

**Pylon 4** (2023)  
ISSN: 2751-4722

## **A Local Will with a “Codicillary” Clause**

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Heidelberg: Propylaeum, 2023



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48631/pylon.2023.4.101705>

### **Citation**

W.G. Claytor and M. Nowak, “A Local Will with a “Codicillary” Clause,”  
Pylon 4 (2023). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48631/pylon.2023.4.101705>.

We would like to thank Brendan Haug for permission to publish this papyrus and Marieka Kaye for conservation and providing temporary photos (on which the edition is based). We are also grateful to Lucia Colella for kindly allowing us to consult a draft of her forthcoming monograph on Roman wills. Claytor’s research is co-funded by Poland’s National Science Centre and the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. [☞ 945339](#) (project No. 2021/43/P/HS3/00651).

[☞ P.Mich. inv. 6215i recto](#)  
Purchased in 1931/2

9.9 (w) × 7 (h)

Oxyrhynchos (?)  
ca. 150–200 CE

- §1 The papyrus is held at the University of Michigan Library and is part of a small group of papyri “purchased in Egypt during the season 1931/1932.”<sup>1</sup> The recto is written across the fibers (as commonly for wills: [☞ Turner 1978](#): 43–44) and is incomplete at the top and both sides. The blank space at the bottom is either the lower margin or a space between sections (see [below](#)) and contains two lines written upside down in a different hand. This hand seems to match that of the [☞ verso](#), which was turned 90 degrees and reused for a document also written against the fibers; the margins on the left and right of the verso (the right partially filled at the top with a notation) suggest that the papyrus was cut for reuse. The verso text (not published here) is badly preserved due to smudging or purposeful erasure of the text, but it is framed as a day-to-day account with amounts of drachmas. From what remains, the hand does not look later than the second century.
- §2 The recto contains part of a local Greek will (*diatheke*),<sup>2</sup> whose main interest lies in the inclusion of a rare “codicillary” clause, which may have been introduced under Roman influence. The date is lost, but the paleography suggests the second half of the second century. The script has the appearance of Turner’s “informal round” category ([☞ 1987](#): 21), with similar hands found in [☞ P.CtYBR inv. 685](#) = [☞ Benaissa 2010](#) (157–160 or 180–188 CE) and [☞ P.Col. 10 267](#) (180–192). The latter document is the top part of a will from Oxyrhynchos and close enough in style and physical characteristics that we have considered whether it originally belonged to our document. A close examination, however, reveals consistent differences in certain letter forms, such as the round-bottomed kappa of the Columbia papyrus and particularly its nu in three distinct, straight strokes, whereas the Michigan papyrus has a more cursive nu with a concave second stroke. Palaeography aside, our document should date no later than 212 CE when almost everyone became subject to Roman law as a result of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* and began to make their wills accordingly. A rough *terminus post quem* is suggested by the “codicillary” clause itself, which on current evidence first appears in the reign of Antoninus Pius (below). These external clues support the palaeographical dating to the second half of the century. As for provenance, the patterns on which the will is based suggests that it belongs to the group of local wills written in Oxyrhynchos (as does the name of the beneficiary in l. 10), while the hand belongs to the same graphic tradition as [☞ P.Col. 10 267](#). All signs thus point to Oxyrhynchos, even if we cannot rule out with certainty an origin in another metropolis of Roman Egypt.
- §3 Missing at the top of the will are the dating clause, introductory formula, and most of the main bequests.<sup>3</sup> Since bequests varied in length and detail, it is not possible to estimate how much is missing. It is, however, possible to get a sense of the width of the document through reconstruction of the clauses in ll. 5–6 and 8–9. The reconstructions proposed suggest ca. 69–71 letters are missing in the lacunas between lines, giving overall line lengths on the order of 100 letters. Our reconstruction of these lines is *exempli gratia*, since the distribution across the lines cannot be determined.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, the University of Michigan’s excavation season in the Fayum, which that winter took place at Soknopaiou Nesos. The purchase was inventoried as P.Mich. inv. 6213–6237.

<sup>2</sup> See generally [☞ Nowak 2015](#).

<sup>3</sup> For the structure of Oxyrhynchite wills, see [☞ Nowak 2022](#): 120–121.

- §4 The preserved text consists of the very end of the main bequests, followed by individualized substitution clauses, the penalty clause, completeness clause, a “codicillary” clause, individual bequests, and the *kyria* clause. The identity of the testator (or testatrix) is lost, and there are at least three beneficiaries to the will, Apollinarion (relation unknown), a son Sosibios, and another son whose name is damaged (l. 12).
- §5 The *kyria* clause, the last clause of the body of the will, is followed by a blank space interrupted only by two lines of text written upside down in another hand. If an original will, we would expect the document to contain the following after the main body: a long subscription recapitulating the testamentary provisions; subscriptions of the six witnesses; and a docket written in the same professional hand that wrote the main text. The blank space raises the possibility that nothing further was in fact written.
- §6 If this were the case, P.Mich. inv. 6215i would be either a private copy, such as [P. PSI 12 1263](#) (166/7), or a draft, as [P. Louvre 3 192](#) (end 2nd cent.) seems to be. The corrections and superlinear addition as well as the reuse for an account may support this understanding. Although the vast majority of Oxyrhynchite wills are original, most come from a single season of Grenfell and Hunt’s excavations and must have been found together (cf. [Nowak 2022](#)), whereas P. Mich. inv. 6215i was acquired on the antiquities market decades later.

 Fig. 1: P.Mich. inv. 6215i recto. Image courtesy of the University of Michigan Library Digital Collections.

 Fig. 2: P.Mich. inv. 6215i verso. Image courtesy of the University of Michigan Library Digital Collections.

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- [ -ca.?- ] [ . . . ]ης σκευῶν ἢ ἄλλων [ . . . ] . . . . [ . . . ] [ -ca.?- ]  
 [ -ca.?- ] τελευτήσῃ ἄτεκνον ἢ ἀδιάθετον, ἔστω ἂ ἐὰν -ca.?- ]  
 [ -ca.?- ] τελευτήσῃ ἄτεκν[ο]ν ἢ ἀδιάθετον, ἔστω ἂ ἐὰν [ -ca.?- ]  
 [ -ca.?- τελευτή]σῃ, ἔστω τῆς προγεγραμμένης Ἀπολλωναρίου[υ -ca.?- ]  
 5 [ -ca.?- ἐκτίνειν τὸν ἐπιχε]ιρήσοντα πρὸς ἀθέτησίν τι τούτων ἄγει[ν ἐπίτιμον  
 δραχμὰς -ca.?- ]  
 [καὶ εἰς τὸ δημόσιον τὰς ἴσας καὶ μηδὲν ἦσσον κύρια μένειν τὰ] προκειμένα. ἄλλῳ  
 γὰρ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν τῶν ἐ[μῶν καταλείπω]  
 [ -ca.?- ]τορι οὐδὲ τῇ Ἀπολλωναρίῳ οὐδεμ[ ] ν [ -ca.?- ]  
 [ὅσα δ’ ἂν ὑπὸ τὸ ἐκδόσιμο]ν τῆς διαθήκης γράψω ἦτοι ἀφαιροόμενος τι τῶν  
 προκειμένων ἢ]  
 [προσδιατάσσω ἢ ἑτέροις χαριζόμενος ἢ καὶ ἄλλο τι βουλόμενος κ]αὶ ταῦτα ἔστω  
 κύρια ὡς ἂν [ἐ]ν ταύτῃ τῇ δ[ιαθήκῃ ἐγγεγραμμένα ἦ]  
 10 [ -ca.?- χορη]γήσει τῷ προτεταγμένῳ υἱῷ μου Σωσιβίῳ [ -ca.?- ]  
 [ -ca.?- δ]ιαδεξόμενοι δὲ αὐτὴν ὁμοίως χορηγήσ[ουσι -ca.?- ]  
 [ -ca.?- ] σθαι τῷ αὐτῷ υἱῷ μου -ca.9- ωκ[ -ca.?- ]  
 [ -ca.?- ἢ δι]αθήκη κυρία. *vac.*

2 τελευτήση: η *corr.* ex γ vel αι? I. ἄτεκνος I. ἀδιάθετος 3 τελευτήση: *corr.* ex τελευτήης I. ἄτεκν[ο]ς I. ἀδιάθετος 8 I. ἀφαιρούμενος 10 ὕω papyrus 11 δ]ιαδεξόμενοι: ξ *corr.* ex λ vel χ I. δ]ιαδεξόμενοι

... of implements or other ... [If NN] dies childless or without a will, let whatever [I leave ... belong to ... And if NN] dies childless or without a will, let whatever [I leave ... belong to ... And if NN] dies, let ... belong to the aforementioned Apollonarion ... Whoever should attempt to invalidate any of these things [must pay a penalty of X drachmas and an equal amount to the public treasury, and the] aforementioned terms [are nonetheless to be valid. I bequeath] to no one else any of [my] things ... [neither] to ...tor, nor to Apollonarion ... [Whatever] I write [under the copy] of the will, whether removing [or adding] something [of the aforementioned terms or providing gifts for other people or whatever else I wish,] let these things be valid as if [they were written] in this will ... S/he will provide to my aforementioned son Sosibios ... Upon inheriting it, they will likewise provide ... to the same son of mine, NN ... The will is valid.

- §7 1 ][...]ης σκευῶν ἢ ἄλλων [. The first trace is a deep descender going through the upsilon of τελευτήση in the next line, almost reaching the tau of τελευτήση in the line following. For the writing of ]ης, cf. προγεγραμμένης in l. 4 and τῆς in l. 8.
- §8 This phrase must have belonged to the main bequest due to its position before the specific substitution clauses. For references to σκευή in the bequests of Oxyrhynchite wills, cf. ☞ P.Oxy. 1 105.4 and 10; ☞ P.Oxy. 3 489.8 and 16; ☞ P.Oxy. 3 494.9; ☞ P.Oxy. 3 495.6 and 7; ☞ P.Köln 2 100.13 and 24.
- §9 2–4 The final letter of τελευτήση in l. 2 is the result of a scribal correction, perhaps from γ or αι. In the second instance of the verb in the next line, the writer appears to have corrected from -της with a final, turned-over sigma, by adding, then retracing for good measure, a final eta. No such modification was made to the third instance, of which only ]ση remains at the beginning of l. 4. Given the subjunctive verbs, the following ἄτεκνον ἢ ἀδιάθετον in ll. 2 and 3 should be in the nominative case on the understanding that they agree with an individual's name, as in ☞ P.Oxy. 1 105.11 (118–138), ἐὰν δ]ε ἡ Ἀμμωνοῦς ἄτεκνος καὶ ἀδιάθετος τελευτήση. The -ον endings may have been influenced by the pattern ἐὰν δὲ συμβῆ (PN in the accusative) ἄτεκνον ἢ ἀδιάθετον τελευτήσαι, especially in view of the possible correction from -αι in l. 2. A less likely explanation for the -ον endings is a protasis such as ἐὰν τὸ τέκνον μου PN ἄτεκνον ἢ ἀδιάθετον τελευτήση. Each of the apodoses in our text begin with the imperative ἔστω (as in ☞ P.Oxy. 1 105.11); in ll. 2 and 3, the verb is followed by the beginning of a relative clause (ἃ ἐὰν) serving as the subject, which would have continued in the vein of ☞ P.Köln 2 100.16 (ἔστω ἃ ἐὰν ἀπολίπη ἀπὸ τῶν ἐμῶν ...), while in l. 4, a genitive of possession immediately follows the verb.
- §10 These lines contain individual substitution clauses. Unlike the general substitution clause (ἐὰν ζῆ, εἰ δὲ μὴ, τὰ τούτου τέκνα *vel sim.*), which is placed much earlier in the text as a part of the appointment of heirs, individualized substitutions occur only sporadically and have no set pattern. Cf. for instance: ☞ P.Oxy. 1 105.6, ἐὰν δὲ συμβῆ τὴν Ἀμμωνοῦν ἄτεκνον καὶ ἀδιάθετον τελευτήσαι, ἔσται τὰ μέρη τῶν ἐνγαίων τοῦ ὁμομητρίου αὐτῆς ἀδελφοῦ Ἀντᾶτος; ☞ P.Oxy. 66 4533. 5–6, ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἔχω τέκνα μόνους τοὺς προγεγραμμένους [A]μόιν. | [καὶ Ζώilon ἢ τὸν ἀπ' αὐτῶν περιόντα πάντων ὧν ἐὰν ἀπολίπ]ω καθ' ὄνηποτοῦν τρόπον; ☞ P.Oxy. 3 490. 6–7, [ἐὰν δὲ συμβῆ τὸν Διονύσιον ἄτεκνον καὶ ἀδιάθετον τελευτήσαι πεμφθήσεται] | τὰ ἀπ' ἐμοῦ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐλευσόμενα [εἰ]ς τοὺς ἔγγιστά μου γένους ὄ[ν]τας; ☞ P.Oxy. 3 491.10: ἐὰν δὲ τινι τῶν τριῶν υἱῶν συμβῆ ἀτέκνω τελευτήσαι ἔστω τὸ το[ύ]του μέρος τῶν περιόντων αὐτοῦ ἀδελφῶν ἐξ ἴσου.
- §11 Here, there are at least three successive substitution clauses, an unusual number. In ☞ P.Wisc. 1 13.7–8, the possible death of one or both of the heirs is handled as follows: [ἐὰν τις αὐτῶν μεταλλάξῃ ἄτεκνος καὶ ἀδιάθετος, ἔστω τὸ τούτου μέρος] ἐν κληρονομίας (I. -α) μου τοῦ ἑτέρου αὐτῶν, ἐὰν δὲ καὶ ὁ ἕτερος ἐπιμεταλλάξῃ, ὃ [μ]ὴ εἶη, ἄτεκνος καὶ ἀδιάθετος, ἔστω δὲ τιν' ἀπολιπεῖν τῶν ἔγγιστά] |

[μου γένους ὄντων, “Should one of them die without children and without a will, his portion of my estate shall belong to the other; should the other one—may it not be! —also die without children and without a will, it shall not be contested that one of my next of kin shall benefit” (translation of *ed. pr.*, lightly modified).

- §12 In our papyrus, we are either dealing with the appointment of a separate substitute for several heirs (scenario 1) or different grades of substitution for one or more heirs (scenario 2), both of which are attested in Greco-Roman Egypt. Scenario 1: ‘I leave NN1 and NN2 as heirs of my belongings. Should NN1 die childless or without a will, his share shall belong to NN3. Should NN2 die childless or without a will, his share shall be of NN4’ (such a pattern is attested in a copy of a Roman will, [PBGU 1 326](#) = Colella (forthcoming) no. 14; see [Amelotti 1966](#): 129). Scenario 2: ‘I leave NN1 as heir of my belongings. Should NN1 die childless or without a will, his share shall belong to NN2. Should NN2 die childless or without a will, her share shall belong to NN3. Should NN3 die childless or without a will, her share shall belong to NN4’ (cf. e.g. the Hellenistic [P.Petr. 12 25.27–31](#) or the Roman *testamentum Dasumii* [[CIL 6 10229](#)] with [Eck 1978](#)).
- §13 4–6 Following the last substitution clause, the will shifted to the general penalty clause, the extant part of which in l. 5 is exactly paralleled in [P.Wisc. 1 13.8](#), the basis for our restorations (parallel underlined): μη οὔσης μηδενὶ τῷ καθόλου ἐξουσίας παραβαίνειν τι τούτων ἢ χωρὶς] τοῦ ταῦτα μένειν κύρια ἔτι καὶ ἐκτέλ[νειν] τὸν ἐπιχειρήσοντα πρὸς ἀθέτησίν τι τούτων ἄγειν ἐπ[ί]τιμον δραχμὰς χιλίας καὶ εἰς τὸ δημόσιον τὰς ἴσ[ας]. Similar constructions are found also in [P.Oxy. 3 492.9–10](#) and [PSI 12 1263.9–11](#). For this clause, see [Nowak 2015](#): 200.
- §14 ] προκειμένα in l. 6 shows that an additional clause was added to the penalty clause, affirming the validity of the provisions even if attempts were made to break them: for the restoration and parallels cf. [P.Oxy. 3 491.11–12](#); [P.Oxy. 3 494.29](#); [P.Oxy. 66 4533.8–9](#); and [P.Oxy. 3 646 descr.](#), l. 13, published in [Derda and Nowak 2018](#) (the clause is also fully restored in [P.Sijp. 43.15](#); cf. also the variant found at [P.Oxy. 3 495.16](#)); the abbreviated version καὶ μηθὲν ἦσσον is also found (e.g. [P.Oxy. 3 492.10](#) and [PSI 12 1263.11](#)).
- §15 If the penalty was set at δραχμὰς χιλίας as in [P.Wisc. 1 13.8](#) (the amount varies, however), our reconstruction would contain 71 letters in the lacuna (cf. the 69 letters reconstructed between ll. 8–9 below).
- §16 6 ἄλλω γὰρ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν τῶν ἐ[μῶν καταλείπω]. On the completeness clause, see [Nowak 2015](#): 154–155.
- §17 7 This line contains reference to at least two individuals in the dative connected by οὐδέ. A third individual might appear at the end of the line with a name beginning with mu, but there is no article before it, and οὐδεμίαν is a possible reading.
- §18 The line might contain individual penalty clauses: cf. [P.Oxy. 1 104.27–30](#), prohibiting anyone from acting against the testatrix’s son, and [P.Oxy. 1 105.7](#), indicating that the penalty should be paid to a given individual, the testator’s daughter and heir; [P.Oxy. 3 491.7–8](#), prohibiting heirs to dispose of the inherited property before turning 25 years old. See [Kreller 1919](#): 366–368.
- §19 Usually, however, both individual and general penalty clauses constitute parts of one provision, that is, a prohibition against anyone interfering with the will and individual prohibitions concerning specifics. Here, however, the general penalty clause was already followed by the completeness clause, so perhaps an alternative explanation for this line is needed, such as a continuation of the completeness clause, specifying that certain people were not bequeathed anything other than what was written in the will. Such a provision is, however, not attested elsewhere.

- §20 8–9 What remains of these lines shows that they contained a “codicillary” clause, paralleled in only two other wills from Oxyrhynchos, [P.Oxy. 3 494.25–26](#) and [P.Oxy. 3 495.15–16](#) (see discussion [below](#)). Since our reconstruction of ll. 5–6 has ca. 71 letters in the lacuna, the “codicillary” clause here likely followed [P.Oxy. 3 495.15](#) with the addition of τῶν προκειμένων after ἀφαιρούμενός τι (left out of [P.Oxy. 3 494.26](#)): the lacuna between ll. 8 and 9 would thus contain 69 letters.
- §21 9 καὶ ταῦτα ἔστω κύρια ὡς ἂν [ἐ]ν ταύτῃ τῇ διαθήκῃ ἐγγεγραμμένα ἐστίν. The phrase is similar to that in the two other wills contains this clause: [P.Oxy. 3 494.25–26](#) (καὶ αὐτὰ ἔστω κύρια | ὡς δ’ εἶν[α]ι τῇ διαθήκῃ ἐγγεγραμμένα) and [P.Oxy. 3 495.16](#) (αὐτὰ ἔστω κύρια] ὡς [... τῇ διαθ]ήκη ἐγγεγραμμ[έ]να).
- §22 10 In the second century, the name Sosibios ([TM Nam 5932](#)) is found largely in texts from Oxyrhynchos.
- §23 10–12 These lines contain additional provisions, anchored by two appearances of the verb χορηγέω. The verb is used for specific bequests in wills: cf. for example [P.Oxy. 3 494.16](#), where a son was appointed as heir (ll. 11–13), but the wife was given the use and management of the testator’s property until her death (ll. 7–10), but was obliged to pay various burdens and provide determined maintenance to her son (ll. 13–16).
- §24 11 διαδεξόμενοι (I. διαδεξάμενοι) δὲ αὐτὴν ὁμοίως χορηγήσ[ουσι]. In the first word, a previous lambda or perhaps chi was crossed out by a short vertical then rewritten with a tall, narrow xi. There are faint remains of what appears to be a curved stroke atop the following omicron, though not obviously an attempt at changing the letter. We think αὐτὴν refers to a piece of property previously mentioned. Cf. [P.Oxy. 66 4533.6](#), ἐπὶ τῷ τοῦς διαδεξαμένους (corr. ex -ομένους) τὰ ἡμέτερα δοῦναι, also for our correction to the aorist participle.

### The “Codicillary” Clause (ll. 8–9)

- §25 This clause, found with minor variants at [P.Oxy. 3 494.25–26](#) and [P.Oxy. 3 495.15–16](#), allows the testator to make changes to the *ekdosimon*, or official copy, of their will. The clause is of interest both because it might have been inspired by Roman testamentary practice (as already suggested by [Arangio-Ruiz 1906](#): 129–130) and because, if put into effect, it would undercut the long-established procedure surrounding the deposition and opening of Greek wills at the local *agoranomeion*.
- §26 Local Greek wills (*diathekai*) were notarial documents, which were drawn up and stored in a notarial office, generally the *agoranomeion* located in the metropolis of a nome ([Wolff 1978](#): 23 with n. 62). The testator was given the official *ekdosimon*, which they entrusted to a private person. Upon the testator’s death, the holder of the *ekdosimon* would apply to the *strategos* or other relevant officials to initiate the procedure for opening the original will, as illustrated in the preserved requests from the second century ([P.Fouad 32](#), [P.Mert. 2 75](#), [P.Oxy. 44 3166](#)).<sup>4</sup>
- §27 Under normal circumstances, a testator intending to change their will had to contact the authorities to do so: [P.Cair.Preis.<sup>2</sup> 32](#), for instance, an order to the *agoranomoi* to return a will, was prompted by the testator’s petition and contains his acknowledgement of receipt at the bottom (cf. [P. Oxy. 1 106](#); [P. Oxy. 1 107](#); [P. Oxy. 36 2759](#); [SB 8 9766](#)). The object of the request is the original *diatheke* and removing it served the purpose of revoking the will. This method prevented the ‘collision’ of two wills but required the physical presence of the testator in the *agoranomeion* (see [Kreller 1919](#): 389–395). As Samuel ([1961](#): 39–42) has pointed out, this method is only attested for Oxyrhynchos in the first half of the second century. Later, we hear of a law attributed to Antoninus Pius according

<sup>4</sup> Dryton’s wills suggest a similar procedure was in place from at least the middle of the second century BCE ([Nowak 2012](#)).

to which one could declare their will to be invalid from afar, in case they wished to make another one in a different place (☞ [P.Wash.Univ. 1 13](#) and ☞ [SB 10 10280](#) with ☞ [Lewis 1968](#)). Local testamentary practice in Egypt before 212 CE, therefore, allowed revocation of a will through the notarial office in which it was drawn up.

- §28 Roman wills, in contrast, were fully private deeds, involving no state office, whose validity depending on meeting certain formal requirements (☞ [Nowak 2015](#): 19–71). Changes to a will were made through a codicil, a separate document written by the testator (☞ [Amelotti 1966](#): 163). Such codicils have survived in Egyptian papyri (e.g. ☞ [BGU 1 326.15–21](#)) and in epigraphic material from outside of Egypt (cf. ☞ [Jones 2004](#): 95–100). Furthermore, Roman testaments from Egypt often contained the codicillary clause confirming the validity of such additions: e.g. ☞ [P.Oxy. 38 2857.21–26](#) (the text is that of Colella, forthcoming, no. 4), ll. 21–26: ἐὰν δέ τι μετὰ ταύτην μου | [τῆ]ν διαθήκην πιν[α]κείσι κωδικίλλοις χ[ά]ρτη ἢ ἄλλῳ τινὶ | [γέ]νει ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ γεγραμμένον ἢ ὑπογεγραμμένον ἐσφρα[γισ]μένον τε καταλε[ί]πω, δι’ οὗ δοθῆναί τι ἢ γενέσθαι παρέ[χει]ν τε ἐπιτρέψω κωλύσω τε, [ἢ] ἐν ἴσῳ βέβαιον εἶναι θέλω | ὡς καὶ ταύτην μου τὴν διαθήκην. For Latin examples see: ☞ [ChLA 9 399](#) = Colella, forthcoming, no. 1 or ☞ [P.Hamb. 1 72](#) = Colella, forthcoming, no. 22).
- §29 Although we cannot avoid the impression that the clause in P.Mich. inv. 6215i, ☞ [P.Oxy. 3 494](#), and ☞ [P.Oxy. 3 495](#) was inspired by Roman practice, it differs in one important respect from the Roman codicillary clause: it envisages changes made on a copy of the will itself, whereas the Roman testator could not add anything to his will once it was made, because it was closed and sealed (☞ [Arangio-Ruiz 1953](#)). A codicil, therefore, had to be a separate document. Further, it is difficult to see any practical effect of this modified “codicillary” clause, since adding or removing something on the *ekdosimon* would not affect the content of the sealed will kept in the notary’s office. The influence, then, may have been more stylistic than anything else. Unfortunately, no examples of such local ‘codicils’ are known to us, so we cannot observe how (and whether) the clause was put into effect in relation to the procedure for opening wills.

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Fig. 1: P.Mich. inv. 6215i recto. Image courtesy of the University of Michigan Library Digital Collections.



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Fig. 2: P.Mich. inv. 6215i verso. Image courtesy of the University of Michigan Library Digital Collections.

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