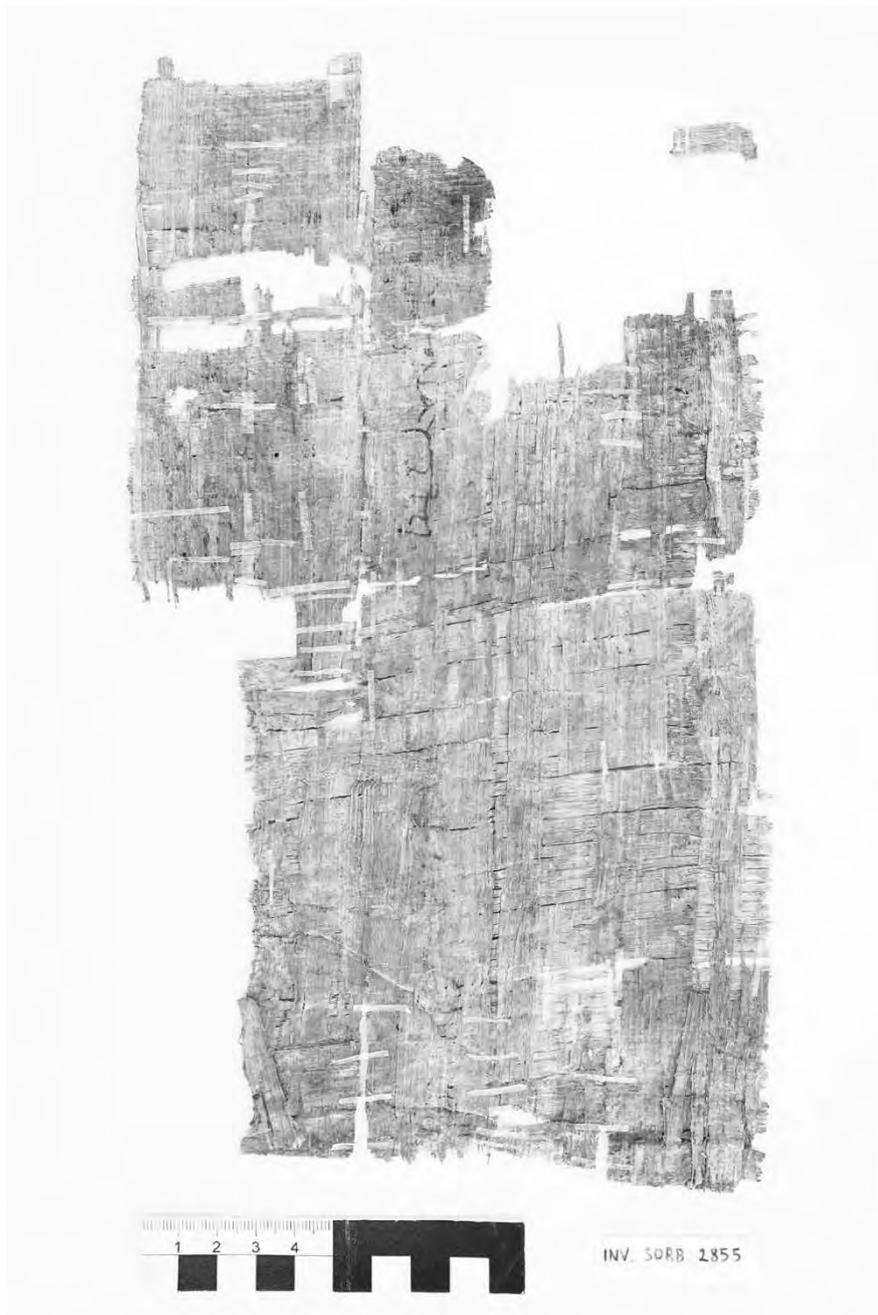
Pl. 3.



Pl. 4.



Pl. 5.



Pl. 6.

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