

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PRELIMINARY REPORT ON TEXTUAL FINDS

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#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Trench BE97-19 in the first-century Roman dump that yielded a rich deposit of ostraka at the end of the 1997 season (Bagnall, Helms and Verhoogt 1999) continued to produce texts in the current season. Twenty-six legible texts were recovered, mainly from the upper loci in the area of the concentrated deposit, while many unreadable fragments came from deeper levels where salt and moisture make conditions less favourable for preservation. As in the prior season, most documents were orders to pass commodities through a customs checkpoint for export. The most common items cleared were, again, Italian and Laodicean wines, almost always denominated in even numbers, suggesting the symmetrical loading of *keramia* onto camels and donkeys. Two orders discovered this season revealed lists of miscellaneous goods that may be interpreted as shipboard provisions.

For the most part, the texts filled out the archives established in 1997: four of the seven archives received new texts (Sosibios, Andouros, Herak( ), and Sarapion), and thirteen new texts were added to the miscellaneous (non-archival) category. Two dated texts came to light: a receipt with a Tiberian regnal date - the year does not survive - and another receipt for grain written in the reign of Nero (20 September, 61). These receipts, taken together with the one securely datable text from last season (year 19 of Tiberius), suggest that the documents found in the dump thus far are first-century. A brief description of the finds follows. A full description of the 1997 and 1998 finds will appear elsewhere (Bagnall, Helms and Verhoogt, forthcoming).

#### 5.2 ORDERS FROM SOSIBIOS

Two orders to allow *italika* of Italian wine to pass were added to the archive of Sosibios using the typical formula: "*Sosibios to x, let pass for N (dative) son of N*", *oinou italika X*. Names added this season in the dative included Kronios son of Pisis, and Petarpochrates.

#### 5.3 ORDERS TO ANDOUROS, QUINTANENSIS

Four texts were added to this archive, with no elaboration on the basic formula: *To Andouros, Quintanensis, let pass of "NN (gen.) for NN (dat.)"* followed by the commodity (in this archive, exclusively wine measured in *italika*) and amount. Names in the dative vary, but the name in the genitive is consistently the (presumed) imperial freedman Tiberius Claudius Dorion.

#### 5.4 ORDERS FROM HERAK( )

In general, this archive includes a broader range of commodities than the others. One of the five new orders added this season contains what may be a list of provisions, which includes *epimēnia*, either “monthly rations”, or more generally, “provisions for a ship” (LSJ), small onions, flatbread and a small order of Laodicean wine. It is worth noting that when wine occurs alongside other commodities, it is found in relatively small amounts; large wine orders in the range of 20-30 *keramia* stand alone.

#### 5.5 ORDERS FROM SARAPION

Another order to load commodities onto a ship was found (cf. the order to load the ship named *Gymasiarchis* from 1997 in Bagnall, Helms and Verhoogt 1999: 204). The commodity specified in this case is [.....] . *epich(orion) lad(ikēna)*: Laodicean *keramia* filled with “native” (i.e., Egyptian) wine. Clearly, some of the wine being loaded at Berenike was Egyptian produce placed in reused imported vessels, or in locally made vessels derived from a foreign shape. Whether the wine was for export or for shipboard consumption is unclear, but either is possible. The *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (24, 39, 56, etc.; Casson 1989), a first-century manual on maritime trade in the Red Sea and beyond the borders of Roman Egypt, refers to several wine markets (e.g. Muza, Barbarikon, Bakare, etc.) without naming any particular type of wine. Continued excavation may well confirm the export of Egyptian wine from Berenike, alongside the re-export of Mediterranean wines.

In the same archive another group of miscellaneous goods is transported by a *kamelites*, camel driver, sub-contracting for various other named parties. Among the goods he is carrying are *lykion*, a medicinal plant commonly used around the Mediterranean (the western variety of *lykion* was native to Asia Minor, but an eastern type was exported from Barbarikon) (*Periplus* 39; Casson 1989: 192-193). The same order mentions *Ephesia*, an unattested measure/vessel that may refer to wine exported from Ephesus, or stored in vessels derived from the place name. Also listed are vinegar and beets (probably pickled), and a reference to *gluke( ) rod( )*, a kind of sweet wine or grape juice stored in Rhodian vessels (*P. Oxy* 1088.51), or perhaps a kind of sweet oil (*SB* 5747.8).

#### 5.6 MISCELLANEOUS TEXTS

A receipt for a grain shipment from Koptos was found, dated 20 September, 61, apparently never returned to the shipper; indeed, the writer is the same author of *O. Petr.* 292 in the Nicanor archive (also Neronian with similar misspellings). Relatively small amounts of wheat, barley and chaff are listed, probably for local consumption. Also included in this category is a Tiberian receipt written by a previously unknown official/merchant, *Germanos and associates*.

Neronian

The presence of letters is indicated by one fragment that records the word *adelphos* (brother) in a practised hand; several fragments found in the deeper loci appeared to be letters of some length, but were entirely unreadable. Other fragmentary pieces in this category reveal hands that are quite refined, or even with literary pretensions.

Finally, three well-preserved fragments of tortoise shell form part of an account or list of outlays, mentioning wine measured in *laodikena* (cf. Plate 5-1). This is the only material of its kind found at Berenike, but given the site's proximity to the sea, it was presumably abundant.

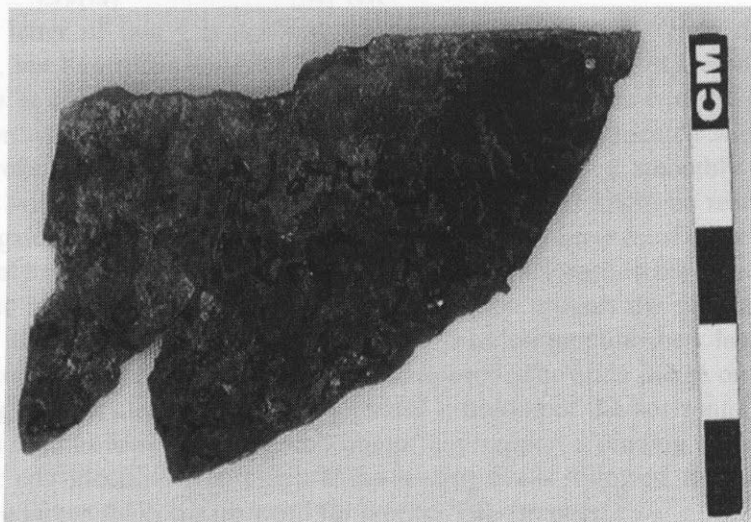


Plate 5-1 Turtoise shell ostrakon (98.0968-A-078). Photograph by Zbigniew Kosci.

### 5.7 CONCLUSION

The 1998 season further expanded the scope of textual finds with new types of documents (accounts and receipts) and new measures that suggest new geographical links to Berenike (notably Ephesia). A greater variety of commodities was evident: various dry goods, 'rations' and medicine. The presence of letters is of particular interest and suggests that continued excavation in the Roman dump might well produce more diverse and informative texts in coming seasons.