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The Identification of Myos Hormos. New Papyrogical Evidence.

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The Identification of Myos Hormos
New Papyrological Evidence *

Adam BÜLOW-JACOBSEN [a], Hélène CUVIGNY [b], Jean-Luc FOURNET [c]

Al-Zarqa[1] is the best preserved Roman police-station, *praesidium* in Latin, on the Quft-Quseir road. This road was obviously well-travelled in the Roman times, judging by the numerous installations (fortified wells, villages) which are in average 18 km apart. Not only did it carry the traffic of the quarries of Wadi Hammamat and the nearby gold-mines of Wadi Fawakhir, but the military structures (*praesidia*, watch-towers) along it show a preoccupation with security. This is explained by the fact that it was one of the routes used by caravans carrying to Quft (Koptos) the goods that were imported from Arabia, India and Africa, and unloaded in Red Sea ports, in the present case Quseir.

The identification of Quseir with one of the Red Sea harbours mentioned by the ancient sources has never been established with certainty. The two most serious candidates are Leukos Limen and Myos Hormos. According to the latitudes given by Ptolemy (4.5, 8) Leukos Limen was situated at the level of Quseir. Excavations conducted by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago between 1978 and 1982 on the ancient site known as Quseir al-Qadim, 8 km north of the modern town, produced a few texts of the 1st and early 2nd century A.D. which were published by R.S. Bagnall in *BASP* 23, 1986, p. 1-60. Among them the editor twice recognized the (incomplete) place-name Leukos Limen: N° 18 is a Latin name-list addressed to *Seren[o c]ura[(tori)] Le[* .[2] N° 54 is a Greek vase-inscription, which reads (line 1)]λευ^κ *vacat* [3] (but other interpretations are possible: for instance, that the vessel contained γ]λεῦκ(ος), "sweet wine". On the other hand, in n° 21, 3, instead of]ποcορμ̣[, perhaps a supporter of the Myos Hormos party would have preferred to read M]υὸc Ὁρμο̣[or Ὁρμῳ̣[, a reading that seems quite possible from the plate; in n° 45, 5, the editor recognizes the fragmentary toponym *muos [*, but does not question its traditional location.

* Most of the photographs were taken by J.-Fr. Gout (IFAO).

a The Carlsberg Foundation.
b CNRS.
c IFAO.

1 E 33° 47,299' N 26° 00,080'. See the Coptos sheet of *Tabula Imperii Romani*.
2 The "e" is certain, but the "l" does not inspire much confidence from the plate.
3 It does not appear in the transcription that the sherd is broken just before the lambda.

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Traditionally, Myos Hormos has been identified as Abu Sha'r, on the basis of latitudes given by Ptolemy and of physical characteristics subsequently recognized by modern travellers.[4] To our knowledge, the first modern writer who identified Myos Hormos with Quseir is A. Sprenger, who tried to reconcile the identification with Abu Sha'r, which he thought unavoidable, with the testimony of Strabo and the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, both of which point to Quseir. He concluded that there had been two harbours called Myos Hormos on the Red Sea coast, one corresponding to Abu Sha'r and the other, which was called Leukos Limen by Ptolemy, to Quseir. If several places in this region were called Berenice, why should there not be two Myos Hormos, he argues...[5]

For a history of the debate and a recent assessment of the pros and cons of the two positions, we refer to M. Reddé, J.-Cl. Golvin, "Du Nil à la mer Rouge...", *Karthago* 21, 1987, especially p. 59-63, and to D.P.S. Peacock, "The site of Myos Hormos: a view from space", *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 6, 1993, p. 226-232. Both articles conclude in favour of Quseir al-Qadim.

While planning the archaeological work at al-Zarqa,[6] comprising an excavation of the rubbish-heap, we expected that the written material would bring some place-names, especially the ancient name of the *praesidium* itself, and that of Quseir, 65 km away. We were not disappointed: several vase-inscriptions revealed that al-Zarqa used to be called Μαξιμιανόν, and eight occurrences of Μυὸς Ὅρμος in private letters, all of which are published here, leave no doubt that Myos Hormos was situated on the coast, at the end of the road. As for Leukos Limen, the attestation in Ptolemy remains the only one.[7] It should be noted also that we did not find any occurrence of the name Aphrodite, known through ancient sources to be an alternative name for Myos Hormos. The latter was probably the usual one.

The spelling Μῦς Ὅρμος (or perhaps one should write Μυσόρμος in one word) which we find in six out of our eight ostraca must correspond to a phonetical or morphological phenomenon. The same spelling is found in three receipts from the Nicanor-archive (O. Petrie 241, 2; 279, 3 and 283, 2). The papyrological texts show a few examples of -υς instead of -υος (P. Dion. 10, 13 Λιβυς for Λίβυος, O. Joachim 8, 6 Παθρυς for Πάθρυος) and some examples of the inverse can also be shown (P. Hal 1 r. 2, 43 εγγυος for ἐγγύς and SB 16, 7572 r. 20 ηδυος for ἡδύς). Gignac *Grammar* does not mention the phenomenon. But perhaps the spelling Μυς is to be explained through the indisputable bilingualism of the soldiers and others who frequented the road and the stations: Greek Μῦος would become *Myus* or *Muus* in Latin, which would, if returned into Greek, become Μυυς or simply Μῦς.

4 List of authors who have identified Myos Hormos with Abu Sha'r in S.E. SIDEBOTHAM, "Ports of the Red Sea and the Arabia-India Trade", *in* T. FAHD éd., *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel*, Leiden, 1989, p. 204, n. 37. S.E. Sidebotham's recent field-work in Abu Sha'r has proved that this Byzantine site could not be Myos Hormos.

5 A. SPRENGER, *Die alte Geographie Arabiens als Grundlage der Entwicklungsgeschichte des Semitismus*, Bern, 1875, p. 17. G.W.B. HUNTINGFORD (*The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, London, 1980), must not be credited for identifying Myos Hormos with Quseir: he follows the traditional identification with Abu Sha'r, only misplacing the latter "near" Quseir (*ibid.*, p. 86). The Loeb-editor of Strabo (H.L. JONES) cannot be credited with a correct identification either. In vol. VIII, p. 119, n. 1 he identifies Myos Hormos with Quseir without argument, but at the same time he identifies Berenice with Suakim much further south, in Sudan, and his map at the end of the volume shows two cities by the name of Myos Hormos.

6 For succinct information on this first season, see here N. GRIMAL, "Travaux de l'IFAO en 1993-1994", p. 420-422 and J.-P. BRUN, "Le faciès céramique d'Al-Zarqa", p. 7-26 . The excavation was financed by the French Ministery of Foreign Affairs and the IFAO which also provided technical support.

7 In the end one can but ask the question if Ptolemy has not confused Leukos Limen with Leuke Kome, which is well attested as an important harbour on the Arabic side of the Red Sea, and which he ignores.

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The eight ostraca that we publish here in advance of their appearance in the *Ostraca Maximiana* (O. Max.) are published now because of their topographical interest only. For the treatment of problems outside the toponymy we must ask for patience.

None of the ostraca found in this first season carries a date, but various chronological clues in combination suggest that they belong to the 2nd century A.D.

I. Letter of Ioulios Maximos to Gaios Apolinarios.

O. Max. inv. 175 — II A.D.
16.5 × 17 cm. — Plate I

Of the eight ostraca published here this one gives the most convincing evidence for identifying Myos Hormos with Quseir. The *praesidia* on the road from Quft to Quseir would have supplied themselves with fresh fish from the nearest harbour, the one which was at the end of the road, i. e. Quseir. This ostracon now proves that the soldiers of Maximianon got their fish from Myos Hormos when the opportunity presented itself.

Though Ioulios Maximos had a very common *nomen* and *praenomen*, it is tempting to identify him with the person of the same name who sends a letter to Ioulios Klemes (O. Max. inv. 253) in which he does *proskynema* to Athena. Now, as it is said in the introduction to O. Max. inv. 300 (= **V**, below), the place where this goddess was worshipped might have been located between al-Zarqa and Quseir. This letter could confirm it: the fact that Ioulios Maximos is asked to buy fish at Myos Hormos and is obliged to send letters to correspond with Maximianon means that he is in an area situated between Maximianon and Myos Hormos, closer to this port than Gaios Apolinarios is.

A point of interest offered by this ostracon is to show the mobility of the soldiers along the road. The lines 9-10 show that Ioulios has been recently sent where he is writing from for an indeterminate period which will probably be short (ἡμέρας).

'Ιούλις Μάξιμος Γαίῳ 'Απολι-
ναρίῳ τῷ ἀδελφῷ πλεῖστα χαί(ρειν).
γεινώσκειν σε θέλω ὅτι οὐκ εἰσῆλθαν
αἱ σχεδίαι ὄντος μου εἰς Μυὸς Ὅρμον· ἤμελ-
λα γάρ σοι πέμπειν τὰ ὀψάρια. μή με οὖν
μέμφου, ἄδελφε· οἶδες γὰρ τὴν ἀνάγκην.
μεθ' ὑγίας ἐὰν εἰσέλθω, μελήσει μοι.
γράψον δέ μοι περὶ ὧν θέλεις. ἀσπάζου
τοὺς φιλοῦντές σε· ὡς βλέπω γὰρ ἔχο-
μεν ὧδε ἡμέρας. ἔρρωσ(σ)ο.

1 γαΐω 2 χαι with an elongated ι 3 l. γινώσκειν 7 l. ὑγείας

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Ioulios Maximos to his brother Gaios Apolinarios, many greetings. I want you to know that the boats did not come (back) to Myos Hormos while I was there. I was going to send you the fish. So don't reproach me, brother, for you know what duty is. If it is possible for me to go, I shall see to it. Write me what you want. Greet those who are friends with you. For as far as I can see, we stay here a few days. Take care.

1. Ioulios Maximos appears elsewhere as sender of two letters: O. Max. inv. 253 (cf. *supra*) and inv. 297 (too damaged to give any other information). In spite of the fact that the name is common in such a military milieu (cf., for instance, O. Flor. 9, 3), it may be the same person. The name can also be read in duty-rosters of Maximianon (O. Max. inv. 227 and 400). Has Ioulios Maximos been detailed for a certain time to Maximianon where he met Gaios Apolinarios or are we dealing with two homonyms?

2-3. A Gaios Apolinarios is known from O. Max. inv. 406 as the recipient of a letter in which Harpocras apologizes for not having sent him the vegetables he asked for and he concluded, as here, by μή με μέμφου. Our man is definitely unlucky!

4. cχεδίαι: here it is a kind of light and rudimentary boat. C. Torr (*Ancient Ships,* Chicago, 1964, reprint of the 1894 edition, p. 122) gives the three meanings of this word ("raft", "floating bridge" and "boat") but does not offer any evidence of the third meaning except from the poets (Eur., *Hec.* 11, Theocr., 16, 41); more recently L. Casson (*Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World*, Princeton, 1971) seems to know only the first meaning (p. 217-219) and omits the other ones (but cf. E. Saint-Denis, "Les types de navires dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine", *RPLHA* 48, 1974, p. 18). However, the papyrological documentation gives somes occurrences of this word: P. Lille, I 25, col. 1, 4 (III B.C.), P. Iand. VI 104, 4 (I), PSI XIII 1363, 2-3, 4-5, 5-6, 6-7, 9 (III/IV), P. Flor. III 335, 11 (= SB VI 9365, 11, in spite of BL III 54 rejected in P. Tebt. III[1] 701, note to lines 151-152, III), P. Tebt. III[1] 701, 152, 224, 318, P. Fay. 104, 21 (III) and confirms that the cχεδία could be used as a fishing-boat (P. Tebt. III[1] 700-701: τοῖc ἐπὶ cχεδίαι ἁλιεῦcι). For an ancient illustration of this small craft, we refer to the Althiburus mosaic (Tunisia), of the same date as our ostraca, whose editor describes it as a "bateau plat et large, poussé à la rame; avant s'allongeant en pointe, arrière massif et carré, à quille saillante; pas de pont, mais peut-être un paravent longeant intérieurement le bordage" (P. Gauckler, "Un catalogue figuré de la batellerie gréco-romaine", *MonPiot* 12, 1905, p. 126-127).

5. ὀψάρια: as shown by the context, ὀψάριον can mean "fresh fish" and not only "salt fish" (in spite of Preisigke, *WB*, "Salzfische". Th. Reil, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Gewerbes im hellenistischen Ägypten*, Borna, Leipzig, 1913, p. 163: "ὀψάριον (...) bedeutet bisweilen, mit oder ohne Hinzufügung von ταριχηρός o. ä., den Pökelfisch"). Indeed this word was used in the same way as ἰχθύc and finally eliminated the latter when food was meant.

7. μεθ' ὑγίαc: it is unlikely that these words refer to a precise fear of failing health. We are probably dealing with a ready-made phrase which originally meant "health permitting" and then, through a semantic erosion, "if I can, if it is possible." Expressions like the Arabic *insh Allah* or the English *weather permitting* spring to mind. We meet μεθ' ὑγίαc, also with ἔρχομαι, in an ostracon of the same date and probably of the same milieu

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though women are concerned, SB XIV 11580, 4-5: μεθ' ὑγείαc ἔρθου εἰcζ οἶκόν cου. The editor hesitated: "does it mean 'may health attend you on the journey', 'come if you are well enough' or 'in all seriousness, come'?" (J. Shelton, *ZPE* 21, 1976, p. 262). With our ostracon in mind one would rather translate: "if you can, go home." The expression is also used, with the same conventional meaning always in connection with travelling, in P. Hamb. I 86, 6 and P. Wisc. II 71, 11.

9-10. The γάρ seems to mean that Ioulios is obliged to stay where he is for a certain time without being able to visit Gaios Apolinarios and his fellows.

II-III. Two Letters from Sarapias to Ammonios.

The following two letters are both written by the woman Sarapias to Ammonios whom she addresses as "father" while making it clear (**II**, 8-9) that he is not her real father. The letters are published here in what appears to be chronological order, *i.e.* the first mentioning her intention of going to Myos Hormos, the second that she has left Myos Hormos. Of course it remains hypothetical that the two letters, which were not found close together, refer to the same visit to the town. Sarapias was apparently illiterate, since the two letters are in different handwritings, which explains the difference in orthography as well.

Ammonios must have been at Maximianon. Since the name is common, we cannot be sure of his identity, but a soldier of that name was regularly on the guards' lists at Maximianon. The whereabouts of Sarapias are not entirely clear. In both letters she offers *proskynema* to Philotera. It is assumed that she was all the time somewhere on the coast, or at least at points east of al-Zarqa/Maximianon, perhaps most likely at one of the stations between Maximianon and the coast. If she travelled between Coptos and Myos Hormos she would have passed Maximianon and the letters would have been superfluous. It is a possibility, although a distant one,[8] that the proskynema to Philotera indicates presence at the port of Philotera, since the cult of this goddess is not a common one, but nothing in the letters allows us to guess at what distance she was, nor whether it was north or south from Myos Hormos. It seems clear that her normal abode, whether it was the port of Philotera or not, was a rougher place than Myos Hormos, hence the promises to do shopping (linen and fish-sauce) and the need to go there for her delivery.

8 Strabo 16.4.5 mentions Philotera before the "hot, salt springs" that may be 'Ain Sukhna, so Philotera was probably somewhere at the north end of the Gulf of Suez.

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II.

O. Max. inv. 279+467 — II A.D.
13 × 11.5 cm. — Plate I

Cεραπιὰc Ἀμμωνίῳ τῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ πλεῖcτα
χαίρειν. πρὸ μὲν πάντων εὔχομαί cε ὑγιαί[νε]ιν
καὶ τὸ προcκύνημά cου ποιῶ παρὰ τῇ κυρίᾳ Φιλω-
τέρᾳ. ἐκομιcάcην διὰ Νεc{c}τερεῦτοc ἄρτουc ς̄.
ἠὰν οὖν παραγένωμαι ἐν Μυὸc Ὄρμῳ • ὡc
ἐπηνγειλάμην coι πέμψω coι ἄλληκοc
κεράμιν ᾱ̄ διὰ τῶν πρώτων
ὄνων. οὕτωc γάρ μοι μελεῖ περὶ coῦ
ὡc περὶ ἰδίου πατρόc. καὶ ἠὰν
εὕρω coι τὸν λινοῦν ἀγορῶ.
ἠὰν ἔχηc ποτήριν πέμψον μοι.
ἀc{c}πάζεταί cε
ἀδελφόc μου.

Added in the upper margin, upside down:
πέμψον μοι τὸ ξυράφιν μὴ ἀμελῇc

Downwards in the left margin:
κόμιcαι
κεράμιν ᾱ̄
.... γράψον μοι περὶ coῦ. ἀc{c}πάζου Πρόκλον.

2 ὑγι- (cf. note) 4 l. ἐκομιcάμην 5, 9 & 11 l. ἐάν 6 πεμψω: ψ ex μ corr. 9 ἰδιου

Serapias to her father and lord Ammonios, many greetings. I do obeisance on your behalf to the lady Philotera. I received from Nestereus 6 loaves of bread. If I come to Myos Hormos, as I announced to you, I shall send you a jar of fish-sauce with the first donkeys. For I care as much about you as if you were my own father. And if I find the linen for you I shall buy it. If you have a drinking-cup, send it to me. My brother salutes you.

Don't forget to send me the scalpel.

Receive 1 jar [and] write to me about yourself. Greet Proklos.

2. The upsilon is surmounted by three dots, all much finer than the two on ἰδιου in l. 9.
5. The point between ορμω and ωc is present on the ostracon, but seems unlikely to be punctuation.
6. ἄληξ: LSJ *s.v.* ἄλιξ, in Latin *(h)al(l)ec* or *(h)al(l)ex*. According to J. André, *L'Alimentation et la cuisine à Rome*, Paris, 1961, p. 115-116, rotten fish that has not yet decomposed completely into garum. See also Pliny *NH* 31, 95. Attestations in

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documentary papyri are rare and late, cf. P. Got. 17 (V-VII cent.), and perhaps P. Apoll. 93, 8 (VIII cent.).

8. ὄνων read by J.D. Thomas.

17. It looks as if the beginning of the line is complete and the first word was presumably καί. If something more is lost in spite of appearances, we could expect an indication of the contents of the jar which might even be the jar already promised in ll. 6-7.

III.

O. Max. inv. 267 — II A.D.
13.5 × 13 cm. — Plate II

Written in a good, clear hand, but with a very phonetic orthography. Not only does the writer commit the usual iotacisms, he is further uncertain in the difference between η/ε, ο/ε, and οι/ευ/ου/ο/ω appear to have been pronounced identically. There is also confusion of θ/τ, φ/π, and χ/κ. The μ particularly shows influence from Latin cursive.

Cαραπιὰc 'Αμμων⟨ί⟩ῳ τῷ{ν}
πατρὶ{ν} καὶ κυρίου πλῖcτα χαίρε̣ .
διὰ παντὸc εὔχουμέ{ν} cε ὑιγειν-
ον καὶ τὸ{υ} προcκύνημά cου
παιῶ{μ} παρὰ τῇ Φιλοτέρᾳ.
ἐξάπινα ἐξῆλθα ἀπὸ Μυ⟨ὸ⟩c Ὅρμον
λουκούcαcα. οὐδὴν ἐνήνικα
ἀπὸ Μυ⟨ὸ⟩c Ὅρμον. ἄρτι δὴ
ἔπεμψα ἐκ Μυ⟨ὸ⟩c Ὅρμον
(δραχμὰc) δ̄ κάριν coῦ ἀναπέρων
μοι τομάχια. πέμψι μοι
φουτήριν μικὼν ᾱ̄
τηc . . μιν καὶ μικ-
ὸν κυρμικάριν

Downwards in the left margin:

πέμψαc τῇ τυγατηρί{ν} •
ἐκομιcάμεν ἀρτίδια β̄
ἐρῶcθη αὐχο( )

2 l. κυρίῳ πλεῖcτα χαίρειν 3-4 l. εὔχομαί cε ὑγιαίνειν 5 l. ποιῶ, Φιλωτέρᾳ 6 l. ἐξῆλθα = ἐξῆλθον, ορῷ because of lack of space l. Ὅρμου 7 l. λοχεύcαcα οὐδὲν ἐνήνοχα 8 & 9 l. Ὅρμου 10 s, l. χάριν cου ἀναφέροντοc 11 l. τεμάχια, πέμψον 12 l. ποτήριον μικόν 14 l. κερβικάριον 15 l. πέμψον, θυγατρί 16 l. ἐκομιcάμην 17 l. ἐρρῶcθαι εὔχο(μαι)

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Sarapias to Ammonios her father and lord, many greetings. I constantly pray that you are well and I do obeisance on your behalf to Philotera. I left Myos Hormos quickly after giving birth. I have taken nothing (with me) from Myos Hormos. Recently I sent from Myos Hormos 4 drachmas in order that you bring me slices (of ?). Send me 1 small drinking-cup ... and send your daughter a small pillow. I have received 2 small loaves of bread. I hope you are well.

7. The use of λοχεύω as intransitive is odd.
7. οὐδὲν ἐνήνικα must refer to the promises to send ἅλιξ and linen, made in the previous letter.
11. τεμάχια are usually understood as "slices of fish", but it is hardly credible that Sarapias would demand fish to be sent to her while writing from near Myos Hormos, so in the present case they must have been slices of meat.
12. For a similar wish, cf. inv. 279, 11, above.
τηc̣..μιν (or τηο̣..μιν) could be an adjective qualifying the drinking cup.
15. τῇ θυγατρί probably means Sarapias herself.
16. The $\overline{\beta}$ is written up against the edge of the ostracon and thus lifted.

IV. Letter of -eianius to Domitius Nemonianus.

O. Max. inv. 254 — II A.D.
11 × 15 cm. — Plate III

Nemonianus also receives, from Caienus, another Latin letter (O. Max. inv. 80). The men mentioned here, except the possible donkey-drivers, are all military.

.eianius Domitio
Nemoniano salu(tem).
misi tibi fasciclos
duos uirdiorum
per Saluianum e-
[q]u[i]tem. dic Ama-
[2-3] Antonino acc[i-]
piat ab ho.[..]ati
epistulam et fasci-
clum quem illi
Caienus misit
qui cibaria fe-
runt in Mys Or̤(mum).
uale.

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3 l. fasciculos 4 l. uiridiorum 8 piat : t ex n corr. 9-10 l. fasciculum

...eianius to Domitius Nemonianus, greetings. I send you two bunches of greens with Saluianus, the cavalryman. Tell Amat[ius?] Antoninus to collect a letter and a bunch which Caienus sent him from the donkey-drivers (?) who carry the food-supply to Myos Hormos. Take care.

1. The *Repertorium* of Solin & Salomies offers three possibilities: *Ceianius*, *Reianius*, or *Ueianius*, none of which is attested in the prosopography of Maximianon.
4. *uirdiorum*. Up to now, the word appears with this meaning only in two ostraca of the district, O. Max. inv. 80 and O. Fawakhir 2 (SB VI 9017 (2); CEL 74). It corresponds exactly to λάχανα in the Greek counterparts of these letters (and the phrase *fasciclos uirdiorum* to δεσμίδια λαχάνων). *Uirdia* is a vulgar Latin form of *uiridia* which, referring to any green thing, or any plant in classical Latin, occurs in the sense of "vegetable" only in glossators who translate it *holera* (*CGL* III 541, 13; 570, 40); *uirdia* has developed in several Romance languages and dialects into *verza* (Italian), *varzà* (Rumanian), *berza* (Spanish) etc.,[9] which means either a particular type of cabbage, Savoy cabbage *(chou de Milan)* , or "cabbage" in general (so in Spanish). This semantic evolution makes one wonder whether *uirdia*, in our ostraca, did not already point to cabbage; the same question arises for the bunches of λάχανα since, in modern Greek, το λάχανο means cabbage (κράμβη being the *katharevusa* counterpart[10]); in Latin and Greek, words meaning "vegetable" tend to specialize into the meaning of "cabbage"; it is a late development for λάχανα and *uirdia*, but it happens already in classical Latin for *holus/holera*.
6-7. *Ama[to]* or, in accordance with the rules, *Ama[tio]*. Maybe the same man as the Ἀμάτις who serves as guard in a duty-roster where a Νεμωνιανός is also named (O. Max inv. 334).
8. *ho . [. .]ati*. One reads *hom[* or *hon[* : a final *o* seems impossible for a name *Hon[or]ato* (which does not appear in the O. Max. anyway); *hon[el]ati*, transcription of the Greek ὀνελάτης, with hyper correct aspiration? Cf. *amaxites* in O. Fawakhir 1. If our interpretation of lines 12-13 as a relative clause is correct, it should be an abbreviated plural ablative.
12-13. Since the relative pronoun *qui* is so far from its antecedent, one could be tempted to understand these lines as a question: "Who are those who carry the food-supply to Myos Hormos?".
13. *Mys Or(mum). Mys Ur* equally possible.

9 For a comprehensive list, see W. MEYER- LÜBKE, *Romanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch, s.v. viridia.* Meyer-Lübke puts an asterisk in front of *virdia*. We now know three instances of the Latin word.

10 We are indebted to B. Anagnostou-Canas for this information which is confirmed by J.T. PRING, *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Greek*, Oxford, 1965.

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V. End of a Letter.

O. Max. inv. 300 — II A.D.
11,5 × 8 cm. — Plate III

Bottom of a letter of which only the opening section, with the names of sender and addressees, is missing. The sender is posted in a place the name of which we do not know, but numerous letters were sent from there, recognizable by the proskynema-formula invoking the goddess Athena. Until now only two *proskynemata* to Athena have been known, one in O. Fawakhir 34 (= SB VI 9017, 34), the other in SB VI 9164, apparently found in Wadi Fawakhir.[11] This place was obviously specialized in growing green vegetables: most letters with such a *proskynema* announce the sending of vegetables. The fact that its inhabitants have to ask colleagues from al-Zarqa for such commodities as lentils (here), oil or fodder, shows that it cannot have been situated in the Nile valley, but must have been a desert-post irrigated by a well. One could think of Wadi Fawakhir as a possible identification, since, as Guéraud noticed, people there often dispatched vegetables to their correspondents (*BIFAO* 41, 1942, p. 151). It would be strange, however, for a man in Wadi Fawakhir to expect his food-rations to be brought from Myos Hormos. One letter among the O. Max. was probably sent from Fawakhir: O. Max. inv. 421 accompanies a bunch of vegetables and includes a *proskynema* to Pan (Wadi Fawakhir is very close to the quarries of Wadi Hammamat where there is a famous *Paneion*). Logically, the place where Athena was worshipped should therefore be situated between al-Zarqa and Quseir, and perhaps at some distance from the main road. It is tempting to suppose that the main purpose of the settlement was the supply of fresh water to Myos Hormos. We know that until the building of a sea-water desalination-plant, Quseir depended on wells in its hinterland for fresh water, the nearest one, Bir Kareim, being 25 km away.[12]

[– – – – – – τὸ προσκύ-]
[νη]μα [[ϲ]] ὑμῶ̣[ν ποιῶ παρὰ]
[τῇ κ]υρίᾳ Ἀθηνᾶϲ. καλῶϲ
[ποι]ήϲατε{τε} ἂν ἔχηται
5 [φα]κὸν μάτιν ἕκαϲ-
[τ]ο̣ν πέμψετέ μοι ὡϲ
[ἐ]νεκθῇ μοι ἀπὸ Μυ〈ὸ〉ϲ Ὁρ-
[μ]ου. ἔρρωϲο.

11 J. SCHWARTZ, "Deux ostraca de la région du wadi Hammamat", *CdE* 31, 1956, p. 118-123. The text rather suggests that this letter had been sent to al-Zarqa: the sender, Annios, writes "I have given up the idea of going to Maximianon..." (mistaken by Schwartz for a personal name). Moreover, Annios includes a man called Niger in his final greetings, just as he did when writing the letter O. Max. inv. 35, which is written in the same handwriting and also contains a *proskynema* to Athena.

12 D.S. WHITCOMB, J. JOHNSON, *Quseir al-Qadim 1978, Preliminary Report*, Cairo, 1979, p. 271.

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3 l. Ἀθηνᾷ καλω^{c} because of lack of space 4 l. ἔχητε 5-6 l. ἕκας[τ]ος 6 l. ἕως
7 l. [ἐ]νεχθῇ, ο^{ρ} because of lack of space

[- I do] obeisance on your behalf to our Lady Athena. Please, if you have any lentils, send me a *mation* each until some are brought to me from Myos Hormos. Take care.

VI. Fragment of a Letter.

O. Max. inv. 654 II A.D.
5.2 × 6 cm. Plate IV

This fragment and the following two are badly damaged and offer nothing of interest except the mention of Myos Hormos. In this one, it must be noticed that Myos Hormos is not, as elsewhere, a *terminus* where one goes to and comes from, but a transit place. Does this ostracon allude to goods which came by sea?

```
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
        ] . [
    ] . προβιστ . [
    ]ξενου ονη[
    ] διὰ Μυ⟨ὸ⟩ς Ὅρ[μου
5   ] . ρατος πολ[
    ]καὶ Ἡρακλ . [
    ] . καὶ Μαξιμ[
  ἄ]σπασε πάν[τας
        ἄ]σπασε [
10      Κ]λαύδιο[ν
```

8-9. l. ἄ[σπασαι

3. One is tempted to read διὰ – – –]ξένου ὀνη[λάτου "through [ ]xenos the donkey-driver", but the η is less convincing than α, though not impossible.
5.] . ρατος : the first letter could be τ or γ. Perhaps a name ending in -στρατος.
11. Κ]λαύδιο[ν : or Κ]λαύδις . [.

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VII. Fragment of a Letter.

O. Max. inv. 386 — II A.D.
6 × 4.5 cm. — Plate IV

```
----------
  ]....[
] . . cης κρειθὴν α .[
] ὑ̣στερήθη χαλκοῦ [
] . θητωι ἕως παρα[
5    ] Μυ⟨ὸ⟩c Ὄρμον καὶ π̣[
        ]θεως μα .[
           ]ο̣τι[
----------
```

2. l. κριθήν

VIII. Fragment of a Letter.

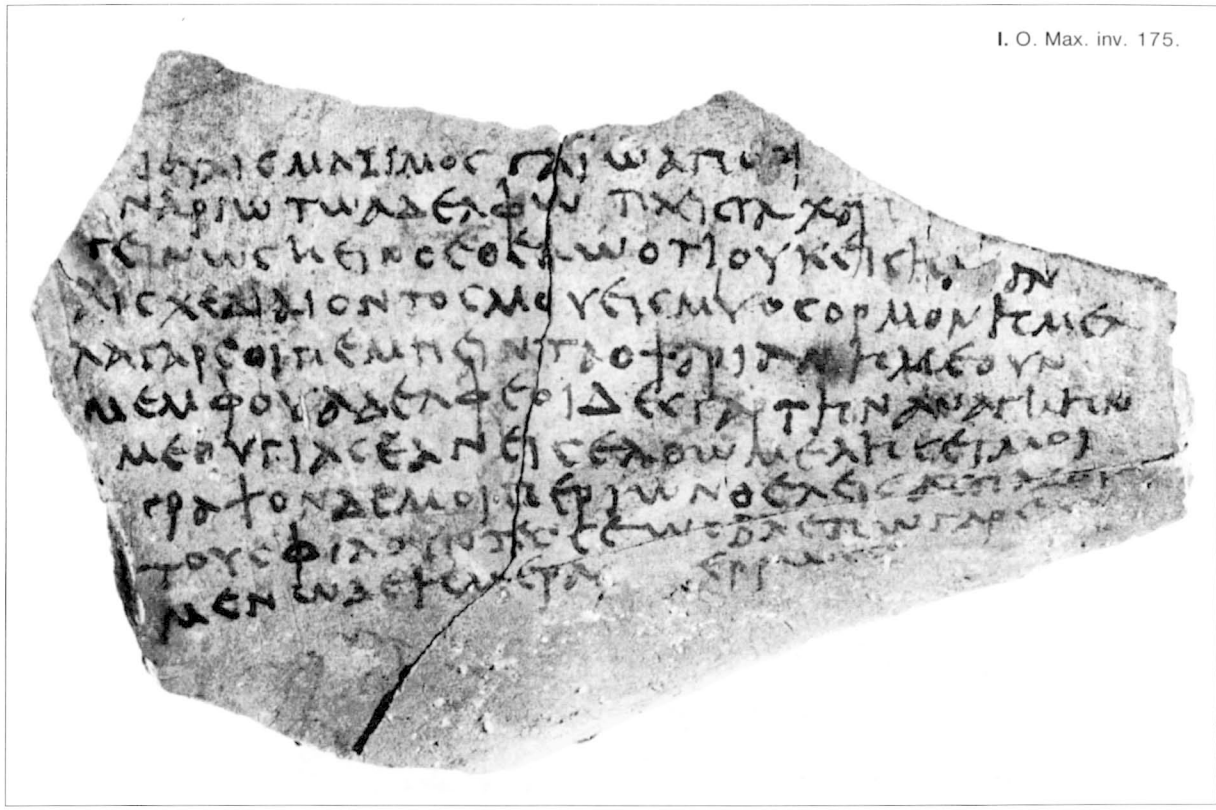
O. Max. inv. 574 — II A.D.
7 × 8 cm. — Plate IV

```
----------
              ] . .
          ] . . ὅτι̣ μοι
  ]ν̣ cυ πέμψον
  ] ἀλλότριν ε̣cc̣ιν
5   ἔπε]μψα ε̣ἰc Μυ⟨ὸ⟩c Ὄρ-
μον        ] . λοι πέμψο cυ̣
           ] . υριν ὅλον̣ [
        ]μοι πεμ̣[
           ]φαρ . [
10         ] του[
           ] . ου[
----------
```

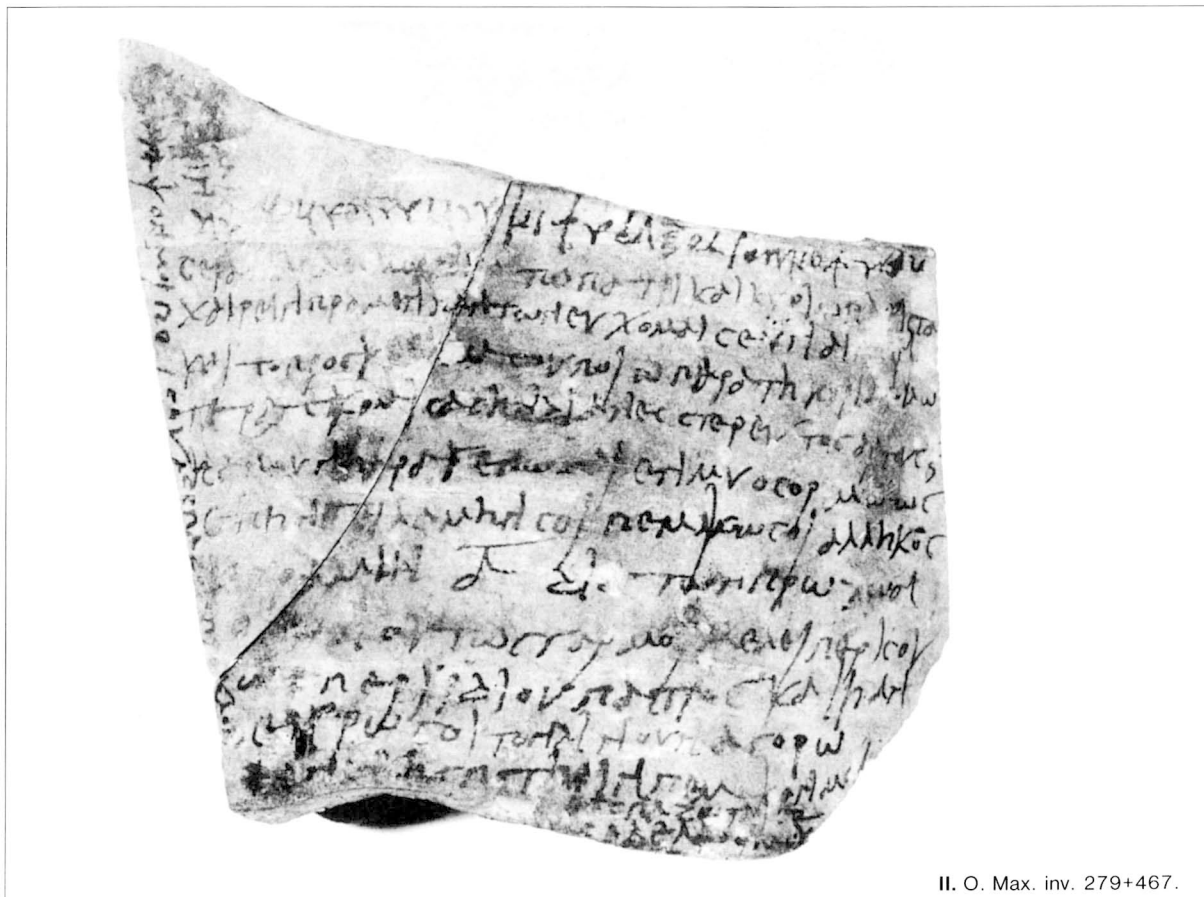
4. l. ἀλλότριον 6. πέμψω coι

4. ε̣cc̣ιν: ἐcτιν is not possible.
7-11. The ostracon may be complete on the right, so perhaps the line-ends are preserved.
7. Perhaps τ̣υρίν (for τυρίον) "cheese". But it may be just the end of a word.

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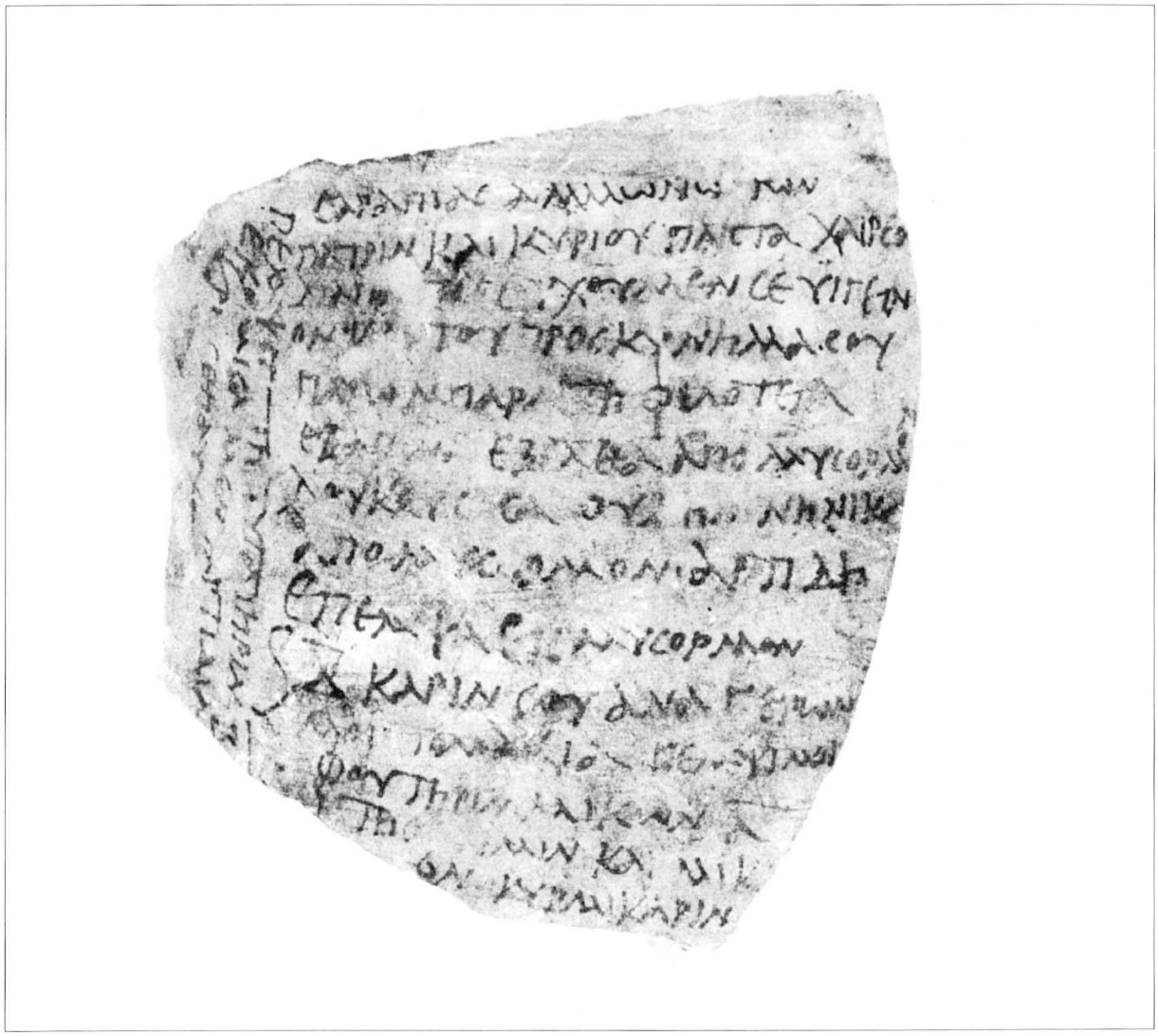


I. O. Max. inv. 175.



II. O. Max. inv. 279+467.

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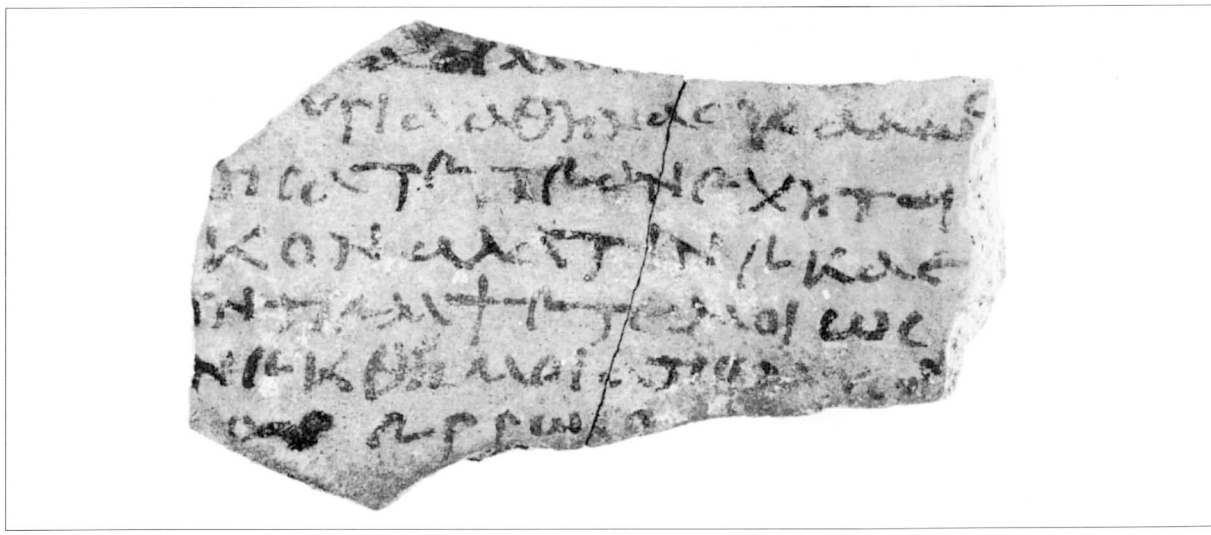


III. O. Max. inv. 267.

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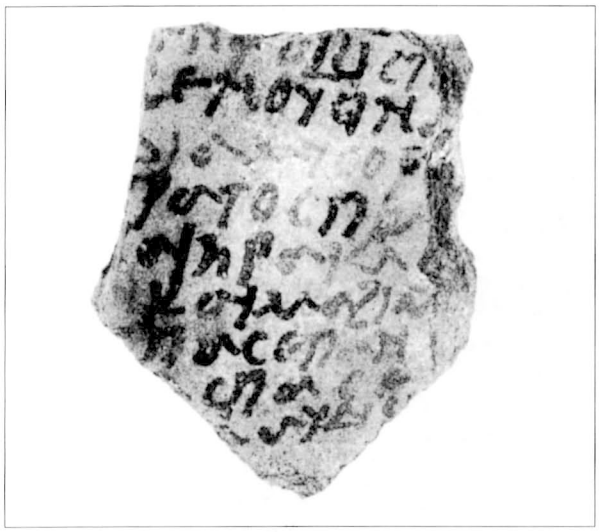
IV. O. Max. inv. 254.



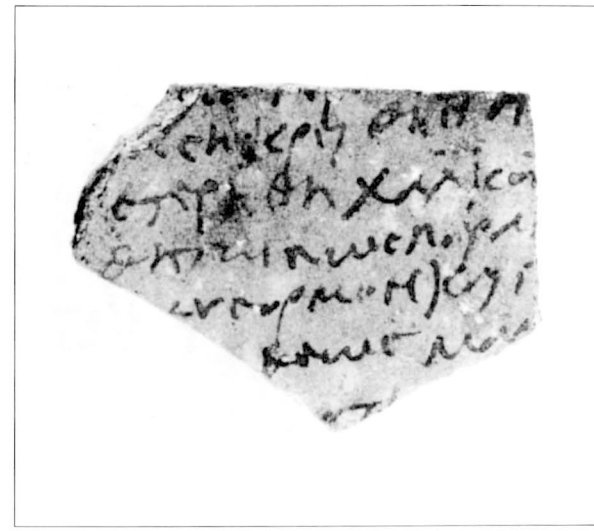


V. O. Max. inv. 300.

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VI. O. Max. inv. 654.



VII. O. Max. inv. 386.



VIII. O. Max. inv. 574.

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