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GHOST-VEGETABLE
A RE-EDITION OF SB VI 9610

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A chance meeting with this text on PHI CD-ROM #6 aroused my curiosity because of the strange word *ολγιττα* and because the text had the ring of the Eastern Desert. Since, on inspection of the plate in the *ed. pr.*, the strange word turned out to be the well known Latin cognomen *Sagitta* and since various other details were open to improvement, I present a new edition with more commentary and a translation.¹

The letter, as so many others from the Eastern Desert, is concerned with the sending of vegetables which were grown at certain places in the desert, where there was enough water.² The ostrakon must have been found at such a place, since it is an order to send vegetables. One such place was Wadi Fawakhir³ where a number of ostraca were found in 1940-41 by the workers in the gold mine. Most of these were handed over to the EAO, but a few, and perhaps this one, may have found their way into the trade, probably in the early 1950'ies.⁴

Since Tyche needs to write her instructions and could not intervene directly to see that the vegetables were sent, she must be in another place than where the vegetables were grown, presumably at a nearby station, but perhaps only in another part of the settlement. The distances involved cannot be very great, since Ision is expected to take the vegetables next time he goes. Vegetables like cabbage left in the shade or wrapped in wet cloth will last a week, perhaps, in the desert in the winter.

Tyche appears from her language to be in a superior situation to Salamanes.

Ed. pr. E. Bresciani, *Parola del passato* 14, 1959, 140-141 = SB VI 9610. Written vertically on the neck of an amphora. w. 16 cm h. 10 cm. II A.D.

Τύχη Σαλαμάνη χ(αίρειν). πέμ-
ψον τὰ λάχανα Σαγίττα
ἂ Ἰσίων μυ [.] σήμερον ἔγρα-
ψεν, ὅτι ἐκώλυσας ἀρθῆναι·
5 ὄρα οὖν, μὴ ἀμελήσης.
μὴ ἵνα ἐξελθὼν ἐμπαί-
ξι σοι· οὐκ ἔστι γὰρ ἀγέ-
νητον πλειόνων ἀν-
τόν ποτε χρήζιν λα-
10 χάνων. ἔρρωσο.
λαβὼν τὸ ὄστρακον
κάταξον.

3 ἴσιων 1. μοι 6 ἵνα 91. χρήζειν

¹ This paper has profited in various ways from discussions with H el ene Cuvigny.

² See O. Claud. II ch. II (nos 224-242 forthcoming, 1995) and A. B ulow-Jacobsen, H. Cuvigny, J.-L. Fournet 'The Identification of Myos Hormos: New Papyrological Evidence' *BIFAO* 94, 1994, 27-42.

³ The documentation for this will be published later in the ostraca from el-Zerqa (O.Max.).

⁴ See O. Gu eraud, 'Ostraca grecs et latins de l'W adi Faw akhir' *BIFAO* 41, 1942, 143. Two more ostraca from this find have already been published by J. Schwartz, 'Deux ostraca du w adi Hamm am at' *CdE* 31, 1956, 118-123.

Tyche to Salamanes, greetings. Send Sagitta the vegetables which Ision has written me today that you forbade to be taken. See that you do not neglect this. I hope he does not cheat you when he is gone, for it has happened that he has 'needed' vegetables of several others. Farewell. Break the ostrakon when you have received it.

1. Σαλαμώνης, see *ed.pr.* on the Semitic, and more precisely Nabataean origin of this name. Several Nabataean inscriptions have been found on the Red Sea coast and along the road between Coptos and Myos Hormos, see recently C. Toll 'Two Nabataean Ostraca from Egypt' *BIFAO* 94, 1994, 381-382, with some further literature. Also 'Thamudaeen' is found, see the contribution of Chr. Robin in Bülow-Jacobsen, Cuvigny, Fournet, Gabolde & Robin, 'Les inscriptions d'El-Muwayh' *BIFAO* 95, 1995 (*forthcoming*). See also Gérard Colin 'À propos des graffites sud-arabiques du ouâdi Hammâmât', *BIFAO* 88, 1988, 33-36.
2. λάχανα presumably 'cabbage' as in Modern Greek. See also 'The identification of Myos Hormos' (cf. n. 1) text IV *note* 4. From the parallels it is obvious that the mere mention of vegetables in the desert places the people concerned in the military milieu - nobody else could afford such luxury.
Σαγίττα (ολγιττα *ed.pr.*). The name is attested once in an unpublished Latin ostrakon (inv. 982, AD 100-120) from Mons Claudianus, where he writes to his 'brother' Dasius, and several times in lists of names without context. The Sagitta from Mons Claudianus belonged to the people ἐκ τῆς φαμελίας. It is impossible to say whether it is the same man, but probably not - members of the *familia* did not eat fresh vegetables in the desert.
3. ἂ Ἰσιδ[. . .] τὸ σήμερον *ed.pr.*
6. μὴ ἴνα, see T. Kalén, *Selbständige Finalsätze und imperativische Infinitive* (Skrifter Utgivne av Kgl. Hum. Vetenskapssamfundet i Uppsala 34, 2, 1941) S. 69ff. On the word order μὴ ἴνα Kalén writes (p. 72): "Bemerkenswert ist die invertierte Stellung μὴ ἴνα, die sich auch ein paarmal in abhängigen Finalsätzen findet; Olsson⁵ zitiert dafür P.Ryl. II 230,9 (Nr 26), BGU I 248,19 (Nr. 41) und PSI IV 317,6 (Nr. 66) alle aus dem ersten Jahrh. n. Chr. Sie ist wohl nur so zu erklären, dass der neugriechische Gebrauch von νὰ als einer blossen Modalpartikel schon in der volkstümlichen κοινή der frühen Kaiserzeit seine Wurzeln hat. (Kalén adds in a note: Doch scheint jene Wortstellung nur eine Episode geblieben zu sein; im Ngr. heisst es νὰ μὴ neben blossem μὴ(ν); Thumb, Handb. § 194,1.)" With electronic searching the list can now easily be made longer. Without attempting exhaustivity I notice BGU 4, 1079,20; P.Phil. 33,16; PSI 14, 1404,15 (see the original edition, H. Koskenniemi, *Aeg.* 33, 1953, 315ff, for commentary and translation⁶); P.Fam.Tebt. 19,25; SB 12, 10841 (= J.R. Rea in *CdE* 45, 90, new ed. of PSI 8, 972 = Naldini 64); SB 16, 12570,24, and 12694,7&14. The

⁵ I.e. Bror Olsson, *Papyrusbriefe aus der frühesten Römerzeit*, Uppsala, 1925.

⁶ Contrary to Koskenniemi I do not think that PSI 1404 is a letter full of paternal worry. I think it is a father who is caustically ironic with a son who demands a monthly allowance while working. The key is in ὀλιγορῶ γὰρ περὶ σοῦ which K. had difficulties explaining. It cannot mean 'I worry about you', but has to mean 'I am scorned because of you' (ὀλιγορῶ = ὀλιγοροῦμαι, cf. P.Oxy. 16, 1832 and note. Other possible examples are PSI 7, 742 and P.Stras. 7, 680). This is the story of the businessman who has become important with some public office and needs his son next to him. One of our workers at Mons Claudianus could not come one year, because his father had become mayor of the village. ὅρα μὴ ἀπολέσης σεαυτὸν εἰς τὰ ἔργα is ironic: 'don't work too hard'. When the father writes that the son must come himself for the money, because he has not found a suitable messenger, μὴ ἴνα σκόλης με ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ σέ must mean: 'don't force me to come to you' and the irony is in the very thought that a mere son could get such an idea knowing how important his father is.

phenomenon is still largely confined to the first and second centuries except for SB 12694, which is dated to III/IV and SB 12, 10841 which is from the fourth century.

7. ἐμπαίξιη (ἐμπαίξιη *ed.pr.*). ἐμπαίξω with dative ‘mock’ while the passive can carry the meaning ‘to be deluded’ or ‘to be defrauded’ of revenues (*LSJ*). Here active ‘defraud’ with an object in the dative as in PSI VIII 941, 12. So Tyche had doubts whether Ision was the πιστός, or ἀσφαλής (ἄνθρωπος) sometimes mentioned as messenger (e.g. SB 16, 12694, 4&10). But how would Salamanes take precautions against Ision taking some of the vegetables for himself? The only thing he could do was to send a note to Sagitta, preferably by another carrier, saying κόμισσαι παρὰ Ἰσίωνος *quantity* λαχάνων. And Sagitta would reply on the first opportunity ἐκομισάμην παρὰ Ἰσίωνος *quantity* λαχάνων. Such notes are common in the papyrus-letters, in the, as yet unpublished, ostraca from Maximianon and in O.Claud. I-II (II forthcoming).
- 11-12. κάταξον κτλ. As already remarked by Bresciani the idea of this kind of secrecy is unique. Undoubtedly Tyche did not want it about that she had suspicions about the honesty of Ision.