

CHAPTER 10: EPIGRAPHY

Greek and Latin

Roger S. Bagnall

Among the diverse finds of the first season of excavations were some four Greek papyri, one Latin papyrus, 20 Greek and one Latin ostraca, and pieces of a Greek inscription. In addition, some sealing plugs from pottery jars were found impressed with seals bearing Greek texts. Most of the Greek and Latin written material is very fragmentary, but a brief summary will show the interest that even this small assemblage of broken items has.

The best-preserved Greek papyrus is a letter, broken at the left and upper right corner. Its fragmentary contents seem to concern the dispatch of some item or items. A second papyrus also probably belongs to a letter; the others are too small to allow any sense to be extracted at this point. The Latin papyrus fragment is very exiguous, but line 1 reads]mus, and in line 2 the word *supra* is visible. The very finding of a Latin text points to the presence of a military unit using that language.

This impression is confirmed by one of the Greek ostraca, a note from one Komaros, who identifies himself as $\chi\iota\lambda(\iota\alpha\rho\chi\omicron\varsigma)$, or military tribune, a legionary officer, to someone who is commanded to dispatch three kolophonia of wine. Of the other ostraca, some are private letters, others seemingly lists, still others chits or tickets.

A unique part of this find is a group of three pieces of gypsum with writing. The text was first engraved on the soft stone and then filled in with writing in ink. Of these fragments, two (reconstructed from three and two pieces respectively) appear to belong certainly to the same document, and the third may well belong to the same text as well. This text was originally probably a dedication made in thanks for safekeeping of the dedicant (line 1, [ὐπὲρ τῆς σω]τηρίας), who is named Tiberius Claudius, the date thus being after A.D. 41. The third piece, in a similar hand, is probably from a dedication to the Anatolian god Sabazios (line 4, $\Sigma\alpha\beta\alpha\zeta\iota.$ [; line 2, $\acute{\alpha}]νέθηκ[εν]$), whose cult is known elsewhere in the Roman world (e.g., in Greece, Macedonia, and Italy [RE s.v.]), but which was hitherto attested in Egypt only in the appearance of a Sabazeion (temple of Sabazios) in *P. Oxy.* XXXIII 2678.3, an invitation to a wedding dinner in that temple (third century A.D.).

Finally, one of the plugs deserves attention. It bears the text KEPE.ONIOE
ΣΕΒ ΑΠΕΛΕΥΘ , i.e., it is the "signature" of one Kere.onios, who identifies himself as $\Sigma\epsilon\beta(\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon) \acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\theta(\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma)$, the Latin *Augusti libertus*, freedman of the emperor. As evidence for imperial freedmen in

the Greek-speaking part of the empire is comparatively exiguous (Weaver, 1972: 9), this testimony of an imperial freedman's activity in charge of a wine-producing establishment which shipped to Quseir is of some interest. It was already known that some imperial estates in Egypt produced wine, but this text is the first clear proof that one of these was headed by an imperial freedman (as had been surmised from the situation in western provinces) (Parássoglou, 1978: 44-47, 50-52). Another plug mentions someone with the name Titus Flavius ..allis, perhaps also a freedman (of one of the Flavian emperors).

To sum up briefly the contribution of the Greek and Latin documents to our knowledge of Quseir in the first and probably second centuries of our era: an army detachment, taken from one of the legions occupying Egypt, was based in or near Quseir, commanded by a *tribunus militum*; it used Latin for official records, but the officers used Greek for day-to-day ephemeral communications (Bagnall, 1976: 21). The imperial presence was also noticeable in the presence of wine evidently produced on an imperial estate under the supervision of an imperial freedman. Finally, we find the religiosity typical of a port town, with a dedication to a foreign god in the form of a plaque in thanksgiving for safe return from a voyage.

Demotic

Janet H. Johnson

Only one Demotic ostrakon was found during the first season, that one broken and preserving only the last line of what was perhaps a tax receipt. The one line of text provides the year date and the name of the scribe and can be read *h3t-sp 14 p3-df-ws1r s3 iw.f[* 'year 14, Petosiris the son of Ef['. The father's name was most likely *iw.f^Cnh* 'Efonkh' (Nur el-Din, 1974: 497) although other reconstructions are possible (Nur el-Din, 1974: 498, *iw.f...* and *iw.f^Cw* 'Efou'). Neither the handwriting nor the date, year 14, are distinctive enough to suggest a date for this ostrakon.

Himyaritic

Gene B. Gragg

One sherd was found from the shoulder of a vessel on which had been scratched the letters *ydm* in Epigraphic South Arabic. *Ydm* (probably to be read *yadūm*) is a well-known proper name in Epigraphic South Arabic inscriptions from what is now Yemen. It occurs as a personal name, both as a first name and as a second name for officials and rulers; it also occurs as a tribal name. Most of these inscriptions occur roughly between the sixth century B.C. and the sixth century