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A Fragment Mentioning the *Legio III Cyrenaica*?

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Text exemplar

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P. Heid. Inv. G 826

11.3 (h) × 5.6 (w)

Ankyron
81–96

- §1 P.Heid. inv. G 826 is a small papyrus fragment of medium brown color.¹ It was acquired by Friedrich Bilabel during the ‘Badische Grabungen’ conducted in el-Hîbeh in the winter and early spring of 1914.² It preserves most of the large top margin and the upper part of the left-hand margin (fig. 1); the verso is blank. Overall, there survive the beginnings of ten lines of a Greek text written along the fibers. The original length of the lines is impossible to determine. The ink is black and the writing is somewhat effaced.
- §2 The main interest of the fragment, which dates to the reign of Domitian and might have contained an oath by the fortune of this emperor,³ is in the mention of a ‘third legion’, which I suggest to identify with *legio III Cyrenaica*. This legion, created sometime at the end of the Republic, was stationed in Egypt after Octavian established the province. In the first century, it was garrisoned at Nikopolis, near Alexandria; later it participated in the conquest of Arabia in 106/107 and in Trajan’s eastern campaigns, returning to Egypt by 119; shortly after, it moved again to the eastern frontier provinces of the Roman Empire where, as early as 140, it was permanently garrisoned at Bostra.⁴
- §3 It is difficult to assert what kind of document we are dealing with. It could be a declaration of some sort. The two parties involved bear common Latin names, Marcus and Lucius Valerius. The rest of the text is too fragmentary to offer definite conclusions.

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Andrea Jördens (Institute for Papyrology, Heidelberg University) for allowing me to study this papyrus fragment and the editors and anonymous reviewers of the journal for their very useful insights, corrections, and comments regarding previous versions of the manuscript; all errors are my own. The dates are Common Era unless specified otherwise.

² A general account of the excavations is available in [Habermann and Fuchs 2014](#).

³ For the papyrological documentation dating to the reign of Domitian see the overview of selected papyri in [Bellucci and Longo 2020](#), especially chapter 1.3.

⁴ For this legion both in Egypt and Arabia see, for instance: [Speidel 1982](#); [Alston 1995](#): esp. 73; [Wolff 2000](#); [Gatier 2000](#); [Haensch 2012](#): esp. 69; [Fischer-Bovet and Sängler 2019](#): 172; [Bagnall 2021](#): 62–63. See also: [Stoll 2003](#); [Perea Yébenes 2003](#): 116–118; [Coşkun 2008](#); [Speidel 2016](#): 223–225; [Perea Yébenes 2020](#): 69–75; [Stoll 2022](#). For the latest epigraphic discoveries pertaining to the legion in the Eastern Desert of Egypt see [García-Dils de la Vega et al. 2022](#), including further bibliographic references at 114–115, note 16; for the latest epigraphic discoveries from Arabia, see [Fiema et al. 2020](#).

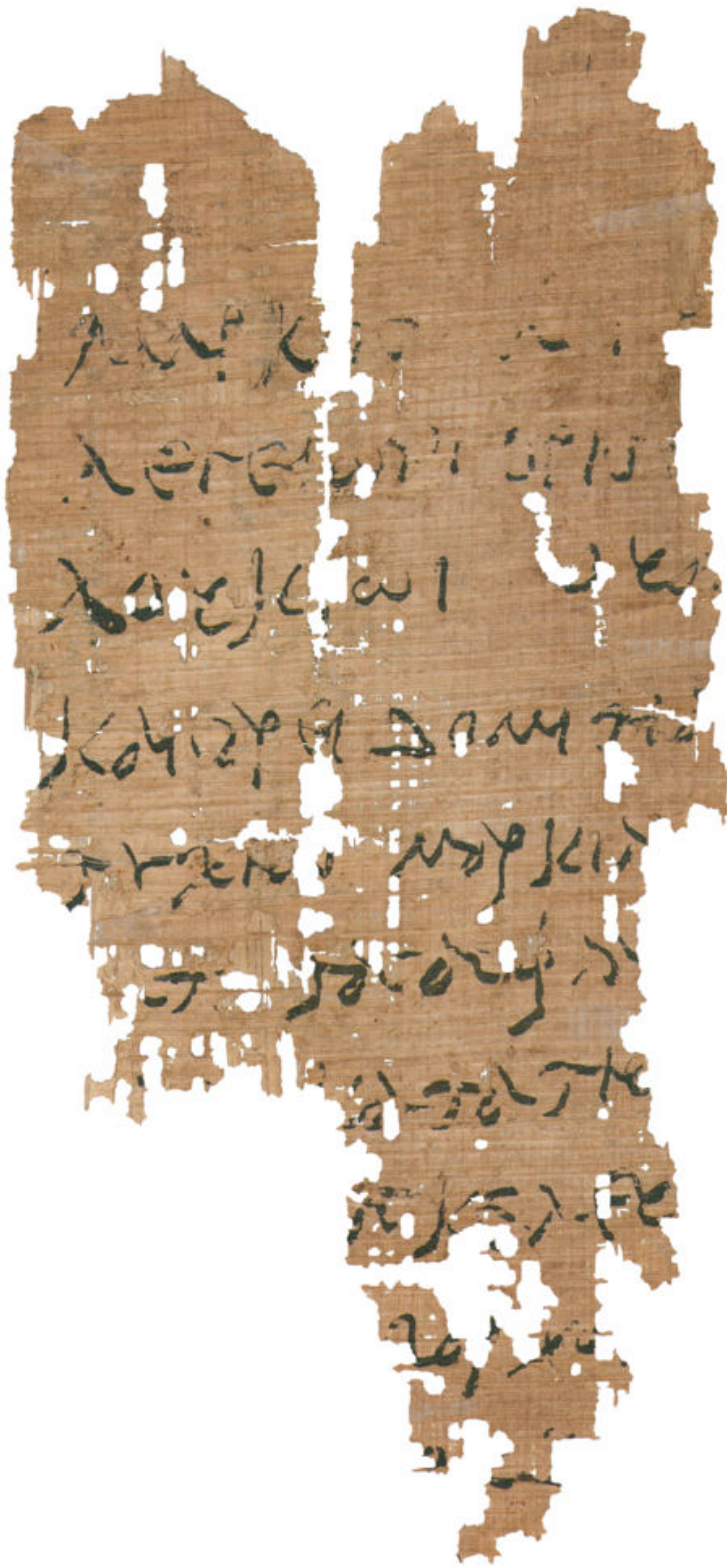


Fig. 1: P.Heid. inv. G. 826 recto. Photo: Elke Fuchs; © Institut für Papyrologie, Universität Heidelberg.

Μάρκος Α . . . [-ca.?-]

λεγειῶνι τρίτη[ς Κυρηναϊκῆς (?)-ca.?-]

Λουκίῳ Οὐαλ[ερίῳ -ca.?- χείρειν (?) -ca.?-]

Καίσαρει Δομῖτια[νοῦ Σεβαστοῦ -ca.?-]

5 τυχήν Μάρκον [-ca.?-]

[-2-3-]στολας ἀσφαλ[-ca.?-]

[-ca.5-] κατὰ τή[ν -ca.?-]

[-ca.5- τ]ῆ κελευ[σθείση (?) -ca.?-]

[-ca.7- ὕ]παρχο [-ca.?-]

10 [-ca.7-] . . . [-ca.?-]

2 *l.* λεγεῶνος 4 *l.* Καίσαρος

- §4 1 The *nomen gentile* could have started with a *lambda* instead of *alpha*; there follow traces of two unidentifiable letters. The lost part of the line must have had the *cognomen* and the legionary rank or status.
- §5 2 The dative is likely a mistake for the genitive, *l.* λεγεῶνος. Alternatively, if the dative was intended, line 1 may have ended with the preposition ἐν, preceded by a verb, thus [... ἐν] | λεγειῶνι τρίτη[ι Κυρηναϊκῆ].
- §6 Several Greek and Latin papyri from Egypt referring to the *legio III Cyrenaica* have known provenance. One comes from Oxyrhynchus, ☞ *P.Oxy.* 64 4434 (22 August 154?), and another probably from Alexandria, ☞ *BGU* 1 140 = *M. Chr.* 373 = *Sel. Pap.* 2 213 (4–29 August 119), while the rest come from the Arsinoite nome: ☞ *P.Tebt.* 2 586 = *SB* 12 11041 (20/21, Tebtunis); ☞ *SB* 18 13235 (69–78, Aueris); ☞ *ChLA* 46 1364 (92, Arsinoites); ☞ *P.Lond.* 2 142 (28 November 95, Karanis); ☞ *P. Mich.* 9 571 (26 May–24 June 96, Karanis); ☞ *P.Mich.* 8 465 and ☞ *P.Mich.* 8 466 (107/108, Karanis), two letters sent by Iulius Apollinarius while stationed with the legion at Bostra; ☞ *P.Mich.* 9 562 (1 September 119, Karanis). See also ☞ *Lash and Verhoogt* 2015 for a *signifer* from Karanis presumed to be from this legion. The provenance of other papyri mentioning the legion (☞ *ChLA* 10 431; ☞ *RMR* 34; ☞ *RMR* 58) is not clear.
- §7 3 Marcus’s address to Lucius Valerius probably ended with the customary χείρειν.
- §8 3–5 If τυχήν in *l.* 5 is the word τύχη, its proximity to the imperial titles would suggest that it formed part of an oath, in which the verb ὀμνῶ stood in line 3. A possible reconstruction of *ll.* 3–5 could then be [... ὀμνῶ τὴν Αὐτοκράτορος] | Καίσαρει (*l.* Καίσαρος) Δομῖτια[νοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Γερμανικοῦ (?)] | τύχη. An oath by the fortune of the emperor is attested in two Domitianic papyri, a census declaration ☞ *P.Hamb.* 1 60 = *CPJ* 3 485 (10 December 90, Hermopolis), *ll.* 19–22: [καὶ ὀμ]νῶι (*l.* ὀμνῶ) τὴν Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Δομῖτι[ανοῦ] [Σεβαστο]ῦ Γερμανικοῦ τύχη <μη> ὑπάρχειν μοι [ο]ίξ[ίαν] ... ἕξω τῶν προγεγραμμέ[νων], and a fragmentarily preserved delivery assurance, ☞ *SB* 6 9087 (29 August 89–28 August 90). One would expect, however, that the content of the oath, which should have followed the word τύχη, would begin with an infinitival or an adverbial phrase, cf. *P.Hamb.* 1 60 cited above (or other sworn statements), and not a personal name in the accusative, as in the Heidelberg fragment, unless this Marcus—presumably different from the Marcus in *l.* 1—is the subject of the lost infinitive of the oath. Too little is preserved to allow one to draw any definite conclusion and it is conceivable that τυχήν in *l.* 5 was the end of a personal name, such as Εὐτύχη.

- §9 6 One can clearly read στολάς. The letters probably form the ending of a word the beginning of which was written in the lost beginning of the line, for instance: [ἐπι]στολάς, ‘letters’, or [δια]στολάς, ‘payments’. Another possibility to consider is [τὰς] στολάς ‘the garments’; a good parallel from the late 1st century, involving military officials, is found in a receipt from the receivers of public clothing in Tebtunis (☞ [P.Tebt.UC 1607c](#)) cf. ll. 6–8: παρε[ι]λήφασμεν -ca.?-] | [-ca.?-] παρ’ ὁμῶν τὰς στολάς [-ca.?-] | [-ca.?-] α ἀνή[κ]οντα ἀγούσας [-ca.?-]; see further ☞ [Gibbs and Sampson \(2019\)](#). The form of ἀσφαλ[] is impossible to ascertain, nor its connection to the preceding word.
- §10 8 Since the first preserved letter in the line is an *eta*, I suggest that it is part of the article τῆ and that the following word is the dative singular of the participle feminine passive of the verb κεύω.

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