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P. OXY. 2466: THE SESONCHOSIS ROMANCE

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P.OXY.2466: THE SESONCHOSIS ROMANCE

To date there are three papyrus fragments of the so-called Sesonchosis romance.¹ We are mainly concerned here with P.Oxy.2466, a papyrus which contains 28 lines and belongs to the third century A.D. The text we cite is the one edited by D. Rea, with some restorations which complete the first three lines. We then go on to provide a translation of and a commentary on the text, followed by some general remarks by way of conclusion.

P.Oxy.2466

.....]. τ[
 μ[αχεῖν]· γενναίως οὖν ὁμοθυ-
 μα[δὸν ἄ]παντες ἐφ' ἰκανὸν χρό-
 ν[ον ἀντ]ιστάντες ἐμάχοντο. πολ-
 5 λοὶ μ[ἐν] αὐτῶν ἀπώλλυντο, πολ-
 λούς δὲ [κ]αὶ τῶν ἐναντίων ἐκτ[ει-]
 ναν· [σφ]ᾶς δ' ὀρώωντες αὐτοὺς οἱ ἸΑ-
 ραβες [ἐκά]στης ἡμέρας μειουμέ-
 νους, τ[οὺς] δὲ Αἰγυπτίους ἔτι μᾶλλον
 10 ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων νομῶν ἐπερχο-
 μένων πληθύ(ο)ντας ἐτροπώθη-
 σαν ὥστε μηδὲ τὸ πέμπτον μέ-
 ρος ἀνασ[ωθ]ῆναι τῆς στρατείας,
 ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν διωκομένο[υ]ς, τοὺ[ς]
 15 δὲ φεύγοντας ὑπ' ἀλλήλων συμ-
 πα[τ]ε[ῖ]σθαι, μόνον δὲ τὸν Οὐέβηλιν
 μετ' ὀλίγων τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς
 ἰδίους ἀνακομισθῆναι τόπους· οἱ
 δὲ Αἰγύπτιοι μετὰ τὴν ἦτταν τῶν
 20 ἐναντίων εὐλαβηθέντες μὴ

¹ P.Oxy. 1826, 2466 and 3319. The second, P.Oxy. 2466, was edited by Dr. Rea in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 27 (1962) 134-36, who restored the text of the last two lines: cf. S.West, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 47 (1980) 11, n.1, in her edition of P.Oxy.3319. The latter is also edited by J.N.O'Sullivan and W.A.Beck in "The Sesonchosis Romance", *ZPE* 45 (1982) 71-83, with translation and a good commentary. The text of the three papyri has been reproduced also by J.N.O'Sullivan in "The Sesonchosis Romance", *ZPE* 56 (1984) 39-44, who makes some convincing comments on this romance and tries to outline its likely content.

For the name Sesonchosis and its variants, and for the historical question, see the above cited article of West. Greek texts about Sesonchosis are Hdt.2,102-110; Diodorus S.1,53-58; Ps.-Call. 1,33,6; 34,2; 3,17, 17; 24,2; 34,4.

στρατολο[γ]ήσας ὁ Οὐέβηλις ἐκ τῶν
 ἄλλ[ων ἐ]θνῶν τῶν ὁμορούντ[ων]
 αὐτῶ τ[ὸ] δεύ[τε]ρον ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἔλθη
 γει[νό]μεν[ος ἰσ]χυρότερος τὰς πό-
 25 λεις τὰς [ἐπὶ] τ[ῆ]ς συνορίας τῆς Ἀρα-
 βίας ἰκα[ν]ο[ῖς] ἀνδράσιν ὠχυρώσαν-
 το [.]. πάντα. Σεσόγχωσις δὲ
 διακ[ο]ύ[σ]ας παρ[ὰ] τοῦ Θαίμου τὰ συμ[βεβηκότα]

Translation

"... And so gallantly confronting them in common accord they fought for a long time. Many of them perished, but they also killed many of the enemy. The Arabians, seeing how their numbers decreased daily, and how the Egyptians in even greater measure increased their own with those that arrived from the other nomes, were put to flight, in such a way that less than a fifth of the army managed to escape with their lives, but some in being pursued, others in fleeing, trampled each other, and only Webelis and a few of his men were able to return to their own land. The Egyptians, after the defeat of the enemy, fearing that Webelis, recruiting troops from the other peoples on his borders, might launch a second attack with more strength, garrisoned the cities on the border of Arabia with many men ... all; Sesonchosis, informed of what had taken place by Thalmus ..."

Commentary

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2 μ[αχεῖν]. cf.1.4 ἐμάχοντο. For such repetitions in this romance see P.Oxy.3319 col.ii 16 and 17-18: δυναμικώτερος; col.III 1.1 πλαν[ώμενος] and 1.3 πλανῆσθαι; col. iii 1.11 ὀρώσα and 1.14 ἐώρα; also cf. *infra* 1.4-6 and 1.2 γενναίως.

γενναίως: cf. the episode of the capture of Tyre in Ps.-Call.I 35,9 τῶν ... συμμαχομένων γενναίως. The adverb is frequent in Ps.-Call. besides verbs such as πολεμέω: see I 37,3; 38,5; II 2,12; 9,8; III 4,15. It appears also in other romances: *Lessico dei romanzieri greci, o.c. s.v.*, and in the papyri: Preisigke I,s.v.

2-3 Ὅῶν ὁμοθυμα[δὸν ἅ]παντες: the former editors wrote: οὐνομο. υνα[. . .] .αντες. Our restoration is based on literary and non-literary texts: see Ar.Av. 1015-16 ὁμοθυμαδὸν | σποδεῖν ἅπαντας τοὺς ἀλαζόνας δοκεῖ; Pax 484-85 ὁμοθυμαδὸν | ἀπασιν ἡμῖν Ἀῶθις ἀντιληπτέον; cf. also Pl.Leg.805a; Xen.Hell.2,4,1 τότε πάντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν . . . τιμωρόμεθα; Act.Ap.5,12 καὶ ἦσαν ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἅπαντες ἐν τῇ Στοᾷ Σολομῶντος. The adverb alone is usual in authors such as Philo and Josephus and in the papyri: Preisigke II, s.v.; cf. also Act.Ap.15,25.

The same spirit of unity between war allies in Char.8,2,10 ὁμονοοῦντες ἐκρατήσαμεν τῆς θαλάσσης; cf. also 7,5,10.

3 ἐφ' ἱκανὸν χρόν[ον]: the adjective is very usual in the papyri with the sense of "a lot of": cf. Preisigke I, s.v. The same occurs in the New Testament and authors like Polybius or Diodorus of Sicily: see Bauer, s.v., c; cf. Ach.Tat.8,17,10 ἐπεδίδου . . . χρήματα ἱκανὰ τῇ πόλει; Ps.-Call.2,9,1 ὀδεύσας ἱκανὰς ἡμέρας; 3,21,1; 28,8; 31,11.

4 ἀντ[ι]στάντες: περι- is also possible: cf. Josephus, *Bell.*3,355 ἀθροῖοι περιστάντες, and *Ant.Iud.*5,227; 4,92; 5,162. The same intransitive value in Char. 2,5,7; 3,8,5; 5,4,6. But a more likely proposal seems ἀντι-; cf. Char. 7,5,12 χρόνον μὲν οὖν πολλὸν ἀντέσχεν ἡ πεζὴ στρατιὰ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων Μῆδοις; P.-Call. 1,35,3 uses it in the siege of Tyre: ἀντέστησαν . . . καὶ ἀντιτάσσονται αὐτῷ Τύριοι περιτειχίσαντες ὅλην τὴν πόλιν. The verb appears several times in Heliodorus: Cf. *Lessico dei romanzieri greci, o.c., s.v.* The participle refers to the Egyptians.

4 ἐμάχοντο: cf. Ps.-Call. 1,41,5 ἐμάχοντο πολλὸν χρόνον; cf. *supra* 1.2 μ[αχεῖν]. Egyptians must be the subject.

4-7 πολλοὶ . . . ἀπώλλυντο, πολλοὺς ἔκτειναν: anaphoric polyptoton. Cf.Char. 7,5,14 πολλοὺς μὲν ἐζώγησε, πλείονας δὲ ἀπέκτεινε; other examples in Char.1,9,6; 4,7,7; 8,5,4 etc.; also in the narration about Ninus and Semiramis in Diodorus S. 2,19,9 πολλοὺς μὲν τῶν Ἰνδῶν διέφθειρε, τῇ δὲ Σεμιράμιδι πολλὴν ἀσφάλειαν παρεσκεύασε.

7 οἱ Ἀραβες: there are not reports of an Arabian invasion of Egypt: cf. *infra* 1.16. Diodorus S. 1,53,5 says that Sesoösis was sent by his father with an army into Arabia, where he underwent a laborious training; the conquest of the nation came next. Arabia is mentioned in Ps.-Call. 1,41,1.

7-8 ὀρώντες αὐτοὺς . . . μειομένους: cf. Josephus, *Ant.Iud.* 10,192 εἰ δὲ μειωθέντας ἴδοι; μειόω appears in the papyri: cf. Preisigke II, *s.v.*; and in the New Testament: Bauer, *s.v.*

9 τ[οὺς] . . . Αἰγυπτίους: The Egyptians are introduced sympathetically and as heroes in Char. 6,8,2ss., and constitute obligatory characters in the Greek love romance.

10-11 ἐπερχομένων πληθύ(ο)ντας: The same construction in Char. 7,3,11 βουλομένων . . . στρατηγῶ. These absolute constructions are more and more frequent in the *koiné*.² There are some examples of πληθύω with partitive genitive in the New Testament: see Blass-Debrunner-Funk 95. For the verb ἐπέρχομαι cf. Ach.Tat. 4,18,1 τοὺς ληστὰς ἐπελθοῦσα δύναμις μείζων παρεστήσαντο. It is also very usual in the papyri: Preisigke I, *s.v.*; and in the New Testament: Bauer, *s.v.*. Cf. Ps.-Call. 1,1,4 τῶν ἐπερχομένων πολεμίων . . . περιεγένετο, and *ibid.* 3,3,5.

11-12 ἐπτροπώθησαν: The verb occurs in the papyri: Preisigke II, *s.v.* The lexicon of Sophocles gives several instances in the Septuaginta and one from Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

12-14 τὸ πέμπτον μέρος ἀνασ[ωθ]ῆναι τῆς στρατείας: Hyperbaton as in 1.17-18. It is usual in literary authors; so in Char. 7,1,8 εἰς ἄμυναν καταχρήσασθαι τοῦ τυράννου, who presents more than forty cases.³ The same verb in Xen.Ephes. 1,10,10; 5,6,1; Ach.Tat. 5,9,6; Ps.-Call.1,36,5; see also Bauer, *s.v.*

14-16 τοὺς μὲν διωκομένο[υ]ς . . . συμπα[τ]ε[ί]σθαι: The content is similar to Char. 7,4,8 οἱ δὲ ἔξω παιόμενοι . . . εἴσω πάλιν ἔφευγον, ἀπαντῶντες δὲ ἀλλήλοις ἐν στενοχωρίᾳ πολλὴν ἐξουσίαν παρεῖχον τοῖς φονεύουσιν. The phraseology is more similar to Josephus, *Ant.Iud.* 1,383 πολλοὶ δὲ ὑπὸ σφῶν αὐτῶν συμπατούμενοι διεφθείροντο (cf. *ibid.* *Ant. Iud.* 9,86), and to Diodorus S 2,19,8, in the account of Ninus and Semiramis: πάντων . . . φευγόντων . . . ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀπέθνησκον συμπατούμενοι; cf. Ps.-Call. 2,9,6. The verb συμπατέομαι appears also in Ps.-Call.1,35,7 (the siege of Tyre) and 3,22,3; it does not appear in the lexicon of Bauer or in that of Preisigke.

16 τὸν Οὐέβηλις: Two Arabian kings named Webelis are known (4th and 2nd centuries B.C., respectively), but there are no notices of their invasion of Egypt.⁴ In our papyrus he seems to be the chief of the Arabians, perhaps their king. In this case he must be the king whom Sesonchosis mentions in P.Oxy. 3319 col.ii 2-6 as his vassal and to whose daughter Sesonchosis is betrothed.⁵

² See E.Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik* II, München 1975⁴,400; E.Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit* II 3, Berlin 1970, 67-70; F.Blass -A.Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. by R.W.Funk, Chicago 1961, 218.

³ I am indebted to Carlos Hernández Lara for stylistic features of the romance of Chariton.

⁴ Cf. Dr.Rea, *art.cit.* 134-35.

⁵ O'Sullivan -Beck, *art.cit.* Their statement seems to me to be right, as do those of O'Sullivan in his article mentioned in n. 1.

17-18 εἰς τοὺς ἰδίους ἀνακομισθῆναι τόπους: "to return to their country or land", rather than "to their own positions". The verb is used with εἰς τὴν πατρίδα in Ach.Tat. 5,11,3 or with εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν in Josephus, *Ant.iud.* 7,251; cf. *ivid.* 14,233. It occurs also in Ps.-Call. 3,17,36. The adjective ἴδιος instead of a possessive reflexive pronoun appears in ptolemaic papyri⁶ and in literature: cf. Char. 1,4,6; 2,9,1; 5,6,10; 8,8; it is very usual in Pseudo-Callisthenes, as in the papyri (see Preisigke I, *s.v.*) and in the New Testament (see Bauer, *s.v.*), both in the singular and in the plural form. As for τόποι, in plural, it appears in Ps.-Call. 2,10,1; 3,24,1; 25,3,5; see also Bauer, *s.v.*, d. Preisigke II, *s.v.*, a.

For the hyperbaton cf. *supra* 1.12-13. In Chariton there are more than a hundred instances of this type.

20-23 εὐλαβηθέντες μὴ . . . ἔλθῃ: cf. Moeris ἀντὶ τοῦ φυλάττεσθαι . . . Ἀττικῶς, ἀντὶ τοῦ φοβεῖσθαι, Ἑλληνικῶς.⁷ Cf. Ps.-Call. 3,31,2 εὐλαβούμενος μήποτε . . . ἔλθῃ; the same construction with the subjunctive in Diodorus S. 2,13,4, where it has also the sense of "to fear". The classical examples with the subjunctive mentioned in LSS present the meaning of "to beware". According to Mandilaras it is only in post-ptolemaic papyri that the construction with the subjunctive has the value of "to fear".⁸ This meaning perhaps suits the context better here. Instances with the subjunctive are not documented in Bauer.

21 στρατολογήσας: cf. Char. 1,2,1; 7,2; 12,3. With a transitive sense in Ps.-Call. 1,35,1, in the episode of the capture of Tyre. See also Josephus, *Ant.Iud.* 8,380; 18,84. It appears in the New Testament and authors as Diodorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Plutarch (cf. Bauer, *s.v.*), but not in the lexicon of Preisigke.

22-23 τῶν ὁμορῶντων αὐτῶ: the same in Josephus, *Ant.Iud.* 14,10: τοὺς ὁμορῶντας αὐτῶ Ἰραβας. Cf. as well Preisigke II, *s.v.*; the verb does not appear in the New Testament according to Bauer.

25 συνορίας: this is no very frequent word. It appears in the papyri (Mayser I 3, 28; Preisigke III 329; See LSS), but also in *Ditt., Orientis* 168,18⁹; *Per.Eryth.*65, and *Ev. Mtt.*4,24, where it is doubtful whether we should read συνορία or Συρία. In Ps.-Call. the word used is τὰ ὄρια: see 3,25,7; 11; 26,2.

26 ἱκανοῖς ἀνδράσιν: for the sense of the adjective see *supra* 1.3.

27 [.] πάντα: perhaps a participle is lacking, as after the verb ἔλθῃ in 1.23-24.

27-28 Sesonchosis does seem to be absent from the battle, and a certain Thaïmus is his informant.

28 τοῦ Θαίμου: a Semite name which appears several times in inscriptions.¹⁰

⁶ Mayser, *o.c.* II 2, 73.

⁷ *Moeris Atticista lexicon Atticum* ed. J.Pierson, G.A.Koch, 1830, reprint Hildesheim 1969, 133.

⁸ B.G.Mandilaras, *The verb in the Greek non-literary papyri*, Athens 1973, 258; Mayser *o.c.* II 1, 239, n.1. gives an incomplete example of a possible subjunctive.

⁹ *Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae* ed. W.Dittenberger I, 1903, reprint Hildesheim 1970.

¹⁰ See the article of West (above n.1) 11, n.1.

The text refers to the invasion of Egypt by the Arabians, who are defeated. They are led by Webelis, their chief or perhaps king. Sesonchosis is not present at the battle: it is not known if he is in Egypt or, contrarily, in Arabia receiving his training, as Diodorus S. 1,53,5 relates, and there hears of events; or indeed if it is a result of the invasion that he conceives the idea of conquering Arabia, thereby embarking on his military campaigns. P.Oxy.1826, then, could well come after this papyrus. In any case, the episode in question belongs to the start of the romance, to Sesonchosis youth (cf.Diodorus S. 1,53,6), and clearly precedes P.Oxy.3319, which presents the conquest of Arabia as a past event.

The fragment we are concerned with coincides substantially with the romance of Ps.-Callisthenes, as does P.Oxy. 3319, and it seems reasonable to assume that one romance had an influence on the other. Given the renown of Alexander, and the popularity of his romance, the capture of Tyre (Ps.-Call. 1,35) seems to have had a particular influence on the Sesonchosis romance, just as it did on that of Chariton, where it is attributed to Chaereas (7,2,6 - 4,9), but without the lexical similarities we note in Sesonchosis.

The importance given to the military campaigns approximates it also to the *Ninus* romance, as does the presence of an erotic episode which would seem to mark it as a work of transition between the historical romance and the love romance. However, the features and length of the erotic episode are not known.

In what period could the romance have been written? The papyri are from the third century, the apparent date of composition of the *Alexander* romance,¹¹ so that the text could well belong to a century which saw the writing of other biographies, such as the (rather more pretentious) one of *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* of Philostratus. Alternatively, it might be older: it is not out of the question that a biography of Sesonchosis existed at the close of the Hellenistic period and that it provided the source for the present romance, as is the case with *Alexander*. It is even possible that the model for our text came from some biographical document concerning Alexander which pre-existed the preserved romance of *Alexander*. Could *Sesonchosis* have been written as a nationalistic response to this romance?

O'Sullivan and Beck mention the low intellectual level of the text and of its audience. We have seen that a great deal of terms appear in the non-literary papyri, but also in the literary *koiné* of the imperial epoch. Restricting ourselves to the fragment in question, we can observe an avoidance of the hiatus, a predominance of classical word-order as regards the position of the verb in the sentence and, albeit at a very basic level, a certain concern with

¹¹ See R.Merkelbach, *Die Quelle des griechischen Alexanderromans*, München 1977².

style.¹² However, in P.Oxy.3319 several hiatus are found¹³ and the verb appears predominantly in initial and central positions. Prudence is thus required when it comes to drawing conclusions: the evidence is too scant and the doubts surrounding the romance must remain.

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¹² In P.Oxy. 1826,4 (verso) ἐπέκλωσαν appears; this verb constitutes a poetical word according to LSS; it does not appear in Preisigke or in Bauer, but in literary texts such as D.Chr. 4,139 and Plu. 114 D in subjects which belong to literary or philosophical tradition.

¹³ Cf. col. ii 19 ἀύτῳ ὄθεν; col.ii 21 φαθὶ ἐκ; col.iii 9 παρ[εγένε]το ἐπὶ; col.iii 10 οὐ ἦν; 18 - κλίθη ἐπὶ.