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# Papyrus Rolls as Archives: The *tomoi sunkollēsimoi*

**Abstract:** The most common filing practice used in Graeco-Roman Egypt consisted of pasting documents written on single sheets, so as to form a roll that keeps them together. This article explores the different typologies of these composite rolls, with a special focus on their material features and use.

## 1 Some preliminary information

This article addresses the most widespread method of keeping documents together in Graeco-Roman Egypt, as attested in the papyrological documentation. Therefore, a preliminary recap of some of the basic papyrological notions implied in this topic would prove useful.

### 1.1 The structure and use of the papyrus roll

The papyrus roll (χάρτης, *chartēs*) was made of sheets of the same dimensions (the Greek word for ‘sheet’ is κόλλημα, *kollēma* – pl. κολλήματα, *kollēmata*) pasted one after the other. The overlapping part of two pasted sheets is called κόλλησις (*kollēsis* – pl. κολλήσεις *kollēseis*).<sup>1</sup> Rolls were probably of standard lengths,<sup>2</sup> while their height was more variable.<sup>3</sup> The roll was a modular item,

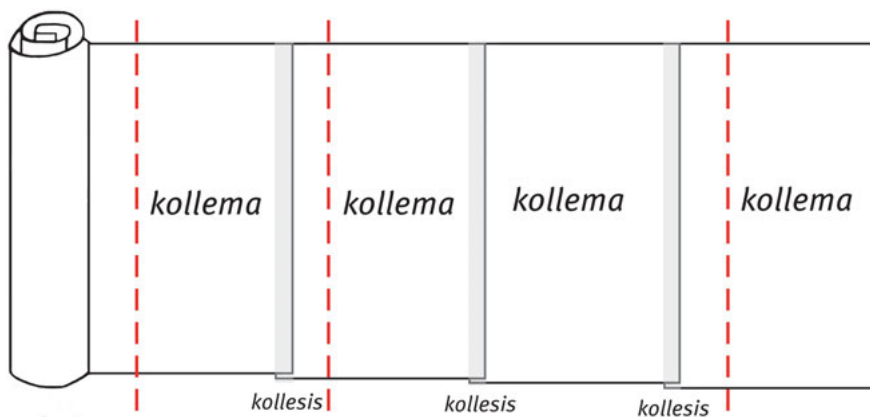
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<sup>1</sup> On the fabrication of papyrus sheets and rolls, see Lewis 1974, 34–83; Turner 1978, 6–13; Lewis 1989, 15–35; Schram 2021, 28–38.

<sup>2</sup> Plinius the Elder (our only ancient source on the production of papyrus sheets and rolls) seems to state that the standard roll was made of twenty *kollēmata* (*Naturalis historia*, 13, 77). The passage is somehow ambiguous (for a new interpretation of it, cf. Delattre 2019, 140–141), but some supporting evidence has been found: for an overall discussion, cf. Lewis 1974, 54–55; Lewis 1989, 26; Dorandi 2017. Still, the mention, in P.Oxy. LXXV 5063, ll. 19–20 (late third century CE), of ‘rolls of 20 *kollēmata*’ seems to imply that other lengths were also commonly available. A much older list of various items includes ‘rolls of fifty *kollēmata*’ (P.Cair.Zen. I 59054, l. 56; 257 BCE).

<sup>3</sup> The average heights range from 15 to 40 cm, with a concentration between 19 and 25 cm during the Ptolemaic period, and between 25 and 33 during the Roman era (cf. Johnson 2014, 141–143 with further bibliography).

readily adjustable to the length and format of the text you needed to write: it was easy to cut and to extend by pasting it with another roll or pieces of a roll. It is important to note that *kollēmata*, once merged into a roll, basically ceased to be perceived as self-standing items, so that when the roll had to be cut, little attention was paid to its original parts.<sup>4</sup> The word *kollēma* was also used to refer to a piece cut from a roll.<sup>5</sup>



**Fig. 1:** A papyrus roll with its production units (*kollēmata*) and overlappings (*kollēseis*, in gray). The red lines show how cutting a part of a roll for writing short texts did not normally consider the placement of *kollēseis*.

The roll (or pieces cut from it) was intended (and prepared, by smoothing its surface and *kollēseis*) to be written on one side, called *recto* in modern terminology, and meant to stay protected on the inside of the roll, the other one (the *verso*) remaining blank. However, cases of an intensive exploitation of papyrus, with the same text covering both sides or, much more often, with a papyrus roll already used on the *recto* being reused on the *verso* for another, different text, are frequent.

<sup>4</sup> The variable position of *kollēseis* in pieces cut from a roll makes it clear that, in most cases, the cuts did not consider the dimensions or the boundaries of the original *kollēmata*.

<sup>5</sup> O.Claud. II 240, O.Strasb. I 795, P.Ryl. IV 629, ll. 63, 121, 157 and 268 refer to pieces of a roll and not to individual ‘fabrication sheets’, as demonstrated by the fact that in these texts *kollēmata* is always complemented by *χάρτου*, *khartou* (‘of a roll’) or diminutives of the same word.

## 1.2 The notion of ‘archive’ in papyrology

The word ‘archive’ has been used in different ways in the various fields of scholarship.<sup>6</sup> I will stick here to the broad definition generally (even if not unambiguously) accepted by papyrologists: an archive is a group of documents ‘which in Antiquity had been brought together for some purpose’.<sup>7</sup> To that, we can add, whenever possible and without considering them indispensable,<sup>8</sup> two more, very welcome but still subsidiary, criteria: the presence of a filing principle and a selection operated by the person(s) who kept the documents together.<sup>9</sup> Archives are sometimes formed by documents of the same kind, and sometimes by documents of different kinds connected by a link (such as their relevance to the same person, matter or procedure). Archives are largely attested both in public and private contexts.<sup>10</sup>

## 2 *Tomoi sunkollēsimoī*: An overall picture

*Tomoi sunkollēsimoī* (τόμοι συγκολλήσιμοι,<sup>11</sup> ‘pasted rolls’) consisted of single and originally independent documents written on different sheets, pasted one after the other proceeding from left to right, so as to form a longer strip very similar to an actual roll. Very similar (and not identical) because the pasted sheets would not have been all of the same dimensions: their heights would depend on that of the rolls from which they were cut, and their length would vary according to the content of each text, its layout and the preference of each scribe. Moreover, the *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* present both some ‘fabrication *kollēseis*’ (those of the original rolls from which the single pieces were cut) and ‘secondary *kollēseis*’ (deriving from pasting the pieces together, and coarser than

<sup>6</sup> For useful, wide-range overviews on archives, see Brosius 2003; Bausi et al. 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Pestman 1994, 51. Also cf. the definition by Bagnall 1995, 40 (‘collections of papers around an individual, a family or an office’). For a partially different approach, insisting primarily on the find circumstances of the papyri to be recognised as an archive cf. also Jördens 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the equilibrate position of Van Beek 2007, 1033–1037.

<sup>9</sup> The first criterion was proposed by Martin 1994, the second one by Orrieux 1985, 41 (and adopted by Martin 1994).

<sup>10</sup> For a survey, see Vandorpe 2009.

<sup>11</sup> For the expression, standard in papyrology, to indicate this kind of rolls, see e.g. M.Ch. 183 (discussed below p. 237). Other documents call them succinctly *sunkollēsimoī* (see e.g. P.Vet.Aelii 5). *Sunkollēsimon* as noun adjective indicates properly the document pasted with others (cf. Montevicchi 1990).

fabrication *kollēseis*). The pasted documents were aligned at the bottom, and the upper, uneven margin was usually left like that (Fig. 2).<sup>12</sup> The *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* were convenient to keep documents in a permanent and secure order, and to easily scroll through them as through any roll.<sup>13</sup> As such, depending on the contexts, they can be a useful archiving method or themselves represent an archive. In any case, their production altered the material aspect of the filed documents and was not meant to be reversible.<sup>14</sup>



**Fig. 2:** P. Graux. III 30: receipts addressed to the public bank of Arsinoe (P.Sorb. inv. 2008 recto , cols 9–14; 155 CE); © Paris, École Pratique des Hautes Études.

**12** Uneven upper margins are well visible, for example, in P.Graux III 30 + P.Berl. Frisk 1 + P.Col. II 1 recto 4 + BGU XIII 2270 + 2271 + SB XVI 13060 (seventy-four receipts addressed to the public bank of Arsinoe, 155 CE; TM Arch id: 370; overall description and reconstruction in P.Graux III; partially reproduced here in Fig. 2) and P.Oxy. XLVI 3276–3284 (nine applications for the admission in the gymnasial class; Oxyrhynchus, 148/149 CE). Some *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* with a trimmed upper margin have actually been reused on the *verso* for a different text (see below § 4), so that it is possible that the trimming belongs to this reuse stage.

**13** To the best of my knowledge, there are only two cases of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* built in a somehow different way: in SB XII 10788 (a private *tomos sunkollēsimos* gathering documents on the properties of a man; Oxyrhynchus?, 60–64 CE) and in PSI Congr.XX 10 (another private exemplar, gathering documents concerning a marriage; Oxyrhynchus, 173/174 CE) the sheets are pasted one under the other (with the top of the second document under the bottom of the first, and so on). The result is still a strip similar to an actual roll, but it had to be used ‘vertically’, rotated 90 degrees.

**14** The same is not true for the other method attested by the papyrological evidence (for private archives): keeping sheets and rolls together by wrapping them in another piece of papyrus or in a piece of cloth and/or (both or just one of these strategies can be used) putting them inside something (e.g. a pouch, a jar, a box, a niche in a building; for some examples see Vanderpe 2009, 219–220). In these archives, documents were protected and somehow bound but, from a material point of view, they remained self-standing and could be easily separated from the others.

The reference work for the *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* is an article by Willy Clarysse published in 2003.<sup>15</sup> Clarysse also produced a very useful list of 263 *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* in the early 2000s, available online.<sup>16</sup> It was a working list, and some items admittedly had still to be checked, revised, etc. An updated list, excluding items that are not actual *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* and including items published in the last twenty years, would probably reach close to three hundred *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*. These papyri are in a very uneven state of conservation: a few of them are long strips made of several pasted documents, but the largest part consists of the (sometimes meagre) remains of only a couple of joined sheets.

We can draw the following assumptions from the overall evidence:

- *Tomoi sunkollēsimoī* were already occasionally produced in the Ptolemaic era, but we have very few samples of them.<sup>17</sup> Their use in some public offices was certainly already regulated by the middle of the first century BCE and seems to have been generalised in the public administration of Egypt under Roman rule:<sup>18</sup> from the first century CE onwards, the number of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* increases tremendously, and the documentation is abundant until the middle of the fourth century (the last attested exemplar, W.Chr. 446 [= P.Oxy. I 87], dates to 342 CE).
- Only about 7 % of the *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* published belong or may belong to private individuals or households (the actual nature of some of them

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**15** Some of the information and examples already given by Clarysse 2003 are mentioned here with updates and a few corrections.

**16** Clarysse's Excel file listing the *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* with basic information on each of them is downloadable here: <http://www.trismegistos.org/arch/tomos.xls>.

**17** The only known examples of Ptolemaic *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* are P.Freib. III 12–33 (TM Arch id: 246, contracts registered in a village office; Philadelpheia, 179/178 BCE), P.Rev. I and II (Arsinoites, 259/258 BCE, each of them with at least five documents on the same matters – laws and ordinances on tender – pasted together), P.Oxy. IV 836 (loan contracts; Oxyrhynchus, 66/65 or 15/14 BCE), BGU VIII 1743, 1745, 1751, 1753 and 1754 (TM Arch id: 156, several *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* of documents belonging to different officials of the Heracleopolite district, 63 BCE). The identification of P.Berl.Salmen. 16 (P.Berol. inv. 25844) with a *tomos sunkollēsimos*, announced in Clarysse 2003, 356, n. 38 (when the papyrus was still unpublished) has not been confirmed in its edition.

**18** In this respect interesting evidence is provided by extra-Egyptian Latin documents: findings at Dura Europos include several *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* of official letters (*libri epistularum*; cf. Cicero, *In Verrem*, 2, 3, 71 (167)) related to the activities of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* at the beginning of the third century CE (P.Dura 66 is a quite impressive, even if much damaged, exemplar containing about fifty letters dated to 216 CE; on this and the other *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* from Dura see Iovine 2019). Information about the use of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* in Rome is nearly nonexistent, but a passage in Cicero (*Ad Atticum*, 9, 10, 4) seems to refer to a private *tomos sunkollēsimos* gathering Atticus's letters: *evolvi volumen epistularum tuarum quod ego <sub></sub> signo habeo seruoque diligentissime*. On the matter see Büchner 1939, 1211 and Shackleton Bailey 1965, 60.

remaining uncertain). Since their chronology overlaps with that of the official *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*, the private use of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* seems to be the result of the influence of the public practice.

- *Tomoi sunkollēsimoī* were mostly used to keep together documents of the same typology (this is the norm in official *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*). But sometimes, and especially in private contexts, they gather documents of different kinds regarding the same matter.
- Similar to any other roll, the length of a *tomos sunkollēsimos* could vary widely in accordance with its contents: private *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* often consisted of just a few documents, while public *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* could reach several hundreds of sheets.<sup>19</sup>

### 3 Use of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* in the administrative procedure

During the Roman era, there is enough evidence for the presence of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* in offices at all levels of administration of Egypt, from the village offices to the archives of the districts (νομοί, *nomoi*, sg. *nomos*) and of the capital Alexandria. The production of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* was, in all probability, the standard procedure for all those documents presented on single sheets that needed to be kept together in public archives, pertaining to both private (contracts) and public law (with declarations – of census, of death, of cattle, of un-

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<sup>19</sup> The *tomos sunkollēsimos* of receipts already mentioned in n. 12, now split into several non-contiguous fragments kept in different collections, contains a total of seventy-four documents. The longest continuous strip of a *tomos sunkollēsimos* is P.Brux. I 3–18, with sixteen census declarations pasted together (cf. the end of this article for more information). However, the numbering of *kollēmata* in official *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* (see below p. § 3.2) allows us to reconstruct the (minimum) length of several other exemplars, and verify that *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* with more than one hundred documents were common. The highest number preserved in a certain *tomos sunkollēsimos* (P.Oslo III 98) is 392. The reading of the number 433 on a *libellus* (certificate of sacrifice) of the Decian persecution (W.Chr. 125) is not entirely certain, and this document is peculiar because none of the other forty-six *libelli* preserved bears numbers or any other evidence that could point to a *tomos sunkollēsimos*: however, the presence (pointed out in the *editio princeps*) of a *kollēsis* on the right of this sheet could suggest actual pasting with other documents. P.Oxy. XLIV 3205.5 probably mentions a *tomos sunkollēsimos* with 437 *kollēmata*. Numbers referring to *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* of petitions (see below p. 238) are often quite high (the highest being 1804, cf. Haensch 1994, 487), but for these cases we should consider multiple *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* with a continuous numbering.

watered land – and reports being the most attested documents filed in *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*). Following the traces of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* means going through the administrative structure of Roman Egypt.

### 3.1 Administrative procedures involving *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*

Many *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* started their journey through the government structure of Egypt in the smallest administrative entity, the villages (κῶμαι, *kōmai*), where some offices produced and collected documents pertaining to private and public law.

We have extant evidence about how the handling of contracts was regulated in the village record office: the γραφεῖον (*grapheion*).<sup>20</sup> In M.Chr. 183 (= P.Grenf. II 41; 46 CE), a man called Tesenouphis writes to the contractor of the *grapheion* of Soknopaiou Nesos to bid for its sublease. Tesenouphis commits himself to submit to the addressee, every four months, the *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* of the deeds drawn, a register of their abstracts (εἰρόμενον, *eiromenon*) and a list of them consisting of just their title (ἀναγραφὴ, *anagraphē*). These documents were probably required by the state, and the accomplishment of these instructions is witnessed, many years later and in another *nomos*, by M.Chr. 184 (= P.Flor. III 357; 208 CE), the final part of a *tomos sunkollēsimos* produced in the *grapheion* of the Western Toparchy of the Oxyrhynchite: Apollonios, the head of the *grapheion*, records that he has deposited the *tomos sunkollēsimos* together with an *eiromenon* and an *anagraphē*; here, the documents are deposited on a monthly basis instead of each four months as established in M.Chr. 183. The ‘submission’ of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* produced in the *grapheion* to the superior levels seems to imply that they were physically moved from one office to the other. This would agree with the absence of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* in the documents coming from the *grapheia* of Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos. The administrative travel of these documents changed along the centuries, as a consequence of the creation of various offices at the *nomos* and central levels. It seems that, from the second half of the first century onwards, two identical *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* were produced in the *grapheion*: one was transmitted to the βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων (*bibliothēkē enktēseōn*, Archive of the real property), first attested in 72 CE and situated in the μητρόπολις (*mētropolis*, the capital of the *nomos*), and the other to Alexandria, in the archive called καταλογεῖον (*katalogeion*).

<sup>20</sup> For this office (certainly attested from 145 BCE until the second half of the third century CE) and its tasks, cf. Wolff 1978, 46–56, 222–255; Cockle 1984; Burkhalter 1990; Claytor 2014, 58–62; Langellotti 2020.

on); here, *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* were checked by officers called εἰκονισταί (*eikonistai*) and then deposited elsewhere: in 127 CE, the role of the main archive (where originals were kept) was assigned to the newly established βιβλιοθήκη Ἀδριανή (*bibliothēkē Hadrianē*), while a copy was brought to the Ναναῖον (*Nanaion*), which had already existed since the Augustan age.<sup>21</sup>

The evidence regarding public documents is somehow different, as we do not have extant regulations on the matter. For a specific kind of document (census declaration), we know that several copies of the same document were produced by the registrant to be transmitted (and kept) in different offices at various levels of the administration. The collections of Berlin and Oxford hold six copies (on six independent sheets) of the same census declaration (dated to 161 CE), prepared and addressed to various officers but in all probability never presented to them.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore possible that registrants would have to produce all the necessary copies for the administrative procedure. We do not have information about the path of census declarations beyond the *nomos* level, but a complete process for other public documents has been sketched: in each local office, the documents were filed in *tomoi sunkollēsimoι*, and a copy of them (deposited by the στρατηγός [*strategos*] and the βασιλικὸς γραμματεὺς [*basilikos grammateus*]) was kept in the βιβλιοθήκη δημοσία (*bibliothēkē dēmosia*, Archive of the public documents) in the *mētropolis* of the *nomos*, while the original was transmitted to Alexandria, in the archive called *Patrika*. The report of a lawsuit against the record keepers of the *bibliothēkē dēmosia* in Ptolemais Euergetis for their mismanagement (P.Fam.Tebt. 15, ll. 75–98; 98 CE) provides important evidence about the actual functioning of this archive. The description of the problems highlighted includes, *inter alia*, sheets piled up and left without proper classification for many years. P.Oxy. II 237, col. 8, ll. 27–43 (89 CE) relates on similar problems in the *bibliothēkē enktēseōn* of Oxyrhynchus.

Besides these paths starting from the bottom and ‘climbing’ the administrative hierarchy, there is a lot of evidence attesting the direct production of *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* at the highest official levels and involving a specific kind of document: petitions (appeals to the authorities for justice). The petitioners submitted their requests, and the authorities responded by giving instructions to solve the problem. A procedure followed over a long period was to paste the documents in *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* and to affix them in a public space in the same

<sup>21</sup> For these offices and the others mentioned below, cf. Burkhalter 1990; Cockle 1984; Kruse 2014.

<sup>22</sup> The six exemplars are BGU I 90, 224, 225; BGU II 410, 539; P.Grenf. II 55. On the treatment of census declaration, cf. Bagnall and Frier 1994, 19–20 and Hombert and Préaux 1952, 84–93 and 129–135.



cities where they were presented, together with the answer from the authorities. At a first stage, *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* were made of documents that required the same answer, prefixed just one time to the whole *tomos sunkollēsimos*; later, each answer was written at the bottom of each document, on the same sheet; in this same phase, the *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* and the documents within them were numbered. After a period of display (during which the people who received their response had time to copy and authenticate it), the *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* were archived.<sup>23</sup> In these cases, thus, the production of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* fulfilled the double purpose of display and filing.<sup>24</sup> We know less about what happened to the petitions addressed to officers at the district or local levels, but there is some evidence of them being pasted in *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* for filing.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.2 Production

The production of a *tomos sunkollēsimos* in an administrative office involved, in principle, three operations: the ordering of the single documents according to a criterion, their pasting together, and their individual numbering.

The documents were usually filed in progressive chronological order, and sometimes a geographical criterion is also present.<sup>26</sup>

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**23** This system was used (from Hadrian onwards) for petitions addressed to (and answered by) the emperor and posted in Alexandria, and during the second half of the second century was also adopted by the prefect and other high authorities. On the processing of petitions in the Roman era, cf. Haensch 1994, esp. 492–511 ('Phasen' III and IV) and Mascellari 2021, esp. 1021–1024.

**24** The number of the *tomos* and that of the *kollēma* were noted in the copies of the petitions and used whenever a reference to the document itself had to be made (cf. e.g. SB XIV 11980, l. 14).

**25** Cf. e.g. SB XVIII 13087, SB XIV 11274, SB XVIII 13088 and SB XX 14086, petitions to the ἐπιστάτης φυλακίτων (*epistatēs phulakitōn*, the chief of the police) belonging to the same *tomos sunkollēsimos* (Arsinoites, 4 BCE); among petitions addressed to the *stratēgos*, cf. e.g. SB XIV 11381 (c. 115–117 CE), BGU II 491, col. 2 (145–149 CE) and BGU II 663 (c. 203 CE).

**26** Some exceptions: a reverse chronological order seems to be attested in P.Vars. 10 (mortgages; Ptolemais Drymou, 156 CE), with two documents having the same date and the following one dated three days before, and in PSI IX 1064 (death declarations; Ptolemais Euergetis, 129 CE), with the second document authenticated ten days before the first. A partially mixed chronological order is attested in P.Bodl. I 17 (census declarations; Soknopaiou Nesos, 133 CE) and PSI I 53 (census declarations; Oxyrhynchus, 132/133 CE). In P.Mil.Vogl. 193 + 194 (census declarations; 146/147 CE; on this *tomos sunkollēsimos* cf. also below, n. 33), the first document is dated after the second, while the exact date of the other two is unknown. To a *tomos sunkollēsimos* with a reverse chronological order might point, according to the readings and reconstruction of its editor, also P.Oxy. LX 4060. These cases might result from slips in the

We cannot say whether pasting was performed in a single moment (when it was time to file the accumulated documents) or if documents were glued together gradually as they came into the office. The lawsuits against the negligent record keepers of the Arsinoite and the Oxyrhynchite *nomoi* mentioned above shows that unbound single sheets could be left like that for many years.

As for the progressive numbers of the documents forming a *tomos sunkollēsimos*, in the surviving evidence they are always inserted in the upper margin and always by one hand: in all probability, then, the numbering was carried out in one and the same moment (before or after the pasting).<sup>27</sup> The total number of sheets pasted in a *tomos sunkollēsimos* was one of the data to be registered when they were deposited in the central archives at Alexandria (M.Chr. 188, I 17–II 1). The *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* themselves were provided with a title and an identifying number if more than one contained the same kind of documents and/or referred to the same time span. They could be further gathered in a τεῦχος (*teuchos* – pl. *teuchē*; lit. ‘case’) bearing a title (and sometimes a number) as well.<sup>28</sup> References to a single filed document were, therefore, made by mentioning the *teuchos* (if it existed), the *tomos sunkollēsimos* and the individual number of the document (indicated by the word *kollēma*) within it.<sup>29</sup> This procedure seems to be standard for those documents that needed to be checked even after they had been archived, as it assured their quick retrieval, while other *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* were (or could be) left unnumbered.

Some problematic cases question the complete uniformity of the operations performed and their relative order within this general picture:

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filing operations, or from an order based on the actual arrival of documents and not on their internal date, or from a deliberate ‘inverse composition’.

**27** In one case (P.Berl.Sarisch. 10), the number is preceded by the abbreviated word *kol(lēma)*; the partial superposing of the number to the word shows that *kol(lēma)* was written at an earlier and different time. BGU IV 1052, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1101–1104 and several other documents from the so-called ‘Alexandrian scribal office’ (TM Arch id: 430) are separated sheets with the word *kol(lēma)* in the upper margin, without numbers: these documents were possibly intended to be pasted in a *tomos sunkollēsimos*, but apparently they never had been: cf. Van Minnen 2016, 144. The indication *kol(lēma)* (admitting that the solution of the abbreviation is right) looks unnecessary and presently remains unexplained.

**28** On the meaning of *teuchos* as ‘container of multiple *tomoi*’ and the related administrative practice, cf. Sängner 2007.

**29** The best example is provided by P.Ryl. II 220 (Thmuis?, between 134/135 and 138 CE), an official list of people containing references to several census declarations filed in *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* and sometimes also in *teuchē* (see ll. 69–84 *passim*); a similar reference can be found in SB XVI 13067, l. 3 (Ptolemais Euergetis, 175–188 CE).

- Some typologies of documents usually filed in *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* also survive on single, numbered sheets that do not seem to show any trace of pasting.<sup>30</sup> Leaving aside an intentional operation of detaching a document from an already fabricated *tomos sunkollēsimos*, which seems highly unlikely (in principle, there would not be any administrative reason for separating filed documents meant to be kept in an office), several explanations are possible: (1) the sheets have come unstuck over time, or during modern restoration, and their separation would therefore be irrelevant;<sup>31</sup> (2) the editors failed to recognise that what appears to be a single sheet is in fact a piece of a *tomos sunkollēsimos* cut from it to be reused (for reuse of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*, see below); (3) these documents witness an incomplete filing procedure, with numbering already inserted on still separate sheets, but no pasting done; or (4) these documents witness an alternative filing procedure, consisting of numbering the documents without pasting them in *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*.
- A group of papyri belonging to the archive of Apollonios, *stratēgos* of the Apollinopolite Heptakomia *nomos* (TM Arch id: 19), includes the same kind of documents both in single sheets and in *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*. It is formed by P.Giss. 4, 5, 6 and 7, W.Chr. 352 (= P.Brem. 36), P.Lips. II 136 and 137, P.Ryl. II 96 and P.Alex.Giss. 26, all of them containing offers for the lease of public land. None of the documents whose upper margin is preserved appears to be numbered. P.Giss. 6 is a part of a *tomos sunkollēsimos* containing three documents ordered chronologically: the first one is dated between 27 November and 26 December 117 CE, the second one 1 December 117, and the third one 15 January 118. P.Giss. 7 is a portion of a *tomos sunkollēsimos* as well: the meagre remains of the first document do not preserve a date, while the second document is dated to September–October 117 CE. The other seven documents of the group appear to be on loose sheets: W.Chr. 352 dates to 28 December 117 CE; P.Giss. 5 to 29 December 117, P.Lips. II 136 to 9 January 118; P.Giss. 4 to 10 January 118; we only know the year (117/118) for P.Lips. II 137, while the dates of P.Alex.Giss. 26 and P.Ryl. II 96 are lost. Since all these documents were presented to the same office, why have W.Chr. 352, P.Giss. 5, P.Lips. II 136 and P.Giss. 4 not been inserted in the *tomos sunkollēsimos* partially preserved by P.Giss. 6, at their chrono-

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. e.g. P.Köln II 86 (cattle declaration), P.Oxy. II 245 (cattle declaration), BGU XV 2471 (official letter), PSI X 1136 (census declaration) and P.Flor. I 5 (census declaration).

<sup>31</sup> Cutting or separating single columns of longer rolls was relatively common in the restoration practice of the first decades of the past century. For example, SB XII 10788 (the ‘vertical’ *tomos sunkollēsimos* mentioned above in n. 13) and the register from Karanis mentioned below in n. 34 underwent this kind of operation.

logical spot between the second and the third *kollēma*? Perhaps the loose sheets were meant to be added to the *tomos sunkollēsimos* later (cf. n. 26 above for possible similar cases), or, as Clarysse thinks, all the documents were actually part of the same *tomos sunkollēsimos* but some of them came off.<sup>32</sup> Both hypotheses imply that the date of arrival of the documents at the office (and not the date in the documents themselves) determined the ‘pasting order’ in this *tomos sunkollēsimos*. The first hypothesis implies an ongoing and progressive production of the *tomos sunkollēsimos*, while the second one could suggest a unified operation of pasting.

- Among extant *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* gathering the same kind of documents, some are numbered and others (a minority) are not. Among the nineteen *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* containing census declarations and preserving the upper margin, for example, sixteen have numbers, while the numbering in two of them is certainly lacking, and one more shows a somewhat ambiguous situation.<sup>33</sup> Here, again, more than one explanation is possible: (1) these *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* witness an incomplete procedure; or (2) different offices adopted different procedures (some inserted the numbering and some others not, thus giving up the possibility of a quick reference to, and retrieval of, documents). Note that the first explanation would imply a relative order between numbering and pasting opposite to that implied in hypothesis (3) for the single sheets discussed above.

The inconsistencies mentioned so far might just derive from different internal procedures of different offices, and a certain degree of variability should perhaps be expected. The constantly increasing documentation, together with a careful reanalysis of the material published already, will possibly shed some light on the reasons for this lack of complete uniformity. A careful observation of the material features of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* and of loose sheets, in particular, seems indispensable to understand their nature better and how they were used.

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<sup>32</sup> Clarysse 2003, 348.

<sup>33</sup> P.Berl.Leihg. 16 and P.Oxy. VIII 1111 have no numbers (for the second one, I rely on the edition, since I was unable to check photos); P.Mil.Vogl. 193 + 194 (already mentioned in n. 26) has no numbering in three out of four declarations, while a number was inserted in an odd position (between ll. 2 and 3) in the last one.

## 4 *Tomoi sunkollēsimoī* and other rolls

Finally, a few words about how some of the features of *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* may affect the possibility of distinguishing them from other kinds of artefacts.

1. *Tomoi sunkollēsimoī* were not the only rolls with internal numbering: the numbering of columns was also used in registers written continuously on ‘normal’ rolls. A fragment consisting of just a part of a numbered column cannot, therefore, be automatically attributed to a *tomos sunkollēsimos*: material features and contents should be carefully inspected.
2. Once fabricated, a *tomos sunkollēsimos* was treated exactly like any other roll, and could, therefore, be reused by writing on its back. This could be done by simply turning the *tomos sunkollēsimos* and reusing it as a whole, or by cutting parts of it and reusing them for writing short documents. This last case produces another stage in a long back-and-forward process from sheets to rolls. P.Flor. II 119 + 159, for example, is a part of a *tomos sunkollēsimos* of letters addressed to the same person around the middle of the third century CE, cut and reused on the back to write another letter (Fig. 3).

A *tomos sunkollēsimos* reused on the back can look very similar to another well attested kind of roll, fabricated with several sheets (or pieces of rolls) already written on one side, with the purpose of using it on the (blank) back.<sup>34</sup> These rolls are sometimes called ‘pasted’ or ‘composite’ rolls – both insufficient expressions, since they can also describe *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*. The content of the already written side was completely irrelevant regarding both reused *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* and ‘composite rolls’, and if the pasted parts had uneven height, a trimming to obtain regular margins could be made disregarding the eventual loss of text.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> There are several well-known and -preserved examples of this kind of roll. Among those known for a long time, the most famous are probably P.Oxy. II 237 (*recto*)/223 (*verso*), P.Oxy. VI 986 (*recto*)/853 (*verso*) and P.Marm., all of them reused for literary texts on the *verso*. Among the more recently studied, a prominent place is held by P.Mich. inv. 4382–4387 and 4390–4391, a long register from Karanis written on the back of six pasted documents of different kinds (for a list of them, cf. Claytor 2014, 89). P.Lond. inv. 604 (P.Lond. III, pp. 70–87) is made of two different documents (a list and a register) pasted with the top in opposite directions and reused for a literary text in Demotic on the *verso*. A large part of the Demotic literary texts found in the ‘deposit’ of the Tebtunis Temple Library are written on the back of already used rolls, sometimes pasted between them to obtain a longer surface to write on: cf. Ryholt 2018.

<sup>35</sup> The pasted roll from Karanis mentioned in the previous note has an untrimmed upper margin. As for reused *tomoi sunkollēsimoī*, the long exemplar of receipts from Arsinoe mentioned above in n. 12 and 19 was reused on the back to write a register without trimming its upper margin.

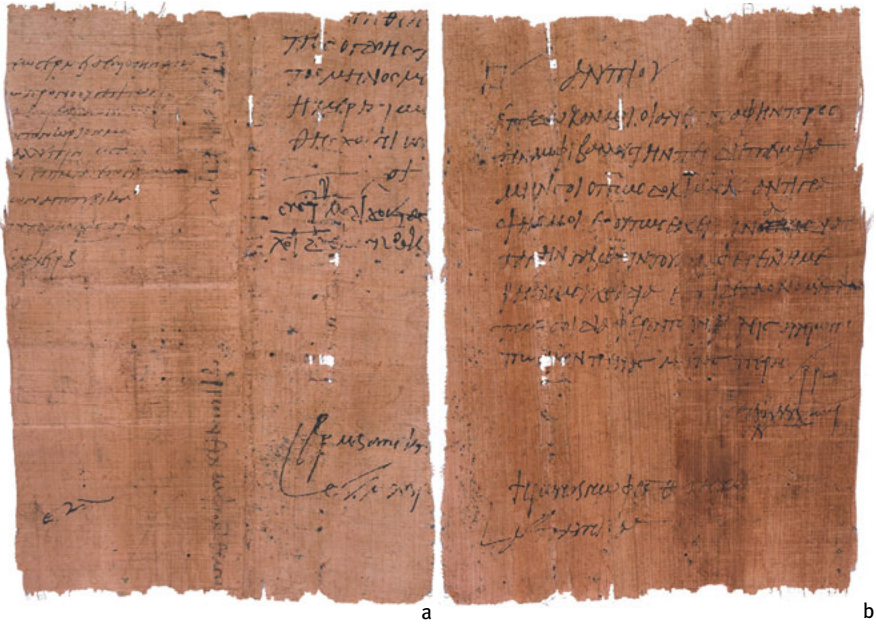


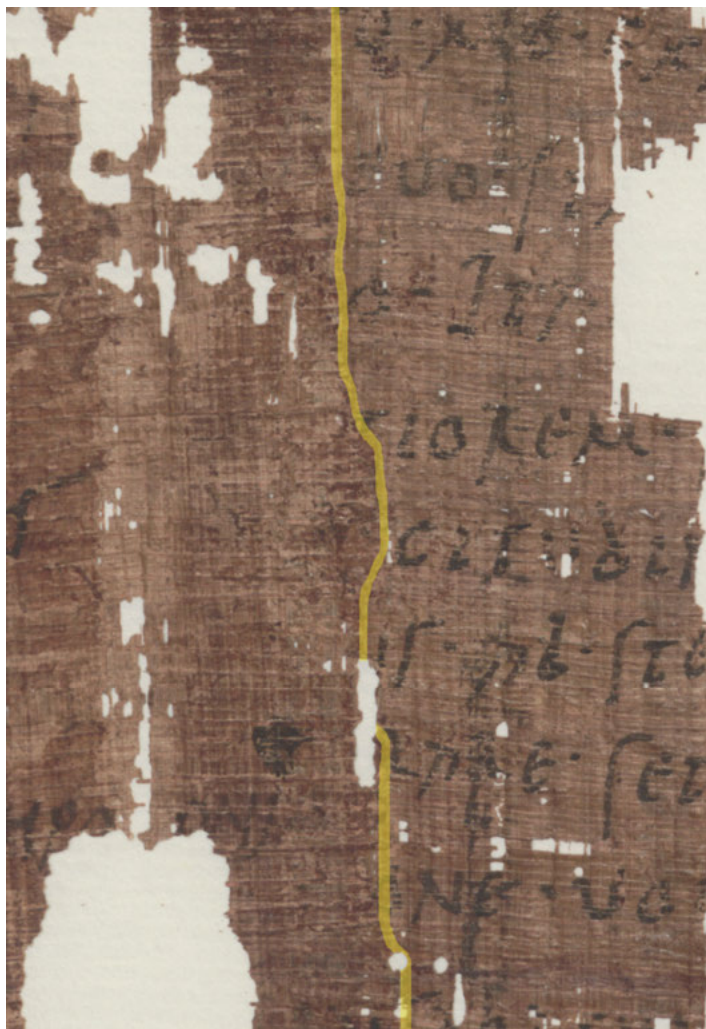
Fig. 3a–b: P.Flor. II 119 + 159 *recto* (a) and *verso* (b): a *tomos sunkollēsimos* of letters cut and reused on the back for another letter; © Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.

A reused *tomos sunkollēsimos* and a pasted roll will both *certainly* have secondary *kollēseis*, and they both *might* have different handwritings on the *recto* of the pasted sheets and a trimmed upper margin.

It is usually simple to distinguish between a reused *tomos sunkollēsimos* and a pasted roll if you have a large enough portion to observe the contents of the pasted parts: if the pasted parts are numbered and/or contain documents of the same kind (or on the same matter), this will point to a *tomos sunkollēsimos*; unrelated texts, or sheets pasted regardless to the full preservation of the texts<sup>36</sup> will, instead, point to a pasted roll. Smaller fragments will, of course, produce more uncertainty.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Ch.L.A XLIII 1241 (P.Vindob. L 1; TM 70033), considered for many years a *tomos sunkollēsimos* of letters, but correctly recognised as a pasted roll including different and unrelated documents: the first extant sheet, superposed to the following one, covers the beginning of its lines (as shown in Fig. 4; cf. Kramer 1991, 144, n. 18 and Ch.L.A XLIII, p. 5).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. e.g. PSI VII 731 + P.Col. inv. 134 (TM 17644), with a clear join between two documents: the first one is a declaration of *epikrisis* (ἐπίκρισις, inscription to the gymnasium), while the contents of



**Fig. 4:** P.Vindob. L 1 (Ch.L.A XLIII 1241): the image shows a detail of the join between the first and the second sheet, with an overlapping covering the text on the left handside of the second document: since the pasting was made only to use the obtained strip on its *verso*, there was no interest in preserving the texts on the *recto*; © Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrus-sammlung.

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the second document (almost completely lost) are not ascertainable: are we looking at a *tomos sunkollēsimos* of *epikriseis*, or at two independent documents pasted together to write the register on their back?

Some complex artefacts show an accumulation of many of the processes described above: an excellent example is the well-known (and already mentioned in n. 19) P.Brux. I 1–18. Two (parts of) *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* of census declarations from two villages of the Prosopite *nomos*<sup>38</sup> were pasted together to write a register of documents related to liturgies (P.Brux. 21) with numbered columns on their back (Fig. 5).<sup>39</sup> Another already mentioned papyrus (P.Marm.)<sup>40</sup> shows that three different scraps of rolls coming from offices of the Marmarica (one of them consisting in two parts already pasted in the office where they were used: therefore, a *tomos sunkollēsimos*) were pasted together to write on their back a literary work by Favorinus; the layout of the columns and the analysis of the *kollēseis* shows that the text on the *verso* was copied before the pasting.<sup>41</sup>

## 5 Desiderata

An overall and systematic study of *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* might contribute to cast more light on some of the administrative procedures in which they played a fundamental role, on the degree of uniformity of archival practices in different offices, and on the use of filing systems in private households. This survey should start from a careful material analysis of the fragments (and especially of the smaller ones), in order to identify them with certainty and to distinguish *tomoi sunkollēsimoι* from other kinds of rolls.

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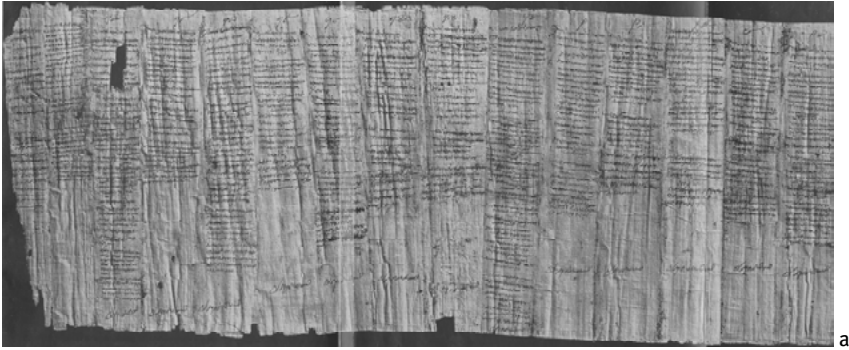
**38** P.Brux. I 1–2 (with two receipts numbered 98 and 99) was produced at Theresis in June 174 CE, while P.Brux. I 3–18 (16 receipts numbered 92–107) was produced at Thelbonthon Siphtha in the July of the same year.

**39** For a thorough analysis of this roll, cf. Hombert and Préaux 1952.

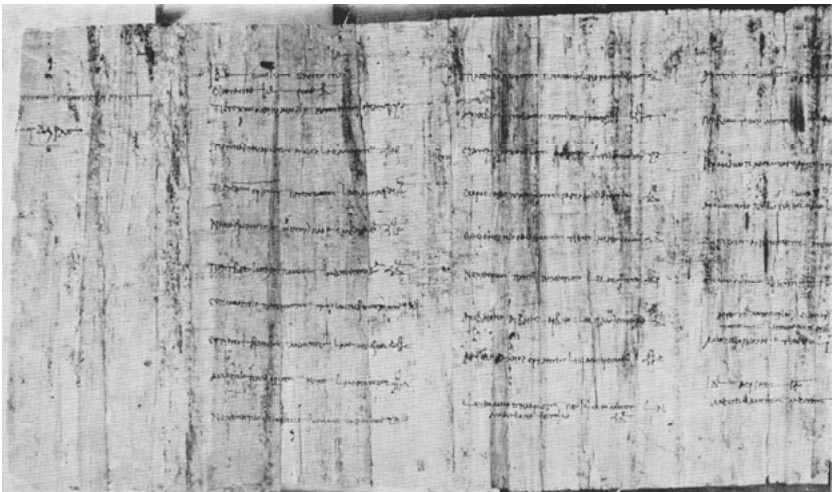
**40** See n. 34.

**41** For the material analysis of this roll, cf. Bastianini 2011.





a



b

**Fig. 5a–b:** P.Brux. I 1–18 (partial) and P.Brux. I 21 (partial): two *tomoi sunkollēsimoī* pasted together to be reused on the back for writing several documents related to liturgies, in numbered columns (P.Brux. inv. 7616: *recto* (a), cols 1–15, Prosopite *nomos*, 174 CE; *verso* (b), cols 1–4; Prosopite *nomos*, 175/176 or 207/208 CE); © Brussels, Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.

## Abbreviations

Sigla of papyri follow the ‘Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets’, <<https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>>.

References to ‘TM Arch id’ are to the Archives section of the Trismegistos online database, <<https://www.trismegistos.org/arch/index.php>>.

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