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Confidential Business: P. Col. Inv. 316

Jacqueline Long

Loyola University Chicago, jlong1@luc.edu

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CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS: P. COL. INV. 316*

P. Col. Inv. 316

11.5 x 23.4 cm.

I cent. A.D.
(?) Alexandria

The papyrus is a medium buff color. Almost complete, the page misses its lower right corner (approximately 7 x 3.5 cm. along the margins), and grows increasingly worn and gappy towards the bottom edge. It was folded twice vertically about 4 cm. in from the margins: the righthand fold is particularly worn. No horizontal fold is evident.

The papyrus is written along the fibers on both sides, having been rotated 90° for the address on the back. The front looks neat and professional. The top margin measures 2 cm., the left .5 cm. and the right 1 cm.; continuation-strokes keep the right margin regular in short lines. In the first line more than in the body of the text, the characters are neatly spaced, the words divided, and the names capitalized.

The first hand is a fairly regular, somewhat angular cursive; similar hands appear throughout the first century (e.g. P.Lond. 277 of A.D. 23 [Atlas II pl. 13], 140 of 69-79 [Atlas II pl. 21], 897 of 84 [Atlas III pl. 27], 142 of 95 [Atlas II pl. 43]). Otherwise, termini are furnished by the correspondents' Latin names and the reference to the *idios logos*, which ceased to function during the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211).

Longus writes with urgency and tantalizing vagueness about business matters obviously familiar to his correspondent, but which he did not want to be more widely known. The identity of the "thirty items" he intends to buy is the letter's great puzzle. It is the first document to evidence a precautionary approach to the *idios logos*. Longus' vocabulary, and a few rhetorical flourishes, deserve notice also.

* P. Col. Inv. 316 is part of the papyrus collection of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the Columbia University Libraries, and is published with permission. This edition was originally prepared in connection with a seminar conducted by Roger S. Bagnall, from whose comments it has greatly and gratefully benefited. I also thank Susan L. Stephens for her comments.

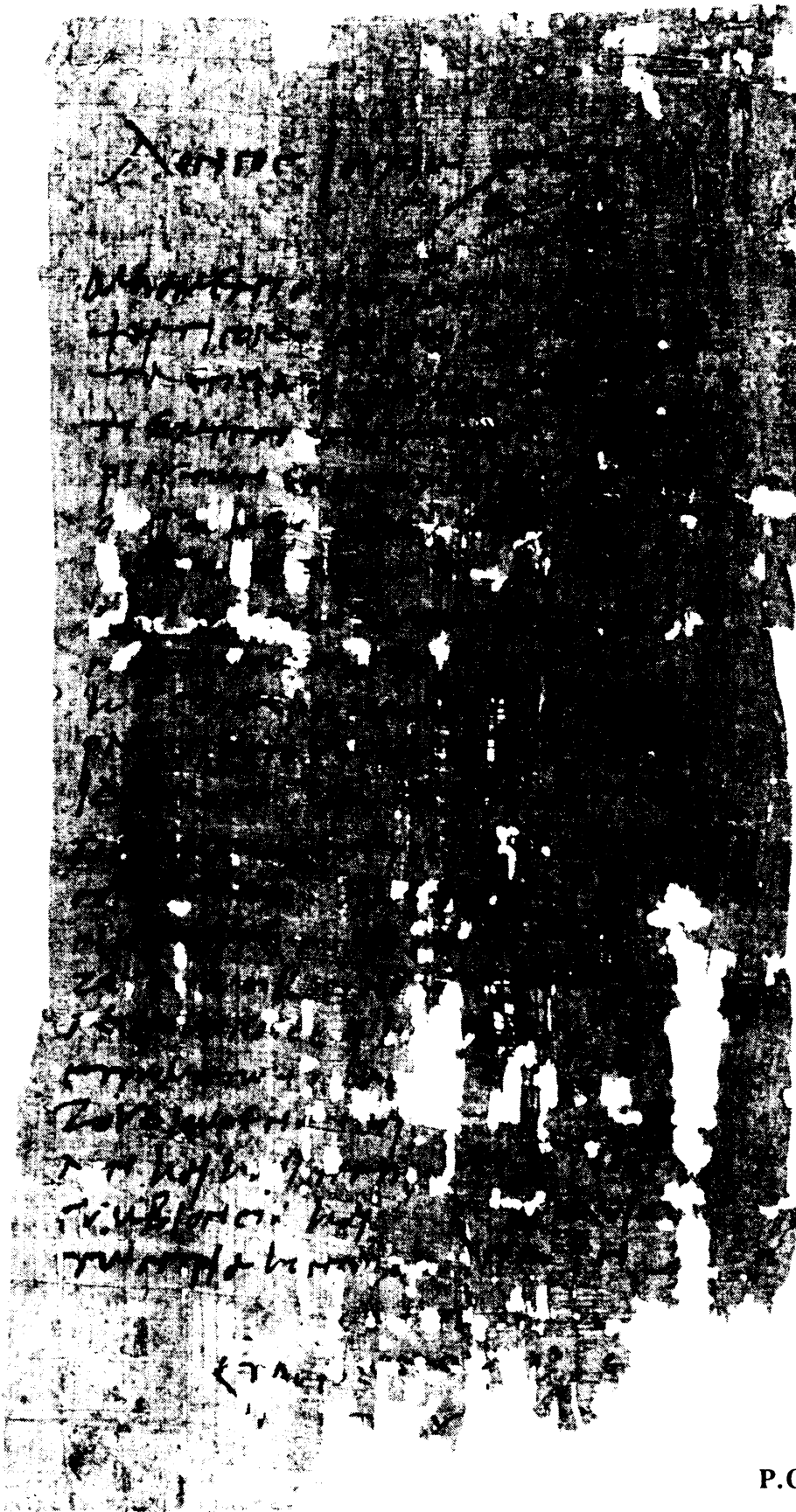
FRONT

Λόνγος Ἰουλίῳ τῷ πατρὶ
 χαίρειν.
 μὴ ἀμελήσης μοι δι' οὗ ἂν εὕρης γρά-
 4 ψαι τί σοι δοκεῖ περὶ τῶν τριάκον-
 τα. ἐπεὶ μοι ἐξ οὗ κατέπλευ[ς]α
 πέμπτῃν ταύτην ὁ πατήρ πε-
 ρὶ αὐτῶν ἐπιστολὴν μοι γράψει καὶ
 8 ὀργιζόμενος καὶ μέλλω αὐτὰ ἀγο-
 ράζειν, ἐπιγνώση; .ε[ί]πέ μοι
 δι' οὗ ἂν δύνῃ, μόνον μηδεὶς γει-
 νωσκέτω ὃ ποιεῖς, εἰ ἢ βιβλιοθή-
 12 κη συνχρηματίζει καὶ καθα-
 ρά ἐστι ἀπὸ ὑποθήκης καὶ ἀπὸ
 ἰδίου λόγου, καὶ ταχέως μ[ο]ι γράψον.
 παρακαλῶ δέ σε περὶ πρ[άξ]ε[ω]ν μου ἃ
 16 σοι ἐντέταλμαι μὴ ἀμελ[εῖν]. καὶ τὰ κτή-
 νη μὴ ἀργεῖτω ἵνα ὑπο . [. . .] . ω ἀὐ[λι-]
 ζέσθω μὴ βαρυνόμενα [. .] . ος[. .] .
 λειαν κοποῦσθαι κ[. .] . θιτ[.]ν πε[. .] .
 20 στρωμάτων ἵνα ς[. .]υδ[. .] . [. .] ἀπ[ά-]
 ζου Διογένην καὶ [. .] . λ [. .]αι[.]υ
 λαν καὶ Κῦριν τὴν μεταί[ρα] καὶ τὴν
 σύμβιον σου. καὶ [με]λέτω μοι πε[ρ]ὶ
 24 τῶν τριάκοντά μοι γράφ[ει]ν.
 . [. .] . ν
 ἔρρωσο πολλο[ί]ς χρ[όνοι]ς.
 Π[α]ῦ[νι]

BACK

2nd. h. Ἰουλίῳ Εἰρωνίν[ω] εἰς Φιλαδελφίαν
 3rd. h. Λόνγου []

6. ε of πεμπτῃν corr. 10. 1. γι-. 13. ὑποθηκης. 16. κ of κτη- corr. 21. 1. Διογένην. 22. 1. μητέρα.
 24. μοι: 1. σοι? 28. 1. Ἑρωνεῖν-.



"Longus to Julius his father, greetings. Please do not neglect to write me, through anyone you may find, what you decide about the thirty items. Since, from when I sailed downriver, this is the fifth letter my father will be writing me about them, and he is growing angry, and I am going to buy them, will you make up your mind? Tell me through anyone you can—only don't let anyone find out what you're doing—if the registry is issuing the deed and the items are clear of mortgage and of *idios logos*. And write me quickly. I beseech you, concerning my affairs don't neglect what I have instructed you. Also the animals: don't let them be idle, so that ... let them be stabled if they are not worn out ... Greet Diogenes and ... and mother Cyris and your wife. And please be sure to write me about the thirty items. ... Keep well for a long time. (Addressed) To Julius Heironinus, to Philadelphia, [from] Longus ..."

3. μή: The initial downstroke of the μ loops up into the following curve: a scribal flourish like the capitals of Λόνγος, Τουλίω, Χαίρειν, Ἐρρωκο.
5. κατέπλευσα: If Longus "sailed downriver" with respect to Philadelphia, whither he directs the letter, he could be in Alexandria.
- 6-9. It is likeliest that Longus addresses Julius as "father" only honorifically, and now refers to his real father, who evidently dislikes the business of the thirty items. A less populous solution would be to assume that Longus here addresses Julius in the third person as sarcasm, possibly echoing language of Julius' previous letter. "Cyris [in this case, *my*] mother and your wife" (lines 22-23) would then be a huffily elevated style for one woman who is both. The hyperbaton stressing πέμπτην τάτην breathes exasperation in any case.

ὀργιζόμενος must describe ὁ πατήρ, or the second καί becomes meaningless.

μέλλω might mean "I am delaying", as in Classical tragedy: Longus' vocabulary does embrace ἀυλιζέθω and κοποῦσθαι, lines 17-19. But the sense is rare in the papyri, and is not found with a complementary infinitive (P.Mich. 11.624.9, P.Stras. 5.305.7). The future sense conforms better with future γράψει and ἐπιγνώση.

9. .εἰπέ: The syntax of both sentences seems complete as read, but the remains of three apparently separate strokes are visible about the edge of a lacuna and under magnification, the join of the ε shows faint traces of ligature. The traces do not suggest any compound of εἰπεῖν.

10. *ἐάν*: Though he correctly uses *ἄν* in the parallel clause of line 3, the scribe here makes a confusion common in the papyri; cf. F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods I* (Milan 1976) 305.
- 11-12. *εἰ ἡ βιβλιοθήκη συνχρηματίζει*: The verb is used in the sense "issue appropriate documentation", somewhat loosely of the registry itself rather than of its officials (Wilcken's definition [*Arch. Pap.* 1(1901) 558] should be broadened slightly with reference to e.g. P. Tebt. II 397.26, where quittance of a debt is at issue, rather than authorization to sell or mortgage property). Longus' reference suits the *βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων*, which during the second half of the first century A.D. was split off from the *βιβλιοθήκη δημοσίων λόγων* to assume the oversight of private transactions in land and (perhaps only in exceptional cases) slaves: for a full account, see H. J. Wolff, *Das Recht der griechischen Papyri Ägyptens in der Zeit der Ptolemäer und des Prinzipats II* (Munich 1978) 222-55.
13. *ὑπόθηκη*: since hypothec granted the creditor only the right to proceed *in rem* for the value of an unpaid debt, a debtor might in theory hypothecate the same piece of property repeatedly for different debts, up to its full value. A clause to prevent the exploitation of this capacity or the transfer of the hypothecated property is found in many mortgage-loans (e.g. P. Oxy. XXXIV 2722.34-38, P. Flor. 1.8f.; cf. discussion of P. Oxy. XIV 1634). Failing the registry's involvement, an unwary purchaser might find not just an obligation on his new property, but his entire purchase vitiated.
14. *ιδίου λόγου*: For a full account, see P. R. Swarney, *The Ptolemaic and Roman Idios Logos* (Toronto 1970). The *βιβλιοθήκη*, hypothec and the *idios logos* provide clues to the nature of Longus' "thirty items". If he does mean precisely the *βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων*, his letter would belong to the period when the *idios logos*' scope was expanding beyond land matters (Swarney 52 notes that *adespota* within the *idios logos*' authority were defined broadly; but that classification would seem to exclude the possibility of a hypothec). But the antecedents of the *βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων* were *βιβλιοθήκαι* no less, so that the date cannot be restricted in this way. There is abundant evidence for the hypothecation of land, buildings and furniture, parts thereof or part-interests therein during the Roman period (e.g. P. Oxy. III 486, 510; XXII 2349; XXXIV 2722; P. Mich. VI 428). Universal hypothecations appear late (e.g. P. Oxy.

XVI 1890 [A.D. 508], 1891 [A.D. 495], LI 3641 [A.D. 544]). But a will of A.D. 156, P. Oxy. III 494.19-21, does grant broad rights to sell or hypothecate ἃ ἔάν αἰρῆται ἀφ' ... ὑπαρχόντων καὶ σωμάτων, i.e. possessions generally and specifically slaves (cf. BGU II 567 i.24, 2nd cent.): even in the Roman period hypothec could apply to a wider range of items than its use generally suggests. Curious as it seems to count separately rather than refer to them cumulatively, parcels of land (Longus' neuter plurals standing for e.g. ἐδάφη) would be the most broadly attested possibility for Longus' "thirty items". Slaves cannot be excluded, however, and it is less odd for them to be treated as items. It would be a large transaction in either case, making Longus' hope for secrecy desperately optimistic.

- 17-18. ἀλιζέθω: A relatively rare word in the papyri, though common enough in literature; about half the α is visible, and part of a downstroke at a characteristic angle for the υ.
19. κοποῦσθαι: A fairly rare word, but cf. P. Oxy. I 128.8 (6th-7th cent.!), an official who wishes to retire because of ill health.
21. One or two names or relationships have been worn away from the typical roster of salutations.
- 22-23. Κῦριν τὴν μεταίρα καὶ τὴν σύμβιον σου: Either Cyris is the mother of Diogenes and the rest, or σου applies to both nouns and she is Julius' mother (or see on lines 6-9 above). The absence of a clarifying possessive is most unusual. μεταίρα is remarkable against the general level of orthography in the letter, but no other title of relationship can be read.
24. μοι: The traces clearly indicate μ rather than c, and I have translated an ethical dative accordingly, but one might expect a dative of interest with μελέτω. Possibly a scribal blunder.
- 25-27. The last three lines of the letter begin part-way across the page, as if centered. No traces show between the υ at the end of 25 or the c at the end of 26, and where the papyrus breaks off.
28. Εἰρωνίν[ω]: From the prevalence e.g. at Karanis (e.g. P. Mich. VIII 465-6, 483-7, 498-500) of men for whom Julius is one of two or three names used, it

seems likely that Heironinus is a second name here. But since no trace of the case-ending remains, it could equally well be a patronymic genitive.

28. The rather spindly second hand addressing the letter is presumably Longus'.
29. Traces of 6-10 letters: the characters of the second hand are much narrower than those of the third, which much resembles the first. It may indeed be the scribe's; more likely Julius' or his secretary's, docketing the letter on receipt.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

JACQUELINE LONG