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REMARKS ON THE PAPYRI AND OSTRACA FROM KOSSEIR

aus: Zeitschrifft für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 78 (1989) 297–299

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Remarks on the Papyri and Ostraca from Kosseir

In BASP 23 (1986), pp. 1-60 R.S. Bagnall publishes 76 texts found in the American excavations of the Red Sea port of Leukos Limen (Kosseir). Since the texts come from an area from which written documents were hitherto all but absent, they are of more than usual interest in spite of their fragmentary state.

No. 2 is a private letter mentioning some products received or sent by the writer (25 loaves of bread, a bathing towel etc.) and ending with family greetings. Typically the products are conveyed on camel back (l. 5). The editor deplores that "since the name of the god before whom the usual proskynema is made is not preserved, we cannot deduce anything about the place of writing." This divine name must have stood in l. 3, where Bagnall reads [παρά - - - - κομπαστη]. The papyrus is badly damaged at this point, but there are clear traces of the bottoms of several letters before [κομπαστη]. When one takes into account that Leukos Limen was situated at the end of the caravan route departing from Coptos, ll. 2-3 can be supplemented as follows: [Π]ο προσκύνημα σου ἐποίησα παρὰ τοῖς τρίχωμασιν [. . .]. The hair (τρίχωμα) of Isis was the most famous relic to be worshipped in Coptos. It was the object of a proskynema in a letter from that town published by H.C. Youtie in 1951. The present letter nicely confirms the close links between Coptos on the Nile and Kosseir on the Red Sea coast.

Ostracon no. 24 is full of problems, grammatical and lexicographical as well as institutional. We reproduce here Bagnall's transcript:

Κόμαρος χιλίαρχος
Βήκει Αριοθης
ἀπες μασσανάκαια
καλοφονέια γ.
Κόμαρος χιλίαρχος Βήκει[
[. . .] ρέσενουφι .
[. . .] θεί Ψενοσφιρεʔ]

Between the name of the sender Κόμαρος, in the nominative, and that of the recipient Βήκει, in the dative, there is a short cluster of letters, which Bagnall reads as χιλίαρχος "commander of a cohors milliaria ".

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2 In l. 9 we prefer to read [μος ἐν τοσοῦτοι . instead of [κατεντος οὕτως].
This is unlikely both from the institutional and the palaeographical point of view:

1. The cohortes milliariae are no doubt a creation of the Flavian emperors\(^3\), and cohortes milliariae were probably never stationed in Egypt\(^4\). The parallel for a cohortes milliaria in Upper Egypt adduced by Bagnall, [line omitted] χιλιαρχος in SB XIV 11699, has been refuted by Gilliam, who rightly noticed that the title χιλιαρχος is not normally abbreviated. Chi, sometimes superimposed on rho, is used there for ἐκατόνταρχος, i.e. centurio\(^5\), not for χιλιαρχος.  

2. For equestrian officers within the legions the title χιλιαρχος was also used as an equivalent of tribunus angusticlavius legionis. In Egypt there were probably six tribuni angusticlavii for each legion as the Egyptian legions did not have a tribunus laticlavius\(^6\), but it is unlikely that a small detachment as that in Leukos Limen would have been commanded by a tribunus legionis.  

3. From a palaeographical point of view the group read by Bagnall as λ( ) is identical with nu in l. 4 (κολοφονεία) and l. 7 (Ψευδος). For these reasons we prefer to read here a single proper name Χινβήκει, both in l. 2 and in l. 5. Names beginning with Χιν- or Χι- are very rare in papyrological documents. In the lexica of Preisigke and Foraboschi only the following can be found: Χινανας, Χινεμμους, Χινθωνς, Χινφος, Χιχως, Χινες. Most of these are variants of better known names, such as Σινθωνς and Σινθως\(^7\). Thus Χινβήκες might also be a variant of Χεμβήκες (SB I 5135 l. 3). Maybe another instance of the same name is attested in no.7 l. 3. Bagnall does not read this line, but on the photograph in his edition (pl. 5) we clearly see : , which can be read without problem as Πχενβηκι and may be a variant with the masculine article of Χινβήκες.  

Confusion between λι and ν is a common editorial error in Roman papyri\(^8\), and the same error may have been made in l. 3, where μασσανδάνια yields no sense. Bagnall suggests an

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\(^7\) For the alternance Σ/Χ in Greek transcriptions of Egyptian names, see J. QUÆGEBEUR, Considérations sur le nom propre égyptien Teëphtaphonuchos, Or. Lov. Per. 4 (1973), pp. 85-100, esp. pp. 92-100.

\(^8\) An interesting parallel is the ghost-name Αλιταίος in P.Flor. III 329 l. 3 and l. 27 and in P.Giss. I 59 col.1 l. 11 (wrongly "corrected" in BL I, p. 462). The name should be read Ανταίος, as
alternative reading μασσαλιδάνια, which "sounds as if it might be connected with Massalia". This is very close to the mark, but the last two signs are not the ending of the word, but the figure ια, as is clear from the line above them. Line 3 is thus a perfect parallel to line 4:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{massalidan( ) } & \ i\alpha \\
\text{kolophoineia } & \ \gamma
\end{align*} \]

The word massalidan( ) is a variant of μασσαλιταν(αί), attested in P.Mich. VIII 501 (A.D. II) l. 20: λαγύνοι μασσαλιταναί. It is originally a Latin derivation of Massilia. Latin Massilitanus means "of Massilia" and is synonymous with Massiliensis and Massilioticus. Martialis xenion 13.123 deals with the "fumea Massiliae vina", which he apparently considers a cheap brand, and is labeled "Massilitanum". When the Greeks borrow the word they adapt it slightly to the Greek name of the town Μασσαλία and call the wine Μασσαλιτανός. Thus in P.Mich. VIII 501, cited above. The change from mute τ to voiced δ in the present text is no problem. Since the word is here used in parallel with kolophonia, it apparently denotes a kind of jar rather than the wine itself (so also in P.Mich. VIII 501).

In conclusion we propose the following text:

Kομαρός Χιν-
βήκει. Aριώθης
ἀπέσαλκε ἵ. μασσαλιδαν(άς) ια, κολοφόνεια γ.
Kομαρός Χινβήκει[ει]
[. . .]. ρεσενουψί [. . .]
[. . .].βίς Ψενοσίρε?]

Komaros to Chinbekis. Haruothes has sent (?) 11 Marsilian jars and 3 kolophonia.
Komaros to Chinbekis - - -12

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was seen by U. Wilcken in Archiv 6 (1920), p. 427 n.2 (the correction was not incorporated in the Berichtigungsliste).

9 Cf. Bagnall's note on p. 26: "There seem to be marks above the ια at the end".

10 For the complex history of the suffix -tanus, see M.FAUST, Die Einwohnernamen und Völkernamen auf -itani, -etani, Göttingen 1966, pp. 81 and 109.


12 A few minor corrections can be given for some other texts: in no.4 l. 1 we read [χαίρειν. Καλός πισχήσείς] instead of πάλιν καλό σε, in no.27 l. 2 'Ερμέρως instead of 'Ερμέρος and in no.28 l. 1 the name of the addressee is clearly 'Επαφροδίτων.