

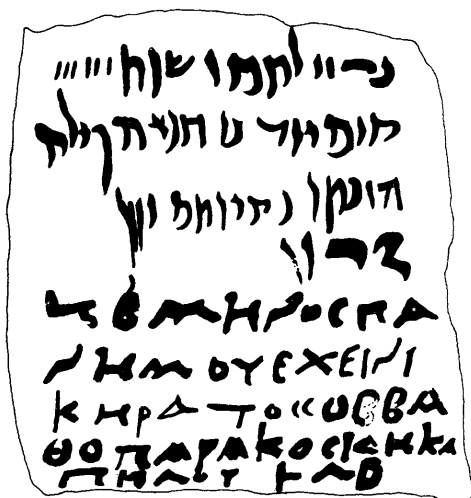
BRIEF NOTES

RECENT SUGGESTIONS ON THE BILINGUAL OSTRACON FROM KHIRBET EL-KÔM

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My publication of the third-century-B.C. bilingual ostracon in Aramaic and Greek scripts from Khirbet el-Kôm has recently called forth two helpful reviews that form the basis for my further brief discussion of this ostracon below. For the sake of convenience I present first the bilingual text, English translation, and my hand copy of the ostracon as these appeared in the original publication¹ (a slightly revised form of the text and translation appears at the end of the discussion):

- /// /// לתמוז שנת בר // (1) On the 12th (day)
of (month) Tammuz,
year 6,
קוסידיע בן הנא קפילם (2) Qôs-yada', son of
Hanna', the
moneylender,
הופת לנקירתם זוזן (3) loaned to Niqeratos:
zuz,
// 33 (4) 32.
- Λ5 IB MHNOΣ ΠΑ (5) Year 6, 12th (day),
month of Pa-
NHMOY EXEI NI (6) nēmos, Ni-
KHPATOS ΣOBBA (7) kēratos, (son) of
Sobbatos, received
ΘO ΠAPA KOΣIΔH (8) from Kos-idē, the
KA money-
ΠHAYT AB (9) lender: drachma, 32.



¹Lawrence T. Geraty, "The Khirbet el-Kôm Bilingual Ostracon," *BASOR* 220 (1975), pp. 55-61.

The first of the aforementioned reviews is that of Aaron Skaist which appeared in 1978,² and the second is an unpublished one by my colleague William H. Shea.³ Though Skaist has offered no new suggestions that were not considered in my original publication, he did opt for two alternative readings to the ones I preferred. His argument for reading *br* in line 2 of the text instead of *bn*⁴ may be correct, but it would hold true for certain only if the script observed strict differences in letter length between medial and final positions; since this is not the case, one may choose between *nun* and *resh* on other than palaeographical grounds, which I did.⁵ His (and Shea's) choice of my fourth option for the reading in line 3, namely *hw ntn [l]*,⁶ may be right after all; it is certainly the simplest reading and seems to me, too, after further reflection, to present the fewest problems. (I do not see the original suggestion as anomalous, however—the Greek text merely acknowledges the loan made in the Semitic text, just as it acknowledges the receipt of a payment if my fourth option is preferred.)

As for Joseph Naveh's interesting suggestion that the last word in line 2 is a verb like *hnsq*,⁷ I am afraid that it is palaeographically difficult, not because the first letter could not be a *he* or the last one a *qof* (which I also considered), but because among the traces where he would read *samekh*, the upper tick is too high and the lower stroke too short. Given the clear Greek reading of the other half of the ostrakon and the parallel for transliteration of a Greek

²Aaron Skaist, "A Note on the Bilingual Ostrakon from Khirbet el-Kôm," *IEJ* 28 (1978): 106-108.

³The nine-page manuscript by William H. Shea, "The Receipts of the Bilingual Ostrakon from Khirbet el-Kôm," is available from the author for 75¢.

⁴Skaist, p. 106, n. 2; cf. Joseph Naveh, "The Aramaic Ostraca from Tel Beer-Sheba (Seasons 1971-1976)," *Tel Aviv* 6 (1979): 194, where *br* is also proposed.

⁵In *ibid.*; Skaist says that I gave no examples of the use of non-Aramaic grammatical forms, though in fact I did: *hzpt* rather than ²*zpt*, or *kzpt* rather than *kzpt*²; but admittedly these forms are uncertain.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 107, and n. 7. (My original suggestion for the space between the *lamed* and the name was that Nikeratos may have signed the document. At least his name is lighter and in a different hand from the rest.) On the same page and in n. 6, Skaist correctly points out my mistake in translating a first-person form as a third-person; obviously from my transcription, I intended the former.

⁷*Ibid.*, n. 7.

technical term in an Edomite context,⁸ *qpyls* seems to me to still be the preferred reading, probably to be translated in its most usual meaning of "shopkeeper."⁹

Shea's study offers a novel and appealing interpretation of the ostracon: that the actions described in the two halves of the text are reciprocal, the bottom of the ostracon describing the loan that Qôsyada^c made to Nikeratos, and the top of the ostracon describing Nikeratos' repayment of the loan exactly one month later.¹⁰ I might be persuaded if it were not for (1) the order of the transaction's record (it seems to me more logical for the top half to describe the loan and then the bottom half, the repayment) and for (2) the two different languages used (if two *different* phases of the transaction on two different dates is being recorded, what purpose does the difference in language on the same ostracon serve?). This still leaves the chronological problem mentioned by Shea.¹¹ Because of the above objections to his most recent suggestion, I suppose I would still prefer his original suggestion to me that the problem of the month could be resolved by considering the problem of intercalation.¹² Perhaps the Greeks had intercalated already that year, thus pushing Panēmos one month later than it ordinarily would have been, whereas the Edomites had not yet intercalated. So far, very little is known about the relationship of the Macedonian calendar to others that are better known. As a last resort one might even consider the possibility of a scribal error.

Thus at the present time I prefer to see both halves of the el-Kôm bilingual ostracon as referring to the *same* transaction on the

⁸Geraty, p. 57.

⁹M. I. Finkelstein, "Ἐμπορος, Ναυκλήριος and Καπηλός: a Prolegomenon to the Study of Athenian Trade," *Classical Philology* 30 (1935): 320-326. Skaist also preferred this translation.

¹⁰Shea, p. 3.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 4. As Shea points out, in the Macedonian calendar used in the Near East from the third through the first centuries B.C., Panēmos was equated with Simanu in Babylonia and Sivan in Palestine. Apparently it was not until the first century A.D. that the names of the months of the Macedonian calendar were regularly shifted one month later so that Panēmos came to line up with Duzu in Babylonia and Tammuz in Palestine.

¹²Though this chronological difficulty was not discussed in my *BASOR* article (see n. 1, above), it was treated in my unpublished thesis which is now being prepared for publication.

same day—probably some kind of payment made by Qôš-yada^c to Nikeratos. The ostracon served as Qôš-yada^c's receipt—perhaps one signed by Nikeratos. Thus the bilingual would read:

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|----------------------|-----|--|
| /// /// שנת //בי | (1) | On the 12th of Tammuz, year 6, |
| קוסידע בן חנא קפילס | (2) | Qôš-yada ^c , son of Ḥanna ² , the shopkeeper, |
| הו נתן [ל]נקירתס זון | (3) | gave [to] Niqueratos: zuz, |
| //פ | (4) | 32. |
| Λς ΙΒ ΜΗΝΟΣ ΠΑ | (5) | Year 6, 12th (day), month of Pa- |
| ΝΗΜΟΥ ΕΧΕΙ ΝΙ | (6) | nēmos, Ni- |
| ΚΗΡΑΤΟΣ ΣΟΒΒΑ | (7) | kēratos, (son) of Sobbathos, received |
| ΘΟ ΠΑΡΑ ΚΟΣΙΔΗ ΚΑ | (8) | from Kos-idē the shop- |
| ΠΗΛΟΥ ΠΛΒ | (9) | keeper: drachmas, 32. |