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A New NT Papyrus: \mathfrak{P}^{126} (PSI 1497)¹

In 2003, the Papyrological Institute in Florence² announced the identification of a fragment of papyrus containing Heb 13:12 – 13, 19 – 20. It was edited in 2008 with the label PSI 1497 (LDAB 10009)³ by Guido Bastianini.⁴ In 2009,⁵ it was given the Gregory-Aland number \mathfrak{P}^{126} . This short note summarizes the Italian description of PSI 1497, then goes on to discuss its two main features. Finally, it suggests how it could have happened that such a document was overlooked by NT scholars.

PSI 1497 has been dated by Bastianini to the beginning of the 4th century CE (place unknown), and is said to display an “elegant, librarian writing” in a “strict” style.⁶ It is a codex folio, recto-verso, measuring 9.1 cm x

- 1 Many thanks are due to Jenny Read-Heimerdinger for revising the English of this article.
- 2 C. Pernigotti, “Notizie relative allo stato attuale del XV volume dei Papiri della Società Italiana: i papiri letterari”, *Comunicazioni dell’Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli”* 5 (2003) 61 – 72, here 69.
- 3 G. Bastianini (ed.), “1497. NT *HEBR.* 13:12 – 13; 19 – 20”, in *PSI. Papiri Greci e Latini*. Volume 15 (Florence 2008) 171 – 172; see Table XXXIV for photographs. My thanks are due to Prof. Guido Bastianini for having authorized the publication of the photographs here. Bastianini’s reconstruction is as follows:

recto →

	$\overline{\rho\xi\alpha}$	
	αιματος τον λαον] εξω της πυλης της πα	Heb 13:12 – 13
	ρεμβολης επαθεν τοιν]υν. εξερχω[μ]εθα	
3	προς αυτον εξω της παρεμβολης τον ο]νει	

verso ↓

	$\overline{\rho\xi\beta}$	
	αποκατασταθω υμιν ο δ[ε $\overline{\theta\varsigma}$ της ειρηνης	Heb 13:19 – 20
	ο αγαγων εκ [v]εκρ[ων τον ποιμενα των	
3	πρ[οβατων	

4 *PSI, Papiri* 15 (see n. 3), VI.

5 I informed the Institute for New Testament Research at Münster about the papyrus in August 2009.

6 Bastianini, “1497” (see n. 3), 171.

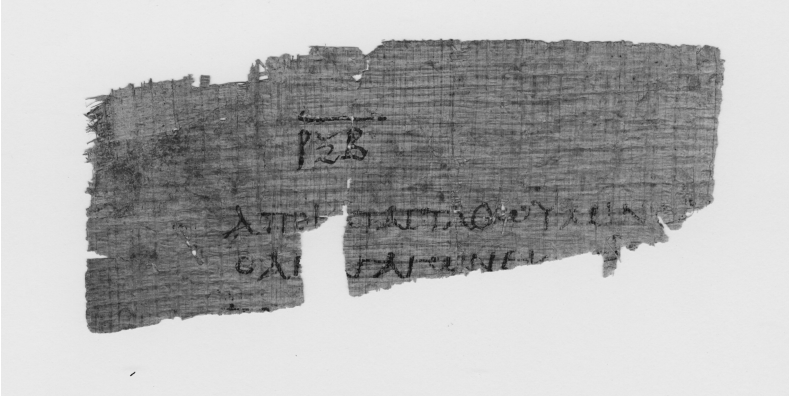


Abb. 1 PSI XV 1497 verso

3.7 cm with a 2 cm external margin and a 2.4 cm upper margin, and numbered 161 (ρξ̅α) and 162 (ρξ̅β). The codex can be presumed to have measured 16 cm x 30 cm,⁷ every page containing about 20 lines with 30 letters for each. Thus, the entire Epistle to the Hebrews would have taken up 45 pages, starting on page 118 and ending on page 162.⁸ P¹²⁶ brings the list of papyri with Hebrews to nine;⁹ it presents two main peculiarities.

First, the numbering of the pages indicates a place for Hebrews among the Pauline letters not attested in any other manuscript. On the one hand, the 117 preceding pages are too numerous to have contained only Romans¹⁰, as is the case with P⁴⁶; on the other hand, they do not leave enough space for any of the eight other places occupied by Hebrews as listed by Metzger.¹¹ We have no means of taking this enquiry further,¹² but P¹²⁶ apparently attests a place for Hebrews hitherto unknown in any codex, just like the recently listed minuscule 2892.¹³ P¹²⁶ is a reminder that one ought

7 Bastianini compares PSI 1497 to the “group 8” described by E.G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia 1977) 20. The spacing of the writing is about 12.5 cm x 24 cm per page (Bastianini, “1497” [see n. 3], 171).

8 Bastianini, “1497” (see n. 3), 171.

9 P¹², P¹³, P¹⁷, P⁴⁶, P⁷⁹, P⁸⁹, P¹¹⁴ and P¹¹⁶. P⁴⁶ offers the verses contained in P¹²⁶.

10 Romans would have occupied about 60 pages in the codex, according to the spacing of the writing.

11 B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart 1994) 591 – 592.

12 Bastianini, “1497” (see n. 3), 171. Romans and 1 Corinthians would have taken up about 117 pages in this codex but we have no extant example of such an order.

13 For a description of the double place of Hebrews in 2892 (VK 908) see <http://www.csntm.org/TCNotes/Archive/TwoNewManuscriptsInOne>, accessed 21.09.2009.

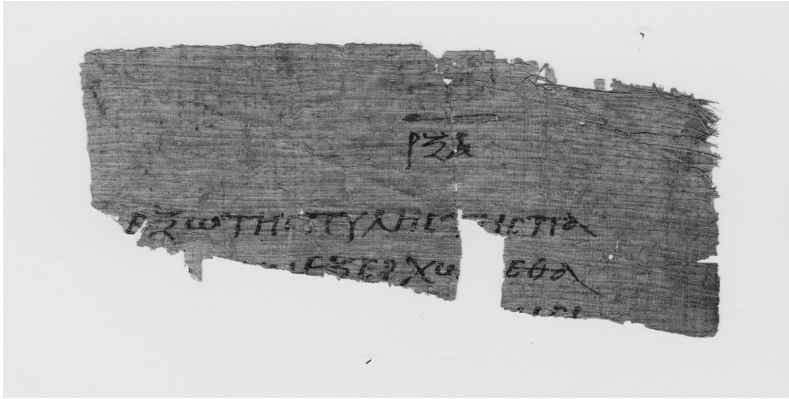


Abb. 2 PSI XV 1497 recto

not to overestimate the significance of the place of Hebrews in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , as underlines Metzger's remark about the predecessor of Codex Vaticanus, which had Hebrews after Galatians.¹⁴

Secondly, Bastianini draws attention to a unique variant in Heb 13:12, ἔξω τῆς πύλης τῆς παρεμβολῆς ἔπαθεν, “he suffered outside the gate of the camp”. He considers this to be the “introduction into the text of an interlineary variant”,¹⁵ noting that the usual wording ἔξω τῆς πύλης is replaced in \mathfrak{P}^{46} and codex P by ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς,¹⁶ a feature described by Harold Attridge “as influenced by the wording of vss 11 and 13”.¹⁷ That may be so, but we have now three different variants, and it could be argued that \mathfrak{P}^{126} challenges an interpretation put forward notably by Tertullian¹⁸ and maintained by scholars still today: they generally reword ἔξω τῆς πύλης as “out of the city” or “out of the city gate”,¹⁹ because ἔπαθεν sounds

¹⁴ Metzger, *Textual Commentary* (see n. 11), 591, n. 2. Unfortunately, C.K. Rothschild does not point out this important remark in her discussion of the place of Hebrews in the list of Pauline letters (C.K. Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon* [WUNT 235; Tübingen 2009] 146, n. 118). A careful reading of Metzger's information, together with \mathfrak{P}^{126} and 2892, re-opens the debate.

¹⁵ Bastianini, “1497” (see n. 3), 172.

¹⁶ See also 104 bo^{ms}, according to H. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia 1989) 390.

¹⁷ Attridge, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (see n. 16), 390.

¹⁸ See Tert., Adv. Jud. 14, mentioned by M. Ciccarelli (following Westcott and Spicq), *La sofferenza di Cristo nell'Epistola agli Ebrei: Analisi di una duplice dimensione della sofferenza: soffrire-consoffrire con gli uomini e soffrire-offrire a Dio* (Supp. Rivista Biblica 49; Bologne 2008) 257, n. 101. The exact reference is Tert., Adv. Jud. 14, line 65.

¹⁹ For a recent reference, see G.J. Brooke, “4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard”, in his *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament: Essays in Mutual*

like an “allusion to the historical Jesus”.²⁰ P¹²⁶ offers a sustained metaphorical interpretation of the passage, by using in v. 12 the expression τῆς πύλης τῆς παρεμβολῆς, which designates in Exod 32:26 LXX the place where Moses stands when he discovers the golden calf.²¹ Whether P¹²⁶ alludes or not to Exod 32:26, it specifies that the gate is that of the camp, not of the city. It thus attests to an early interpretation of the verse that differs from that of Tertullian.

A final comment: P¹²⁶ could have easily continued to be ignored by NT scholars because it was immersed in the 15th PSI volume, in a list of “literary and paraliterary texts” between astrological or magic texts (PSI 1494–6) and fragments of Hesiod and Homer (PSI 1498–9).²² The preceding PSI volume was published 52 years earlier, and up to that point in this series biblical texts were always published at the beginning of the literary texts.²³ During the last half-century, the status of the New Testament has changed drastically in Europe, as this example illustrates. It was while looking at a papyrus about Sappho in this 15th volume that by chance I came across PSI 1497. This anecdote serves to show that New Testament research would do well to bear in mind that today “New Testament” means “Early Christianity” for many people: in the eyes of European con-

Illumination (London 2005) 235–260, here 258; Ciccarelli, *La sofferenza di Cristo* (see n. 18), 235, 255; M. Hasitschka, “Opfermetaphorik in Hebr 13:8–16: Eine bibeltheologische Skizze”, in *Horizonte biblischer Texte: Festschrift für Josef M. Oesch zum 60. Geburtstag* (ed. A. Vonach and G. Fischer; OBO 196; Göttingen 2003) 237–245, here 242; Rothschild, *Hebrews* (see n. 14), 201. The NRSV even translates ἔξω τῆς πύλης by “out of the city gate”. For the contrary opinion, see M. Theobald, “Wir haben hier keine bleibende Stadt, sondern suchen die zukünftige” (Heb 13:14). Die Stadt als Ort der frühen christlichen Gemeinde”, in his *Studien zum Römerbrief* (WUNT 136; Tübingen 2001) 538–562, here 544, n. 22.

20 Attridge, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (see n. 16), 398.

21 This expression is also found in 1 Chr 9:18 LXX: αὐται αἱ πύλαι τῶν παρεμβολῶν αἰῶν Δευτ.

22 PSI, *Papiri* 15 (see n. 3), IX-X.

23 The intermediary fascicules published in 1966 and 1979 do not contain any biblical texts.

temporary culture, P¹²⁶ is just one “Christian papyrus”²⁴ among others, even though it is of special significance for NT scholars.

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²⁴ This is the name given to the single Christian papyrus present in the three volumes of the Geneva papyri (P.Gen. III 125). On this topic, see also the collected essays in C. Clivaz, J. Paik and J. Zumstein (eds.), *Reading New Testament Papyri in Context – Lire les papyrus du Nouveau Testament dans leur contexte: Conference of 22–24 October 2009 in Lausanne* (BETL, Leuven, forthcoming).