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A new Ravenna papyrus from the Bodleian Library.

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COMPLETIO OF A DEED OF DONATION

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COMPLETIO OF A DEED OF DONATION

Ravenna

Between 553 and 564 A.D.?

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. class. c. 15 (P). Dimensions: ± 19 cm (h.) x ± 30 cm (w.). Writing across the fibres (*'transversa charta'*). Above the text is a blank space of ± 3.5 cm. The bottom and the RH edge of the papyrus are torn off irregularly. The width may originally have been about 35 cm., both edges probably having been torn off. As there is no join visible, the fragment may be the remainder of one of the single leaves (*paginae*) of a papyrus roll. Under the text, to the right, there are some names of persons living much later times; they may be taken to have owned the fragment, or to have left their signatures in order to show that they at least saw the fragment. On the back is pasted a 19th-century Italian label with a (slightly erroneous) transcript of the text; this label may cover some writing, but otherwise the back is blank. The text was acquired by the Bodleian Library in 1981.

- | | | |
|---|--|----------------|
| 1 | † Gratus scr[i]btor huius chartulae donationis perfect[a] a testibus | Cf. Tafel III. |
| 2 | rob[er]ata post quod ei relictum est complevi [et absolvi]. | |
| 3 | (In other, much later hands) m/b | |
| 4 | Mattheus Boiard(us) | |
| 5 | Ioh(ann)es Peṭr(us) Bonsegnior. Rolandus (?) Ombonus. A[| |
| 6 | Iohanes | |
| | <i>traces of writing?</i> | |
| 7 | Rolandus (?) Ombonus | |
| 8 | Rizardus | |
| | <i>spatium of ± 5 cm</i> | |

1 l. hanc chartulam, perfectam 2 l. roboratam, relecta, complevi 5 Iohes pap. 6 l. Iohannes

Translation:

† I, Gratus, writer of this deed of donation, have completed [and released] <it>, finished <and> corroborated by witnesses, after it was read back to him.

Introduction:

With the present fragment another piece is added to the group of Italian (mostly Ravenna) papyri from the Vth - VIIth centuries published by J.-O. Tjäder.¹ It is the small rest of a certainly very extensive document carrying a deed of donation. What has survived is the very end of the document with the scribe's finishing subscription commonly known as the *completio*. Thereafter one finds names of persons who may have been the (much) later owners of the papyrus or who, by writing their signature, intended to show that they saw it (cf. note on l. 4ff.).

¹ J.-O. Tjäder, *Die nichtliterarischen lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445-700, I, Papyri 1-28* (Lund 1955); *II, Papyri 29-59* (Stockholm 1982); *III, Tafeln* (Lund 1954). These editions will be referred to hereafter as P.Ital. I and P.Ital. II; for their content cf. the short survey given in J.-O. Tjäder, *Alcune osservazioni sulla prassi documentaria a Ravenna nel VI secolo*, in: *Il mondo del diritto nell'epoca giustiniana. Caratteri e problematiche*, Ravenna 1985 (= Biblioteca di 'Felix Ravenna', 2), note 1, pp. 23-24. After the publication of P.Ital. II one small fragment, previously known and rediscovered in 1980, was published by J. Frösén as P.Rain.Cent. 166 + Pl. 119; it was then republished by J.-O. Tjäder in *ChLA* LXV (1996) 1349. With the addition of the present fragment the number of non-literary Latin papyri from Italy from 445-700 thus amounts to 61.

We have no doubt that this new text belongs to Ravenna. Hitherto no private documents written in Latin and dating from the Vth - VIIth centuries have been found surviving in any other archive in Italy, and we think that the chance that some day this picture will be altered can safely be ignored. Consequently, it may be assumed that the recipient of the donation was just the Church of Ravenna, and the odds are in favour of regarding Ravenna also as the place where the papyrus was written (throughout P.Ital. Tjäder uses the term ‘Schriftheimat’). The fact that what is preserved is the *completio* allows us to propose a rather precise dating. The *completio* was the subscription by the scribe, by which he assumed the responsibility for the formal and juridical correctness of the document, and it belongs exclusively in the byzantine period of Ravenna which, as far as private documentation is concerned, seems to begin about 550.² The first known case of a *completio* added to a Ravenna text turns up in P.Ital. I 13.82-83 (A.D. 553): *Ego Severus for(ensis), scribtor, hanc donationem perfectam et completam absolvi die et duodec(ies) p(ost) c(onsulatum) s(upra)s(crip)to*. This may yield a *terminus post quem* for our text (unless it would happen to be even earlier than P.Ital. I 13; but see below). The next known *completio* is P.Ital. I 8 (A.D. 564) which has the more elaborate phrasing (iii.12-13): [*Fl(avius) Iohannis, tabellio civ(itatis) Rav(ennatis), scripator huius chartulae plenariae securitatis*] (brief reference to the object of the affair; only the last words, *po]pilli in Germana cl(arissima) f(emina)*, are preserved) *relectam, roboratam et traditam conplevi et absolvi diae s(upra)s(crip)ta*. Still another phrasing occurs in P.Ital. I 6 (575), ll. 34-35: [*Iohan]nis v(ir) h(onestus), for(ensis) huius civ(itatis) Rav(ennatis), hunc testamantum Mannani v(iri) d(evoti), per quo* (short reference to the content of the will), *scribturn a Iuliano v(iro) h(onesto), adi(utore) meo, et a testibus roboratum et traditum conplevi et absolvi*³ and this version leads forward to the one which was to become standard in the future and which, for the deeds of donation, runs as follows (P.Ital. I, p. 274): (The writer), *tabellio/forensis civitatis Ravennatis, scripator huius chartulae donationis* (short reference to the object of the donation), *sicut superius legitur, post roboratione testium* (or: *post roboratam a testibus*) *atque traditam conplevi et absolvi*.⁴

It seems clear that our text is earlier than P.Ital. I 8 and the subsequent texts in which the *completio* is preserved (see footnote 4). It does not give, after *scribtor huius chartulae donationis*, any reference to the object of the donation, and it does not feature the phrases *sicut superius legitur* and *atque/et traditam* nor the preposition *post*. On the other hand, it has, like P.Ital. I 13, the participle *perfecta/-tam*, which does not occur in P.Ital. I 8 nor in the later texts. It seems to be equally clear that our text is later than P.Ital. I 13; it has *scribtor huius* etc. where P.Ital. I 13 has another – syntactically correct – construction, it has the phrases *a testibus roborata* and *post quod ei relictum est*, which are not used in P.Ital. I 13, and it has *conplevi*, whereas P.Ital. I 13 has *completam absolvi*. Most probably, however, our text also had *absolvi* – *conplevi [et absolvi]* –; there is space enough for a supplement and we cannot see any reason why *absolvi* should have been left out. But there still remains a difference in the wording. It may be objected that P.Ital. I 8 does not have the words *a testibus*, which occur already in our text. But to all appearances the writer of the *chartula plenariae securitatis* of P.Ital. I 8 was deliberately simplifying at this point, reducing the longer expressions to the naked participles *relectam, roboratam*. This attempt seems to have had no future, also – we guess – because the reading of the document was subsequently no more recorded in the *completio*.⁵

² J. -O. Tjäder, *Alcune osservazioni* (fn. 1) 34.

³ The assistant, who had written down the document, gives in l. 29 the short subscription *suscriptum conplevi*, but this is no real *completio*.

⁴ P.Ital. I 20 (ca. 600), 22 (639) and 24 (ca. 650); in deeds of sale, *mutatis mutandis*, P.Ital. II 36 (575-591), 37 (591) and 38-41 (616-619); and cf. the lost papyrus Marini 128 (probably first half of the VIIth century), reconstructed in P.Ital. II, pp. 47-48. For P.Ital. II 35 see below, footnote 6.

⁵ It was already sufficiently recorded in the subscriptions made by the witnesses; in the donations already in P.Ital. I 13 (see P.Ital. I, p. 272-73), in the deeds of sale from P.Ital. II 36 onwards (but not in P.Ital. II 35; see P.Ital. II, pp. 30-31);

Despite the rather thin documentation available to us we feel safe enough in dating our fragment between 553 and 564 A.D.; it may be closer to the later of these two dates.⁶

The type of writing fits very well to this dating. Gratus writes a quite regular cursive, with a normal use of ligatures.⁷ We note that the first 'i' of *donationis* (l. 1) is attached in one down-stroke to the 'roof' of the preceding 't'. The letter 's' is linked only to a following 't'. Of the single letters is also notable the 'disarticulated' 'l' of *chartulae*, l. 1; this is a way of forming the letter which occurs very occasionally from the 5th/6th century onwards in, e.g., a graffito published by Xavier Dupuis⁸ and which is always to be regarded as exceptional.

There is no need to worry about the linguistic and structural deficiencies of our *completio*. The omission of the final '-m' is a quite normal phenomenon in the Ravenna papyri (cf. P.Ital. I, p. 157 and fn. 4) and the omission of the copula *et* between *perfecta(m)* and *roborata(m)* has its counterpart in P.Ital. II 37.103, *roboratum a testibus traditum* (cf. *ibid.* p. 282 n. 27); in our text there is hardly sufficient space in the lacuna for inserting the copula which the clerk probably simply omitted as a regular case of 'asyndeton'. For the exchange 'e' > 'i' in *relictum*, cf. P.Ital. II, p. 336, s.vv. *relictum* and *relicta*; we should, of course, expect to find *relicta* here, but the scribe may have had the word *documentum* in mind (cf. the deeds of sale, e.g. P.Ital. II 37.102). The participles *perfecta(m)* and *roborata(m)* were originally connected with the substantive (*hanc*) *donationem*, as in P.Ital. I 13, or possibly (*hanc*) *chartulam donationis*. When the substantive was subsequently turned into a genitive, the participles were left unchanged and this is a phenomenon which one encounters now and then in the various products of the public scribes; cf., also for a general evaluation of the work of these scribes (the *forenses* or *tabelliones*), P.Ital. II, pp. 3-5.

Gratus (for his name see below, note to l. 1) does not qualify himself as a *forensis*, or a *tabellio*, nor even as a *vir honestus*, as the other clerks from Ravenna usually do. Even so, there should be no doubt that he was an authorized writer of documents. The *vir honestus* Iulianus, who wrote P.Ital. I 6, does neither qualify himself as a *forensis* or a *tabellio*, and yet he had his own *statio* (ll. 28-29: *habens stationem apud sanctum Iohannem Baptista*), and we find another scribe without an indication of his profession in P.Ital. II 43.4: *scripsi ego Marcator v(ir) h(onestus)*. Like our Gratus, the *tabellio* Bonus of P.Ital. I 20.115 does not possess the rank distinction *vir honestus*.

For the phrase *post quod ei relictum est* cf. above, with fn. 5; no doubt the reading of the document was recorded in the subscriptions by the witnesses also in our case. *Ei* is the donor to whom the document was read by the scribe; in P.Ital. II 34 the vendors say (ll. 75-76): *posteaquam nobis ad singula est ab scribto relictum*.

What a deed of donation was to contain in the post-Justinian period of Ravenna has been listed in P.Ital. I, p. 257ff. The *completio* comes there in 20th place, and it is followed only by the list of witnesses, the *notitia testium*. Most certainly there was a *notitia testium* also in our document, but it was written at a certain distance from the *completio* and it has not been preserved. In P.Ital. II 35, e.g., there are approx. 12 cm between the *completio* and the *notitia testium*; in P.Ital. II 37 the *notitia* is not preserved, though there are approx. 11 - 12 centimeters blank at the end of the papyrus.

We can form us an idea of the original dimensions of our document by comparing P.Ital. I 20 (ca. 600 A.D.) which is preserved almost in its original extension. It measures 2.6 meters in height (126

further in the will P.Ital. I 6 (l. 5ff.) and, of course, in P.Ital. I 8 (col. iii.6 and 8). The earliest case, however, is to be found in the *chartula damnatae litis* P.Ital. II 43 (l. 19ff.), but the dating of this document in the year 542 is not absolutely certain.

⁶ We have excluded from the discussion the deed of sale P.Ital. II 35 (572) because in this document the *completio* appears reduced to an absolute minimum (*scriptor huius instrumenti, complevi*). This violent shortening is interesting in so far as it shows us how little could be considered as absolutely necessary (cf. P.Ital. II, pp. 31-32; J.-O. Tjäder, *Alcune osservazioni* [fn. 1], pp. 32-34), but it seems to have had no impact on future developments; it is not found in any subsequent Ravenna *completio*.

⁷ For the Ravenna script of the Vth - VIIth centuries (later Roman cursive), see P.Ital. I, pp. 95-117.

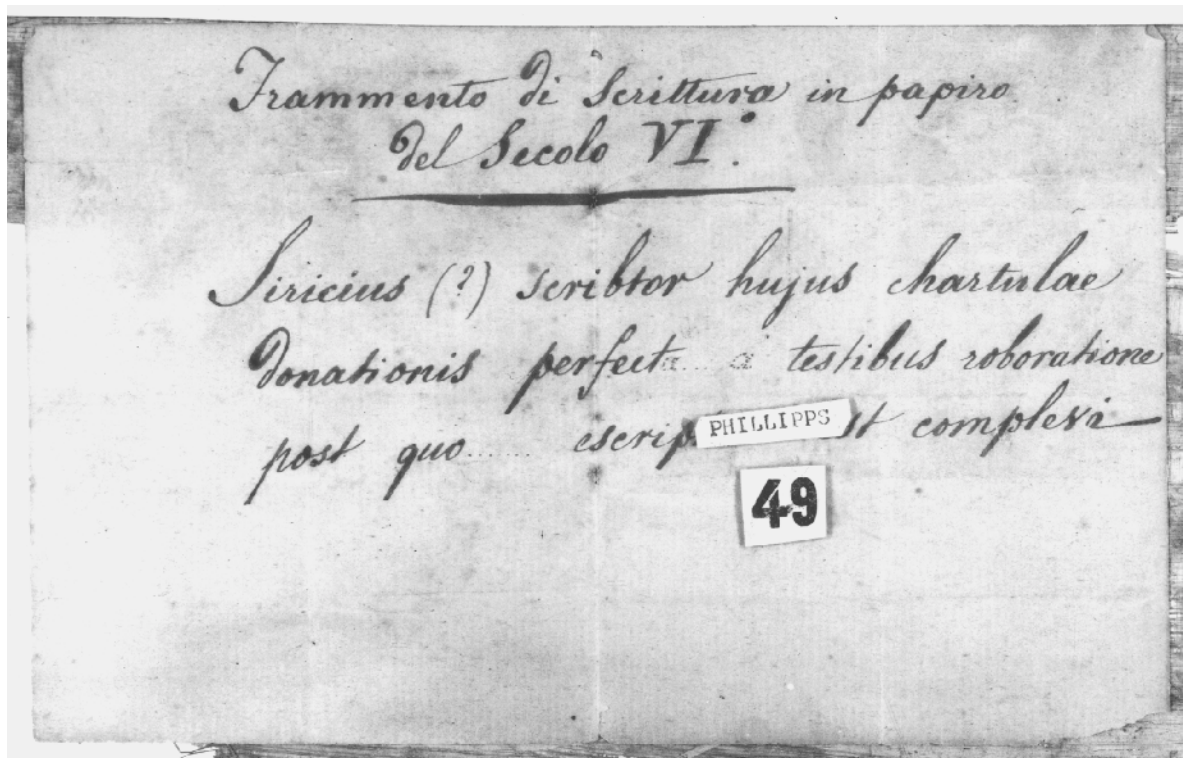
⁸ Bordeaux Saint-Christoly. *Sauvetage archéologique et histoire urbaine* (Bordeaux 1982), 38.

lines; for writing ‘*transversa charta*’ cf. E.G. Turner, *The Terms Recto and Verso; The Anatomy of the Papyrus Roll* [Bruxelles 1978], Chapt. 4; for Ravenna cf. *ibid.*, p. 49f.), and it lacks only some 10 lines at the top⁹, which is equal to 20 cm. Our document may have been somewhat shorter, also because it seems to have had more letters in each line than P.Ital. I 20, but a reasonable guess would be that originally it measured, from top to bottom, approx. 2.5 m.

What concerns us now is the ‘modern’ history of the fragment, i.e. what happened to the fragment before it was purchased by the Bodleian Library in August 1981. As we have found only some more or less reliable information on the whereabouts of the fragment over the last 150 years or so, we propose to work back from 1981 to the point where we lose sight of it in the mists of the past and speculations begin.

First, then, Dr B. Barker-Benfield, senior assistant librarian of the Bodleian Library, kindly informed us that the item was bought from the London dealer Charles Ede in August 1981.¹⁰ Dr R. A. Coles wrote to us that Charles Ede bought the fragment at an auction house, which was not prepared to reveal the name of the vendor. So already at this point our investigations threatened to reach a deadlock. Fortunately, however, there is, glued to the back of the fragment, a nineteenth-century Italian label which may help us somewhat further. It reads:

- 1 Frammento di Scrittura in papiro
- 2 del Secolo VI.
- 3 Siricius (?) scribtor hujus chartulae
- 4 donationis perfecta ... a testibus roboratione
- 5 post quo.....escript | (label) | ęst complexi (-i ex corr.)



⁹ Cf. the estimate made in *ChLA* XXI 717, where this document has been republished.

¹⁰ Cf. *The Bodleian Library Record* 10.vi [May 1982] 376.

We shall not discuss this (partly wrong) transcription any further. What matters is a small sticker affixed in the space left blank in the above-given transcription of l. 5 (covering the text between '[escript[um]]' and 'est') with the name of 'Phillipps' on it; below that there is another sticker with the number '49', obviously a lot number of an auction. The name is almost certainly a reference to Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792-1872), who was renowned, *inter alia*, for his enormous book-collection.¹¹ After passing into the hands of his grandson, Sir Thomas Fitzroy Fenwick, only a relatively small part of the library was sold via private channels and auctions, before the bulk of the Bibliotheca Phillippica was bought up by the Robinson brothers, booksellers, just after WW II, and subsequently auctioned by Sotheby in a series of sales. A reasonably reliable reconstruction of the whereabouts of the fragment over the last fifty years or so might thus run along the following lines: the above-mentioned anonymous person bought the piece at one of Sotheby's auctions after WW II and resold it at an auction house, from which it was bought by Charles Ede. Finally, in 1981 it came into possession of the Bodleian Library by sale from Ede.

The next question is, how the fragment came into possession of Sir Thomas Phillipps. In order to be able to give an answer to that question we assume that the modern history of our fragment finds a parallel in the history of a leaf from a XIth-XIIth century Greek papyrus codex which, originating from Italy, ultimately turned up in the library of Sir Phillipps. The text on this leaf was identified by S. G. Mercati as a portion of the *Life of St. Niphon*.¹² This leaf once belonged to a Mr. L. Lambruschini from Firenze (ca. 1812)¹³ who had acquired it from the Padri Teatini dei SS. Apostoli of the S. Paolo convent in Naples.¹⁴ These clerics¹⁵ admittedly played a part in the dispersal of the Ravenna papyri, although we cannot tell exactly *what* part. P.Ital. I 10-11 B (now in the Nationalbibliothek in Vienna), e.g., was copied for Maffei in the archives of the convent of the Padri Teatini in Naples in 1702¹⁶ while probably the other part of the papyrus, P.Ital. I 10-11 A (now in Naples in the Biblioteca Nazionale), was housed in the archives of the same convent by the same time. P.Ital. II 34 already was in the archives of the church of S. Annunziata in Naples in the first half of the seventeenth century.¹⁷ From all of this¹⁸ we gather that at various moments of its history an unknown number of papyri disappeared from the Archivio arcivescovile at Ravenna (see below) and that a few of them ultimately turned up in the archives of two churches at Naples in the first half of the seventeenth century, at the latest.

Given the connection that certainly existed between Mr. L. Lambruschini and the Padri Teatini we venture to hypothesize that Lambruschini may have acquired the present Ravenna *completio* in the same way as he had acquired the papyrus containing the *Life of St. Niphon*, viz. from the Padri Teatini. There is no reason to assume that the Padri Teatini escaped the fate to which many, if not all, orders in those days fell victim, viz. to the French Revolution and the subsequent secularization, as a consequence of which religious orders lost many or even all of their possessions and precious objects. It is anything but inconceivable that Lambruschini bought the fragment from the Padri Teatini precisely during that difficult period in the history of the hard-pressed order.

¹¹ Cf. A.N.L. Munby, *Portrait of an Obsession*, New York 1967; Ch. Elliott, *Mass! Incredible huge Mass!*, Harvard Magazine, November-December 1977, 34-35.

¹² S.G. Mercati, *Vita di S. Nifone, riconosciuta nel papiro greco Fitz Roy Fenwick a Cheltenham, già Lambruschini a Firenze*, *Aegyptus* 21 (1941), 55-92. Cf. J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des Papyrus Littéraires Juifs et Chrétiens* (Paris 1976) 1222; Pack², App. 50.

¹³ It should be noted that the *Life of St. Niphon* is the second publication of a Greek papyrus in modern times, after the publication of the famous Charta Borgiana by N. Schow in 1788.

¹⁴ Cf. Mercati, *loc. cit.*, 56 and 65-66.

¹⁵ For the history of the Padri Teatini cf. *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 8, s.v. *Theatiner* (p. 12f.; F. Andreu); M. Heimbucher, *Die Orden und Kongregationen der katholischen Kirche II*³ (München 1933-1934; repr. Aalen 1965), 96ff.

¹⁶ Where it may have arrived in the second half of the seventeenth century, cf. S. Maffei, *Istoria diplomatica* [Mantova 1727] 139f.

¹⁷ Cf. I. B. Doni, *Inscriptiones antiquae, nunc primum editae ab A. F. Gorio* [Florentiae 1731] xii-xiii.

¹⁸ For further details on P.Ital. 10-11 A+B and 34 see the introductions to these texts, P.Ital. I, pp. 280-82; II, p. 92.

Unfortunately, we are unable to tell exactly when the fragment came into possession of the Padri Teatini. *IF* it ever was in their hands, it must have been there some time after 1524, when their order was founded in Rome. From there the members of the order fled before the plundering troops of Charles V to Venice in 1527. A new convent was founded in Naples in 1533 and this year would be, therefore, the *terminus post quem* of the accession of the fragment to the archives of the Padri Teatini in Naples.

We also lack certain information as to how the fragment ended up from the Ravenna archives (or otherwise) into the archives of the Padri Teatini. According to J.A. Amadesi¹⁹ papyri may have disappeared from the Ravenna archives on three occasions:

1) by the end of the 15th century, when archbishop Filiasi Roverella cleared the archives and removed a great number of *diplomata*. Chronologically, this is the only occasion out of three (for the others, see next) to fit in well with the life time of Matteo Maria Boiardo (Mattheus Boiardus, l. 4) who seems to have owned the fragment at some moment. Boiardo was a well-known Italian humanist, who lived from 1441 to 1494 and he was just the man to take a keen interest in texts like ours. For further details, see below, note to l. 4.

2) In 1512, when Ravenna was plundered by French troops and the troops of the ducs of Ferrara. If, however, Boiardo was, as we assume, one of the owners of the fragment already at the end of the fifteenth century, it cannot have been taken away from the archives by plundering troops in 1512.

3) At the end of the 16th century, when large portions of the Ravenna archives were requisitioned by the popes Sixtus V and Clemens VIII for the Vatican libraries. For chronological reasons this possibility must be rejected as well. Moreover, there are only a few papyri in the Vatican libraries that arrived there as a consequence of these requisitions; and even in the case of those few papyri it is uncertain whether they have anything at all to do with the requisitions.

All in all it seems most likely that Boiardo somehow acquired the donation or only the fragment containing the *completio* at the end of the fifteenth century when the archbishop of Ravenna cleared the archives. We are, however, unable to tell how it came subsequently (after 1533) into the hands of the Padri Teatini in Naples.

On the basis of our hypothetical reconstruction, the Odyssey of the fragment may be summed up, in chronological sequence, as follows:

- 1) At the end of the fifteenth century the fragment may have come from the archives of the archbishop of Ravenna into possession of the humanist Matteo Maria Boiardo († 1494);
- 2) via unknown ways the fragment was acquired by the Padri Teatini at Naples at an unknown moment, probably after 1533. There it was filed in the archives of the convent;
- 3) at the end of the eighteenth or at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was sold or given by the clerics to Mr. L. Lambruschini in Firenze, as a consequence of the secularization in the aftermath of the French Revolution;
- 4) Mr. Lambruschini sold the fragment, directly or indirectly, to Sir Thomas Phillipps at some moment before 1872;²⁰
- 5) at his death in 1872, Sir Thomas bequeathed the piece, together with his enormous library, to his grandson, Sir Thomas Fitzroy Fenwick at Cheltenham;
- 6) the fragment and the library were bought up by the Robinson brothers, booksellers, before WW II;
- 7) the fragment and the library were auctioned by Sotheby's in several sales;
- 8) the fragment was purchased at one of Sotheby's auctions by an anonymous person who

¹⁹ *In antistitum Ravennatum chronotaxim ... disquisitiones perpetuae ...*, 1-3 (Faventiae 1783), referred to in P.Ital. I, p. 20.

²⁰ Dr N. Barker (London) informs us by letter (from 30.6.1987) that he is fairly certain that in fact the papyrus was bought by Sir Thomas from Charles Molini of the famous Florentine firm, which had a branch in London from c. 1840 -60 (cf. N. Barker, *Bibliotheca Lindesiana*, London 1977); he considers the route Lambruschini - Molini - Phillipps as plausible.

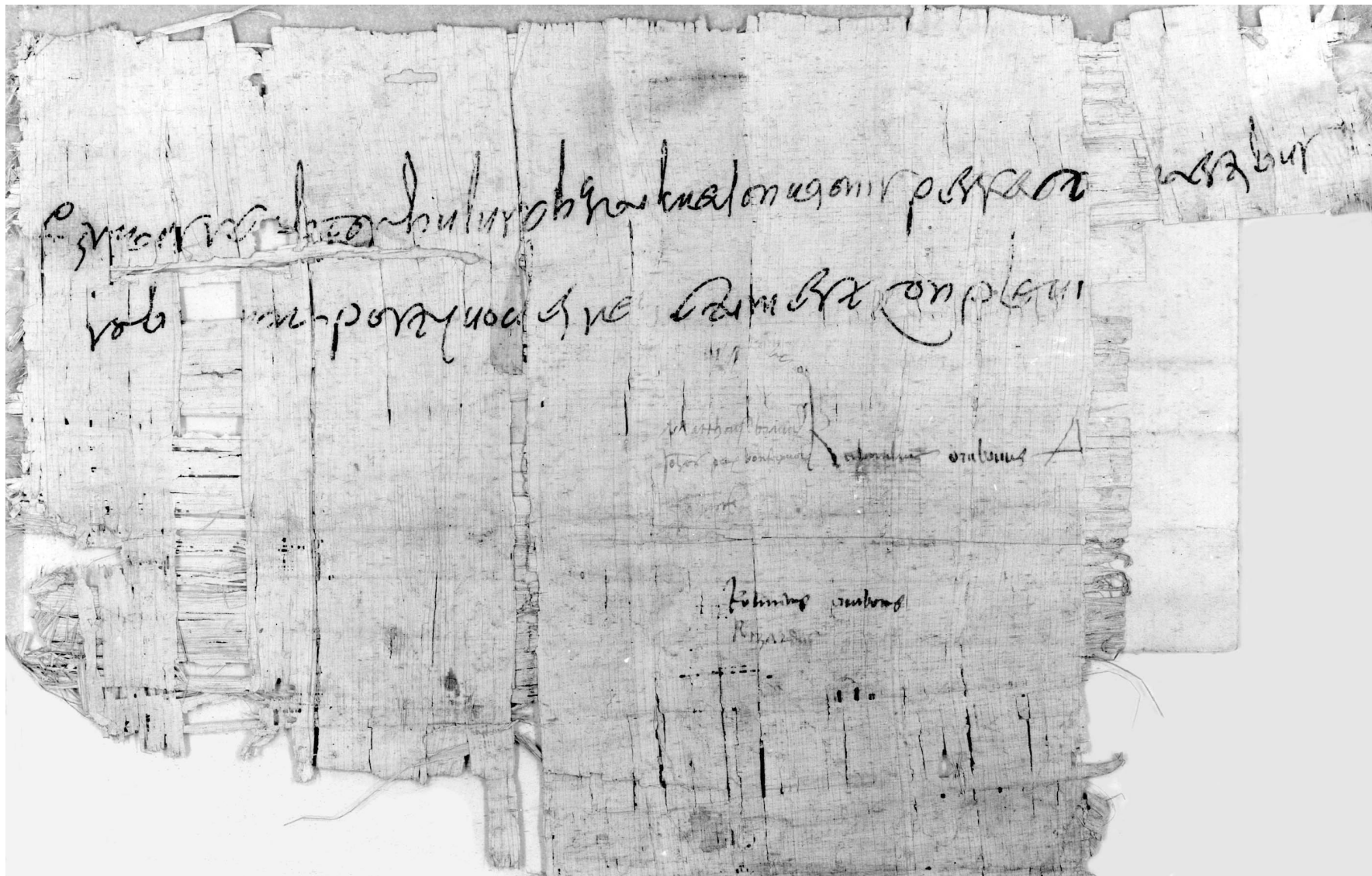
- 9) sold it later at another (unnamed) auction house, where it was bought by the dealer Charles Ede;
 10) The fragment was bought by the Bodleian Library from Charles Ede in August 1981.

Notes:

1. Gratus: this name is not already known from other Ravenna texts, but the name as such is well-known from Christian epigraphical sources, cf., e.g., E. Diehl, *ILCV* III 77.
2. For the use of 'post quod' instead of classical Latin 'postquam' cf. the Thes. Ling. Lat. X.2.ii p. 164.59ff.
3. We are not able to tell exactly what was written in this line. The two last characters look like 'κς', but there is no good reason to expect any Greek here. The preceding letters 'mb' may be interpreted as the initials of the person discussed in our next note.
- 4ff. Mattheus Boiardus is the only person in these lines whom we were able to identify. He is the well-known Italian humanist Matteo Maria Boiardo (1441-1494), '*doctus utriusque linguae*', poet, lawyer, philosopher and courtier of the Este family from Ferrara. For more details, cf., e.g., P. Bondanella & J. Conaway Bondanella, *The Macmillan Dictionary of Italian Literature* (London - Basingstoke 1979) s. n. Boiardo (A. di Tommaso); *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XI (Roma 1969), s. n. Boiardo (F. Forti), both with extensive further bibliography; see also G. Guerrini, *Scrivere in casa Boiardo ... Scrittura e Civiltà* 13 (1989) 441-473. To be sure, one cannot be 100% certain whether his name on this papyrus means that he really owned it; there is a (at least theoretical) possibility that his name was scribbled down on it in order to show that he had seen it. We are grateful to Prof. Guerrini (Roma) for kindly communicating to us her observation that the hand responsible for the entry in l. 4 is NOT that of Boiardo himself. At the same time, unfortunately, she was not able to find out by whom this line was actually written.
6. There may be some traces in this line, but we are unable to read anything intelligible; possibly they are just dirt.

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P. Bodl. MS. Lat. class. c. 15 (P); R. P. Salomons – J.-O. Tjäder – K. A. Worp, pp. 151–157