



PROJECT MUSE®

2. Physical Description

Published by

Schlosser, Andrea.

Three Early Mahāyāna Treatises from Gandhāra: Bajaur Kharoṣṭhī Fragments 4, 6, and 11.

University of Washington Press, 2022.

Project MUSE. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/103065>.



➔ For additional information about this book
<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/103065>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[162.158.63.41] Project MUSE (2025-04-04 20:00 GMT)

Physical Description

2.1 BC 4

2.1.1 Preservation Status

The fragments of BC 4 are stored in two parts, in frames 10 and 18. The manuscript is heavily damaged and split into several pieces of medium and small size. There is writing on both sides in the same hand and the fragments contain a single text.

2.1.2 Reconstruction of the Scroll

It has been possible to reconstruct the original location of most of the fragments. The connection between the right and left halves of the manuscript is certain in lines 4r11, 4r20, 4r21, and 4r26. Of slight uncertainty are the upper loose fragments from 4r1 up to 4r10. However, the transition from line 4r10 to 4r11, *kaiace-dašia*, is more than likely, which makes lines 4r7 and following quite probable. Moreover, the blank reverse side of those fragments leaves almost no other choice regarding their arrangement. It is uncertain how 4r6 and 4r7 belong to each other exactly, or whether even one or more lines are missing here. Furthermore, a few fragments are placed with a little uncertainty, but their form and/or content make it highly probable that their location is correct in the current reconstruction. These are fragments 4.2 C+P (4r5), S (4r8), and X (4r14), see fig. 6. Fragment 4.1 Q consists of four layers of birch bark, of which one (labeled Q4, see fig. 23) is not easy to allocate, because the four incomplete akšaras written on it do not connect to any adjoining fragment.

The reconstruction of BC 4 made it clear that physically it does not belong to BC 11, as was presumed by Ingo Strauch in his preliminary survey (2007/2008: 9). BC 4 is a “short format” scroll that was folded once in the middle. In contrast, BC 11 is a “long format” scroll that was folded twice.

2.1.3 Format and Layout

The reconstruction process of BC 4 resulted in a scroll of about 24 cm width and 23 cm height (the safely reconstructed part of the scroll is 24 × 17 cm with an upper part of at least 6 cm).¹ Unfortunately, the beginning of the manuscript is—as usual—lost; we do not know exactly how

¹ It is not possible to give any dimensions with absolute certainty, since the available scans do not include any scale for orientation. The size has been calculated on the basis of the information Ingo Strauch gave in his catalogue after measuring the fragments in Pakistan. The fragments were scanned at 600 dpi and 100% scale, so the rulers in the image editing software should give quite exact data.

much is missing. Luckily under the circumstances, the first paragraph is repeated, so a possibility would be to count the number of akṣaras at the beginning of the repetition up to where the text matches the beginning of the preserved manuscript. But the scroll is very fragmentary at this point, making it uncertain where the repetition exactly begins. There are, ultimately, two alternatives:

1. The repetition starts after the small dot · in 4r5 and begins with *vado ṇidaṇa*, meaning about three lines would be missing (green + blue bar in fig. 1).
2. The repetition starts after the bigger circle ○ in 4r7 and begins with *ki hakṣadi*, meaning about one line would be missing (blue bar in fig. 1).

In option (1) the second section (§ 1B) as well as the text itself would begin with *vado ṇidaṇa*. Since this would be repeated, *nidāna* cannot refer here to some kind of introduction (although it is still possible that there was a textual variation in the beginning and not exactly the same wording as in the repetition). The small dot before *vado* could indicate a new train of thought. In option (2) the second section as well as the text itself would begin with *ki hakṣadi* or something similar. In light of bigger circles serving principally as punctuation marks, especially preceding new paragraphs, this seems more likely. Thus, a bit more than one line would be missing, corresponding to about 1 cm and an original scroll of 24 × 25 cm, including a margin of 1 cm. It is also conceivable that the original measurements were 24 × 24 cm since in the digital reconstruction not every fragment could be vertically joined without a gap to the next due to the sometimes strongly warped birch bark strips.

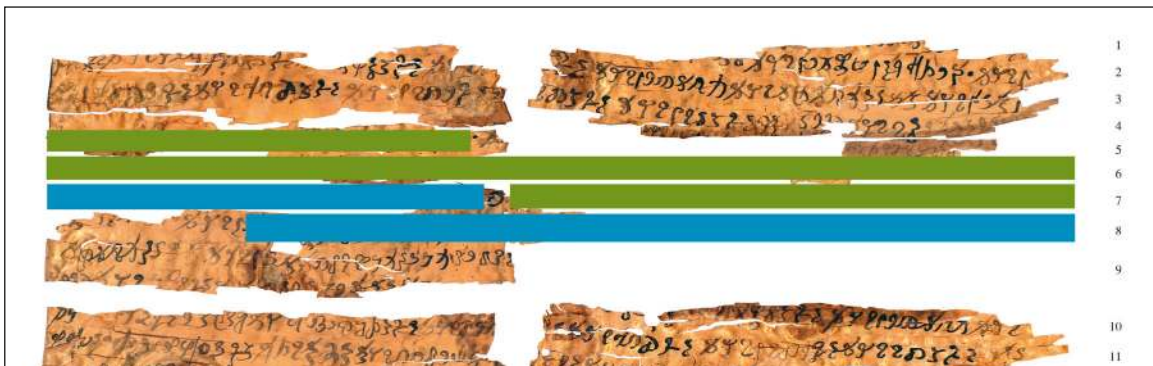


Fig. 1. Reconstruction of the missing lines at the beginning of BC 4.

Based on the measurements and the format, the scroll can be defined as a “short format.” It was folded once in the middle at a ratio of approximately 11.50 : 12.50 cm—thus not exactly in the middle of the manuscript. This made it easy to allocate single strips to one side or the other. As is to be expected with short format scrolls, there is no evidence of any overlapping parts that have been glued together (as is the case with longer scrolls produced from shorter strips). Likewise, there are no signs of needle holes indicating stitching along the margins. The margins are ca. 1 cm at the top (seen on the verso, corresponding to the height of one line), 1 cm at the right, i.e., the beginning of the line (corresponding to three akṣaras), 0–0.7 cm at the left end of the lines, and 1.7–2 cm at the bottom (seen on the recto, the lower half of the verso having been

left blank). It can be assumed that on the recto the same upper margin was observed. Also at the left end of each line a margin of 1 cm may have been intended, but the scribe usually wrote to the very end of the birch bark.

On the recto, there were presumably 28 lines of writing (depending on how much is missing at the top). On the verso, definitely only 12 lines were written, the rest of the birch bark remaining blank. Each line contains an average of 67 akṣaras. The presumed total number of (all preserved, reconstructed and missing) akṣaras is 2797, of which 2491 (including illegible but still visible akṣaras) = 89% have survived.

In the last line of the recto, an instruction is given that refers to the continuation of the text on the verso (*G śeṣae patade*). The same remark can be seen at the bottom of the recto of BC 6.

2.1.4 Additional/Unlocated Fragments

In addition to the fragments in frames 10 and 18, some pieces collected in the “debris” frame (no. 35) of the Bajaur Collection could be matched to the scroll (35r l → 4r4, 35r o → 4r5). Judging from content and script, also other fragments, namely 35r m and 35r n, belong to BC 4 (or BC 11), but I was unable to reposition them with certainty (see fig. 22).

On the other hand, a few fragments from BC 4 still await their positioning (4.2 D, O, R, AA, DD). Their “type face” and the words contained suggest that they belong to the top right of the reconstructed manuscript, since the verso is blank in each case and all the other fragments of the same frame 18 (part 2) have exclusively been placed in this area (see fig. 8). In addition, as already mentioned, the little fragment labeled 4.2 Q4 could not be positioned. In part 1 (frame 10) only two very small fragments resisted repositioning. These are 4.1 W and 4.1 K, but nothing is written on them.

Fragment V in frame 18 clearly belongs to another scroll, since the surface of the birch bark and the content are different, and both script and format are slightly larger (fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Fragment V stored in frame 18 together with the fragments of BC 4 (scale 100%).

The transliteration of fragment V is:

V.1 ///

V.2 /// *bhagavado pada śiraṣa vadita egadamate aṭha[e]* ///

V.3 /// ? [*ma*] *sa trisahasae mahasahasae lo(*gadhadue)* ///

V.4 /// ? *t[r]i* ? ? ? + ? ? ? ///

The same wording occurs in BC 2 [341] *yavado imasvi triṣahaṣee mahaṣahaṣae logadhade* and [343] (**bha*)[*ga*]vato pada śiraṣa vadita ekamaṃte aḥhaṣa · aṣa yavada imasvi mahaṣahaṣae logadhade. However, the script of fragment 4.2 V is different from that in BC 2. Further, the orthography is dissimilar (*egadamate* vs. *ekamaṃte*), although this is not a sufficient criterion since even in one and the same manuscript, several spelling variations can occur. Also in BC 3 a similar phrase is used (r4 (**bhagava*)[*do śiraṣa*] pada vadadi bhagavado śiraṣa pada va[*di*](**ta*)), but the script and birch bark do not allow the fragment to be placed there either.

2.2 BC 11

2.2.1 Preservation Status

The manuscript is relatively well preserved. Only at some isolated spots along the right margin are parts of the birch bark broken off, presumably due to the folding of the manuscript, which was folded twice in equal intervals after having been rolled up. The manuscript is conserved in two frames (frames 20 and 21), which were labeled part 1 and 2 during the reconstruction process. Part 1 is a little smaller and better preserved than part 2. There are only a few small fragments alongside the bigger parts. Unfortunately, the bigger sections were not placed in the correct sequence. Both sides contain a single text written by the same scribe.

2.2.2 Reconstruction of the Scroll

The fragments are in five sections with no discernible physical connection to each other. Although the reconstruction status of the manuscript looks satisfying, the arrangement is not the only one possible. The contents do not allow any definitive sequence, since similar keywords are found in the different parts, and thus theoretically any individual section could be linked to any other. Sections 1–3 are blank on the verso, hence their placement may be fixed. While sections 1 and 2 could be interchanged, the first is shorter and more damaged and should most probably be placed at the beginning. This leaves only sections 4 and 5 truly interchangeable. Judging only from the contents, the sequence 3r–5r–4r–4v–5v–3v might be preferred, but the physical form of the fragments and the texture of the birch bark supports the current reconstruction.

Apparently, at the time of writing these different parts were separate, that is, not glued together. At the ends of part 2, 4, and 5 this is especially easy to discern. Either the letters get smaller and smaller in order to still fit onto the piece of birch bark (2r, 5v), or the slanting lines reach the bottom of the birch bark before they reach its end, but the writing is not continued on the next piece (4r, 5r). It is also conceivable that BC 11 consisted of separate sheets that had never been glued together. If so, then all parts (with part 1 and 2 possibly belonging together) would each have to be read first on the recto and second on the verso before continuing with the next sheet.

Symmetrical ink blots on the recto of part 3 (in lines 17/18 and 21/22) suggest that this part of the birch bark (up to and including line 23) was temporarily folded after being written. This could have happened in both scenarios. If BC 11 is one long scroll, the scribe may have folded or bunched up the section he had just written to facilitate writing the remainder on the recto. If BC 11 is a loose-leaf collection, the scribe may have folded the lower part of the birch bark to continue writing on the verso.

2.2.3 Format and Layout

Because of the just mentioned peculiarities, it is uncertain if BC 11 was one long scroll, or if it was made up of separate pieces of birch bark. All the different pieces show an identical vertical folding, which speaks in favor of them having been joined before being rolled up. If all parts are put together, the measurements of the reconstructed manuscript BC 11 are ca. 15×40 cm.² The width is in accordance with the original format, which is known since there is at least one line whose left and right edges are preserved completely. A width between 10 cm and 20 cm further suggests that the manuscript can be considered a so-called “long-format” scroll (cf. Schlosser 2016: 3 and Baums 2014: 193) with several sheets being glued together.

The margin at the start of each line corresponds to about two akşaras. At the end of each line this surely was also intended, but the space here varies in width between one and four akşaras. There is no vertical line indicating the text boundaries.³ In the right margin of the reserve side of part 4, the scribe added some letters vertically. This is most probably an addendum, since it takes up the same phrases used in part 4v. The gloss does not seem to have been continued on (the currently following) part 3v, but is rather squeezed onto part 4v, which would be another argument for the parts having been separate at the time of writing.

In its present condition the manuscript contains altogether 83 lines—53 on the recto, 30 on the verso—with approximately 40 akşaras per line. The presumed total number of akşaras is ca. 3240 akşaras, of which $2887 = 89\%$ have survived. There is no evidence of any notations indicating a pre-planned layout, and the ends of lines are repeatedly left blank on purpose.

2.2.4 Additional/Unlocated Fragments

Two fragments have been added from the “debris” frame: 35dd + ee → 11r35–36/11v15–16. Among the fragments labeled as BC 14 (frame 33), one larger fragment originally belonged to BC 11 at the beginning of the recto, making line 11r3 complete and adding another two lines. In the same frame 33, another small fragment seems to belong to BC 11 or even BC 4, but it was not possible to find its original place, which should be somewhere in 11r1–21 or 4r1–18, since the verso side is blank (see fig. 24).

There are only a few unlocated fragments left in frame 20 (part 1). One of them, fragment I, appears to belong to BC 11 but could not be allocated with certainty (see fig. 24).⁴ Four more fragments (F, G, H, J) most probably belong to BC 2 based on the hand and content (see fig. 25).

² The height of the reconstructed scroll has changed since the first publication discussing it (Schlosser 2016), because in the meantime another fragment of BC 11 was found in a different frame of the Bajaur Collection (frame 33, BC 14).

³ Such lines call to mind the threads running from top to bottom that were sometimes used to hold the strips of birch bark together. For example, in the long-format scrolls BC 3 and BC 5, such a line can be seen, although there are no traces of needle holes. Vertical stitches at the edge of the margins are discernable in the Dhp^k scroll and also in BL 1, 3A, 9, 13, and 12+14 (Salomon 1999a: 96, Allon 2001: 44, Salomon 2008a: 86, Baums 2009: 62, 68, 609); horizontal stitches at the overlapping joints of two birch bark parts can be seen (at least) in BL 9 and 13 (Baums 2009: 68), although normally at such joints, the component sheets would have only been glued together.

⁴ In Schlosser 2016, also fragment K was not positioned. It is now part of the first line on the recto, where it seems to fit both physically and textually.

2.3 BC 6

2.3.1 Preservation Status

Manuscript no. 6 of the Bajaur Collection is in a quite poor state of preservation, above of all because the ink is sometimes very faint, making the letters hardly legible. In the first survey of the Bajaur Collection (Strauch 2007/2008), BC 6 consisted of three parts. In his revised survey (2008) the third part was labeled as BC 19 (frame 32), since due its different width it cannot belong to BC 6. The two remaining parts (frames 29 and 30) are the left and right half of a single manuscript.

2.3.2 Reconstruction of the Scroll

The left, right, and bottom margins of the scroll are preserved. It seems that also the top margin of the scroll is preserved, but it cannot be said with absolute certainty whether another piece of birch bark was originally attached to the top (adding more text at the beginning and end). However, the two preserved edges at the top left and right, the dog-ear at the top right, as well as a quite horizontal upper border suggest that the manuscript is complete as it is.

The reconstruction of the preserved fragments is fairly certain. Although the connection between lines 2 and 3 on the recto (corresponding to lines 7 and 8 on the verso) is not absolutely clear, it looks as if there are some joint letters on both the recto and the verso. Moreover, the imprints of two little chips from 6v5 on 6r1 ensure that the scroll was once folded in accordance with the current reconstruction. The sequence of the rest is evident from one continuous piece of birch bark on the right-hand side. The left half of the manuscript is a little more damaged, but here the contents confirm the current reconstruction. In two cases, the left half of the lines are lost, and in two other cases the left half of the lines are so badly damaged that almost nothing can be read anymore. There is no physical connection between the two halves, but the distance can be estimated with some certainty in 6r8 based on internal textual evidence.

2.3.3 Format and Layout

The original scroll was a “short format” type, measuring about 30 × 10 cm. It was folded quite exactly in the middle (the maximum width of the preserved halves is 14.7 cm on both sides).

The margin on the right edge of the recto is about 0.8 cm (corresponding to two or three akṣaras). At the top it is about 0.5 cm. The margins on the verso are a little wider, measuring 1–1.20 cm on the right (corresponding to three akṣaras) and circa 0.6 cm at the top.

On the recto, there are eleven lines of writing, on the verso there are nine, making twenty lines altogether. Each line contains more or less 68 akṣaras. In total there would have been 1287 akṣaras, of which 1095 survive (fully or partly), which is 85 % of the presumed original text.

The text is structured into paragraphs by different types of circles, however without any numbering. At the end of the recto side there is a note, most likely added later, which says that the rest has been written on the reverse side (*G śeṣa patade likhidae*). The same remark can be found at the bottom of the recto side of BC 4, although there the remark is a little more detailed and embedded in the text with relation to the content.

2.3.4 Additional/Unlocated Fragments

There are no unlocated fragments and also no fragments from other frames. Only in one case is the exact horizontal position of a small fragment (C) in the left half of the manuscript uncertain, which affects the transliteration of line 6r1, as well as lines 6v8 and 6v9.

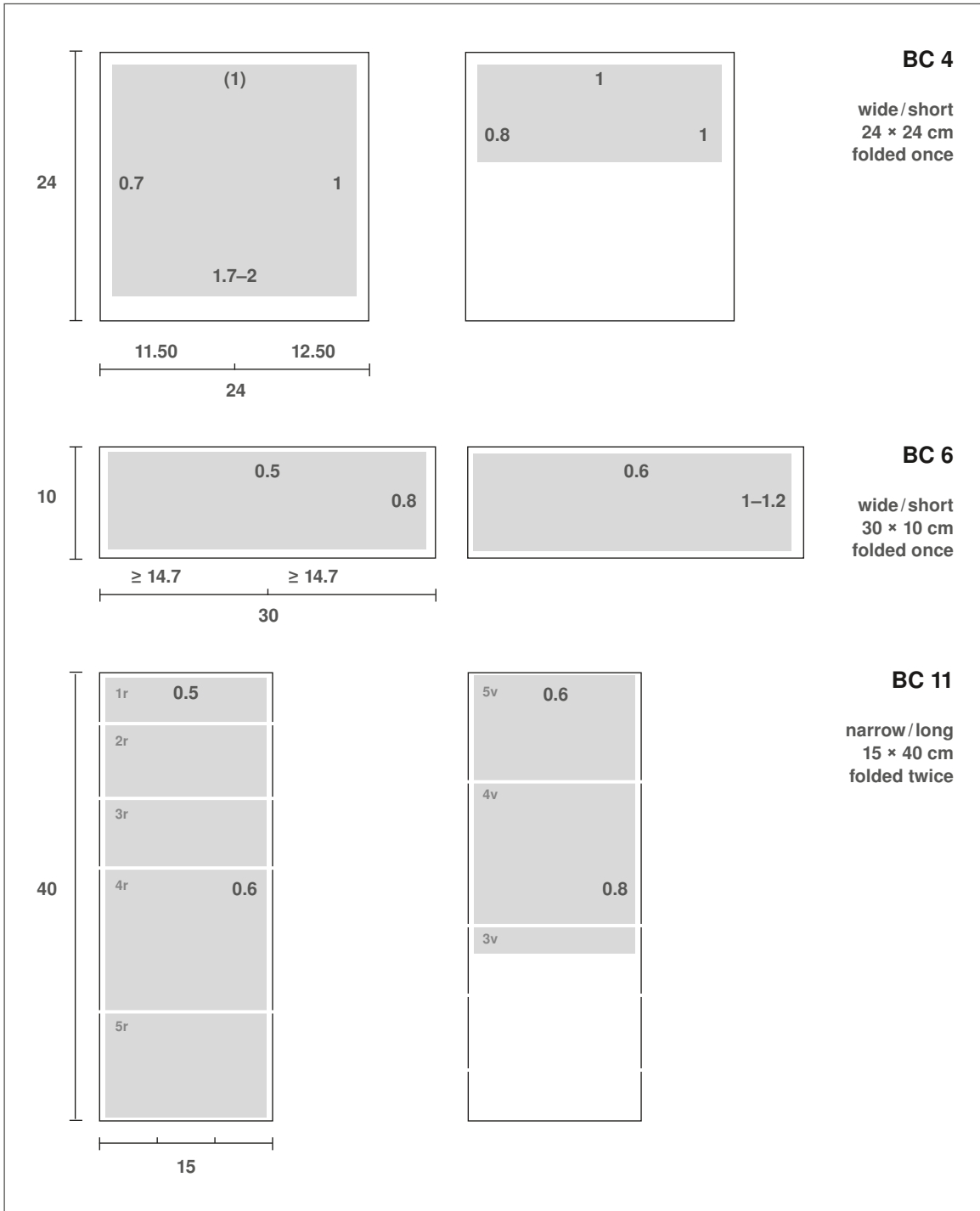


Fig. 3. Illustration of the original format of BC 4, BC 6, and BC 11.



Fig. 4. BC 4, unreconstructed preservation status of the manuscript after unrolling (scale 50%). Part 1 (frame 10) and part 2 (frame 18), recto.

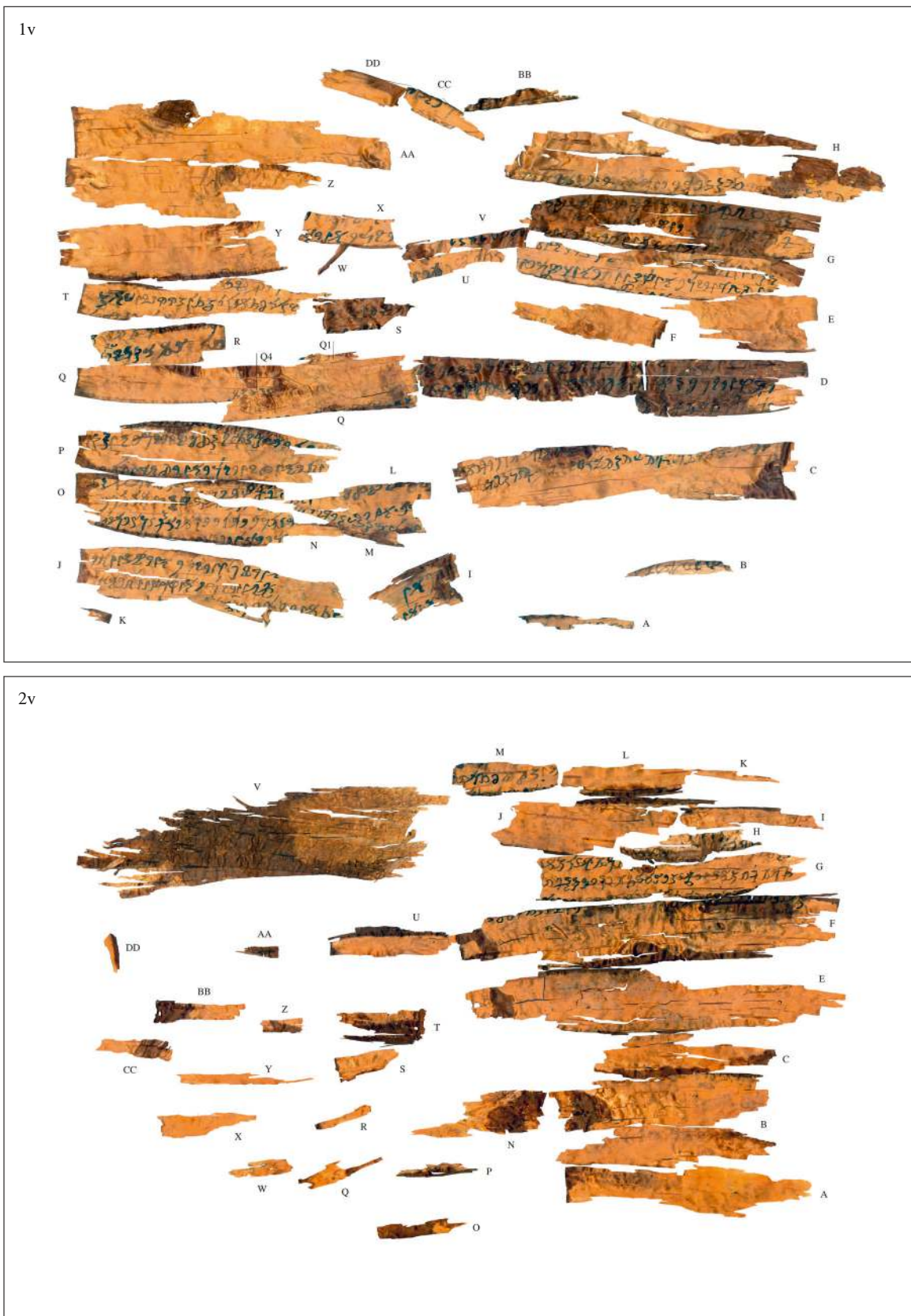


Fig. 5. BC 4, unreconstructed preservation status of the manuscript after unrolling (scale 50%). Part 1 (frame 10) and part 2 (frame 18), verso.

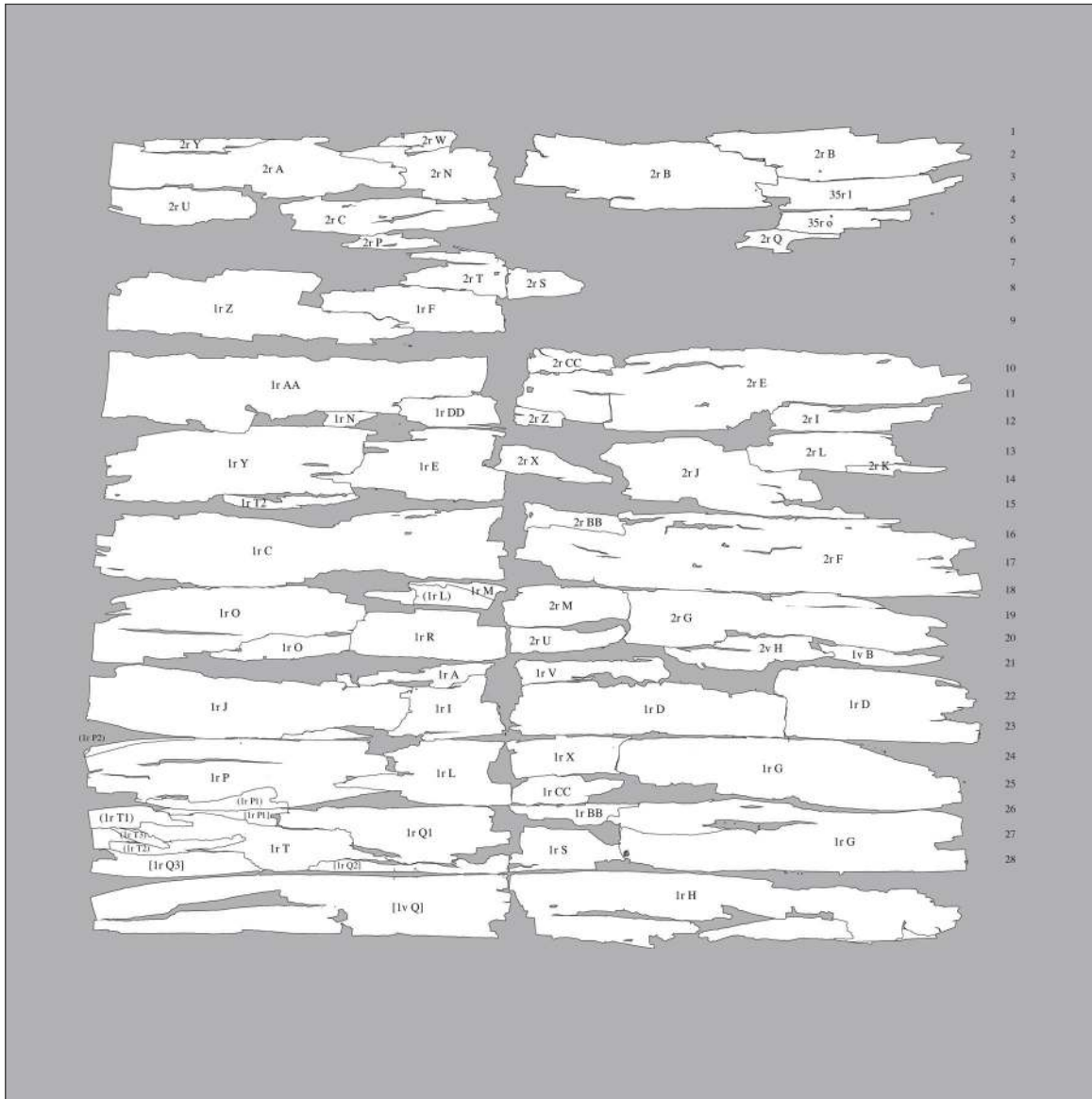


Fig. 6. BC 4, key to the reconstructed manuscript, recto (scale 50%). 1r = BC 4, part 1, recto (frame 10), 2r = BC 4, part 2, recto (frame 18), 35r = frame 35, recto. Designations in round brackets signify overlying fragments. Designations in square brackets label the reverse sides of fragments of which only one side was visible in the scan.

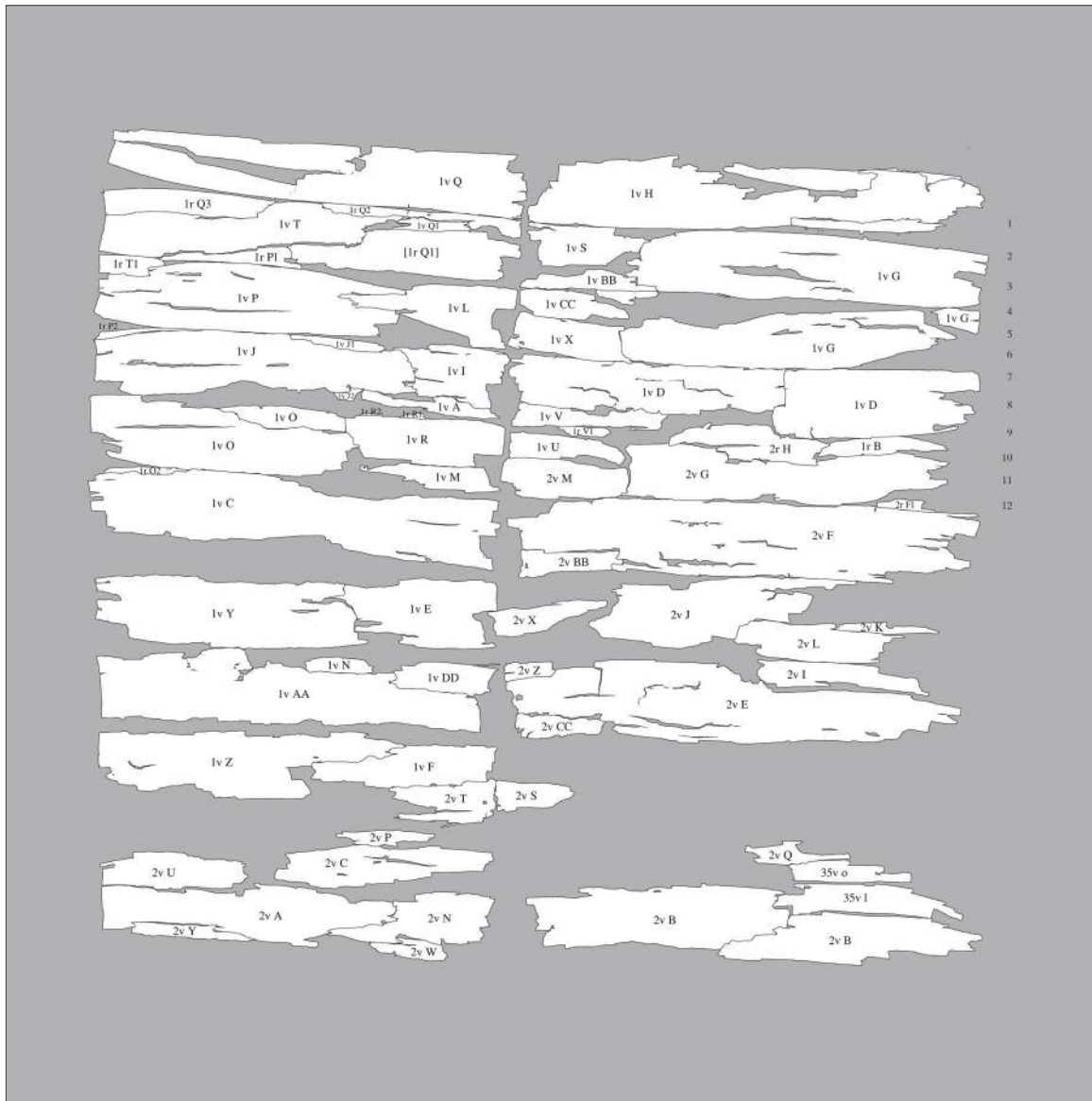


Fig. 7. BC 4, key to the reconstructed manuscript, verso (scale 50%). 1v = BC 4, part 1, verso (frame 10), 2v = BC 4, part 2, verso (frame 18), 35v = frame 35, verso. Designations in round brackets signify overlying fragments. Designations in square brackets label the reverse sides of fragments of which only one side was visible in the scan.

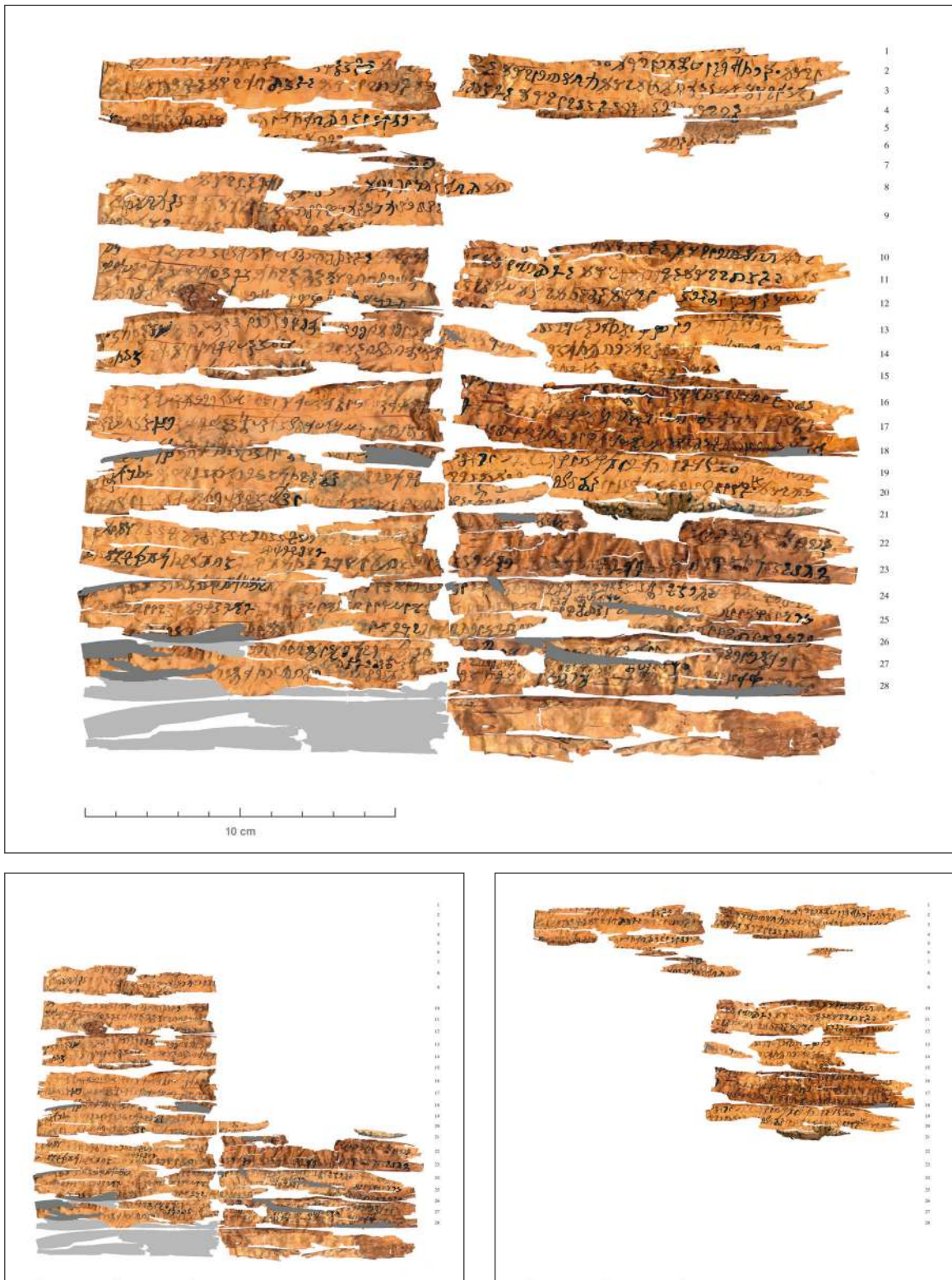


Fig. 8. BC 4, reconstructed manuscript, recto (scale 50%). Dark grey areas represent overlying fragments. Light grey areas represent the reverse sides of reconstructed fragments of which only one side is visible (in the scanned image). Below are the reconstructed fragments of part 1 (frame 10) on the left and part 2 (frame 18) on the right.



Fig. 9. BC 4, reconstructed manuscript, verso (scale 50%). Dark grey areas represent overlying fragments. Light grey areas represent the reverse sides of reconstructed fragments of which only one side is visible (in the scanned image). Below are the reconstructed fragments of part 1 (frame 10) on the left and part 2 (frame 18) on the right.

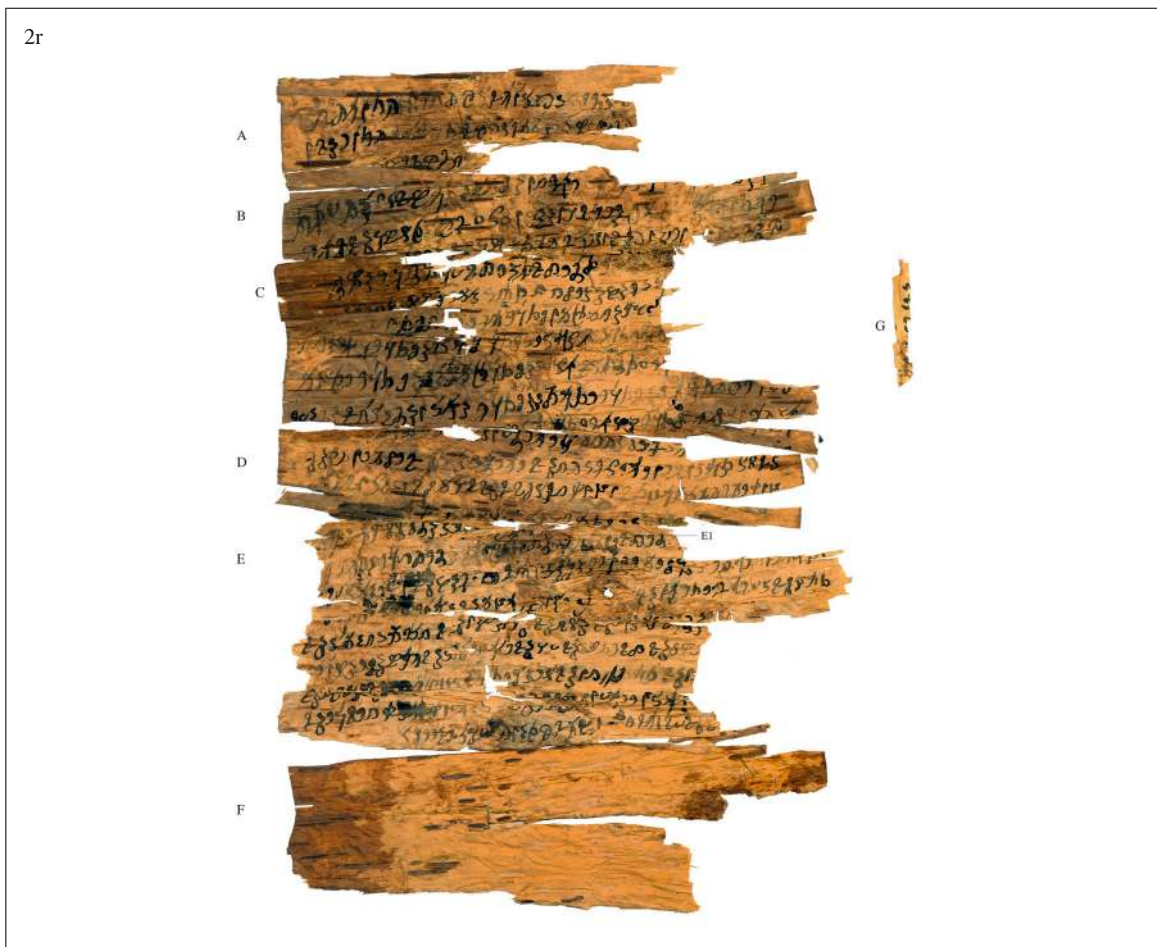
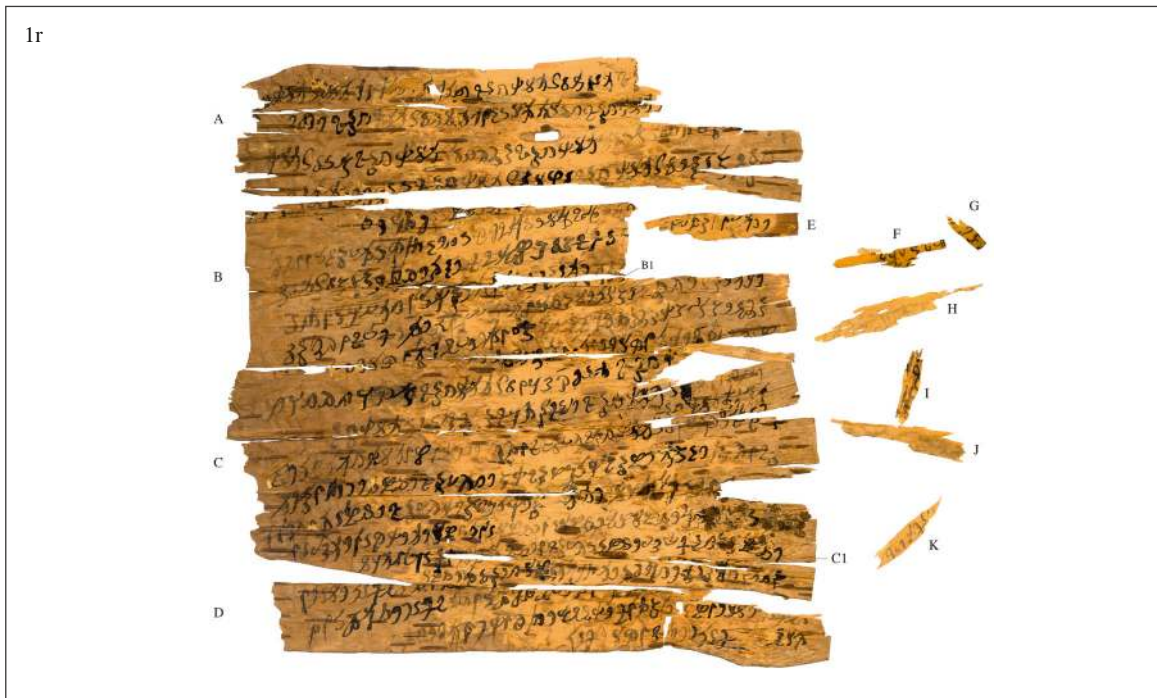


Fig. 10. BC 11, unreconstructed preservation status of the manuscript after unrolling (scale 50%). Part 1 (frame 20) and part 2 (frame 21), recto.

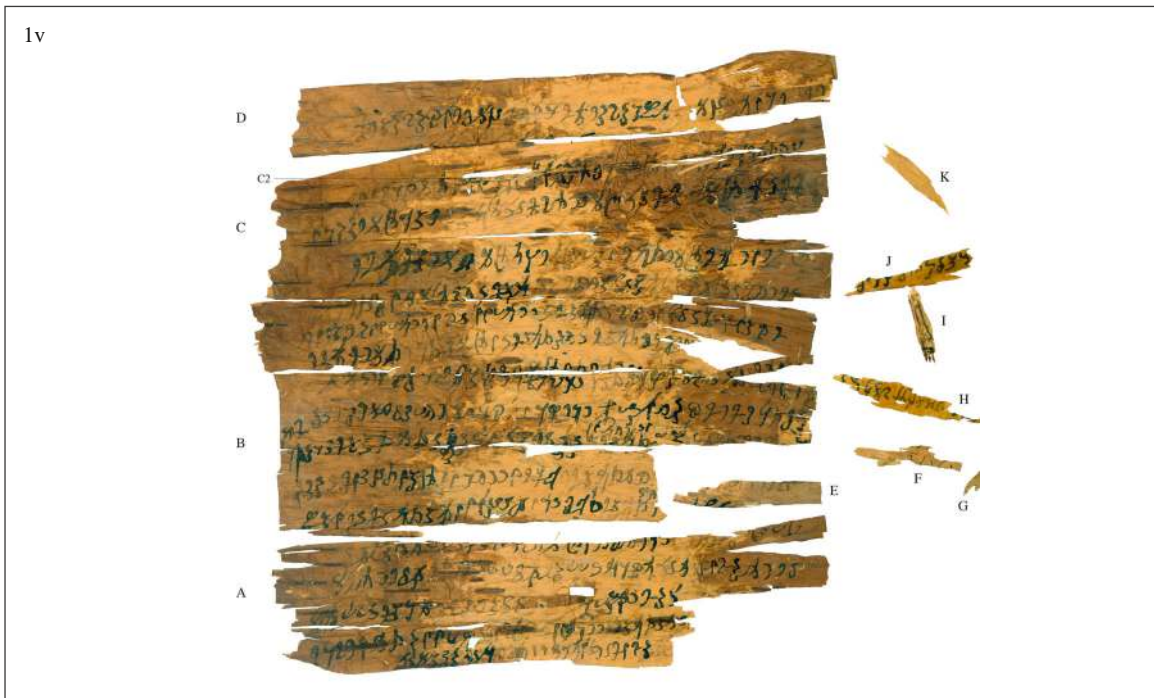


Fig. 11. BC 11, unreconstructed preservation status of the manuscript after unrolling (scale 50%). Part 1 (frame 20) and part 2 (frame 21), verso.



Fig. 12. BC 11, key to the reconstructed manuscript, recto (scale 50%).



Fig. 13. BC 11, key to the reconstructed manuscript, verso (scale 50%).

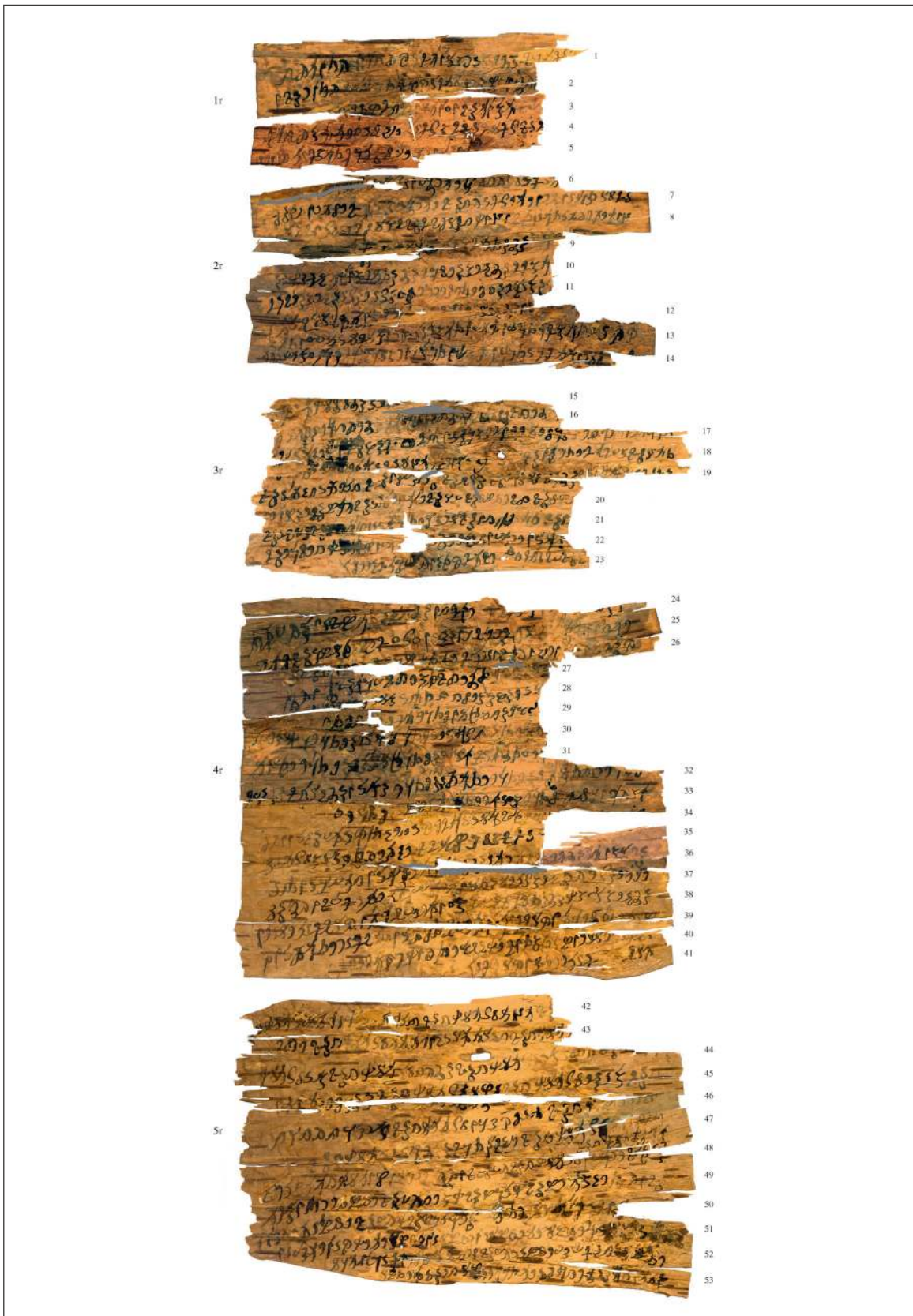


Fig. 14. BC 11, reconstructed manuscript with line and section numbers, recto (scale 50%). Dark grey areas represent overlying fragments.

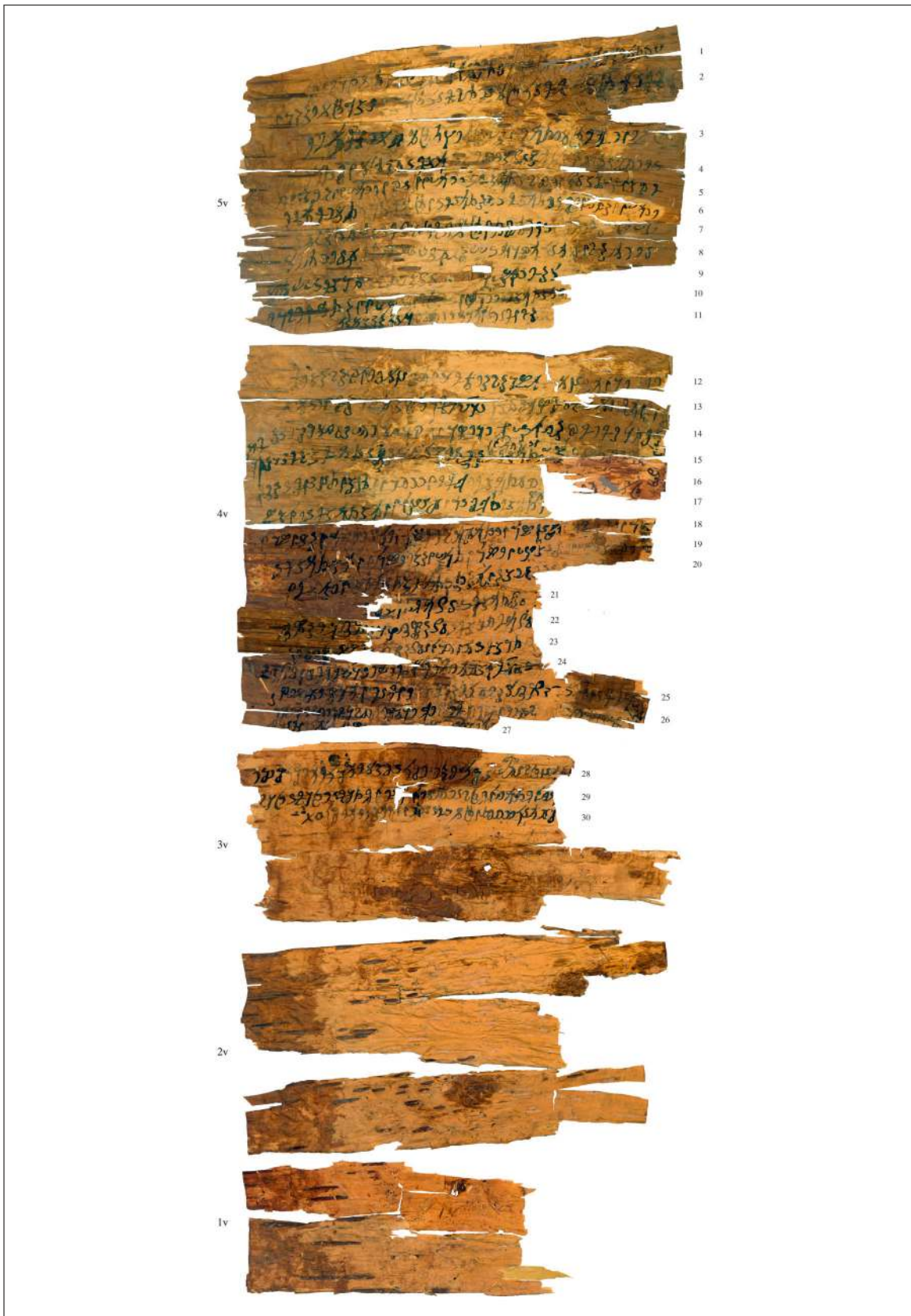


Fig. 15. BC 11, reconstructed manuscript with line and section numbers, verso (scale 50%). Dark grey areas represent overlying fragments.



Fig. 16. BC 6, unreconstructed preservation status of the manuscript after unrolling, recto (scale 47%).

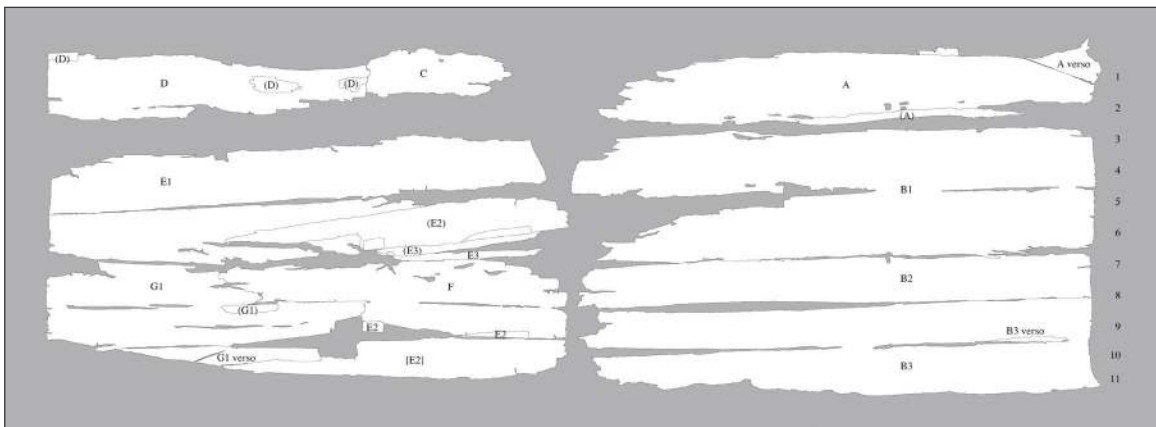


Fig. 18. BC 6, key to the reconstructed manuscript, recto (scale 47%).



Fig. 20. BC 6, reconstructed manuscript with line and section numbers, recto (scale 47%). Dark grey areas represent overlying fragments. Light grey areas represent the reverse sides of reconstructed fragments of which only one side is visible (in the scanned image).



Fig. 17. BC 6, unreconstructed preservation status of the manuscript after unrolling, verso (scale 47%).

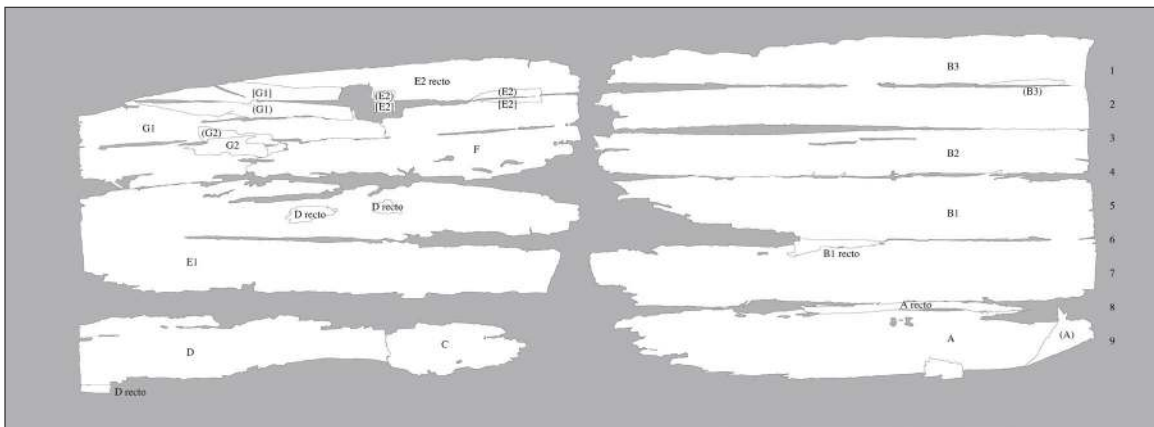


Fig. 19. BC 6, key to the reconstructed manuscript, verso (scale 47%).



Fig. 21. BC 6, reconstructed manuscript with line and section numbers, verso (scale 47%). Dark grey areas represent overlying fragments. Light grey areas represent the reverse sides of reconstructed fragments of which only one side is visible (in the scanned image).

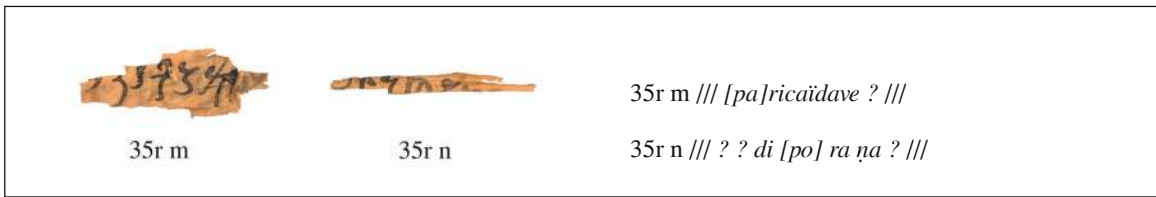


Fig. 22. Fragments from the “debris” frame 35 of the Bajaur Collection, possibly belonging to either BC 4 or BC 11 (scale 100%); the verso is blank in each case.

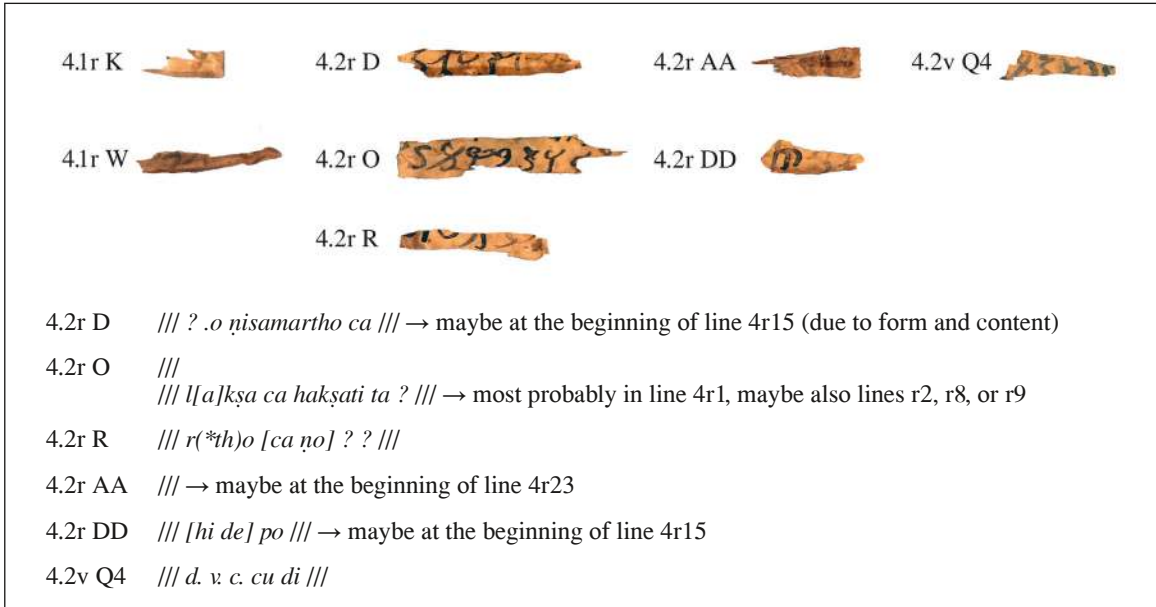


Fig. 23. Unlocated fragments from BC 4 (scale 100%); the verso is blank in each case.

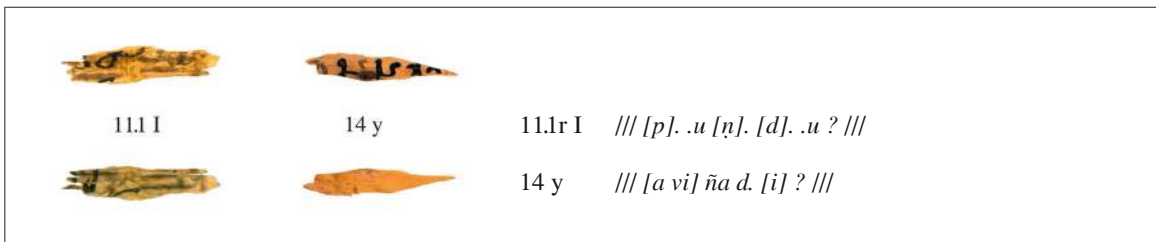


Fig. 24. Unlocated fragments from BC 11 (scale 100%).

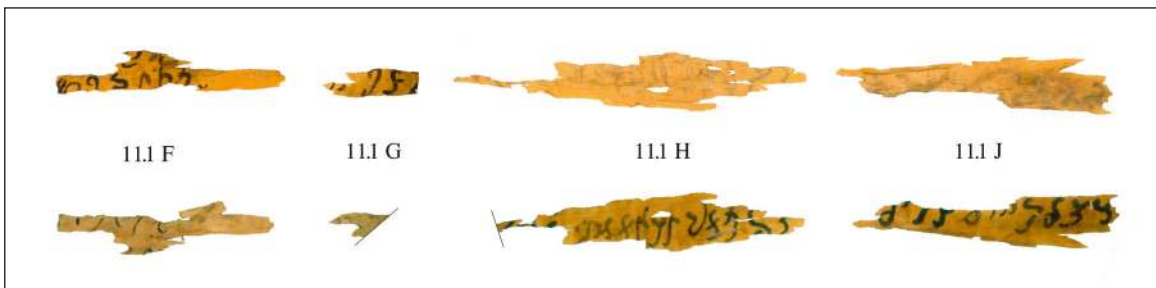


Fig. 25. Unlocated fragments from BC 11, probably belonging to BC 2 (scale 100%).