

WM. BRASHEAR

A TRIFLE

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## A Trifle

*The Boy through the Ages* by Dorothy Margaret Stuart, Doubleday Doran and Co., New York (n.d.), is an entertaining, albeit saccharinely romantic, idealization of male childhood from prehistoric times on down, published by all appearances at the end of the last century or the beginning of this one. I chanced upon the book this past summer in my childhood home in Newfield, New York, and decided to indulge in some light summer vacation reading. However, the picture of a waxed writing tablet with Greek school exercises on p. 63 caught my attention, prompting the following note.

The caption there reads: "Wax tablet with multiplication table. The numerals run up to 3 times 10. On the right is a list of words divided to show stems and terminations. British Museum". Since I had only recently completed a list of such objects (see *Enchoria* 17 [1990] 21-54), wax tablets and their contents were relatively fresh in my mind. Hence, I was somewhat perplexed at not being able to recognize the wax tablet portrayed in the photograph before me. So much for my light summer reading!

Upon returning to Berlin I was soon able to track down the tablet in question and the history of its publication. British Library, Add. 34186 is a wooden diptych (10.25 x 7 in.) with wax coating, acquired by the British Museum in 1892. The one tablet contains a collection of *sententiae* which has received due attention from scholars and a photograph of it often reproduced in scholarly and popular literature. The other tablet containing school exercises of a more banal nature, although it has often been described and twice photographically reproduced, to my knowledge has never yet been properly published. Here the results of my investigations:

The diptych is first mentioned by D. Hessling, *JHS* 13 (1893) 296f., who merely noted the *sententiae* on the one tablet without even indicating the presence of any other writing, let alone its contents, on the other. It was not until 16 years later that F. Kenyon, *JHS* 29 (1909) 39, finally published the *sententiae*, mentioning *en passant* the "multiplication table and a list of words divided into their roots and suffixes", creating the erroneous impression continuing down to this day that the words in question are somehow declension or conjugation exercises.

E. Ziebarth, *Aus der antiken Schule*, Bonn 1910, no. 14 (*non vidi*).

E. Ziebarth, *Aus der antiken Schule* (2. Aufl.), Bonn 1913, no. 11, published the *sententiae* without any mention of the other exercises.

J. Milne, *Catalogue of the Literary Papyri in the British Museum*, London 1927, no. 253, is devoted solely to the *sententiae*. "The other leaf contains a multiplication table and a list of words".

G. Zlateo, *Aegyptus* 41 (1961) 201 no. 354: "tavola di moltiplicazione e una lista di parole divise secondo le loro radici ed i loro suffissi".

R. Pack, *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt*, Ann Arbor 1965, 2713: "multiplication table; list of words divided into roots and suffixes".

K. Painter, *British Museum Quarterly* 31 (1966-67) 106 no. 13: "On the other tablet are two columns of the multiplication table, also in Greek, and a list of words divided into their roots and suffixes".

T.S. Pattie, E. Turner, *The Written Word on Papyrus*, London 1974, S. 22 (Nr. 21): "multiplication table and a list of words".

J. Debut, *ZPE* 63 (1986) 258 no. 108 = no. 142: *sententiae*; no mention of multiplication tables, but since she excludes mathematics from her corpus, the omission may be excused.

O.A.W. Dilke, *Mathematics and Measurement* (Reading the Past 2), London 1987, 16 with pl. 7: "Greek multiplication table on a wax tablet".

D. Fowler, *ZPE* 75 (1988) 278-279: the multiplication tables are not recorded in his list of mathematical exercises on papyri, ostraca, tablets and graffiti.

Wm. Brashear and F.A.C. Hoogendijk, *Enchoria* 17 (1990) 49.98, note only the *sententiae*.

Here, for the record once and for all, is a transcription of the multiplication table and — *nota bene* — syllabification exercises on British Library, Add. 34186 (1).

α	α	α	γ	α	γ
β	α	β	γ	β	ς
β	β	δ	γ	γ	θ
β	γ	ς	γ	δ	ιβ
β	δ	η	γ	ε	ιε
β	ε	ι	γ	ς	ιη
β	ς	ιβ	γ	ζ	κα
β	ζ	ιδ	γ	η	κδ
β	η	ις	γ	θ	κζ
β	θ	ιη	γ	ι	λ
β	ι	κ			

ΘΑΡ	ϞΩΝ
ΟΥΡ	ϞΟϞ
ΘΩ	ΔϞ
ΘΕ	ΩΝ
ΘΑΡ	ϞΟϞ

The multiplication exercises are of a type commonly attested and require no further discussion. Translated they read: col. I: "1 x 1 = 1, 2 x 1 = 2, 2 x 2 = 4 ... 2 x 10 = 20"; col. II: "3 x 1 = 3 ... 3 x 10 = 30". For parallels see H. Harrauer, P. J. Sijpesteijn, *Neue Texte aus dem antiken Unterricht*, Vienna 1985, nos. 152ff.; D. Fowler, *ZPE* 75 (1988) 278-279; R. Pintaudi, P. J. Sijpesteijn, *Tavolette lignee e cerate* (P. Flor. XVIII), Florence 1989, no. 22.

Thereupon follows a disyllabification exercise of a type just as banal as the foregoing multiplication table, represented by numerous parallels in both Greek and Coptic. Cf. Wm. Brashear, *Enchoria* 13 (1985) 16-17; J. Debut, *ZPE* 63 (1986) 256-257; Pintaudi, Sijpesteijn, *op. cit.*, nos. 6 (quadrissyllabic), 22 (disyllabic), 36 (trissyllabic); *MPER* IV, Vienna 1888, pp. 131-132 (Coptic disyllabic).

Apart from the second and maybe the third entries these disyllabic words could have been taken from an epic context. They might also be names (?) of jockeys or gladiators (?).

θαρσῶν

οὐρσος: One expects θύρσος, but the crossbar of the putative theta has been omitted — whether inadvertently or on purpose is difficult to say.

θωας: 1. θοάς, Θόας, θοός, Θωμάς, θωάς (accusative plural of θωή), θωᾶς? *non liquet*.

θέων: The epsilon, vaguely discernible in Stuart, is no longer visible in Dilke.

θάρσος

ADDENDUM to *Enchoria* 17 (1990) 21-54:

J. Lenaerts, *CdE* 64 (1989) 210-215: T. Brux. E 8507, Isocrates.