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*VESTIGATIONES*

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## *Vestigationes*

W. Clarysse and P.J. Sijpesteijn have recently republished O.Amst. 8 in *Ancient Society* 19 (1988) 71-96, with four plates between pp. 80 and 81. With newly acquired joining pieces it now amounts to a very substantial segment of an amphora inscribed mostly with a list or lists of the duties of Roman soldiers. Some, if not all, refer to the month of Phamenoth of an unknown year, probably of the second century A.D. The new joins have also enforced a new arrangement, so that what was O.Amst. 8.62 has now become line 2. In addition a new reading of it is offered. What was οὐεγτιγαλίωνεϛ has become οὐεγτιγαρίωνεϛ; the earlier reading was connected with *uectigal* without any very clear attempt at an interpretation being made, see O.Amst., pp. 12-13, while the new one is equated with *uexillationes*, which is supposed to refer to four individual soldiers, whose names alternate in pairs below. Without arguing over this terminology I would like to offer a third reading: οὐεγτιγατίωνεϛ. The writing is completely undamaged, see especially Pl. 1 in the new publication; the photo in O.Amst., Pl. V, has a pale patch here. The difficulty lies in the rapidity of the writing and in the unfamiliar word. The reading suggested by me has the attraction that it represents a normal transliteration into Greek of a Latin word: *uestigationes*. It is true that this word can only be found in Latin in Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 6.1.2, where it refers to the efforts of Psyche to trace Cupid after he had run off when his identity was discovered, and in a glossary as the equivalent of ἰχνευσις, see G. Goetz, *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum* ii 334.11. However, it receives some comfort from another ostrakon containing a Greek private letter referring to a *uestigator*. This is SB VI 9272, first published by P.I. Price, *JJP* 9-10 (1955/6) 162-4, with a plate. A Marcus writes to a Julius mentioning leave, *commeatus* (in a Greek version not fully preserved), and then continuing simply ἔπεμψά σοι καὶ διὰ τοῦ οὐεγτιγάτορος, 'I sent you word by the *uestigator* as well'. The first editor, p. 163, made the attractive suggestion, «that *vestigator* is here the title of some *immunis* of the Roman army not previously encountered in inscriptions and documents». This was contested by S. Daris, *Aegyptus* 43 (1963) 267, arguing that the word must have retained its technical signification and its connection with the world of the chase, and appealing to a passage from yet another letter on an ostrakon, this time from a known location, the Wadi Fawakhir on the desert road between Coptus and Leucus Limen, namely SB VI 9017 (from O. Guéraud, *BIFAO* 41 (1942) 141-196 + 1 Pl.) No. 14.4-8, ... ἀπὸ Ἀκριπίνου (l. Ἀγριπίνου) ἕως ἄρτι ὑπὸ τοῖς ἐπάρχουσιν γυνηγοῦμεν (l. κυνηγοῦμεν), 'from (the month of) Agrippinus (or -eius?) till now we have been hunting under the command of the prefects'. The writer of this, which the month name dates to late in the reign of Gaius or early in that of Claudius, see P.Oxy. LV 3780 introd. and 8 n., cf. Guéraud p. 170, is called Antonius Proculus and his correspondent is called Valerianus, no doubt soldiers both. But still Daris's argument is not conclusive. We know that there were *uenatores* in the Roman army, see A. von Domaszewski, B. Dobson, *Die Rangordnung* 26, 27, 47, 49, so there may well have been *uestigatores*, even if they were animal trackers.

In the light of all the evidence of the use of the better attested word *uestigator* to refer to a tracker of animals, sometimes to a tracker dog, see Varro, *LL* 5.94, Columella, 9.8.10, Apul., *Metam.* 8.4.6, Servius, *Aen.* 4.121.4-5, CGL Indexes (= ἰχνευτής, κτιβευτής), we should by no

means be eager to exclude the theory that the *vestigatōnes* of O.Amst. 8 were hunting trips. Seneca, *Benef.*, 3.26.2, where *vestigatōribus* refers to the informers of the reign of Tiberius, is the only passage to justify Lewis and Short's definition 'spy'. But yet the regularity of the list of days and names below the heading does not suggest very strongly that hunting is involved, even if one could argue that these ostraca might be from a desert post where the problem of the food supply would be an everyday concern, cf. O.Florida pp. 30-31. For each day from 1 to 15 we have a pair of names, Munatianus and Isidorus in that order on odd-numbered days, Draco and Clemens in that order on even-numbered days. Each name is followed by either ἄνω or κάτω, according to a regular system elucidated by Clarysse and Sijpesteijn, *Anc.Soc.* 19 (1988) 85-7: in effect each pair acts on alternate days and each member of each pair takes the opposite direction in turn, viz. Munatianus goes 'up' on days 1, 5, 9, and 13, 'down' on days 3, 7, 11, 15, while Isidorus goes 'down' on days 1, 5, 9, and 13, 'up' on days 3, 7, 11, 15; Draco goes 'up' on days 2, 6, 10, 14, 'down' on days 4, 8, and 12, while Clemens goes 'down' on days 2, 6, 10, 14, 'up' on days 4, 8, and 12. This is certainly not the like the long hunting trip mentioned in SB 9017 No. 14.

My guess would be that these details refer to patrols. Tracking is an essential element of desert travel, not of course so much the tracking of wild animals to hunt, but the tracking of other travellers on the same route. In this case my guess would be that the soldiers were stationed in a post on a desert road and that on each of these days patrols were made in two directions away from the post along the desert road, 'up' the road, and 'down' the road. The aims of the alternation would be partly to share the work fairly and partly to familiarize all the troops with the terrain round the camp.

In line 63 of the complete document, at the top of the fourth column, there is a heading which Clarysse and Sijpesteijn have restored as [c]τατίονος, on the basis of other headings in the archive, *στατίονες* in O.Amst. 11 and *στατιωνάριοι* in O.Amst. 12. The heading is followed by 16, evidently a day number, and below by four names followed by *πρῶμα*, *σεκόνδα*, *τέρτια*, and *κόρτα*. The entry for 17 below is similar. For 18-21, after which the ostrakon breaks off, the names are followed by Latin numerals, some of which are in a unique horizontal form, —, =, ≡, rather than I, II, III, but the meaning is certain in view of the words spelled out above. The editors record their hesitation about the restoration of the heading (p. 94). Naturally I am tempted to restore the same word again. The palaeography does not seem to forbid the version οὐετι]γατίονες, with omicron certainly in place of omega — this is by a different writer; the tiny penultimate letter seems to me as likely to be the epsilon, which we want, as an omicron. The main objection to this is the difference between col. i and col. iv. Nevertheless, the numbering of the days of the month, which in this reconstruction would be continuous, strongly implies that it is the equivalent information that is being given. I suggest that two patrols per day were found to be insufficient and that the number was doubled. It was no longer clear to label them 'up' and 'down' — perhaps there were two up and two down — and so they were numbered. However, this was not the only change. The persons are completely different from those in col. i, but they overlap with the men who were assigned to *σκόπελοι* in the intervening col. iii. These are believed to have been watch-towers placed at an upper level, on 'cliffs', above a desert road, see O.Florida p. 25, and perhaps R.S. Bagnall, *CE* 57 (1982) 125-8. These 'towers', of which one is illustrated on p. 127 together with the view from it down into the Wadi Hammamat, are described by Professor S.E. Sidebotham, quoted by Bagnall in *CE* loc. cit. p. 126, as «square, solidly built with no interior space,

approximately 2-2½ m. in height. They were built, like the *hydreumata*, of local field stones. Presumably soldiers sent out in rotation from the garrisons of the *hydreumata* stood watch by these towers, ascending them only when a signal had to be sent.»<sup>1</sup> Bagnall here advances the theory that the words ἄνω and κάτω in O.Amst. 8 and 13 and in O.Barns 6 apply to the posts of two individual guards, the upper one at least a σκοπελάριος (or σκοπελοφύλαξ: only in *ZPE* 39 (1980) 127 = O.Barns 1 = SB XVI 12649.4), stationed high to be able to see traffic approaching from a greater distance, and another one stationed on the valley floor in a position more convenient for intercepting it. The publication of the augmented version of O.Amst. 8 raises difficulties for this attractive theory. There are three named σκόπελοι in col. iii 39-62, each associated with a man's name; the names are given for days 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, evidently because the men named were on duty at the named points for five days at a time. They did not change daily and, assuming that col. i, where the month name is not actually given, also applies to Phamenoth, their names are not the same for days 1 to 15 as those of the men whose names do receive the notation ἄνω (or indeed κάτω). The new term *uestigationes* certainly implies movement by the men named, whether they were tracking men or animals, rather than guard-posts in a fixed spot. Moreover, many of the associated texts in O.Florida and O.Amst. make it clear that they concern Roman cavalry, *decuriones* and troopers organized in *turmae*. In fact, the earliest inscription on the amphora which carries this duty roster consists of the words [Δρ]άκοντος ἱππέεσ (sic) in a very large hand. In spite of the contrary view of Clarysse and Sijpesteijn, *Anc. Soc.* *ibid.* p. 88, I am inclined to think that this officer is the same man as the Draco named repeatedly under the heading *uestigationes*, and that he and Clemens and the other pair, Munatianus and Isidorus, are the commanders of groups of horsemen sent out on these missions. The noun *uestigator* might apply to every member of such a group, but perhaps it is more likely that it refers to an expert tracker, whether a Roman soldier and an *immunis*, as Price suggested, or a civilian employee.

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<sup>1</sup> For a much more detailed account see now, R.E. Zitterkopf, S.E. Sidebotham, *JEA* 75 (1989) 180-9.