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P.LOND. INV. 1270: A PETITION TO AN OFFICIAL AND A PRIVATE LETTER

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P.LOND. INV. 1270: A PETITION TO AN OFFICIAL AND A PRIVATE LETTER*

The text on the front is a petition presented to an official from a person requesting him to give instructions to an assistant to come to make an inspection and obtain information from a door-keeper concerning a certain case in order to obtain requisite satisfaction and what was due to him together with the interest. The surviving text does not offer sufficient information for us to be clear about what happened. Moreover the text becomes puzzling because of the phrase in l. 5 ἐπὶ φραγίδων τὸν τόπον ποιήσασθαι (see n. ad loc.). The date of the petition is 24 September A.D. 255 or 23 September A.D. 256; see 7n. Αὐρήλιος Χαρήμων who is attested in the subscription is probably the petitioner (see 10n.). The official to whom the petition is addressed is probably the strategos of the nome (cf. the letter on the back, ll. 6-8). From the data the document offers we have no indication of the provenance of this piece of papyrus. To the left of line 3 in the margin there are faint traces of M/ (= 40?).

After this petition was written the back of the papyrus was reused for a letter. The writer of this letter turned the papyrus upside-down, i.e. 180° in relation to the text on the front side. The interesting points in this letter are the phrases πᾶν ποιήσον εἰς τὸ ἀπελτῖν, εἰς τὰ χαρταράν μου and the rare name Λαίς. The letter lacks the ἐρῶσθαι wish at the beginning and it seems to have been written very quickly because the case was, perhaps, urgent. The hand is to be dated shortly after A.D. 256 (i.e. the text of the front) and not after ca. A.D. 270. The letters κ, δ, π, υ are characteristic of this period. The hand is slightly forward-sloping and the letters are written separately with some ligatures of εἰ and αἰ.

The text on the front side is written along the fibres, the text on back across the fibres.

front →

Tafel I

- 1 [.....][.....]ι. [.....][.....][
βι[β]λίδια ἀξιῶν ἐπιτεῖλαι σε ἐνὲ τῶ[ν περὶ σὲ ὑπηρε-]
τῶν παρα[γ]ενέσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτ[ο]ψίαν []
πυθέσθαι τῆς ἐκεῖ θυρουροῦ τίνα εἴη τ[]
5 ἐπὶ φραγίδων τὸν τόπον ποιήσασθαι []
τοῦ νόμου ἐκδικίας τυχεῖν καὶ τὰ ὄφ[ειλόμενά μοι σὺν τοῖς]
τόκοις ἀπολαβεῖν. Διευτύχει. Λ τ [Αὐτοκρατόρων]
Καισάρων Πουπλίου Λικιννίου Οὐαλε[ριανοῦ καὶ Πουπλίου]
Λικιννίου Οὐαλεριανοῦ Γαλλιηνοῦ Ε[ὐ]σεβῶν Εὐτυχῶν Σεβακτῶν]
10 Θῶθ κς. (2nd hand) Αὐρήλιος Χαρήμων[ἐπιδέδωκα.]
21. ἐνὲ τῶ[ν

[I submitted to you this] petition requesting from you to give orders to one of [your assistants] to come to make an inspection [...] and learn from the door-keeper which were [...] and then] seal up the site [...] so that I could] obtain the satisfaction provided by the law and what is due [to me together with the] interest. Farewell. Year [...] of the Emperors Caesars Publius Licinnius Valerianus and Publius Licinnius Valerianus Gallienus Pii Felices Augusti, 26th Thoth. (2nd hand) I, Aurelius Chaeremo[n, have submitted the petition.]

- 1 The first lacuna contains 7-8 letters, the second 4-5 letters and the third 7-8 letters. The long tails both after the first and second lacuna could belong to either a ρ or a ι.
- 2 βι[β]λίδια: For the meaning 'petition' of this word and its use before the beginning of the fourth century A.D., when it was replaced by βιβλία, see U. Wilcken in APF 5 (1913), pp. 262-264. The plural βιβλίδια in this context in the papyri is less common than the singular βιβλίδιον.

* I should like to thank Dr. Scot McKendrick, Curator of the Manuscripts in the British Museum, who kindly gave me the permission to publish this text here. I am also grateful to James Cowey (Heidelberg) who improved my English.

- 2-3 ἐνεὶ τῶ[ν: The letters are certain. For the restoration cf. P.Mon. III 75, 9-10 (A.D. 212) ἐ]πιτεῖλαιίαι ce ἐνὶ τῶν περὶ cè ὑπηρετῶν [; P.Oxy. XII 1556, 1-2 (A.D. 247) [. . .] ἐνὶ τῶν περὶ σὲ ὑπη[ρετ]ῶν; ibid. XXXI 2563, 21-24 (c. A.D. 170) καὶ ἀννήγκασεν ἐνὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν ὑπηρετῶν | Θράσυλλον. Cf. also P.Oxy. XLIII 3105, 23-24 (A.D. 229-235) ἐπιτεῖλαι δι' ἐνὸς τῶν περὶ cè | ὑπηρετῶν τὸ ἴσον. The interchange of ι and ει is a common mistake; esp. for the form ἐνεὶ instead of ἐνὶ we find many examples in P.Customs documents; cf. P.Customs 463, 4; 497, 3 etc. Surprising, however, is the fact that the scribe has not made other mistakes. For the ὑπρέται acting as official witnesses to public procedures see P.Oxy. LVIII 3924, introd.; S. Strassi, *Le funzioni degli ὑπρέται nell'Egitto greco e romano*, Heidelberg 1997, pp. 40ff.
- 3 παραγενέσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν: This phraseology occurs either in petitions (cf. P.Oxy. X 1272, 19 (A.D. 144) ἀξιῶ --- παραγενέσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν; P.Harr. II 192, 21 (A.D. 167) ἀξιούντες ὑπρέτην ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν παραγενέσθαι) or in servants' reports (cf. P.Mil. II 41, 6 (V A.D.) ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν παραγενόμενοι ἐπεθεωρήσαμεν). Sometimes the phrase γίνεσθαι or ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν is attested: P.Stras. IV 259, 6-7 (II A.D.); P.Wisc. II 86, 26 (A.D. 244-46), a petition, ὑμῖν γεινομένοις ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν; P.Oxy. XII 1557, 5-6 (A.D. 255), a document which makes reference to a previous petition and a report, ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν ἐλθόντες; P.Cair. Isid. 66, 6 (A.D. 299), a petition, καὶ γενομένου μου ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν π[ρὸς] τὴν τῶν γεωργικῶν; but cf. also ll. 10-11 ἀξιῶν] ὑπρέτην ἀπ[ο]σταλα[ί]ηνα]ι ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν. In P.Oxy. XIX 2233, 8-9 (A.D. 350), an eirenarchs' report, the phrase ὡς τε ἐκεῖσε παραγενέσθαι π[ρὸς] αὐτοψίαν καὶ] παράστασιν τῶν [αἰ]τίων occurs, but the restoration has no parallel. In P.Oxy. LVIII 3926, 16-20 (A.D. 246), a petition, we find the following phraseology: ἐπιδίδωμι τάδε τὰ βιβλίδια ἀξιούσα | ἀποτάξαι ce ὑπρέτην τὸν ἐπολιόμενον τὴν περὶ αὐτοῦς | διάθεσιν.
- 3-4 Perhaps we should restore ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοψίαν [αὐτοῦ καὶ] | πυθέσθαι; cf. P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719, 11-12 αὐτοῦ | [πυ]θοῦ ἢ τῆς θυρουροῦ καὶ μαγ[θ]ῶ[ν]ει].
- 4 The syntax after πυθέσθαι requires a genitive of the object (τῆς θυρουροῦ) and an indirect interrogative sentence (introduced by the pronoun τίνα). I consider this pronoun as neuter nominative plural and not masculine accusative singular. For the optative (εἴη) in indirect questions see Mandilaras, *The Verb*, p. 289, § 653. Cf. P.Cair. Isid. 67, 19-21 πυνθ[ανόμενος περὶ τούτου τῶν τῆ]ς κώ[μης δη]μοσιῶν [C]ῶτα καὶ Λε[ῶν] [νίδου τίνες ἂν εἶχαν οἱ κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν] ἐκ[εῖ]ν[η]ν τούτῳ | [τῶ] τόπῳ παρεμφανέντες. In trials the verb πυνθάνεσθαι is a *terminus technicus* for the task of officials, who ask for information about something or someone; see for instance PSI IX 1033, 8-11 ἀξιῶ δέ ce μαθεῖν παρὰ τοῦ ὑπρέτου | [Διοφάντου] ὅπως ἐξῆλθεν ἡ παῖς. ὁ στρατηγὸς Διοφάντου | [ὑπρέτου] παρόντος ἐπύθετο· πῶς εἶδες τὴν παῖδα ἐξελθού[σαν οὐκ ἐξ]όντος; PSI X 1100, 18-22 Φαῦστος ἐπύθετο· ὑπὸ τίνος βασιταχθ[ῆ]ν; ἀπεκρίνατο· ὑπὸ τῶν κτε[ο]λόγων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων. ἐὰν οὖν σο[ι] δοκ[ῆ]ι, κατὰ τῆς τινος ἐπακολουθ[οῦν]τας. Φαῦστος εἶπεν· [. . .] [. . .] χρ[ὴ] α ἐπραξ[ε] περὶ τούτων; | ἀπεκρίνατο· οὐκ ἀναπαύ[σ]ομαι πράσσων κ[ατὰ] καιρὸν τοῦτον ἄχρη[ι] | τὰ ταῦτα διοικηθ[ῆ]ν. Φαῦστος ἐπύθετο· πόσου χρόνου δεῖ εἰς τὴν ἐκμέτρῃσιν. τῆς ἐκεῖ θυρουροῦ: Women as door-keepers are not rare in the papyri; cf. BGU VIII 1881, 5 (I B.C.); SB XII 11169, 13 (A.D. 175); P.Mil.Vogl. VI 281, 4 (II A.D.); P.Mil. II 77, 49 (III A.D.); P.Herm. 84, 12 (VI A.D.); P.Oxy. XXIV 2419, 8 (VI A.D.); P.Bad. IV 95, 438.479 (VII A.D.).
- The last preserved letter of the line could be either τ or π. Probably the article τά followed by a noun corresponding to τίνα. It is another example of Attic syntax in the papyri.
- 5 ἐπὶ γραγίδων τὸν τόπον ποιήσασθαι: The term *γραφίς* in the papyri denotes either a defined and numbered parcel of land or seal. The latter is difficult to understand in our context. If we assume a phrase “which were . . . (e.g. the papers or contracts) under seal” in ll. 4-5, then we cannot explain the infinitive ποιήσασθαι. As far as the meaning “parcel of land” is concerned, a parallel phrase occurs in P. Köln V 230, 7-8 καὶ γινόμενος ἐπὶ τῶν τόπων τὰ π[] | γραγίδων (l. γραγίδων) ἐποίησα τοὺς τόπους. The infinitive ποιήσασθαι depends on ἐπιτεῖλαι (as do the infinitives παρα[γ]ενέσθαι and πυθέσθαι), so at the end of l. 4 we have to supply the copulative conjunction καί. Probably, based on the present document, at the end of P.Köln V 230, 7 we could supply ἐπί.
- Τόπος can in the papyri mean sites (whether they are built upon or not), houses or parts of them (i.e. single rooms); see G. Husson, *OIKIA*, pp. 276-278 and E. Bernard, *Tόπος dans les inscriptions grecques d'Egypte*, ZPE 98 (1993), pp. 103-110.
- In the introduction to P.Köln V 230, the editor states that the document seems to refer to a dispute concerning land-surveying. The strategos asked someone, when he “made the land into parcels” and the answer, as the text is partly lost, seems to be that it was done “in the preceding year” (ll. 7-8). We cannot say whether this person was an official (servant? cf. l. 7 γινόμενος ἐπὶ τῶν τόπων) or one of the parties of the argument. Taken together with evidence from P.Lond. III 1270 I feel that the former case is more probable. Then the strategos announces a decision μένουσι ὧν οἱ τόποι ἐσφραγισμένοι, which more or less means that the phrases ποιῶ τὸν τόπον ἐπὶ γραγίδων and γραγίζω τὸν τόπον are synonyms. In both P.Lond. and P.Köln papyri I assume that the phrase has nothing to do with a division of land into parcels. In that case we would expect another phrase, e.g. the verb διαίρω. It seems that the meaning of ποιῶ τὸν τόπον ἐπὶ γραγίδων is to “seal up a place”. I cannot find a close parallel in the papyri; cf., however, LSJ s.v. γραγίζω I 4¹. Below in ll. 6-7 reference is made to something that was due (τὰ ὀφειλόμενα) and to the interest (τὸν τοῖς τόκοις). We usually find the phrase τὰ ὀφειλόμενα ἀπολαβεῖν (with or without the interest) in loans and leases. It is possible that the

¹ In Modern Greek we find the verb γραγίζω with the meaning “seal up a shop” because of a seizure of real estate or bankruptcy; see Δημητράκος, *Λεξικόν*, s.v. γραγίζω.

petitioner refers to someone who had leased land or had made a loan to another person, the latter did not keep the terms of the agreement and now the lessor or the creditor requests that a certain place (a house, if we take into account the door-keeper in 1.4) be put in pledge. The reason for the sealing could be that the house had to remain as it stood without changes or that they wanted to avoid theft.

Two more documents attest the phrase ἐπὶ φραγίδων connected with land [P.Erl. 41,14.19 (II A.D.) and P.Diog. 43,13 (II-III A.D.)], but both of them are much too mutilated to be helpful. The unusual phrase ποιεῖν τὸν τόπον followed by a predicate (adjective or prepositional noun) is comparable with P.Oxy. II 242,19-21 (A.D. 77) τοὺς δ' αὐτοὺς τόπους | οὐκ ἐμόρους πυήσουσι (I. ποιήσουσι) πρὸς τὸ μένειν αὐτοὺς χρησιτῆρια τοῦ αὐτοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἱεροῦ and P.Oxy. VI 941,2-3 (VI A.D.) ἐπειδὴ ὁ πλινθευτῆς λέγει τὸν τόπον τοῦ υἱοῦ Νῆνονοῦδος ὀστρακώδη | καὶ μὴ πεποιημένον εἰς πλινθεῦσαι.

In the lost right part of the papyrus we could possibly restore πρὸς τὸ (or ὥστε) δύνασθαί με or a parallel phrase.

- 6 τὸν νόμου ἐκδικίας τυχεῖν: The phrase ἐκδικίας τυχεῖν occurs at the end of a number of petitions of the second to the fourth century A.D. At the beginning of the line we expect a preposition. There is sufficient space for two letters. The first letter seems to be either an ε or an α. In the papyri κατὰ τὸν νόμον is a standard phrase; cf. PSI VIII 893,23-24 (A.D. 315) καὶ τυχεῖν με τῆς | [κατ]ὰ τὸν νόμον ἐκδικίας. But this is not the case here, because the genitive τοῦ νόμου is a certain reading. Consequently we have to assume either the preposition ἐκ or ἀπό. In the latter case we have to suppose that the letters πο are written in ligature, which would resemble the same ligature in ἀπολαβεῖν, in l. 7. Parallel examples of these two prepositions with τοῦ νόμου or τῶν νόμων are to be found in SPP XX 54,15-16 (A.D. 250) ὑπάρχει ἐκ τῶν νόμων καὶ τῶν θεῶν διατάξι[ξ]εων α[ύ]τ[η] ἢ [βο]ήθεια; P.Oxy. XXXIV 2712,16 (A.D. 292-293) σκεψάμενον σε [ὄ]ρειν τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων; Ἄπο τοῦ νόμου is also rare and not always found in petitions; cf. SPP XX 4,11-12 (A.D. 124) οὐκ ἔχοντος ἐκεῖνου ἀπο τῶν νόμων ἐξουσίαν; P.Diog. 16,23 (A.D. 207) ἐμποδίζομαι μὴ ἔχουσα τὸν ἀπο τῶν νόμων ἐπιγραφόμενόν μου κύριον; P.Wisc. I 3,8-10 (A.D. 257-259) ἔτυχον [ἐ]ξ ἀντιγραφῆς τὴν ἀπο τῶν νόμων φιλανθρῶ Ιπίαν; P.Oxy. XLIII 3140,3-4 (III-IV A.D.) θέμενος τὴν ἀπο τῶν νόμων | κίνησιν; P.Cair. Isid. 75,17 (A.D. 316) δεομένης τῆς ἀπο τῶν νόμων ἐπεξελεύσεως. Cf also the proposition ἐπί in P.Cair. Isid 63,7 (A.D. 296) ἦλθον ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν νόμων (l. νόμων) ἐγδικίαν.
- 7 Between ἀπολαβεῖν and διευτύχει there is a space of about 1 cm and between διευτύχει and the symbol for ἔτους a space of 0.5 cm. The description of the papyrus notes that the number of the year is lost. However, the first and the only preserved letter of the year number is τ, which points to either τ[ρίτου] (24 September A.D. 255) or τ[ετάρτου] (23 September A.D. 256).
- 10 For the restoration ἐπιδέδωκα cf. e.g. P.Wisc. II 86, 32 (A.D. 244-246); P.Oxy. XII 1557, 19 (A.D. 255); BGU XI 2069, 20 (A.D. 292). The hand of the subscription is less formal than that of the main text of the petition. It is presumably written by the petitioner himself since there is no subscription by an *amanuensis*. Many persons with this name are attested in the papyri of this period (about A.D. 245-260).

back ↓

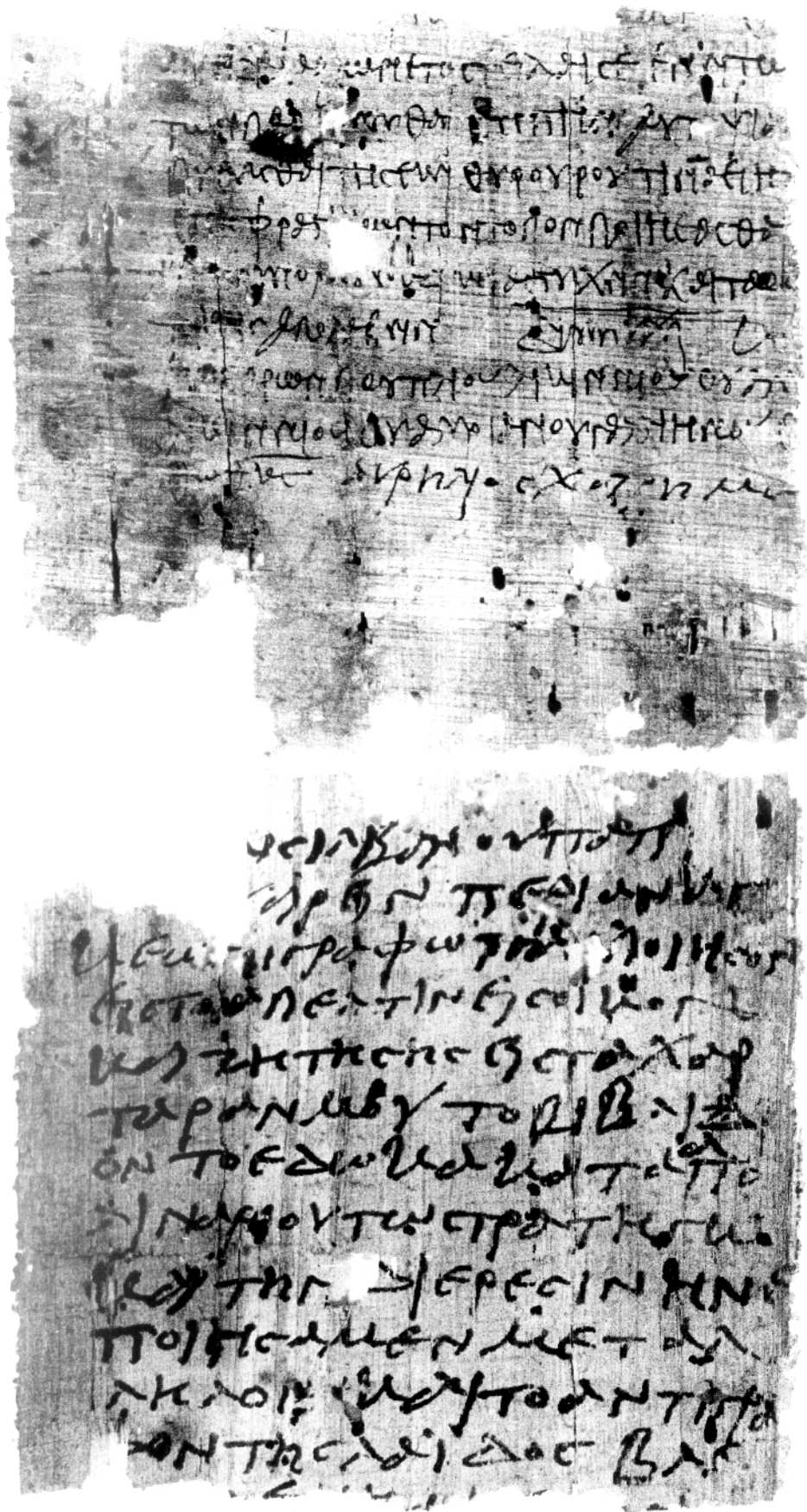
1 ...]ν Cιλβανοῦ πατρὶ
...]χαίρειν. Περὶ ἀναγ-
κέω σοι γράφω. Πάν ποιήσον
εἰς τὸ ἀπελτῖν εἰς οἶκον
5 καὶ ζητήσης εἰς τὰ χαρ-
τάραν μου τὸ βιβλίδι-
ον τὸ ἔδωκα κατὰ Ἀπο-
λιναρίου τῷ στρατηγῷ
καὶ τὴν διέρεσιν ἣν ἐ-
10 ποιήσαμεν μετ' ἀλ-
λήλων καὶ τὸ ἀντίγρα-
φον τῆς Λαίδος βλε-
...] εμησαμ ... ν[...

Tafel I

2-3 l. ἀναγκαιά(ν) 4 l. ἀπελθεῖν 5 l. ζητήσεις 5-6 l. χαρτάρια μου? 7 l. ὄ, α of Απο- is written above π
9 l. διαίρεσιν 10-11 l. ἀλλήλων 12 Λαίδος Pap.

[...]n son of Silvanus to [...] father, greetings. I am writing to you about what is needed. Make every effort to go home and search among my papers for the petition I submitted to the strategos against Apolinaris and the contract of division drawn up between us and the copy of Lais...

- 1-2 Ὠρίων or Θέων are possible supplements. *Κιλβανοῦ* in the genitive is either the name of the sender's father or a mistake for *Κιλβανῶ*, a dative as object to *χαίρειν*. The latter is less probable because there is no article before *πατρί*. In the papyri we usually find the phrase *ὁ δεῖνα τῷ πατρὶ (μου) χαίρειν*. There are only few exceptions; cf. P.Oxy. VI 938,1 (late III or IV A.D.) *Δημήτριος Ἡρακλείδη πατρὶ χαίρειν*. In that case at the beginning of the l. 2 we could supply *μου*.
- 2-3 *ἀναγκέω*: There is no final *ν* at the end. For the specific case of the use of *ε* instead of *αι* in this word in the papyri from the end of the second century A.D. see Gignac, Grammar I, p.192.
- 3-4 *Πάν ποιήσον* | *εἰς τὸ ἀπελτίν*: The syntax of the phrase *πάν ποιήσον* with infinitive accompanied by preceding article and preposition is found only in the present document; on the other hand, cf. a very close parallel example in P.Oxy. XIV 1670,7 (III A.D.) *πάν ποιήσον ἐν ἀπελτίν παρὰ Θῶνιν*. Very occasionally this phrase is construed also with the imperative or with *ἴνα* + subjunctive; see Henry Steen, *Les clichés épistolaires dans les lettres sur papyrus grecque*, *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 1938, pp.158-159. For the form *ἀπελτίν* itself cf. also *ἀπελτίν* in P.Abinn. 37,15 (Arsinoite nome; A.D. 342-351). For the interchange of *τ* and *θ* see Gignac, Grammar I, p. 87.
- 5 *ζητήσης* (l. *ζητήσειε*) *εἰς*: The future stands here for the imperative; see Mandilaras, *The Verb*, §396, pp.188-190. Alternatively, *ζητήσης* stands for the aorist futuristic subjunctive (l. *ζητήσης*); see Mandilaras, *The Verb*, §569, p.256. *εἰς c. acc.* for *ἐν c. dat.*
- 5-6 *εἰς τὰ χαρτάρων μου*: We would expect either *εἰς τὰ χαρτάρων μου* or *εἰς τὴν χαρτάρων μου*. The latter is difficult to accept; *χαρτηρά* is the tax on papyrus (see N. Lewis, *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity*, Oxford 1974, pp. 135-139) but this meaning gives no sense to the text. The letter *ν* in the former case could be explained as superfluous at the end of a word before another word beginning with a nasal; see Gignac, Grammar I, p. 113, c. A noun *χαρταρόν*, however, is not attested and we can assume that *χαρταρα* is a mistake for the accusative plural of *χαρτάριον* or *χαρτάρην*; for the meaning of *χαρτάριον* see N. Lewis, *op.cit.*, p. 77; *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity*, a Supplement, Pap. Brux. 23, 1989, p.34.
- 6-7 The phrase *δίδωμι βιβλίδιον κατὰ τινοσ* is attested in P.Oxy. VIII 1120, 4-6 (early III A.D.) and *ibid.* LV 3813, 2, 51-52 (III-IV A.D.)
τὸ ἔδωκα: For *τό* as relative see Gignac, Grammar II, p. 179; cf. also for example P.Oxy. XXXI 2599,31 (III-IV A.D.); *ibid.* LXII 4340,2.6 (late III A.D.).
- 9-11 *τὴν διέρεσιν ἣν ἐποιήσαμεν μετ' ἀλλήλων*: The phrase *ποιῶ διαίρεσιν* is attested in many papyri and denotes the division of property. However, the preposition *μετά* + genitive with this phrase is rare. The preposition *μετά* governs the genitive to denote "in common", "between". After the letter *ο* we can see a vertical. This could be considered as *ι*, but then a letter *ς* is too difficult for a dative *ἀλλήλοισ*. Before *καί* there is another vertical with a loop at the bottom. The letter *ν* resembles the final *ν* of *οἶκον* in l.4.
- 12 The name *Λαίς* is attested in P.Oxy. IV 658,16 (A.D. 250).
- 12-13 *βλεῖ[. . .] ἐμηγμ . . . ν[. . .]*: Cf. P.Oxy. XIV 1773,33 (III A.D.) *βλέπε δαὶ* (l. *δὲ*) *μὴ ἀμαρ[τ]άνης* (= be careful not to make any mistake). May we supply accordingly in our text *βλέ[πε δ]ὲ μὴ ἀμαρτάνης*? In that case we would have to put a stop after *Λαίδοσ*.



P.Lond. inv. 1270 front and back; N. Litinas, pp. 173-176