ROBIN BIRLEY – ANTHONY BIRLEY

FOUR NEW WRITING-TABLETS FROM VINDOLANDA

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 100 (1994) 431–446

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

FOUR NEW WRITING-TABLETS FROM VINDOLANDA

Renewed excavations at Vindolanda have produced further writing-tablets of the period Domitian-Hadrian, c. 85-130. Three letters and an account are sufficiently complete and legible to deserve rapid publication. Three of the tablets are from period II (c. 92-97), one from period IV (c. 104-120)

The following special abbreviations are used:

'BG': Belgica and the Germanies

Birley 1993: E.Birley, R.Birley and A.Birley, Vindolanda Research Reports, new series, vol. II. The Early Wooden Forts. Reports on the Auxiliaries, the Writing-Tablets, Inscriptions, Brands and Graffiti

BT: A.K.Bowman and J.D.Thomas, Vindolanda: The Latin Writing-Tablets, 1983

Holder: A.Holder, Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz, I-III, 1891-1913

Kajanto: I.Kajanto, The Latin Cognomina, 1965

Mócsy: A.Mócsy, Nomenclator provinciarum Europae Latinarum et Galliae Cisalpinae, 1983

W.Schulze: W.Schulze, Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen, 1904

1. Inv. 92/1108 (period II, c. A.D. 92-97). (Tafel XXV).

This is an almost complete letter: a portion has been lost from the top left of sheet 1 and the top right of sheet 2.

Measurements: 202x65 mm. The ink has unfortunately faded on the left of sheet 1 and the right of sheet 2, and both are ravaged by woodworm as well as being badly stained in places. Hence a complete text is unattainable. All the same, what can be read is of some interest. The expression in line 5, *de carris Brittonum*, followed by a reference to *bracis* in line 6, a quantity, unusually written out in full (as well as, perhaps, expressed as a numeral), *m̄. trecentos octo*, are in themselves noteworthy. The references in sheet 2, where *Vindolanda* occurs, to *velatura* (twice) and *vecturas* (and *vecturam*), also deserve to be made more widely known.

1 *C.ri̤l̤*[ ] *Ol.* [ ]
2 (presumably blank) *s̤ṳo̤ salṳt̤e̤m̤*
3 [ ]*..uno̤..in...*
4 *s̤i̤cut*[ ]*...ou .....ium*
5 *.e̤.ne̤s de carris Brittonum*
6 *.....iii aricarromauco bracis*
7 *m̤c̤c̤.....i̤d̤ est m̄ trecentos octo*
8 *...a̤r̤..... oṇera̤ri̤ i̤n̤.a.m̤..*

9 *p...in c..c..ọ c.rr.mliii*
10 *p.... quem..edam..*[ ]
11 *.....e..et.m̄lxiii* [ ]
(sheet two)
12 [ ].....*c̣ụ*[ ]
13 *Vindolanda cuṃ*[ ]
14 *et velatura alent a.*[ ]
15 *itas vecturas id est -Xcviiiị̣ṣ*
16 *et omnem velaturam eọ quam*
17 *vecturam eis solves merce*
18 *tibi recte dixeṛạ̣ṭ Sạcer si ḍẹ*
19 *ceṛa offeres Verẹcunḍo ....*
20 *ṣụị̣ṣ siquid ei....fụẹris*
21 [ ].*a..quis...t.....s*
22 [ ]*tis vale simil.s..*
Reverse: no traces of ink are detectable.
A partial translation is offered after the comments.

Sheet 1

1 The positioning of the fragments is somewhat uncertain, but this may represent the beginning of the writer's name, *C.rị̣ḷ*[ ] or *C.rụ*[ ], and the beginning of the name of the recipient (who may have been called Similis, cf. on line 22, below), *Ol*[ ]; but this could be the cognomen of the writer. (Attempts to reposition these fragments and reverse them, in the hope of reading e.g. *Vị*[*nd*]*ol*[*andae*] as the place of writing proved unavailing: the grain of the wood seems to demand that they come from the top left-hand corner of sheet one).

2 *ṣụọ salụṭẹṃ*, although faint, seems an acceptable reading.

3 This smaller lettering, of which only *unọ* and *in* can be read, has evidently been inserted above the original first line of the letter (line 4).

4 Of the first word only *cut* is clear, but the traces might permit the reading *ṣị̣cut*, which would be a plausible opening word. (An attempt to reposition and reverse the fragment, referred to above, and read the last two letters of *sicut* as VI instead of UT, proved to be unsatisfactory). No certain reading of the remainder can be offered, but *...ou.....ṇṭ ium* seems possible.

5 *de carris Brittonum* is clear; what precedes it is too faint to read with certainty, perhaps *.ẹ.nẹs*. *Carrus*, 'wagon', also appears in the Octavius letter, Inv. 88/946, published by Bowman, Thomas and Adams, Britannia 21, 1990, 41ff., lines 17f., where it is possibly neuter and spelled *karrum,* Brit. 21, 48. The diminutive, *carrulorum, carrulos,* appears in Inv. 87/183, a neuter variant, *carrula,* in Inv. 86/121. *Brittones* are referred to in Inv. 85/32, published by Bowman and Thomas, Brit. 18, 1987, 135ff., where they are also called

Brittunculi. In 85/32 the Britons are clearly being assessed for their military capacity (unsatisfactory). Here they are supplying the garrison with cereal.

6 The last word is *bracis,* an unknown kind of cereal, referred to in BT 5, line 16, and by Octavius, line 25 *et bracis excussi habeo m(odios) cxi.* The editors comment on this word, BT p. 96 and Brit. 21, 49, citing in the former place J.N.Adams, BICS 22, 1975, 22f., in the latter J.André, Les noms de plantes dans la Rome antique, 1985, 37. The word is evidently Celtic. The first few letters of this line may be a numeral, going with the *carris* of line 5. At any rate *iii* can be read, which would then be the last digits of a fairly large number, perhaps over 100, since at the beginning of the line what looks the top of *c* can be seen. What follows *iii* appears to be *aricarromauco,* which might conceivably be *a Ricarromauco,* in other words one of the Britons. The name Ricarromaucus seems to be unattested, but Celtic names beginning Ric- are known, Holder II 1182ff.

7 The first few letters are rather uncertain. What follows is: *id est m̄,* i.e. *m̄*(*odios*), *trecentos octo,* evidently the quantity of *bracis.* The line may begin *ṃc̣c̣c̣ṿiii* - at any rate *ṃc̣c̣* appears to be a possible reading of the beginning of this line.

8 The first half of the line is too faint to read. The second half may include the word *onerạrị* followed by *ịṇ.a.ṃ..*

9 No intelligible reading of the first half of the line is possible. The letters *c.rr.* naturally suggest the reading *carra.* The line ends *mliii,* either *m*(*odios*) *liii*, 53 modii, or *mliii,* 1,053. No bar survives over the M, but it may have been there originally.

10 The first letter is P, but the next three or four traces are unclear. The line seems to end *quem .. edam.*

11 Only the end of the line, *m̄*(*odios*) *lxiii*, can be read with any confidence.

sheet 2

12 Most of this line is broken away. Parts of up to seven letters survive, of which the last two are almost certainly *c̣ụ*, perhaps preceded by ...*ục̣ụṣ*, perhaps [*Ricarro*]*ṃạục̣ụṣ*?

13 The right-hand side is broken away. *Vindolanda cuṃ*[ ] survives.

14 Up to four letters are lost at the right. The line begins *et velatura alent a.*[ ]. *a* probably represents the start of the word ending *itas* at the beginning of the next line. *aḍ*[*d*]*itas* is a possibility, but there is space for more than one missing letter, and the trace after that A does not look like a D, but rather P (E or F is also possible): hence a word such as *aṗ*[*plic*]*itas* might be proposed, with the sense 'attached'.

15 *itas vecturas id est X cviiiị̣ṣ. itas* is clearly the end of a word starting in the previous line, cf. above.

16 *et omnem velaturam eọ quam* is quite clear.

17 *vecturam eis solves merce* is clear. *velatura* and *vectura* occur together in Varro, De re rustica 1,2,14: *item dicuntur qui vecturis vivunt velaturam facere,* 'likewise those who make a living from transport-fees are said to carry on *velatura'.* No other example of *velatura* is registered in the lexica. *vectura* seems to appear at Vindolanda in Inv. 978, a fragmentary

account from period III. The sense of lines 16-17 seems to be 'in such a way that you will pay this transport-fee in kind'.

18 The line begins with *tibi recte,* which is clear, followed by *dixerạt Sạcer si ḍẹ*, which is less certain. Sacer is a moderately common cognomen (Mócsy cites 36 examples, 19 being from 'BG').

19 The first few letters are not very clear, perhaps *ceṛa.* (Immediately after the A is a diagonal mark, which is a stain rather than another letter). Could this be interpreted as *ḍẹ/ceṛa,* i.e. 'from the wax-tablet'? *offeres* is certain, followed by rather faint traces, which it is possible to read as *Verẹcunḍo.* The remainder of the line is illegible. For the very common name Verecundus, cf. Birley 1993, 24: Kajanto 264 registers 287 men and 100 women, Mócsy 307 has 223 in his area, of which 43 are in 'BG'. The name is found at Vindolanda in periods I (Inv. 841, etc., the prefect Julius Verecundus), III (BT 12, an optio) and IV (Inv. 396).

20 The first few letters may be *ṣuiṣ,* then comes *siquid ei,* further traces, then *fụẹris.*

21 The beginning of the line is broken away. The first complete letter is an A, the next two are illegible, then comes *quis.* The rest is too faint to make out any word.

22 The first two or three letters are lost in the break. The surviving part begins *tis,* then comes *vale simil.s,* perhaps *Similịs,* although the trace between L and S does not look like an I. There seem to be further traces, too faint to read. It is possible that there may have been some expression such as *Similịụs* [*te salutat*]. There is also a mark below *tis,* which might represent the end of one last word. Similis is common in 'BG'. Mócsy 267 registers 17 cases there out of 36 in his area - and 5 of Similius. Kajanto 289 gives a total of 65 for the empire. L.Weisgerber, Rhenania Germano-Celtica (1969), 390, regards the popularity of the name in the northern Rhineland as perhaps indicating the latinisation of a native original. For a Flavius Similis at Vindolanda, Inv. 346 and 358 from period III and 444 from period IV, evidently an officer, cf. Birley 1993, 45; 56.

Partial translation

'C.r..[ ] greets his ...

...from the wagons of the Britons, (a number referring to the wagons?), from Ricarromaucus 308 modii, that is three hundred and eight modii, of *bracis*....to be loaded... wagons...53 modii (?).....63 modii ...Ricarromaucus (?)....from (?) Vindolanda with...and transporting, will sustain attached (?) transport-fees, that is 109 1/2 denarii, and the whole transporting there - you will pay them this transport-fee in kind. Sacer had rightly told you, if you offer to Verecundus from the tablet (?)...for his people, if anything...you have been...Farewell, Similis (?)...'

It remains impossible to be certain whether this letter is a draft written at Vindolanda or sent there from elsewhere.

2. Inv. 92/1187 (period II, c. AD 92-97). (Tafel XXV).
Almost complete sheet two of a letter from Aspanius Comicianus to Mensor, measuring 106 x 67 mm.

Although only sheet two has been found, a few letters from the ends of lines in sheet one are visible at the left-hand side. They are not shown in the text below but are referred to in the comments on lines 4, 7 and 8. Only the tips of a few letters in the first line survive and line 3 is damaged by a split in the tablet; and a few letters are missing from lines 8 and 9 because of a break. But enough of the text survives to indicate the subject, and the name of both writer and recipient are clearly legible on the reverse. The place of writing, presumably written at the very top of the reverse, is, however, missing, so that it is not certain whether the letter was written at Vindolanda or sent there from elsewhere: there is a chance that the writer is mentioned in another Vindolanda tablet (cf. below), which might suppport the possibility that the letter is a draft written at Vindolanda. Aspanius Comicianus is clearly asking Mensor to get a third person to repay a sum of money, at least 250 denarii, going on to mention the *conscientiam praefecti sui,* 'the conscience (or: the knowledge) of his prefect'. Presumably some expression meaning 'respecting' (or 'bringing it to') can be supplied after *sic* in line 3. Comicianus then greets four named men 'and all citizens and friends'. It is not clear whether by *cives* Roman citizens are meant, or rather 'fellow-citizens', in this case either Batavians, for the garrison at Vindolanda in period II was the cohors VIIII Batavorum, or some comparable ethnic group. The script is not particularly impressive. S and T are hard to distinguish from one another, likewise A and R. I is written very much like a P in *amicos.* The second U of Verecundus' name seems to have been omitted. The writer seems particularly fond of stops between words. (Of those shown here, only the one after *conscientiam* in line 4, which seems to have been joined to the M, is doubtful).

1 [ ].[ ].[].[ ].[ ]
2 *ut·remṭttat·meos·denarios*
3 *c̣cḷx̣x̣x̣ịṣ sic ..ọṣṭra.ṣ*
4 *conscientiam·praefecti*
5 *sui·saluta·Verecund(u)m*
6 *et·Sanctum·Lupum·Capito*
7 *nem·et·omnes·cives·et*
8 *amicos·cum qụịḅu]ṣ ·ọp̣ṭp̣*
9 *bene valeas* [*va*]*ḷẹ*

Reverse:
10 .[ ]..[ ]
11 *Mensori*
12 *ab Aspanio Comiciano*

Translation:

'[ ] that he refund my denarii, 281 1/2, thus... the conscience (or: knowledge) of his prefect. Greet Verecundus and Sanctus, Lupus, Capito and all citizens and friends, with whom I hope you are in good health. Farewell.'

1 Only the tips of four letters survive. This is presumably not the original first line of this sheet.

2 *ut* is clear enough, although there is a secondary diagonal stroke across the U. The I and first T of *remṭṭtat* are rather faint. The last letter of *remṭṭtat* could be taken as an S, but T fits the sense demanded by *sui* in line 5.

3 There is a split through the middle of this line and the tops of some letters have seemingly gone. *ccl* at the beginning looks certain, although the first C is rather faint. What follows may be read as *xxxis*, followed by *sic*, then *.ostra.s*. This gives the numeral *cclxxxis*, 281 1/2 denarii. The rest is uncertain: not enough can be read to suggest a restoration, but a verb governing *conscientiam* is required, either a future or perhaps, if as seems likely the last letter is an S, a present participle, giving the sense 'satisfying', 'respecting', vel sim. *mo(n)straṇs* is a possible reading. Otherwise one would need to restore a phrase which rendered *conscientiam* as 'knowledge', and a word such as *sinon,* followed by e.g. *admoneam.* The traces seem not to be compatible with something of this sort.

4-9 The reading of these lines seems secure. A few letters in the left-hand margin, obviously carried over from sheet 1, may be noted: line 4, an S; line 7, IA; line 8, an A. Some comment is required on the names:

Verecundus. cf. above, on this common name.

Sanctus: Kajanto 252 notes that 16 out of 32 examples known to him are in CIL XIII. Mócsy 252 registers 24 cases, 12 of them in 'BG' (and cf. below, for a Sa(n)ctius).

Lupus: Kajanto 327 counted 203 examples, 52 of them in CIL III. Mócsy 170 gives 140, only 6 being in 'BG'. Cf. Birley 1993, 73, for a later Lupul(us/a) at Vindolanda.

Capito: Kajanto 235 has over 300 examples. Mócsy 66 has 146 in his area, 12 being natives of 'BG'.

7 *omnes cives*: since both the writer and the recipient were evidently Roman citizens, it cannot be certain whether the reference here is to *cives Romani* or e.g. to *cives Batavi*.

10 The tips of the letters presumably formed part of Mensor's gentilicium.

11 *Mensor*: Kajanto 361 registers only 'CIL five'. Mócsy 186 cites only 'BG 2'.

12 The writer's gentilicium is not absolutely certain. It could conceivably be a name beginning with B, and the letters immediately following B could be read otherwise: R instead of A; I or S instead of S; C or T instead of P. However, only *Aspanius* is attested as a gentilicium out of all the possible variants, and palaeographically *ab Aspanio* is perhaps the most satisfactory reading anyway. *Aspanius* is not, indeed, particularly common (cf. Schulze 254; 347. Note also BRGK 58, 1977, 506, a name painted on an amphora neck, found at Mainz, restored as [*Hi*]*spani Nigri*; as E.Birley points out [*A*]*spani* is perfectly

possible here). While the reading *Ascanio* is thoroughly acceptable, *Ascanius* is seemingly only found as a cognomen. It should be noted that *Ascanius* or *Aspanius* occurs in Inv. 978, a fragmentary account from period III at Vindolanda. Although there is no means of telling whether the letter was written at Vindolanda as a draft or sent there from elsewhere, this item might marginally tilt the balance in favour of the former possibility. *Comicianus* is derived by Kajanto 144 from *Comicus.* But here it may well represent a name derived from a Celtic original. For Celtic names in *Com-,* cf. Holder I 1068ff.; Mócsy 85. Traces to the right of *Comiciano* might conceivably be the remains of *col(ega),* perhaps a C at any rate.

3. Inv. 91/1091A (period II, c. 92-97; it must here be registered that this tablet was mistakenly assigned to period IV in Birley 1993, 58, and the names listed among the period IV garrison, ibid. pp. 62ff.). The tablet is broken into five joining fragments, measuring 65 x 42 mm. This fragmentary account was in at least two columns, of which most of the left-hand one is broken away, leaving only the ends of the last six lines, with small payments registered and the ends of four names, one of which may be complete. The right-hand column, as now surviving, contains only names, a total of fifteen, of which two or three are not fully legible. The garrison in this period is known to have been coh. VIIII Batavorum (cf. Birley 1993, 27). (Tafel XXVI).

1	[			].*sto*
2	[			]*C.riaras*[ ]
3	[			]*Frissia*[ ]
4	[			]*Suasco*[ ]
5	[			]*Germanu*[*s*]
6	[			]*Catussa*
7	[			] ..*dr.elun.*[ ]
8	[			]*Modius*
9	[			]*Senecio*
10	[			]*Sactius*
11	[	].	X *iis*	*Viator*
12	[	]*s*	X ii*s*	*Crenscens Gir*[ ]
13	[	]	X *s*	*Crenscens I*[ ]
14	[	]*us*	X *i*	*Leubius*
15	[	]*mallus alv o̤f̤*		*Varcenus*
16	[	]*is*	X *ii*	

Left-hand column:
Although there is space above *X iis* of line 11 for at least two entries of sums of money, there seems to be no trace of ink on the tablet at this point.

11 A faint trace of a final letter from a name may be detected before the denarius sign, but not enough to suggest what it was.

12 The last letter of a name, S, is clear.

13 No trace of a name survives.

14 [ ]*us* from the end of a name is clear.

15 *mallus* is clear. This might be a name, cf. Mócsy 175, 2 in ' BG', 1 in Aquitania. Equally, it might be the end of a compound name, cf. Mócsy's index, 373, with four examples: Athamallus and Calomallus, 1 each in Narbonensis; Elmallus, 1 (an outsider) in Pannonia; Chrysomallus, 1 in Narbonensis and 2 in Cisalpina. Either one of these or some other compound ending -mallus is perhaps likelier than the simple Mallus, since this would explain why this name extends so far to the right. What follows is not so easy to interpret: *alv* might conceivably represent *al*(*ae*) *V*(*ocontiorum*) (the mark above the L perhaps indicating an abbreviation). In period III, at least, the Voconti were presumably not far from Vindolanda, being mentioned in Inv. 86/183; cf. Birley 1993, 4; 35. To the right of these letters, and really between lines 15 and 16, are further ink marks, perhaps *ọf* = ? *of*(*ficio*) or *of*(*ficialis*). No payment seem to be registered after this name. (It is perhaps just worth noting that *mallus* might conceivably be the word meaning a lock of wool, rather than a name).

Right-hand column

1 A name ending -sto is required. The trace before the S is too small to allow any confidence about that letter. Mócsy lists nine names with this termination, three of them female (Dasto, Sesto, Testo), and therefore probably to be ruled out (all are in any case Illyrian), none common except the Greek Aristo. Greek names are found among the Vindolanda garrison in period III and could well have been borne by Batavians (cf. for comment Birley 1993, 55). The other possibilities are Andosto, Arsto, Festo, Hristo and Vasto, of which only Hristo is found in 'BG'. But the name here may be unattested.

2 A possible reading is *Cạriaras,* but the first two letters are obscured by a stain. These letters could equally be CA, CE, CI, CO, CU; and the first could be a P. But in any case, no names ending -iaras are registered in Mócsy.

3 *Frissia*[ ] evokes the ethnic *Frisiaus,* an alternative for *Frisiavo*; and *Germanu*[*s*] in line 5 could then be an ethnic applied to Suasco in line 4. But an ethnic would be expected after the name on the same line, cf. *Sabinus Trever* in Inv. 88/947, another account. Although *Frissiaus* is not attested as a name, this seems a probable reading (the name might, of course, have had a longer termination).

4 The reading is probably *Suasco,* although *Suasso* is possible, since the penultimate letter is similar to the second S in *Catussa* (line 6). Unattested, cf. Holder II 164ff. for Celtic names in Su-.

5 *Germanu*[*s*] is very common: Kajanto 201 (over 250 examples); Mócsy 135 (104 in his area).

6 The attested *Catussa* (cf. Holder I 862; Mócsy 72: 1 in Noricum, 2 in Lugdunensis) is preferable to *Catusca,* although such a reading would be acceptable.

7 *..drieun.*[ ]. The first two letters are unclear: the first might be H, I, L or R, the second E, I or U - or indeed there may be only one letter, U, before the D. Mócsy 302 lists three names in Ud-: Udalcus, Uderulus, Udicastus.

8 *Modius,* a common gentilicium, is found once as a cognomen, Mócsy 191 (Spain).

9 *Senecio* is common, Kajanto 301: 'CIL 118 + sl./fr. six'; Mócsy 260 lists 81 in his area.

10 *Sactius* is presumably a version of Sa(n)ctius. Mócsy 252 registers 7, all using the name as a gentilicium.

11 *Viator* is fairly common, Kajanto 362 (140 examples), Mócsy 310 (86).

12 *Crescens Gir*[ ]. A very common name, Kajanto 29 (1,045 examples), Mócsy 92 (260). Several Crescentes are already known at Vindolanda, two in period III (Inv. 426, a centurion; 704) and others in period IV (Inv. 242, a centurion; BT 85; Inv. 943). It seems that the two in the present list have been given an additional label to distinguish them, either another name, an ethnic, filiation, or perhaps occupation (one may compare in Inv. 622A, period V, Lucius *scutarius* and Tullio *car...,* the latter in the century of another Tullio). No ethnic or occupational term beginning *gir-* seems to offer itself - unless one were to postulate a word compounded from *gyrus,* the training-circuit for horses. The only name beginning Gir- seems to be Giriso, Mócsy 136, one example in 'BG'. (Cf. also Guras and Guron, Mócsy 139 and the Spanish horseman Gurtarno in the decree of Pompeius Strabo, ILS 8888, etc.).

13 *Crenscens I*[ ]. The second Crescens' name is spelled in a 'nasalised' version, which is sometimes found, e.g. ILS 5533 (and Crensces, 2515). *I*[ ] is not quite certain: *N*[ ] or *P*[ ] are also possible.

14 *Leubius* and other Leub- names are generally regarded as Germanic, G.Neumann, ANRW II 29.2, 1983, 1071. Mócsy 162 lists only 1 in 'BG' but has a variety of other Leub- names in 'BG' and cf. RIB I 1619, Housesteads, a Hurmio Leubasni (f.), in coh. I Tungrorum. However, as Prof. Neumann kindly informs us, 'in den neuen gallischen Texten sind insgesamt drei Formen aufgetaucht, die auf die Existenz eines Verbstamms lub- im Gallischen hinweisen: *lubi* (La Graufesenque), *lubiias, lubitus.* As he concludes, 'damit entfällt das argumentum ex silentio'. The origin of Leubius remains to be determined.

15 *Varcenus*: the fourth letter here could be T rather than C. Neither Varcenus nor Vartenus is attested, but cf. Holder III 1641ff. for Celtic names in Var-.

None of these names conflicts with the view that these men belong to the known garrison of Vindolanda in period II, coh. VIIII Batavorum. But, as stressed in Birley 1993, 20; 56, the evidence for the presence of men from coh. III Batavorum as well as the Ninth in period

III, and for elements of at least one other auxiliary unit, the equites Vardulli, Inv. 88/944, and legionaries, Inv. 88/943, as well as the main garrison, coh. I Tungrorum, in period IV, invites caution. The possibility that Mallus or [---]mallus belonged to the ala Vocontiorum is mentioned above.

4. Inv. 91/1022, letter from Major to Cocceiius (sic) Maritimus, period IV, c. 104-120. (Tafel XXVI). Found in 1991 in dirty turf above the packing on top of the period I ditch, at the same level as the period IV floors on the east side. Hence probably period IV rather than III. Dimensions: 199.5 x 84 mm. This tablet, virtually complete apart from a few letters lost in small breaks, was written at Vindolanda - in bed, indeed, as the writer seems to indicate (lines 17-18), hence perhaps the ink blotches. It may be assumed that a fair copy was duly made and sent, for the subject was a financial transaction, involving the writer's father, government officials and Maritimus, who seems to have acted as an agent for Major. Major and, presumably, his father, seem to have contracted to supply grain, which was evidently spilled in transit, so that a (re)payment was expected to be necessary; Major apparently intended to recoup the sum by 'expelling' someone. There is no means of telling who Major was, but there is no reason why he should not have been in the army, perhaps indeed an officer, even though apparently engaged in private transactions. As far as the script is concerned, the very frequent use of the apex is noteworthy - it even seems to have been used, anomalously, for the last E of *resscribere* in line 11. This word, it may be noted, is spelled with double SS; and in line 15 Major wrote at first *ssumma,* then crossed out the second S. As often with these tablets, the similarity between certain letters makes the correct reading difficult to establish in some cases. For example, T sometimes has a minimal cross-bar, as in *Maritim*[*ó*] (line 1) or *epistulas* (line 3), but a pronounced one in *no/tum* (5-6). C is sometimes small and similar to P, sometimes large with a pronounced curve (contrast *cum*, line 8, with *certum,* line 9). The tablet was broken into several pieces and after conservation, because of the variant thickness of the wood, there has been differential shrinkage. The effects are particularly marked at the beginning of line 3, *scire te volui,* and in the middle of line 14, *morá Britem.* Further, the dark crack lines visible in the photograph also make the reading difficult. Fig. 1, p.446, (for which total accuracy is not claimed) eliminates these crack lines and restores the letters in lines 3 and 14 to their correct position before shrinkage. As far as the language is concerned, one must note *patri* for *patre* in line 4, *ei* for *sibi* in line 5, and the future perfect, *gessero,* where a subjunctive would be expected, in line 6. The word order in the expression *de fussá quod scitá gessisti negotium* (lines 6-8), whether or not the interpretation here offered is correct, seems odd. *internumeraveris,* if all one word (lines 12-13), is seemingly unattested. Quite what is meant by *sine morá Britem expellam* (lines 14-15) is enigmatic.

sheet one

1 *Maior* *Maritim*[*ó*] *s*[*uó*]
2 *salutem*
3 *scire te volui epistulas mihi mis*
4 *sas esse ab patri meó in qui*
5 *bus scribit mihi ut ei no*
6 *tum faciam quid gesseró de*
7 *fussá quod·spicá·gessisti*
8 *negotium cum Caesaria*
9 *ṇis fac ut certum mihi*
10 [*r*]*ẹṣc̣ṛ̣ibas ut egó p̣ạ*[*tri*]

sheet two

11 *ṃẹó sic resscriberé*
12 *possim si quid inter*
13 *numeraveris ego tibi*
14 *sine morá Britem ex*
15 *pellam pro s{s}ummá*
16 *quod efficiatur egó*
17 *cum hạec tibi scribẹ*
18 *rem lectum calfaciebạ*[*m*]
19 *opto sis felicissimu*[*s*]
20 *salutat te f̣ṛ*[*ater*]
21 *va ḷ*[*e*]

(written at left-hand side of sheet two)

22 [*s*]*ị puerum missurus es miṭtes c̣ḥ̣ịṛ*[*o*]
23 [*grafum*?] *cum eo quo securioṛ sim*

Reverse

24 *Vindolande*
25 *Cocceiió Mari*
26 *timó*
27 [*a*]*Ṃ*[*a*]*ị*[*or*]*ẹ*

Punctuated text:

Maior Maritim[ó] s[uó] salutem. Scire te volui epistulas mihi missas esse ab patri (sic) meó, in quibus scribit mihi, ut ei notum faciam quid gesseró. De fussá quod spicá gessisti negotium cum Caesariaṇis, fac ut certum mihi [r]ẹṣc̣ṛ̣ibas, ut ego p̣ạ[tri] ṃẹó sic resscriberé possim. Si quid internumeraveris, ego tibi sine morá Britem expellam pro s{s}ummá - quod efficiatur. Cum haec tibi scribẹrem, lectum calfacieba[m]. Opto sis felicissimu[s]. Salutat te f̣ṛ[ater]. Vale. [s]ị puerum missurus es, miṭtes c̣ḥ̣ịṛ[ografum?] cum eo, quo securioṛ sim.

Translation (the epistolary perfect, volui, and imperfects, scriberem and calfaciebam, are rendered by the present tense):

'Major to his Maritimus, greeting. I want you to know that a letter has been sent to me by my father, in which he writes to me that I should make known to him what I will do. Concerning the spilled (?) grain, which business you have carried out with the imperial officials, see to it that you write back to me for certain, so that I can write back to my father in like manner. If you pay out anything in the meantime, I will without delay expel a Briton(?), for a sum of money: let this be done. I, while I am writing this to you, am making the bed warm. I hope that you are very happy. Your brother (?) salutes you.
Farewell.
(PS) If you are going to send a boy, send a bond (?) with him, so that I may be more secure.
At Vindolanda. To Cocceiius Maritimus from Major.'

1 For the name Major, cf. Kajanto 294: 'CIL men 48 + a freedman, 39 women'. Mócsy 174 registers 28 cases in his area, 11 of them in Belgica and the Germanies. For Maritimus, cf. on lines 25-6, below. It seems proper to supply an apex over each restored O here, given the regular use of this sign elsewhere.

3 The expression *scire te volui* was no doubt a standard opening for a letter. As it happens, it occurs again in another fragmentary Vindolanda tablet, Inv. 92/1197, also evidently at the opening of a letter.

4 Note the dative *patri* for ablative *patre.*

5 *ei* for *sibi*: 'This usage is not as uncommon as might be thought, even in classical prose', as the editors comment on the Octavius letter, Inv. 88/946, line 31, Brit. 21, 1990, 51. Note that Major has deliberately avoided the existing hole and written *no* after it.

6 *gesseró,* fut. perf. where subjunctive would be normal usage.

6-7 *de/fussá quod spicá* is the reading arrived at after long hesitation with other versions. Initially the temptation was to read *de/iussá quod scitá,* because *iussa* and *scita* occur together in Cicero, Pro Balbo 42, and might perhaps be regarded as formulaic. On the other hand, apart from the fact that neuter plurals should not be governed by *de, quod* was impossible to construe. Marc Mayer (Barcelona) urged that *iussá* was in any case not the best reading, and favoured *fussá.* The only other possibility is *kussá,* but (as J.N.Adams points out), K for C before a vowel other than A ought to be ruled out. As for the sense, *de fussá* = *de fusá,* rather than *defussá* ought to be preferred, since *defussá* would have to be an ablative absolute, which (as J.N.Adams points out) would be an unlikely construction in a letter of this kind. As for the word which goes with *de fussá,* the reading *spicá* is perfectly possible and gives a satisfactory sense: 'concerning the spilled grain'. For *spica,* singular for plural, meaning 'ears of grain', cf. Octavius' letter, Inv. 88/946, line 27, with the note by the editors, Brit. 21, 1990, 50: 'the collective singular. Botanical terms are frequently used' in this way and they cite literature on the subject. The word order is of course incongruous: one would expect *de fussa spica, quod negotium,* but for some reason the writer has put the

quod before *spica.* It should be noted that there appear to be stops before and after *spicá* - the only ones in the letter.

7-9 *gessisti negotium cum Caesarianis.* The last word is not perhaps as clear as might be wished. The initial C is minimal, but compare *scribit* (line 5), *faciam* (6), *sic* and *resscribere* (11), and the first C in *calfaciebam* (18). The first A is rather large, but compare *epistulas* (3), *fac* (9) for similar versions. The E is a little faint, especially the bottom half, but the reading is certain. The first S is minimal, as in *epistulas* (3), *esse* (4), *gessisti* (7). The second A runs into the hole in the tablet and looks more like a T. RI is unambiguous and the next A, although obscured by an ink-blot, can hardly be doubted. Only the tip of the right-hand side of the N is preserved because of the break, but the bold top stroke, also used for the N in *negotium* immediately above, has here been continued over the next two letters, IS. It seems important to justify the reading here, since the term *Caesariani* is interesting and not in fact as frequently attested as might be imagined. The Greek form Καισάρειοι is commoner. It seems clear that the word in the early empire meant members of the familia Caesaris, imperial slaves and freedmen, as in Martial, a contemporary of the Vindolanda writer, contrasting the demeanour of its members under Domitian with their improved performance under the new emperor Trajan: *oderat ante ducum famulos turbamque priorem/ et Palatinum Roma supercilium.. .sed domini mores Caesarianus habet* (9,79,1f; 8).

The best discussion seems still to be the long footnote by O.Hirschfeld, Die kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten[2], 1905, 472-3, n.3. Members of the familia Caesaris were of course stationed in the provinces, including Britain, as happens to be registered by Tacitus: Agricola ignored the *libertos servosque publicae rei* (Agr. 19,2).

The *negotium* which Maritimus has carried out was evidently concerned with supplying grain. It seems from what follows that a payment has been received in advance, which now has to be repaid (cf. on lines 12-16, below).

10 Although there is a break, the tops of some five letters are preserved, the last surely being an I, followed by BAS. After *fac ut certum mihi* it is difficult to find another verb than *scribas* or *rescribas,* and the latter seems to fit the traces, i.e. [*r*]*ẹṣcṛibas.* (Considering the spelling of *resscribere* in line 11, one might feel obliged to postulate that *resscribas* was originally written; but there seems no trace of more than four letters after the tip of what should be the E). What follows is TA or PA. Marc Mayer offered the reading *ṭạ*[*tri*]/ *ṃẹó,* which fits the sense very well and must surely be correct. For the M in *meo,* cf. *Maior* in line 1.

11 It seems proper to supply an apex on the O in *meo* in view of *patri meó* in line 4. A duplicated S, as in *resscribere,* is not uncommon, cf. the editors on *nissi* in Inv. 88/946, line 20, Brit. 21, 1990, 48. The apex, if that is what it is, on the last E of this word, seems aberrant; but it is to the right of rather than above the top of the E, so perhaps it is simply a stray mark.

12-16 *si quid internumeraveris, ego tibi sine morá Britem expellam pro s{s}ummá - quod efficiatur.* This sentence is far from easy to understand, but the reading is certain, except perhaps for *Britem* in line 14, which has been affected by the differential shrinkage of the top and bottom of the letters after conservation. But even if the reading looks doubtful in the photograph, the drawing, which shows the letters as they were originally written, seems to justify *Britem.*

internumerare seems not to be attested, but it is surely a perfectly possible formation, which ought to mean 'to make an interim payment'. Otherwise, one would have to take *inter* in an adverbial sense, which would give more or less the same meaning. The interpretation here offered means that Major assumes Maritimus may have had to pay back something to the *Caesariani.* His planned course of action, should this be the case, is remarkable: 'I will without delay expel a Briton (or the Briton?) - or Brites (?) - for a sum of money: let this be done'. (*ssumma* was written and the second S then crossed out). J.N.Adams advised on the most plausible way to construe *quod efficiatur.* He also commented that *Britem* is difficult to accept as a contraction, since the accent falls on the second syllable of *Britonem.* The alternative is to take the word as a personal name, i.e. *Brites* or *Britis* in the singular. Neither seems to be attested. However this may be, it can only be conjectured that Major had in mind expelling someone from a piece of land to raise money by selling it. It might be tempting to render *efficiatur* as having a specifically financial sense: *efficere* to mean 'to yield a sum' is well attested, cf. Cicero, Ad Att. 6,1,3. In that case, one would take it here as 'let this (money) be raised'.

16-18 This engaging comment seems to mean that Major was writing the letter in bed (which would help to explain the ink blot on the HA of *haec* in line 17, cf. on lines 8, 22-3).

20 *f̤r̤*[*ater*] is not entirely satisfactory, since the second letter looks more like an A than an R. The reference may therefore be to a third person, either Major's wife or a comrade known to Maritimus, in either case with a name beginning Fa-. There is room for some eight further letters after the break.

22-3 This postscript, written in a markedly smaller script, has been slightly damaged at the beginning at both lines and at the end of line 22. There is also ink blotting over the IT in *mi̤t̤tes* and the last letter of *securior̤*, extending to the A of *Caesaria* at the end of line 8; but the reading of the affected words is still possible. Line 22 probably began [*s*]*i̤*. It is harder to be certain what is lost at the beginning of line 23, since the last few letters of line 22 are difficult. The reading offered is *c̤h̤i̤r̤*[ ], and, assuming that an O was written immediately after the R, it is suggested that [*grafum*] might be restored before *cum eo. chirographus* or *chirographon,* originally meaning 'one's own handwriting, came to mean 'bond, surety', e.g. Suetonius, Cal. 12,2; Gellius, Noct. Att. 14,2,7; Digest 20,1,26,1. The spelling here restored, with F instead of PH, still requires six letters, which is a tight squeeze, but perhaps just possible.

24 *Vindolande* for *Vindolandae,* locative, presents no problem, cf. the editors on 88/946, lines 12, 15, 19, 21, Brit. 21, 1990, 47. The locative makes it clear that the letter was written at Vindolanda.

25-6 The recipient of the letter has a not particularly uncommon cognomen. Kajanto 308 registers 'CIL men 44 + a freedman, women 25 + sl./fr. three'. Mócsy 179 counts 43 in his area, only 3 being in 'BG' as against 14 in Dalmatia. The duplication of the I in *Cocceiió* cannot be exactly paralleled, although such hypercorrect spelling is not infrequent. For a similar treatment of another name, cf. *Coiiedium* in AE 1971, 534. As it happens, the name of the writer is spelled *Maiior* in CIL XIII 4033 and 4486. An exact homonym of our man was buried by his father-in-law, a slave named Hermes, at Altinum in northern Italy, together with his wife Julia Eutychia: *Iuliae Eutychiae ann. XX d. LV Hermes L. Noni Empori pater infelicissim. et M. Cocceio Maritimo genero* (CIL V 2238). There is no compelling reason why this man should have been identical with the correspondent of Major. Homonymity is insufficient to demonstrate this. For the record, however, it may be mentioned that the name *Hermes,* borne by the Altinum Cocceius Maritimus' father-in law, is attested at Vindolanda in the same period as this letter, Inv. 714.

27. Only the tip of the right-hand side of M, the top of I and the top half of E survive of [*a*] *Ṃ*[*a*]*i̇*[*or*]*ẹ* but there can hardly be any doubt about the reading. Major would not have registered his gentilicium here, if he had one. The fact that one is not given in line 1 does not necessarily mean that he lacked one: if this were just a draft, he may not have bothered to give a fuller version of his nomenclature.

Vindolanda Robin Birley
Düsseldorf Anthony Birley

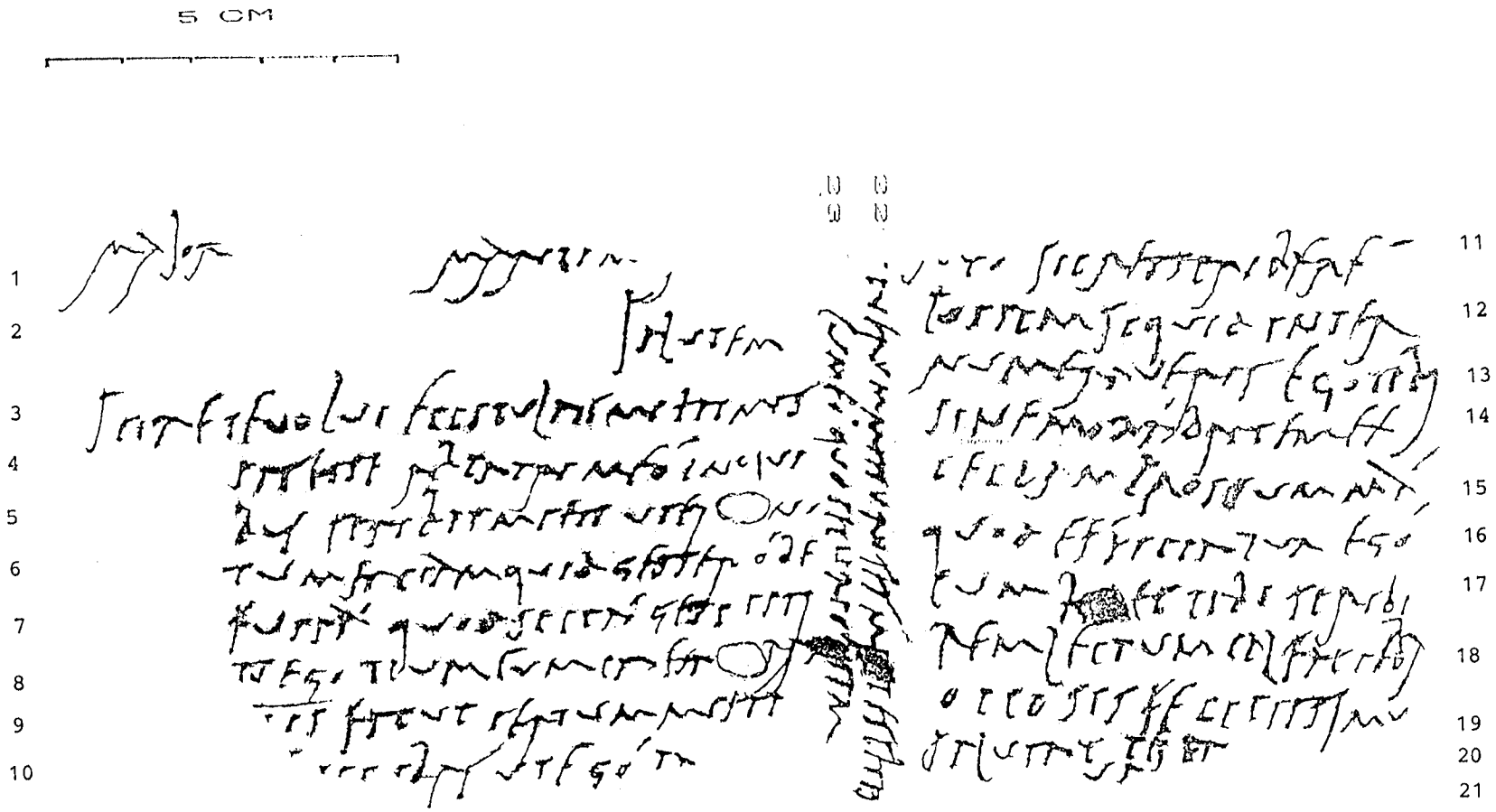
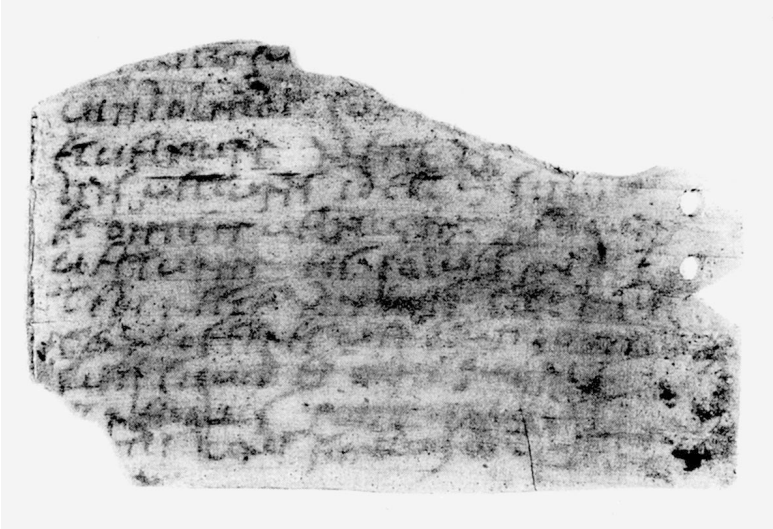
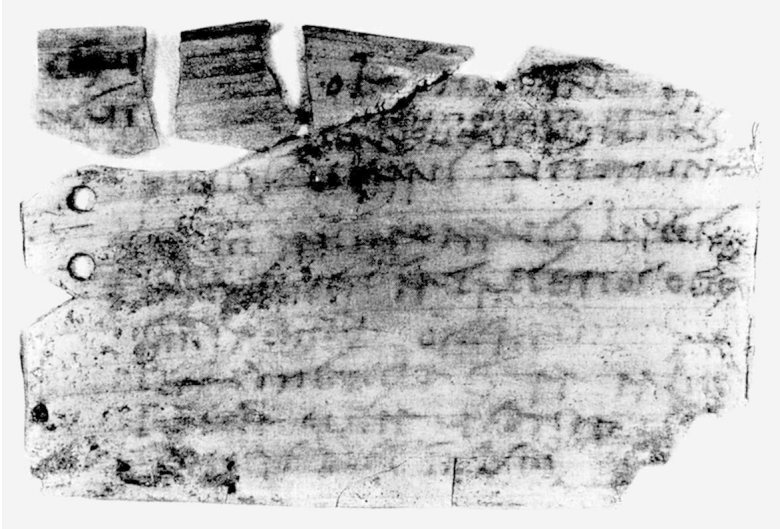


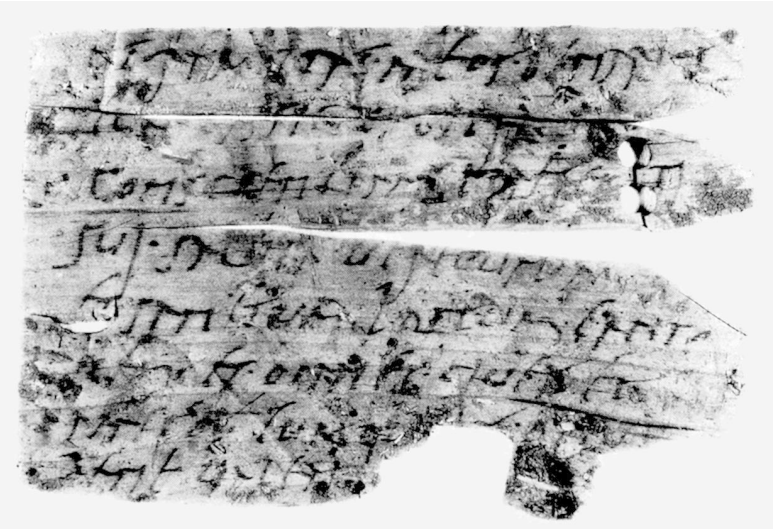
FIGURE 1 VINDOLANDA TABLET 91/1022



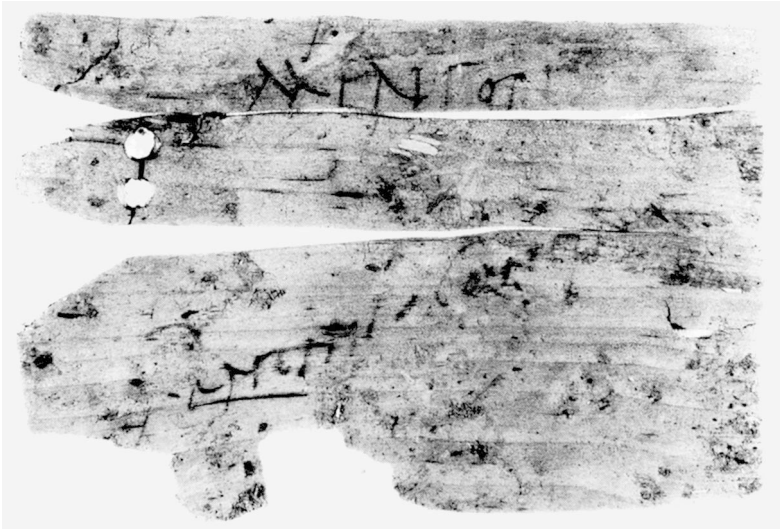
Nr. 1 rechts 1108



Nr. 1 links 1108



Nr. 2 oben 1187

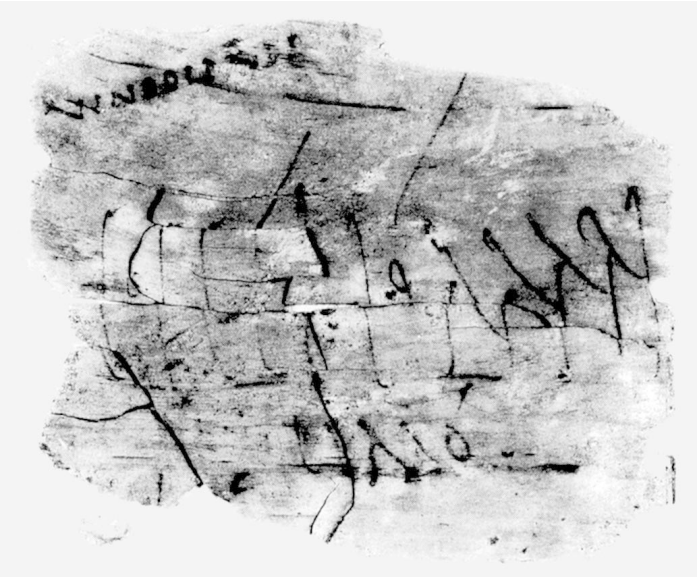


Nr. 2 unten 1187(R)

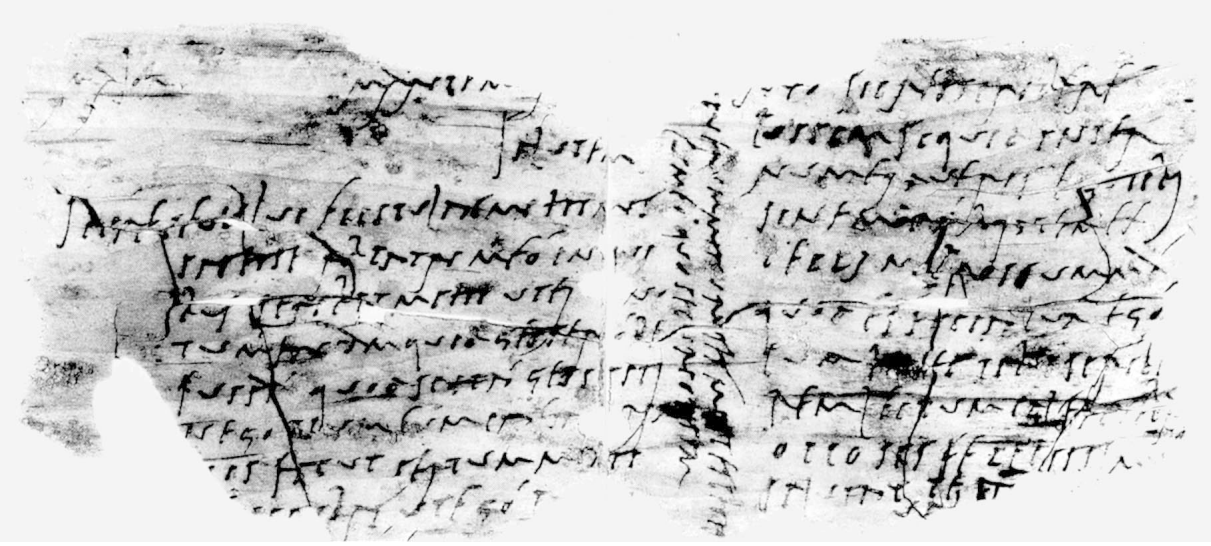
Holztäfelchen aus Vindolanda

TAFEL XXV

Nr. 3 1091A



Nr. 4 unten 1022(2R)



Nr. 4 oben 1022

Holztäfelchen aus Vindolanda