

**TWO PIECES OF LINEN WITH A LATIN INSCRIPTION FROM
THE BIBLICAL AND ORIENTAL MUSEUM OF LEON**

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ABSTRACT: The present article is a study of two linen fabrics that have an inscription in cursive Latin of very high interest. Both tissues are preserved in the Biblical and Oriental Museum of Leon and have an uncertain origin. The two pieces, which are decontextualized, have the same measure, 17 cm wide and 34 cm high. The text is Christian but has certain gaps. It is a repeated invocation to Jesus, who presents Him as the Beginning and the End of all, and qualifies Him repeatedly as Holy. These attributes are proper to God (Apocalypse 1,4; 1,8; 4,8), and being assigned to Jesus, seem to deny the human nature of Christ, which makes us think of a text of heretical character with a clear relationship with Monarchianism or Sabellianism (II-III centuries AD). Sabellianism spread through Libya and Egypt from the third century onwards, which can approximate the text dating between the third and fifth centuries. A technical analysis of both the linen and the ink in which papyrus remains have been found entangled, was performed, indicating that it comes from a workshop in which linen or papyrus was made indistinctly, something that was common in the workshops of Egyptian craftsmen. A textual analysis was also performed enhancing the links with some passages of Apocalypse.

KEYWORDS: Linen fabric, Latin inscription, Monarchianism, Sabellianism, Biblical and Oriental Museum of León.

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1. PRESENTATION: SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1 The two fragments of linen fabric with an inscription in Latin are preserved in the Biblical and Oriental Museum of Leon² and, according to the information collected, were donated by a family during last century, having an uncertain origin.

2 Both have the same dimensions: 17 cm wide and 34 cm high. The burlap has been cut in half with scissors, as shown by the coincidence of the lines and the content of the text, besides the well-defined line of cut that is seen in the microscopic photos.

3 The transcription of both texts has presented difficulties since there are certain gaps due to degradation, although some lines have been partially reconstructed.

4 The edges of the fabric are somewhat deteriorated due to their age. In both fragments the text is written in 14 lines, in a very cursive Latin.

5 The technical analysis of the linen and the ink and the textual analysis that we expose in the present article allows us to locate and date it from the first centuries of the Egyptian Christianity, linked to a heretic current.

6 The Egyptian primitive population was called by the Greeks αἴγυπτος. In the middle of the sixth century when the Arabs conquered Egypt, the Arabic-arabized term “*gubti*” or Coptic was used to refer to the Christian inhabitants of the Nile Valley, who were the majority at that time.

7 The Egyptian hieroglyphic system, coming since 3200 BC, enjoyed a very long life. The last testimonies come from Philae and date from the 4th century AD. Over time, a cursive system of symbols and signs was developed that gave rise to the hieratic and later to the demotic writing. With the arrival of Alexander the Great in 332 BC and the foundation of the Ptolemaic dynasty, the Greek language was imposed until centuries II and III AD, especially in the administration. Since the 1st century a new language appeared, the Coptic, using Greek signs and also enriched with other symbols derived from Demotic in order to adapt the sounds that were strange to Greek phonetics. The texts in Latin from that time are less abundant. In spite of the Roman control since 30 BC, the cultural vehicular language was Greek during the first centuries.

² I am grateful to Dr. J. García Recio, Director of the Biblical and Oriental Museum for the facilities for this study. And to Dr. J. Montserrat, Emeritus Full Professor from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Dr. J. A. Badiola, Dean of Faculty of Theology of Vitoria-Gasteiz-North Campus, for the observations and indications in the development of the study. I wish also to remark the most valued contributions of Mr. F. Antonovich, curator of the Biblical and Oriental Museum, during the study of this material.

8 Christianity spread quite soon in the valley of the Nile. The first Church of Alexandria was linked to Rome, probably favoured by commerce³. Current studies consider that there was more than one penetration of the new faith: one that settled in Alexandria, attributed to evangelist St. Mark, and another that spread to Upper Egypt. This period was very convulsive in the Coptic Church because it knew numerous persecutions and martyrs as well as the occurrence of several heretical currents that were condemned in later councils.

9 The ancient religion of Egypt put little resistance to the expansion of Christianity, considering the fact that many concepts such as resurrection or eternal life were already present in Pharaonic beliefs.

10 Embalming is documented in the classical Mediterranean world as well as in Jewish tradition. On the other hand flax was commonly used in the process of mummification in the Nile Valley during the Pharaonic period, and was maintained in the Hellenistic and Roman times. The best example in the Scriptures is the shroud of Christ⁴.

11 The most detailed description of the practice is found in the life of St. Melania⁵, in which the linen shroud with which her body was wrapped, above her dresses, is referred to:

Ὁθόνην δὲ οὐκ ἔλαβεν πλὴν τοῦ σινδονίου ὅπερ ζωθεν αὐτῆς ἐνετυλίξαμεν⁶.

12 The word “linen” is mentioned 105 times in the Holy Scriptures. It appears for the first time in the passage of Joseph when the Pharaoh named him as vizier⁷. We also find this type of fabric in the narration of the Exodus⁸ referring to the construction of the Tabernacle⁹.

13 The written texts are not very explicit about the typology of these shrouds: “linteum”, “linteamen” and “οθόνη”, the most common Latin and Greek terms, designate fine linen garments or wrappings. Another term that frequently appears is “σινδών”, to quote the sheets or the fine fabrics.

³ Mangado Alonso, M. L., *El Nilo cristiano. Relaciones y tradiciones orientales en el cristianismo occidental*, p. 47, Ed. Verbo Divino, Estella, 2012.

⁴ Matthew 27, 59; Mark 15, 46; Luke 23, 53; John 20, 40.

⁵ Confronting Rosemary, R., “Mothers of the Church: Ascetic Women in the Late Patristic Age”, in *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, New York, 1979. Santa Melania the Older, Melania the Elder or Melania The Major (Hispania, 323 or 325 – Jerusalem, 410) is a holy Christian woman who had great influence in the Christian ascetical movement that arose when Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity and this became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

⁶ “They didn't use any cloth, except a syndone, which was used to cover her above”.

⁷ Genesis 41,42.

⁸ Exodus 25-27.

⁹ Exodus 27, 16: “For the entrance of the court make a curtain of ten meters; shall be of fine linen twined with purple violet, scarlet, and crimson”.

14 The fact of taking a piece of linen as a writing medium, is an unusual occurrence. Egyptian conserved linen texts with inscriptions are generally of funerary character, like those that present some chapters of the Book of the Dead.

2. TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF TEXT

2.1. Transcription and translation of the left tissue fragment (figures 1, 2, 3, 4)

2.1.a Transcription

1. .] Iesus Sto¹⁰ ego Iesus sum⁺¹¹ ego fui Sto + ego Sto fui¹² [.
2. .] Sto Iesus fui + Sto Iesus est + Iesus Sto est¹³ [.
3. .] Ego [¹⁴.....].
4. .] Sto Iesus fuit + Sto Iesus est + Iesus fuit Sto Iesus¹⁵ [.
5. .] Sto fuit Iesus + Sto Iesus fuit + Sto Iesus fuit¹⁶ [.
6. .] Sto Iesus est Iesus est alef¹⁷ Sto Iesus Iesus¹⁸ [.
7. .] Iesus Sto¹⁹ Iesus alef²⁰ est ω²¹ + est Sto Iesus [.

¹⁰ Sto: probable abbreviation of "Sanctus" (Holy) that appears repeatedly throughout the text, as S as well. Perhaps the scribe, whose mother tongue was, most probably, not Latin, confused this abbreviation. "Saint" in Latin does not have the same root in Greek or Coptic and the one in Greek ends in o: ἅγιος; this word was adopted by the Copts through the Greek.

¹¹ The crosses of four equal arms, traditionally Coptic, serve to separate the words within the text. This symbolic form of expressing the Cross is frequent in early Christian texts. The sign of the Cross emphasizes, in the text, the value of the image as the ancient hieroglyphic symbols.

¹² Reconstruction of the text: "ego fui Sto + ego Sto fui".

¹³ The second line has been reconstructed almost entirely by parallelism with the first line: "Sto Iesus fui + Sto Iesus est + Iesus Sto. est".

¹⁴ Very deteriorated line in which there are no readable characters, except "ego".

¹⁵ Reconstruction: "Sto Iesus fuit", the first three words of line 4.

¹⁶ Reconstruction of the first words of line 5: "Sto fuit Iesus".

¹⁷ The scribe uses the first Hebrew letter to express the term "beginning". The name of the letter was not spelled, probably following the oral tradition.

¹⁸ Reconstruction of the first six words of line six: "Sto Iesus est Iesus Iesus est".

¹⁹ There are folds in the fabric and deterioration of the left edge "Iesus Sto".

²⁰ "The beginning" in the text is expressed by the name of the first letter of the Hebrew script "alef". This case also appears in line 6, replacing the traditional first letter of the Greek alphabet "alpha".

²¹ ω, last letter of the Greek alphabet, to express "the end". The scribe has chosen the spelling of the letter in substitution for its name "omega" (Apocalypse 1,4; 1,8; 4,8, Exodus 3,14).

8. .]...] ²² Iesus (figure 5) Sto (figure 6) fui + St (figure 7) Iesus fui + Sto I [esus.
9. .] Sto fuit ²³ Iesus Sto Iesus + Iesus [fuit ²⁴.
10. .] Sto Iesus Iesus est +St Iesus + fuit Sto ²⁵ [.
11. .] Iesus Sto fuit Iesus ego (figure 8) + fui (figure 9) I ²⁶ [esus.
12. .] Iesus St fuit + Sto Sto fuit Sto I [esus ²⁷
13. .] Iesus St fuit Sto Iesus ²⁸ fuit Iesus fuit Sto + ²⁹ [.
14. .] Iesus Sto fui + Sto Iesus fuit +fui Sto Iesus[.

2.1.b Translation

1. .] Jesus Holy I Jesus am + I was Holy + I Holy was ³⁰.
2. .] Holy Jesus was +Holy Jesus is + Jesus Holy is [.
3. .] I [.....] ³¹.
4. .] Holy Jesus was + Holy Jesus is + Jesus was Holy Jesus [.
5. .] Holy was Jesus + Holy Jesus was + Holy Jesus was [.
6. .] Holy Jesus is Jesus Jesus is the Beginning Holy Jesus Jesus [.
7. .] Jesus Holy Jesus Alef is Omega ³² + is Holy Jesus [.
8. .]...] Jesus Holy was + Holy Jesus was + Holy J [esus.
9. .] Holy was Jesus Holy Jesus + Jesus [was.
10. .] Holy Jesus Jesus is + Holy Jesus + was Holy [.
11. .] Jesus Holy was Jesus I + was J[esus.
12. .]Jesus Holy was + Holy Holy was Holy J[esus.
13. .]Jesus Holy was Holy Jesus was Jesus was Holy + [.
14. .]Jesus Holy was + Holy Jesus was + was Holy Jesus

²² Deterioration of the lower border. The ink is almost completely erased, only traces of ink are visible.

²³ The left edge is deteriorated "Sto fuit"; also show pleats in the fabric that make it difficult to read between lines 8 and 9.

²⁴ Impaired right edge, reconstruction of "fuit".

²⁵ The right border is deteriorated but can be reconstructed: "fuit Sto".

²⁶ The right border is deteriorated; "Iesus" can be reconstructed. It also appears the change from "fuit" to "fui" on the same line.

²⁷ The right border is deteriorated, reconstruction of "Iesus".

²⁸ A broken part is seen in the fibres of the fabric, at the level of the word "Iesus".

²⁹ Reconstruction of the last word "Sto +".

³⁰] [Reconstruction of text.

³¹ Ink remains, unreadable.

³² The Beginning and the End. The scribe has chosen to express this concept by the first Hebrew letter "Alef", replacing the letter Alpha and the spelling of the letter Omega.

2.2. Transcription and translation of the right tissue fragment (figures 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)

2.2.a Transcription

1. .] Iesus + Sto fuit Iesus + Iesus fuit Sto [.
2. .] Sto fuit + Sto fuit Iesus³³ [.
3. .] Sto fuit Iesus [³⁴
4. .] Iesus Sto fuit Iesus fuit + Sto Iesus fuit + Sto [.
5. .] Iesus Sto fuit Iesus fui + Sto Iesus fuit + Sto Iesus³⁵ [.
6. .] Iesus Sto + fuit St Iesus + fui Sto Iesus [.
7. .] Iesus est Sto fuit Sto Iesus + Sto fuit [.
8. .] Sto fui Iesus + fui Sto + [.
9. .] Iesus fuit St fuit + Iesus + Sto [.
10. .] fuit Iesus + fuit Iesus fui[.
11. .] Iesus fuit + Iesus fui [.
12. .] Sto fuit + Sto fui + Iesus Sto [.
13. .] Iesus fui + Iesus Sto + fui [.
14. .] Iesus Sto fuit + fuit Sto [

2.2.b Translation

1. .] Jesus + Holy was Jesus + Jesus was Holy [.
2. .] Holy was + Holy was Jesus [.
3. .] Holy was Jesus [.
4. .] Jesus Holy was Jesus was + Holy Jesus was + Holy [.
5. .] Jesus Holy was Jesus was + Holy Jesus was + Holy Jesus[.
6. .] Jesus Holy + was Holy Jesus + was Holy Jesus [.
7. .] Jesus is Holy was Holy Jesus + Holy was [.
8. .] Holy was Jesus + was Holy+ [.
9. .] Jesus was Holy was + Jesus + Holy [.
10. .] was Jesus + was Jesus was[.
11. .] Jesus was + Jesus was [.
12. .] Holy was + Holy was + Jesus Holy [.
13. .] Jesus was + Jesus Holy + was[.
14. .] Jesus Holy was + was Holy [.

³³ The left margin is quite deteriorated.

³⁴ Line very deteriorated.

³⁵ Line very deteriorated.

3. TECHNICAL ANALYSIS OF TISSUE

- 15 The text in question, as mentioned, is written in ink on linen (figure 15), a tissue support that possesses a great capacity to absorb colours and water up to 20% without thereby achieving a damp touch.
- 16 The technical analysis carried out in the laboratories of the University of Oviedo, using the binocular microscope with “episcopic” illumination and the transmission optical microscope, reveals that the ink has three essential components: a green dye, a rosy resin and microscopic fragments of a mineral with clearly acicular morphology. Laboratory tests show that the intense green dye, when mixed with the resin, takes on a less greenish tone.
- 17 The ink, which affects only the most superficial fibres, was necessarily quite viscous, since it did not penetrate by the way down to the inner fibres. The use of a high viscosity ink is clearly required to make it possible to write in-line without blurring. And in fact the text, although with gaps and some faults by degradation of the fabric, presents a display well preserved and with quality, in spite of a few lines blurred.
- 18 It should be noted that the presence of acicular particles is not accidental but purposeful, with the intention of giving the ink more consistency and blocking its penetration into the tissue.
- 19 The indications that have been obtained from the microscopic analysis seem to indicate that the text was written with a brush instead of a calamus, which was more common at that time. The use of the calamus implied that the letters have accumulations of ink in the horizontal and vertical ends as well as there is obliquity in the strokes. Which seems not to be the case. The writing was so superficial that the ink has, as told, not penetrated inside the fabric.
- 20 In the area where the threads have been cut with scissors, we observe that the fibres are not soldered with resin. This could indicate that the cloth has not undergone impregnation, and that inside the threads we do not have fibres with adhered resin that could have been “liquated” by the pressure of the cut; which would have bound the fibres all together this phenomenon has been seen in other cloth samples (where the internal fibers of the threads were coated with an important film of impregnation resin).
- 21 In the text as a whole, the ink has two types of tones: lighter in the right half of the fabric, and darker in the left half. The two different shades of ink may be due to several causes: variation in the concentration of components unlikely; different exposure to light from the two fragments of tissue; different degree of loss, by friction and erosion, of the ink load. The dye used was green but in contact with resin (which has a rose tone) it takes on a more greenish hue. The ink, in addition to the green dye, highly soluble in water, was also composed of resin.

Hence the two tonalities of ink may have been due to a higher or lower resin concentration³⁶. The ink on the first four lines is more blurred³⁷.

22 The water treatment of samples of the unpainted fabric reveals the existence of an impregnation of the fabric with highly diluted resin, which produces a thin coating film of the flax fibres; this coating gives the fibres a very characteristic colour, which already made suspicion the existence of impregnation with resin. The thin resin film coating the flax fibres is also evident by using the transmission optical microscope.

23 Flax is a fibre of great strength; it is almost three times stronger than cotton. Its quality allows it to be an appropriate material to write on, although it has the drawback, as we see in our fabric, of having very small elasticity. The lack of elasticity in garments woven with 100% linen causes the threads to weaken at the points where the garment is folded frequently, subjecting the fibres to tensile stresses that causes transverse fractures in the flax fibres and enhancing their degradation, eventually breaking. In the pieces of linen under study this has caused the edges to be damaged and there are gaps where the fibres are torn.

24 Biodegradation in ancient textiles is normal to be a major cause of tissue destruction. Biodegradation usually affects the limits of the fabric and areas with tears. In our sample it is also evident that the degradation is more manifest in edges and tears.

25 Another notable feature is the abundant presence of sodium chloride crystals that appear adhered to the fabric, in shape and quantity similar to those found in ancient Egyptian fabrics (figures 16 y 17). The amount of salt presence implies that, most probably, the cloth had a very long residence time in a closed underground area, within an area of desert climate. The formation of the salt is subsequent to the writing carried by the tissue because the letters are also covered with salt crystals. This allows excluding any hypotheses of modern falsification of the written text, regardless of the possible age of the tissue. In fact the abundant quantity of salt let us conclude that it was necessary a large elapsing of time, several centuries most surely, to be formed.

26 This cloth has been smashed by any kind of mechanical action, probably to facilitate writing on it.

27 Nor could a falsification be considered in an old age, since it would lack the motivation to justify it. In addition, the author would lack the data that we know

³⁶ Cilveti Goñi, M., "Análisis de tejidos de la momia conservada en el Museo de Historia Natural de la Universidad de Oporto" en *Scriptorium Victoriense*, LX (2013), p. 125.

³⁷ The third line only retains the word "ego" as readable; in the main part only vestiges of ink appear.

today thanks to the available technical means, and therefore would not know how to act to generate such a document (salt included).

28 In conclusion, this is certainly a non-falsified document, made centuries ago, for which a then recent cloth was used, possibly from an Egyptian workshop. Moreover, that written cloth spent a long period inside a closed cavity, in a geographical area (probably a desert area but close to the sea or a lake, to justify the existence of sodium salts being transported as a sort of aerosols) in which important nocturnal thermal falls occurred, causing the condensation of the humidity of the local atmosphere.

29 The ink may be somewhat affected by dissolution with the condensation water, which leaves the salt crystals on evaporation; and also, more intensely, by detachment and loss in areas where threads and fibers suffer mechanical deterioration or breakage.

30 Papyrus remains (small strips) have been found among the flax fibres (Figure 16) that makes it possible to deduce it's a contamination that occurred during the spinning phase of the flax, thus indicating that different materials were dealt in the same workshop, which when incorporated, generated lower quality threads. The characteristics of these strips suggest that it is a material derived from a process of manufacture of papyrus stalks used for the manufacture of sheets for writing (papyrus paper). So we may admit that both the linen and the papyrus were worked out in the same centre to produce sheet material for writing, something common in the Egyptian workshops.

31 Given the abundance of this type of fragments in the portion of cloth studied, this should not be a fabric intended for a very noble or demanding purposes, which, without doubt would have forced a quality control in the spinning process that avoided the abundant contamination which shows with stem fragments.

32 The study that has been made on the ink can be summarized in the following conclusions:

33 1. In the places of the cloth in which we find traces of ink, this appears as a crust of dark green with a very rough texture, which is strongly attached to the outer fibres of the threads. That substance has not spread on sideways, the boundaries of the strokes are very net, but also not in depth since it has a very little penetration into the threads. This indicates that it was an ink fluid enough to be used for calligraphy but sufficiently viscous to prevent its migration to the inside of the support fabric (figures 15 y 17).

34 2. The viscous nature of the substance used as ink left a sort of a scab adhering to the outermost fibres of the linen, without diffusing by permeability; which allowed a well-defined writing, in spite of using as support a material as little suitable as a common linen cloth.

- 35 3. The surface roughness of the ink crusts is due in part to the presence of grains of salt, which often show a greenish colour. These grains are formed by evaporation of the condensation water from the environmental humidity, which continuously acts on the salt crystals, very higroscopics, subjecting them to re-dissolution and regrowth.
- 36 4. During the dissolution tests of the ink in water, at room temperature, the green dye shows itself very soluble; and, like sodium chloride, crystals, disappears in very few seconds.
- 37 5. Both the dye and salt, which have been concentrated in the last redoubts of water, as it evaporates, end up giving a characteristic precipitate with the formation of salt crystals coloured by the green dye.
- 38 6. It is also observed that another component of the ink is a resin (Figure 18), much less soluble than the salt and the green dye. This resin was hydrated and formed a gel of a very pinkish colour, which ended up depositing on the edges of the water. This displacement towards the edges is due to the fact that the gel floats and, given the meniscus on the limits of the surface of water, moves by gravity towards the lower part of the edges.
- 39 7. The rosaceous component being bound to the resin is not extracted by dissolution in water, as it is the case with the green dye; from which it can be deduced that it is rather a colour derived from a specific component of the resin and not due to an added soluble colorant. The pink tone of the gel evolves to browner tones when evaporation progresses and the gel loses water and consolidates; but when in contact with water again, it is rehydrated and instantly takes on the same aspect of original homogeneous pink colour.
- 40 8. As already mentioned, this resin extracted by the water from the fibres with ink, is characterized by its markedly pinkish colour. Comparatively the normal colour of the gel obtained when we tested samples of yarn of the same cloth, but in which there was no ink, is brownish-ambar. That fact indicate that the rose resin used as a binder in the making of the ink, not would be the impregnation resin that was detected as being present in the tissue.
- 41 9. These observations on the resin and green dye lead us to draw a logical conclusion: the ink, besides the green dye (which is so soluble in water), has this pink resin as one of its components, playing the role of a binder. And the viscosity that the ink needs to be applied on the linen fabric is mainly due to it.
- 42 10. During the test with water, in the areas of contact between the pink gel and the green dye diffusion occurs in the resin gel that darkens and acquires an obvious greenish-brown colour.
- 43 11. Another component present in the samples with ink are microscopic particles of acicular morphology, insoluble in water, which show a fairly reddish colour, a marked anisotropy and a clear “straight extinction” in the transparency

microscope. The sizes of acicular particles range from sizes of the order of micra to several tens of micron. There are abundant crystal fragments of the same indicating a fragile behaviour and perhaps a crushing or grinding process. These characteristics suggest that we may be in face of particles of mineral.

44 12. These particles were not observed in the tests performed on samples without ink, and instead they appear where we have ink residues; which is based on the assumption that it was a material integrated in it and released during its dissolution.

45 13. It has also been found that once the water used in the tests has evaporated the indicated acicular particles are preferably concentrated in the same areas where the concentration of green dye and crystals of sodium chloride is placed; areas that, as already mentioned, correspond to the zones where the “last” water of the evaporation was located. This assumes that the particles remained in the water to the end, either as a floating or suspended material.

46 14. On the basis of the above facts, it seems logical to consider that the characteristics of the ink required to ease the writing on a linen cloth would have been achieved by mixing a water solution of the green dye with the rosaceous resin in proportions suitable enough to have the necessary viscosity and to minimize the dispersion by absorption and diffusion of ink, both in the lateral and in the deep sense; whereas what we would have with a very fluid ink would be traces of fuzzy and ill-defined limits, causing a poorly defined writing. Saying it in a different way it was necessary to adapt the type of the ink to the linen tissue, and the scribe knew how to do it.

47 15. The indicated acicular fibres could be an intentional addition, since it is clear that they can play a varied role and that would help to prevent the penetration of the ink in the yarns and facilitate their extension and their fixing on the more superficial fibres.

4. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

4.1. Textual analysis of the left fragment of the tissue (figure 1)

48 The redaction of the text is made from left to right, distributed in 14 horizontal lines in both parts of the tissue. Sometimes, it has a descending stroke, which occasionally may be due to the folds of the fabric.

49 The type of Latin cursive script³⁸ allows us to date it between the end of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century and the 5th century AD³⁹. Cursive Latin was already used in texts written in papyrus with calamus, dated from the same time, and its strokes are different from the medieval cursive Latin.

Herein we present a comparison:

50 Papyrus found in Egypt that is preserved in the National Museum of Berlin and written with calamus with soft and curvilinear forms and ligatures as being published by F. Steffens (1910), *Lateinische Palaeographie*, taf. 101 (figure 20).

51 At that time, the educated Egyptian classes spoke Greek. The Jewish and Christian minorities also knew the Greek language and considered Latin as a barbaric language, proper of the legionaries. The rarity of texts written in cursive Latin on linen support implies a special value to the text.

52 The edges of the fabric are deteriorated and the last four lines have lost part of the fibres in its right margin, which means that the inscription on both flanks has disappeared⁴⁰. The fabric has horizontal folds with a distance of 5.5 cm in between, which indicates that the fabric has been folded like a roll.

53 From the fifth to the fourteenth line the stroke is legible, probably due to the strongest hue of the ink. The first four lines have been practically reconstructed as a whole, as we pointed out in the transcript. Tissue wrinkles also make it difficult to understand the spelling.

54 In the text 19 crosses of equal arms have been drawn to separate elements of some sentences. And the use of crosses is a strong evidence of the Coptic origin of the text.

55 In the fourteen lines Jesus is quoted 40 times. It carries the attributes of Holy which is reiterated 35 times. The attribute of Holy to Jesus is expressed with the verb *sum*, "to be". It is written in:(a) first person singular in present *sum*, "I am" (once), reinforced by the *ego* pronoun, "I", or past *ego fuit*, "I was" (five times, two expressed with the *ego* pronoun, "I").(b) It is also expressed in the third person singular in present *est*, "is" (8 times) and *fuit*, "was", for 17 times.

56 In the sixth line Jesus is the Beginning and in the seventh is presented as Beginning and End, expressed with the name of the Hebrew letter "Alef" as the Beginning, and the Greek spelling of the letter ω ("Omega") to express the End.

³⁸ Latin was used from the 2nd century onwards in the Christian texts, considering that it was the official language of the Roman Empire.

³⁹ In the first century most of these texts were written in Greek that makes it possible to date this text in a posterior period.

⁴⁰ The right side of the canvas pose a clean and straight cut while the lower right area has lost flax fibres.

Which allows us to associate the text with certain Judeo-Christian communities such as Alexandria⁴¹.

.] Sto Iesus est Iesus Iesus est alef Sto Iesus Iesus [.

.] Iesus Sto Iesus alef est ω + est Sto Iesus [.

57 The repetitive attributes to Jesus, as Holy, “(the One who) I am”, “(the One who) is” and “(the One who) was”, or the “Alpha” and “Omega”, are God-only assignments in the Bible.

58 We may find in the New Testament some source passages for those expressions, as: *He is, who was and who is coming* (Vulgate: *qui est, qui erat et qui venturus est*), Apocalypse 1,4; 1,8; 4,8. It is an explication of the divine name in Exodus 3,14: *I am the One that I am* (Vulgate: *ego sum qui sum*).

59 The Beginning and the End are in Apocalypse 4,8: “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, who was and who is coming, the omnipotent*” (Vulgate: *Ego sum A et Ω, Principium et Finis, dicit Dominus Deus, qui est, et qui erat et qui venturus est omnipotens*).

60 We may read in Apocalypse 1,4: *John, to the seven churches of Asia: “grace and peace to you from him who is, who was, and who is to come, from the seven spirits who are before his throne. Who is, Who was and Who is coming”*.

61 Also in Apocalypse 1,8: “*I am Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*”.

In Apocalypse 4, 8: “... And day and night they proclaimed to the Lord:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Is the Lord God, the Almighty;

Who was, and is

And is to come”.

62 The attributes “Holy, holy, holy” are present throughout other passages of the Old Testament: Isaiah 6, 3: *And they shouted to one another: -Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory*. The trisagion expresses the triune nature of God, the three Persons of the Divinity, each equal in holiness and majesty. The repetition of a name or its expression for three times was very common among the Jews. In Jeremiah 7,4 the Jews are represented by the prophet as saying: “*Temple of the Lord*” three times, expressing their intense confidence in their own worship, even though it was hypocritical and corrupt. In Jeremiah 22,29, “*land, land, land*”, contains an expression of intensity, repeated three times⁴². Thus, when

⁴¹ The use by the author of a very cursive writing.

⁴² In the Egyptian hieroglyphic language, the plural is expressed by three strokes, or three times the same sign is repeated. For example the expression, *Irp nfr nfr nfr*, “He came three times

the angels around the throne call or shout to one another, “*Holy, Holy, Holy*”, they are expressing with strength and passion the truth of the supreme holiness of God, that essential characteristic that expresses His astonishing and majestic nature⁴³.

63 Therefore, the attributes bestowed upon Jesus as “Holy”: “I am and I was” or “is and was”, Beginning (expressed twice as Alef) and End (expressed with the letter ω)⁴⁴ are exclusive attributions of God⁴⁵ not of Jesus Christ. These attributes present a clear relationship with Monarchianism or Sabellianism (II and III centuries)⁴⁶, heresy that identified Jesus with the unique God and denied the true humanity of Christ⁴⁷.

4.2. Textual analysis of the right fragment of the tissue (figure 10)

64 As we have already referred, we are dealing with a text that has been cut in two parts, with a scissor judging by the current appearance of the fibres. As in the other fragment the wording of the text has 14 horizontal lines. Sometimes, it has a descending stroke, which occasionally may be due to the folds of the fabric. The folds of the tissue match the left fragment. This part of the tissue also has horizontal folds as in the left fragment with a distance of 5.5 cm among them.

65 The ink of the first four lines is more blurred, as it was also in the other fragment of the fabric, while from line eight to fourteen the text is clearer and more ink remains.

66 At the height of the fifth line, there is a hollow, which has lost much of the text. In the text 21 crosses of equal arms have been drawn as separators of some sentences. In this text Jesus is quoted 28 times as well. The attribute of Holy is repeated 27 times. The attributes of the verb *sum*, “to be”, are expressed: (a) in the first person singular in the past *ego fuit*, “I was”, for 7 times or (b) twice in the third person present singular *est*, “is”, and past *fuit*, “was”, just 23 times.

good” or, what is the same, “very good wine”. Conf. M. L. Mangado, *El Vino de los Faraones*, Fundación Dinastía Vivanco, La Rioja, 2005.

⁴³ I thank very much to M.J. Meñika from Biblical and Oriental Institute.

⁴⁴ The use of intentional Hebrew and Greek terms that breaks in a certain way with the wording of the Latin in the text makes us think that it could be a scribe of Judeo-Christian tradition, in the case a connoisseur of the Greek and the Hebrew languages.

⁴⁵ Beginning and End are associated with the eternal nature of the Father.

⁴⁶ From the third century on Monarchianism also took the name of “Sabellianism” from the heretic Sabellius of Libyan origin, who, condemned by Pope Calixto (by 220), spread this doctrine through Egypt and Libya. He was a defender of rigid monotheism. Conf. M. Simonetti, “Sabellio e Sabellianismo” in *Studi sulla cristologia of the II and III secolo*, Institute Patristico Agustinianum, Rome, 1993, pp. 217-238.

⁴⁷ J. Montserrat, Professor Emeritus of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, considers an association of this passage with Priscillianism, so present in the north of Hispania from the end of the fourth century.

67 These qualities, as we have already explained in a previous passage, are proper in the Bible of the essence of God, not of Jesus, and are associated with Monarchic or Sabellian heresy.

5. CONCLUSIONS

68 The text is written in a cursive Latin, distributed in 14 lines on a support of two fragments of thick and rather sparse linen. The dimensions of the two fragments are 17 cm wide and 34 cm high, which originally were only one but has been divided in half with a scissor.

69 In the technical analyses some papyrus fibres were found intertwined between the threads of linen. This makes us think that in this Egyptian workshops linen or papyrus sheets were indistinctly made.

70 Linen is a high strength fibre. Its durability allows it to be an appropriate material to write on, although it has the disadvantage of being little elastic.

71 The text in question is written in ink. So it seems sure that the text was written with a brush instead of a calamus. The use of the calamus means that the letters would have accumulations of ink in the horizontal and vertical ends, as well as that there would be obliquity in the strokes, which is not the case. Due to the viscosity of the ink, there is no impregnation of the interior of the fabric.

72 The ink has two types of tonalities: one is clearer (columns of the right half of the cloth); the other darker (columns of the left half). The dye used was green and in addition to this green dye, which is highly soluble in water, there are also a pinkish resin and some solid micro particles of mineral nature. The particles were added to improve the consistency of the liquid. Color variations in the ink may be due to variation in the proportion of components, as well as in the degree of exposure to light (photodegradation) or mechanical deterioration (friction) suffered; we have also observed that the ink undergoes discoloration by the condensation water. The ink thus manufactured allowed, finally, to avoid any kind of dispersion that could blur the writing.

73 The fabric has horizontal symmetrical folds at a distance of 5.5 cm, which indicates that it was originally rolled up and deposited in a protected dry place, given its conservation status.

74 The analysis of the tissue does not confirm the existence of remains of human embalming, although it is the type of usual burlap in the burials of the Nile Valley. Its size (17 cm wide and 34 cm high) has suggested to have been used to involve originally some object of liturgy or relic. During the first centuries of Christianity it was customary to use certain oriental fabrics, particularly Syrians or Egyptians, to

protect relics of saints kept inside beautiful chests like those preserved in San Isidoro of Leon or Saint Salvador of Leyre.

75 As for its content the text is a repetitive invocation to Jesus that is qualified
as:

76 1- Holy (sometimes including the unusual abbreviation *Sto*).

77 2- *Sum* and *fui*, “I am and I was” (present and past in the first person), occasionally reinforced with the pronoun *ego*, “I”, *est* and *fuit*, “is and was” (present and past in third person).

78 3- He is the Beginning and the End. The Beginning expressed by the name of the first Hebrew letter “*Alef*” (twice), replacing the usual Greek letter “*Alpha*”. The End is expressed by the use of the wording ω referring to the Greek letter “*Omega*”.

All are biblical New Testament attributes of God:

1- *Holy, holy, holy* (Apocalypse 1,4; 4,8).

2- *He who was, who is and who shall be* (Apocalypse 1,8; 4, 8).

3- *The Beginning and the End*, (Apocalypse 1,8).

79 The text of the fabric presents a clear relation with the Monarchianism or Sabellianism (II and III centuries) that identified Jesus with the unique God and denied its true humanity. This heresy spread from the third century by Libya and Egypt, which leads us to approximate its dating somewhere between the III-V centuries. The results of the technical analysis, both for the type of rough linen and the existence of papyrus threads between the flax fibres, makes us think, that the burlap was made in an Egyptian workshop in which linen was spun and papyrus was twisted on sheets of papyrus for writing.

80 In both fragments the cross of equal arms appears in order to separate elements of the sentences. In the left inscription fragment the cross is found in 19 occasions and in the right fragment in 21. The imprint of the cross is a significant sign of the sacredness of the text, being at the same time a specific mark of Coptic influence.

81 The text is monotonous and repetitive, which allowed it to be recited or sung, much to the taste of the Coptic liturgical tradition⁴⁸. This type of invocations,

⁴⁸ The Coptic liturgy is monotonous and repetitive. In the Coptic liturgy the word “*Holy*” is repeated in reference to God at various times: after the Lord's Prayer: “the people answer:” *Before You, O Lord* “; The elevation with the words: “*Holy things to the Holy*” and the answer: “*One Holy Father, one Holy Son, one Holy Spirit, together with the Holy Spirit. Amen*”. And in communion: “The formula of communion is”: *The Holy Body* and then “*The precious Blood of our Lord, God and Saviour*”. They are fixed ritual formulas, which are always repeated with the same words.

usually to obtain a favour or protection, should be intoned, enunciating all the sentences.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CONSULTANCE OF THE INTERNET

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- <http://papyri.info>.
- <http://www.pappal.info/about>.

LIST OF PHOTOS

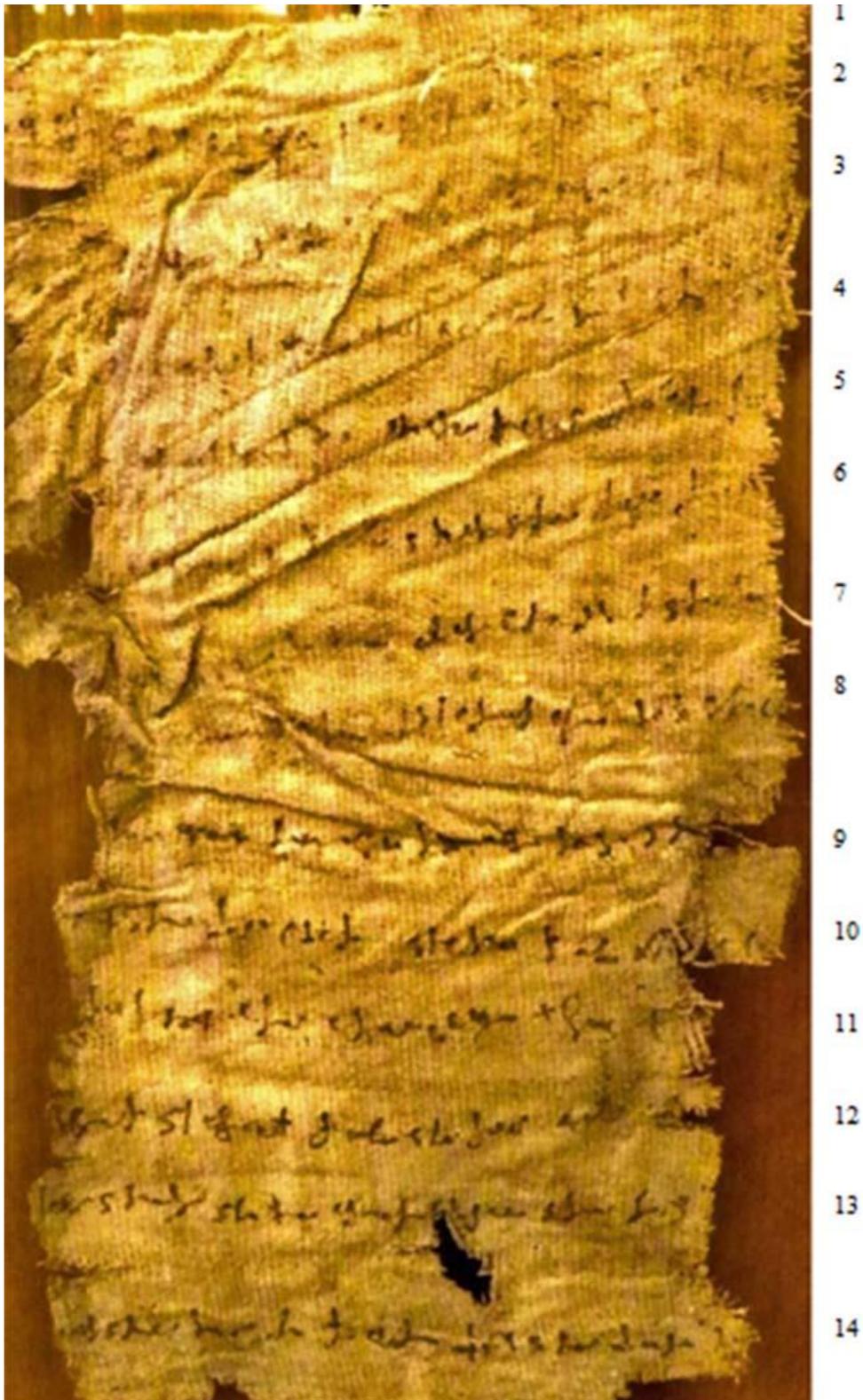


Figure 1
The left fragment

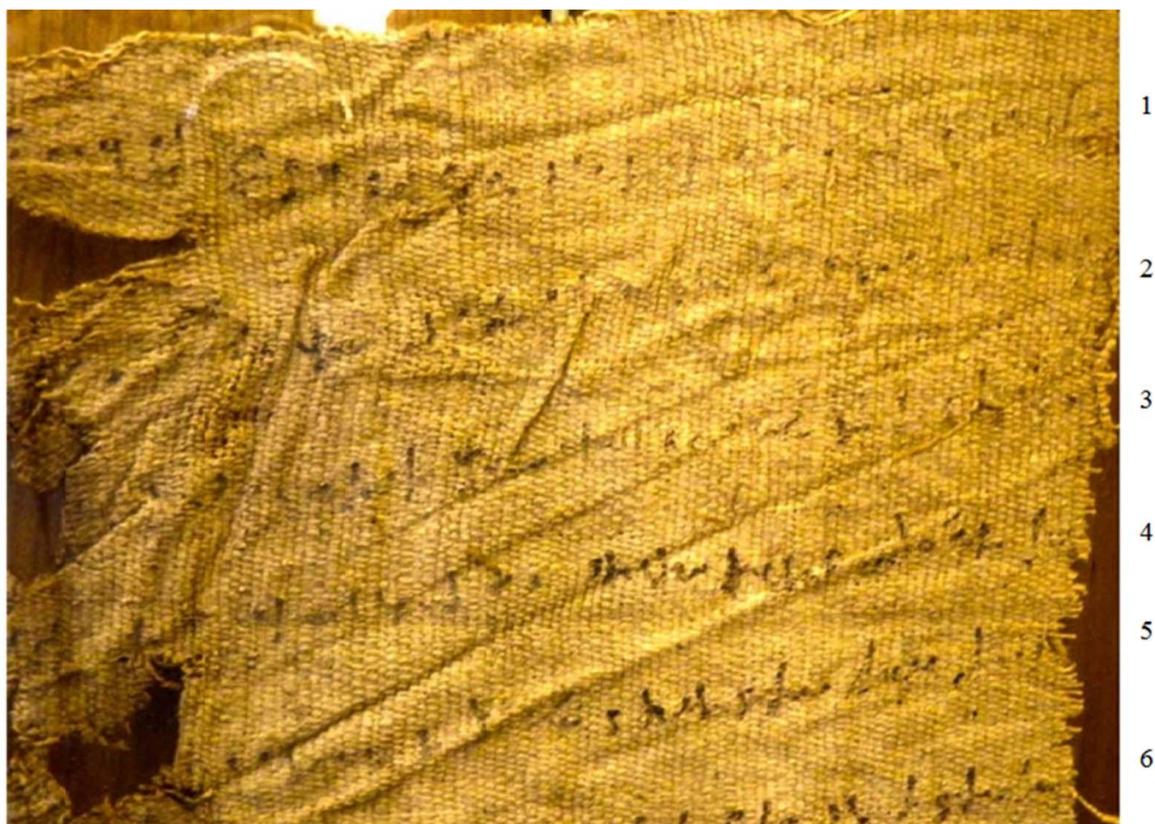


Figure 2
Left fragment (lines 1-6)

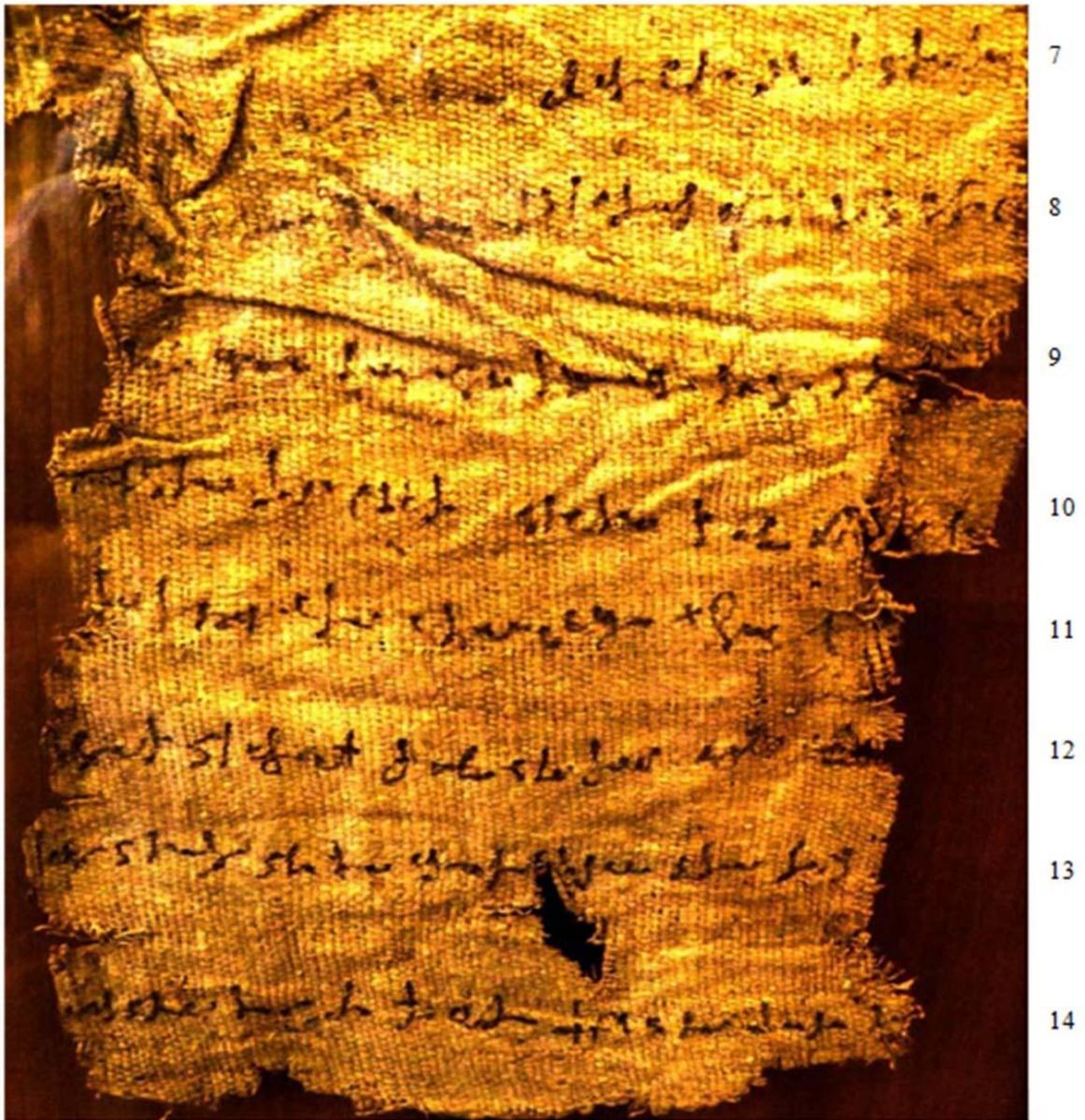


Figure 3
Left fragment (lines 7-14)

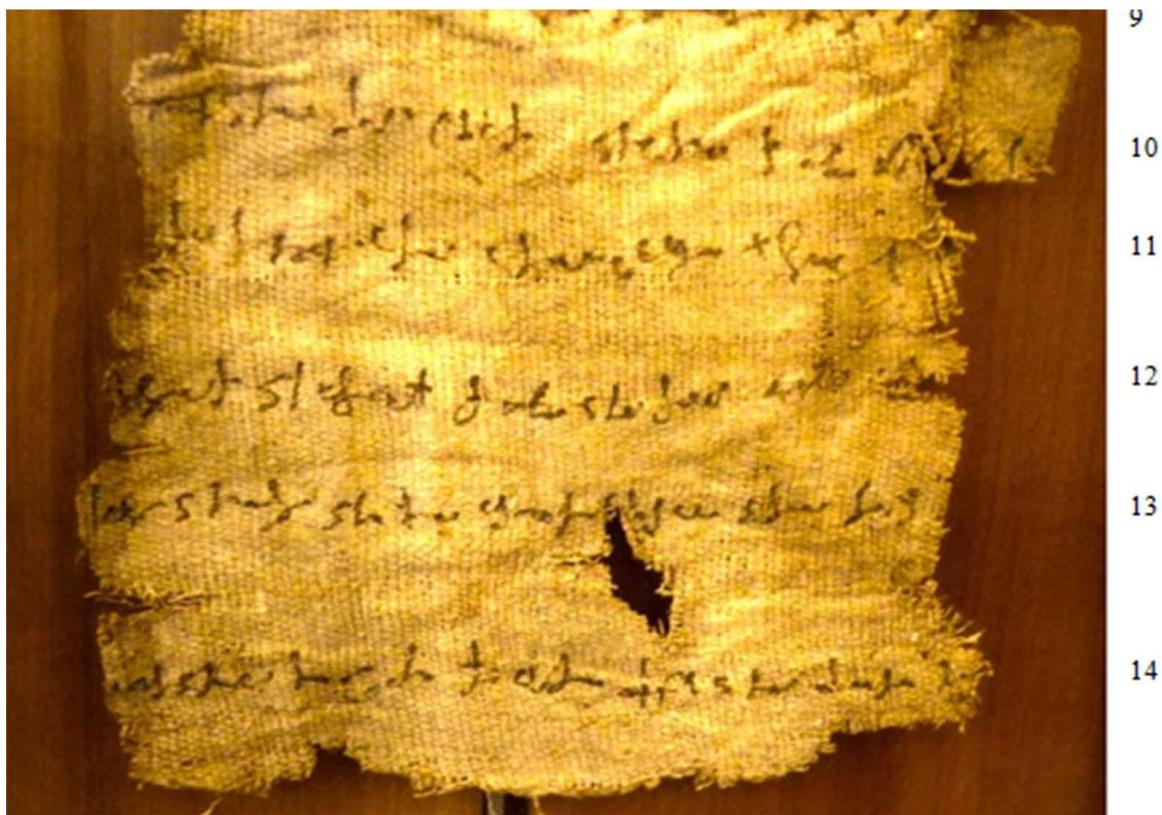


Figure 4
Left fragment (lines 9-14)

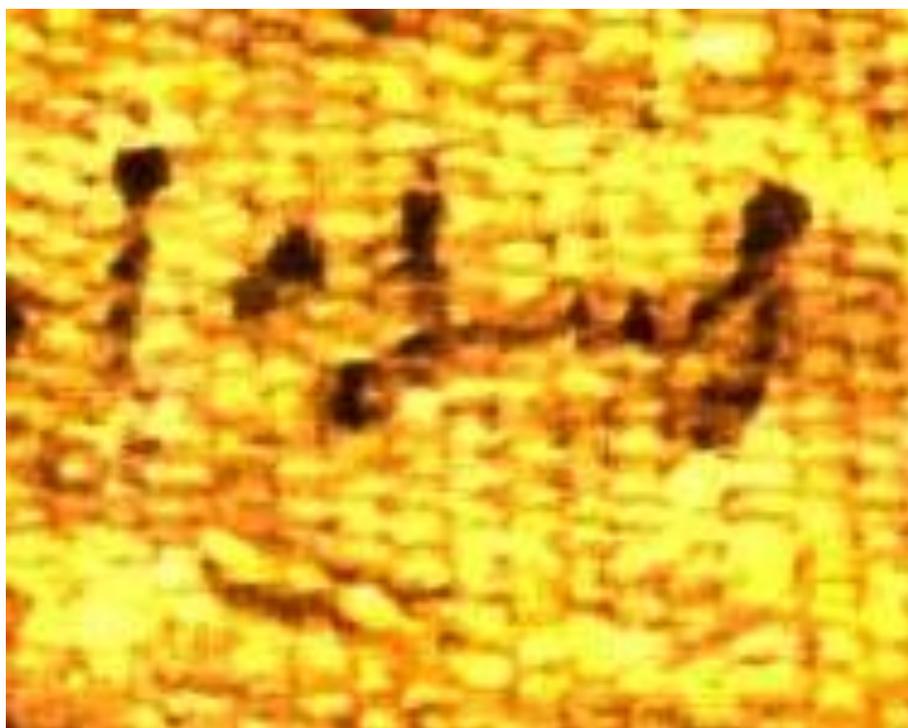


Figure 5
Iesus

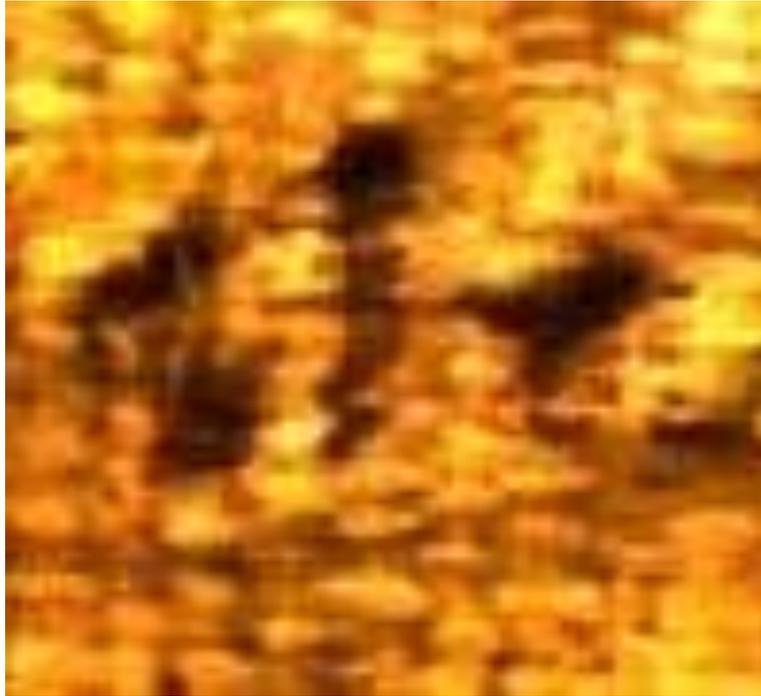


Figure 6
Saint



Figure 7
Saint (St)

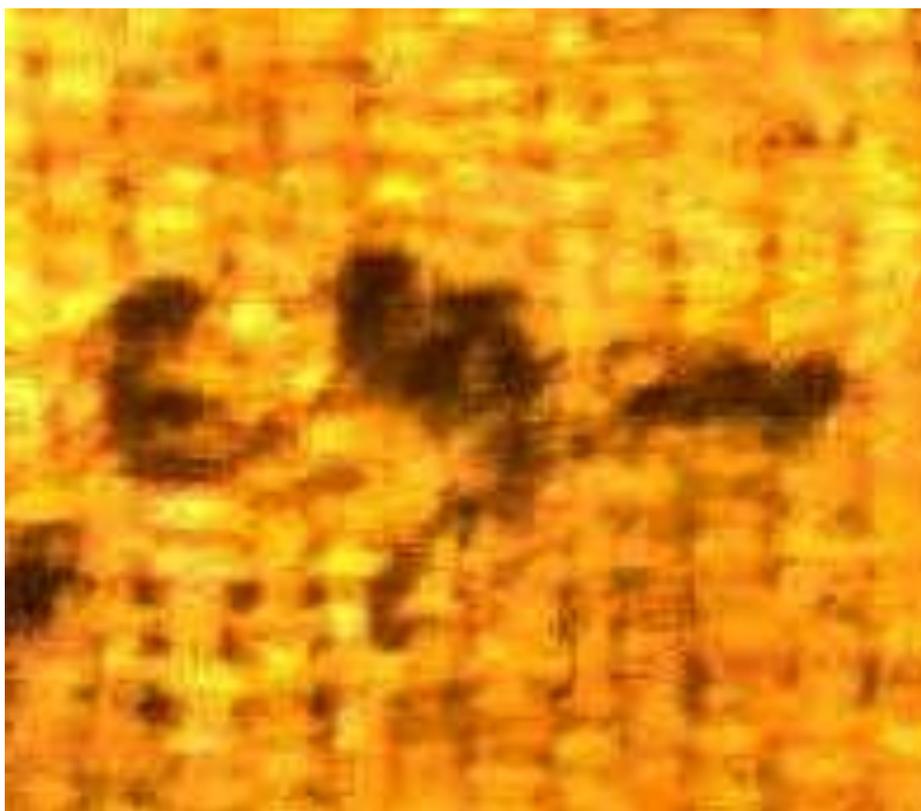


Figure 8
Ego

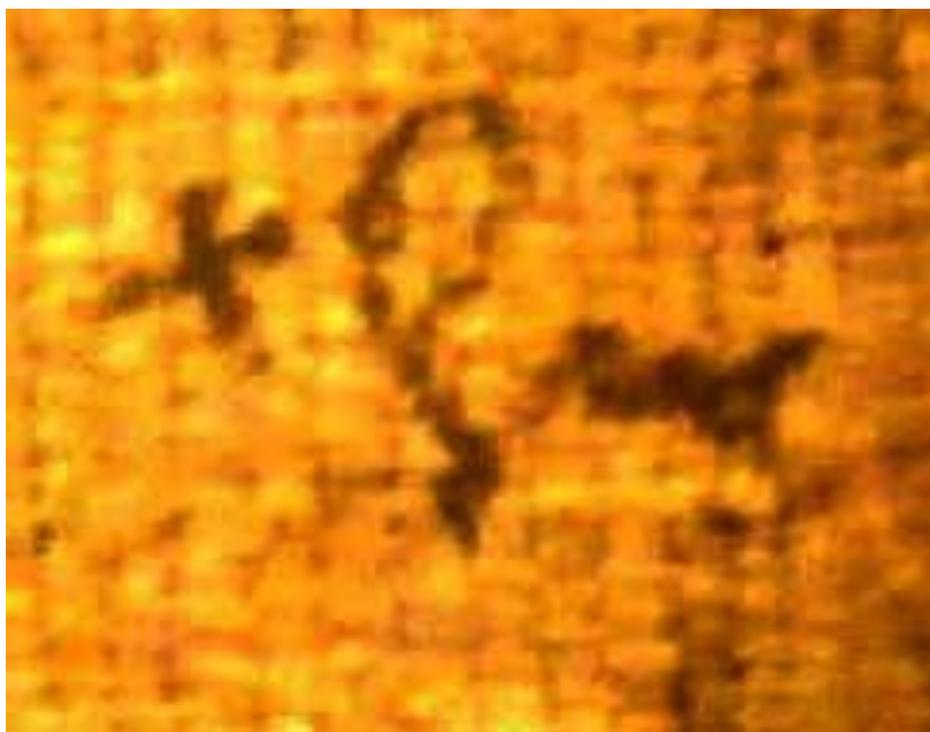


Figure 9
+ Fui

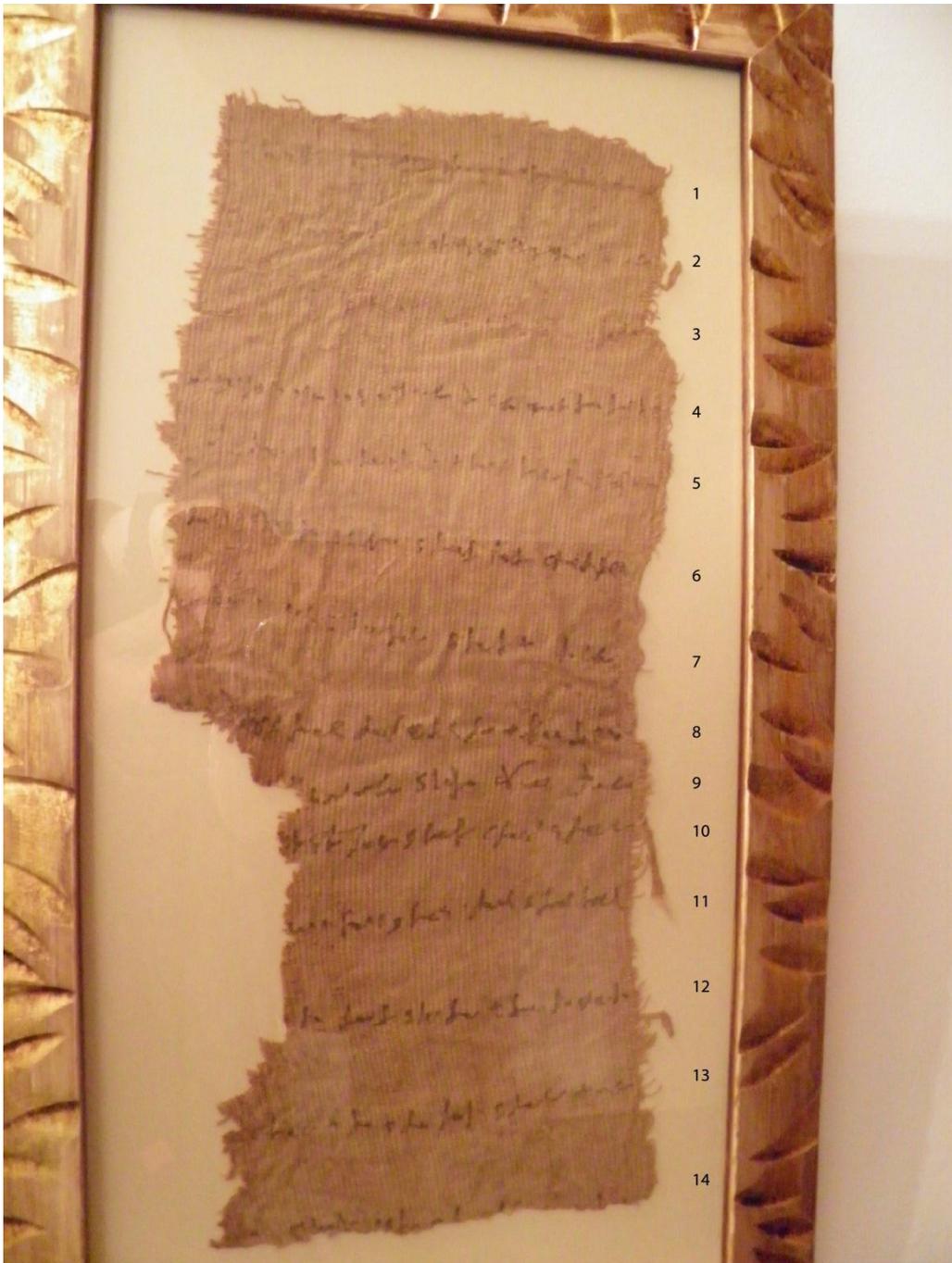


Figure 10
The right fragment

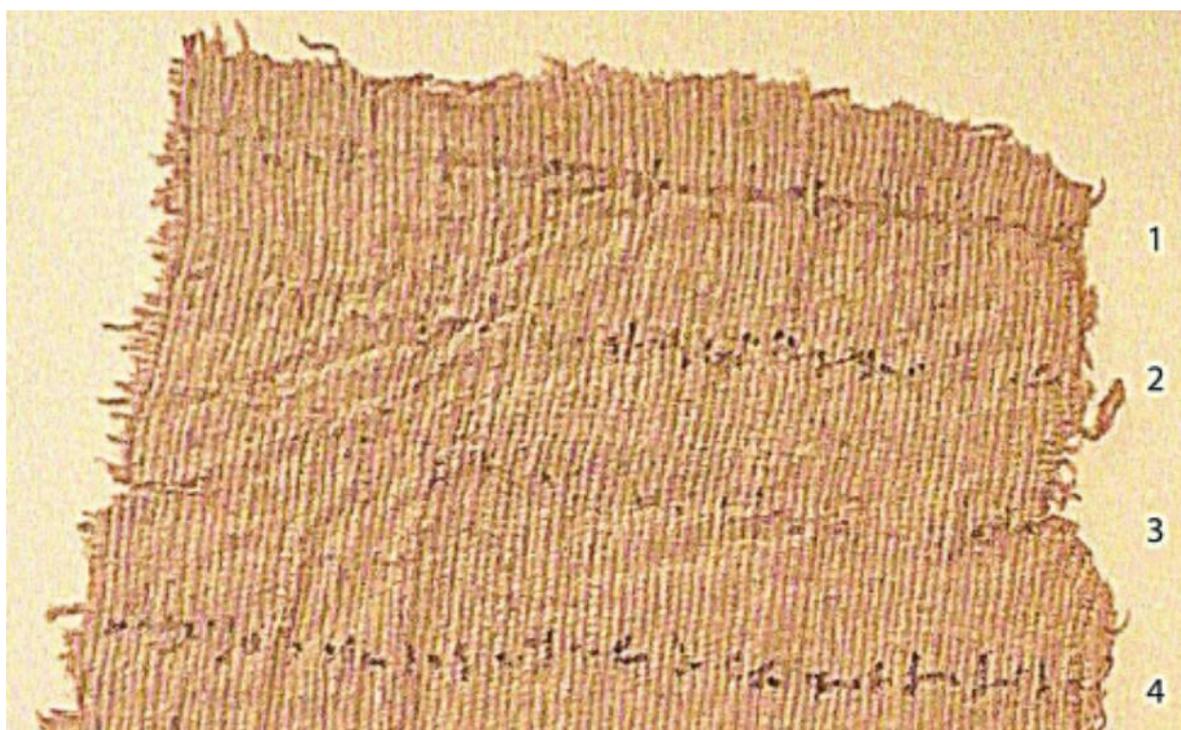


Figure 11
Right fragment (lines 1-4)

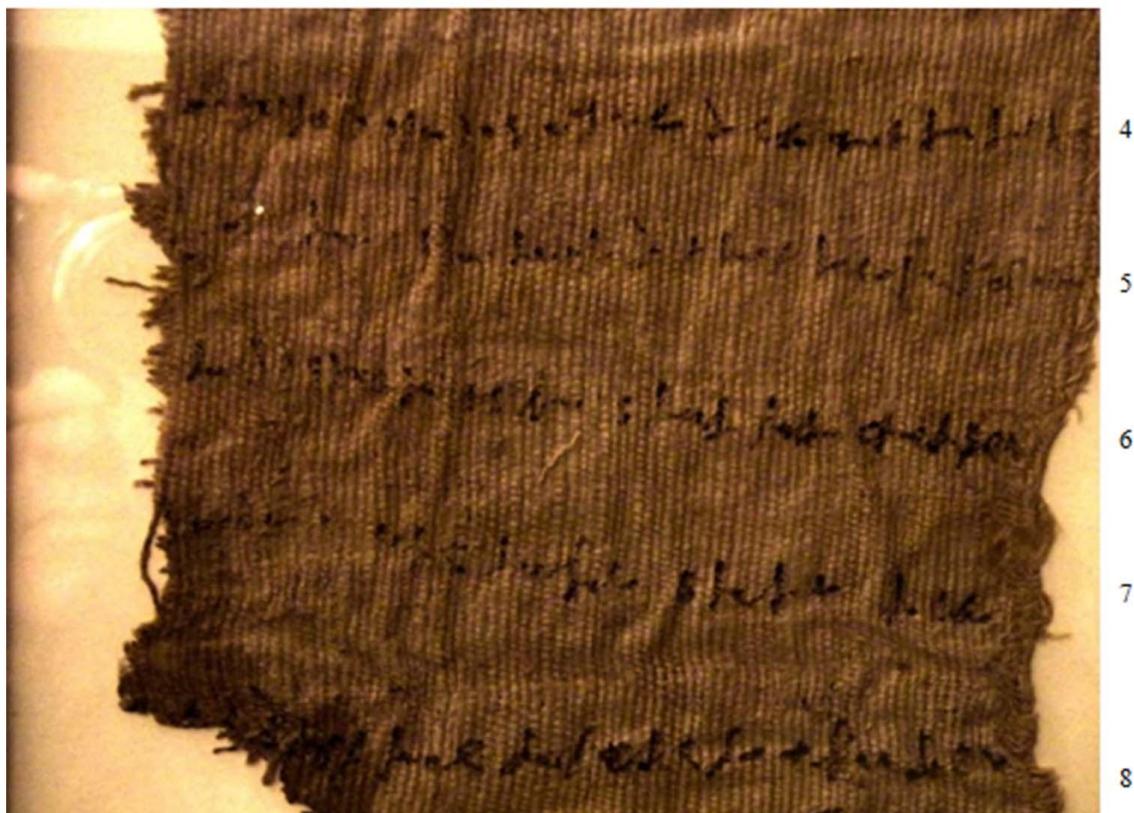


Figure 12
Right fragment (lines 4-8)

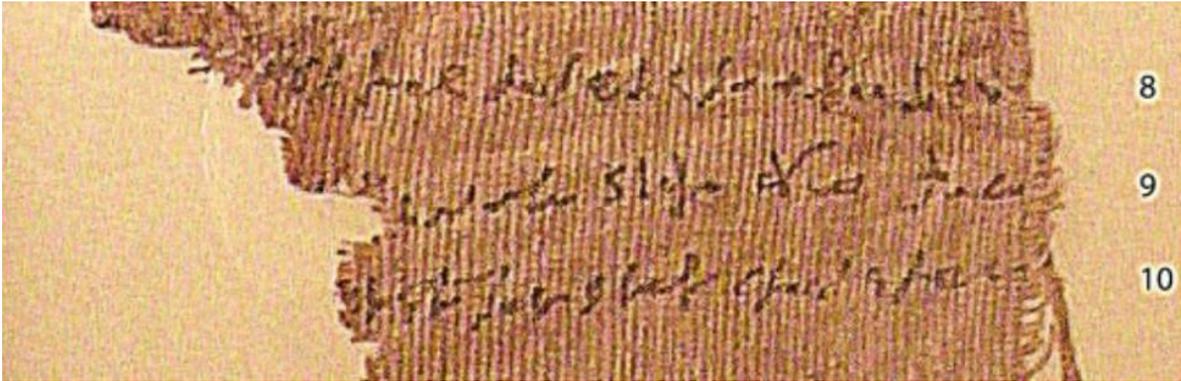


Figure 13
Right fragment (lines 8-10)

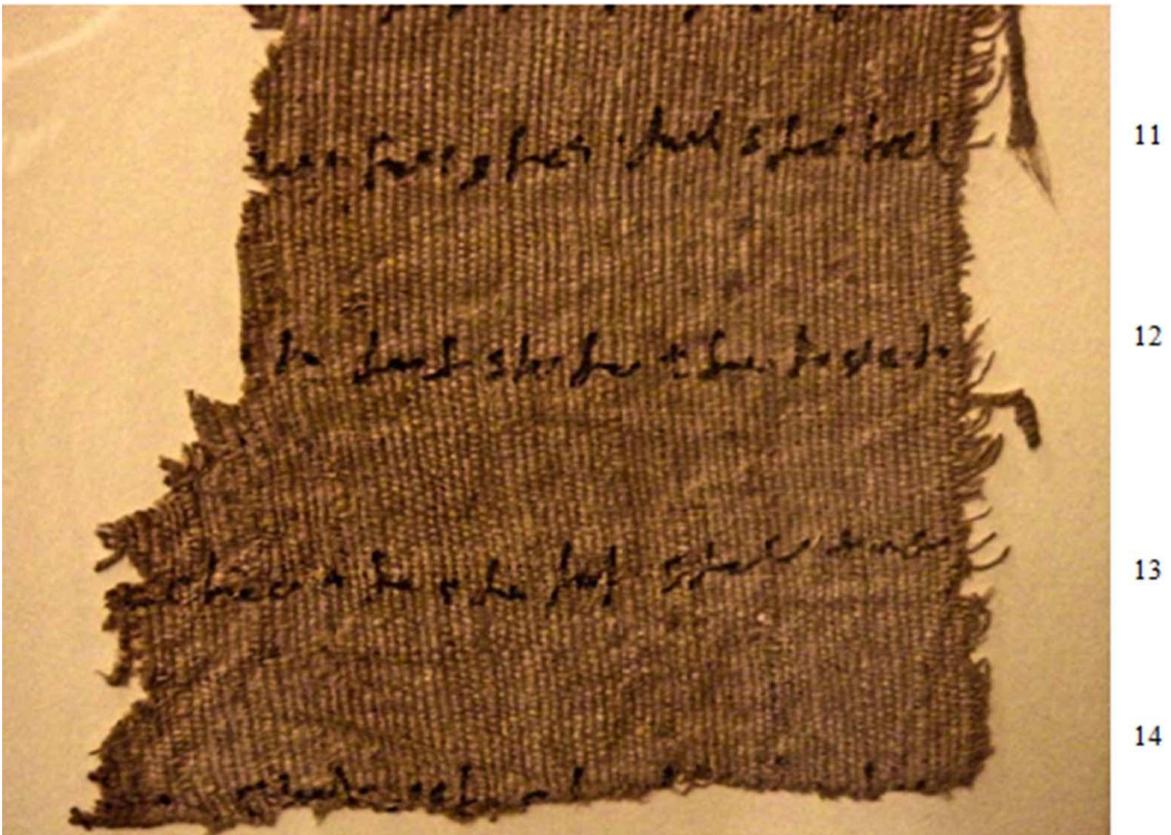


Figure 14
Right fragment (lines 11-14)



Figure 15
Ink on linen



Figure 16
Papyrus remains on linen



Figure 17
Remnant of ink



Figure 18
Remnants of resin

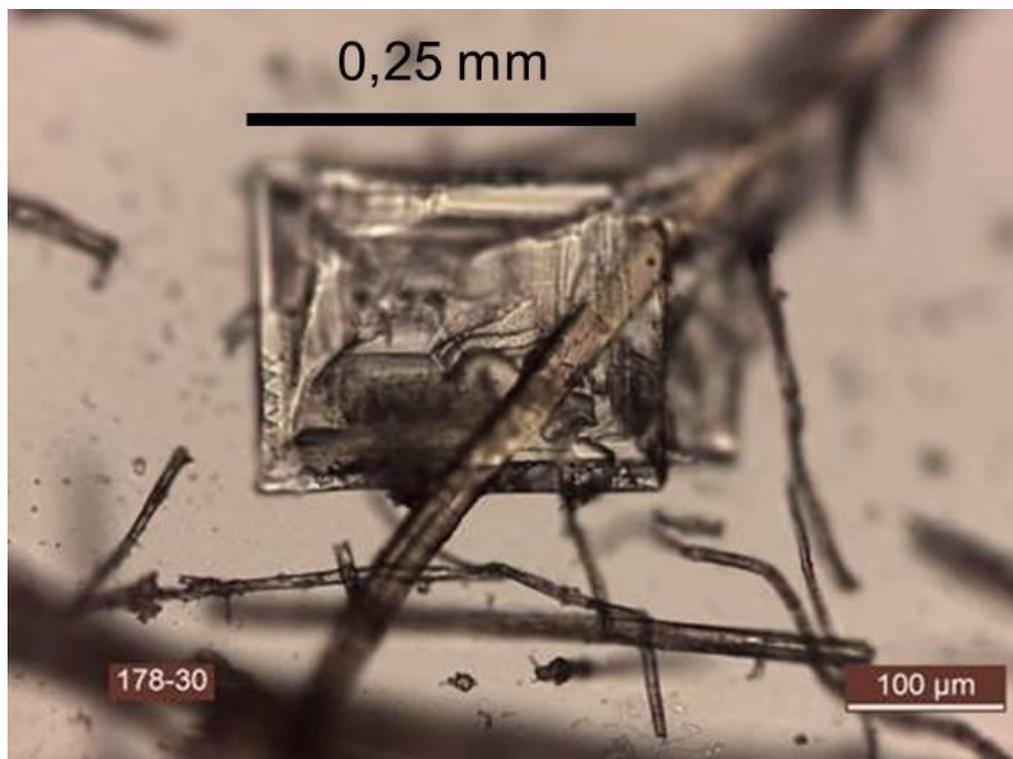


Figure 19
Crystals of salt

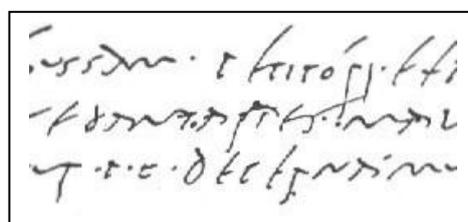


Figure 20
Papyrus Claudius P.Lond. 6.1912 (Alexandria)