

## Masada and Pompeii: Another Link

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The new link is made by the jar inscription published as Doc. Masada 820 in Hannah M. Cotton and Joseph Geiger, *Masada II. The Latin and Greek Documents*, No. 820, pp. 162-163, Plate 22. The text appeared in the following form:

### *Diplomatic Transcript:*

1. ] CEL
2. LI· HÍEMFEOCIS
3. XIII

### *Reconstructed Text:*

1. E]xcel(lens)
2. Li. Híe( ) M Fe<r>ocis vel Li. Híem( ) Fe<r>ocis
3. XIII

Virtually the same text is reprinted in *JRA* 9, 1996, 230 in an article by H.M. Cotton, O. Lerna, and Y. Goren entitled 'Fish sauces from Herodian Masada'.

The plate in *ed.pr.* shows that after the stop in line 2 the reading should be Hermerotis. The supposed apex on Híe( ) is the sharply rising cap of an E of the type described and drawn in Jean Mallon, *L'écriture latine*, 1952, p. 36, para. 56.

A man called Hermeros appears in a jar inscription from Pompeii *CIL* IV.i 2588.4 (p. 176, Tab. XLVI.7) = 5716 (Suppl. ii p. 642), where the full name is given in the form C. Corneli Hermerotis. The initials CCH on other jars have been interpreted as referring to the same person:<sup>1</sup> 'The *titulus* on a Spanish amphora of Pelichet 46 found in Pompeii ... apparently contained *garum sociorum*. Included in the label were the initials CCH, probably standing for C. Cornelius Hermeros, a merchant or shipper known to have traded in wine and fish sauce.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert I. Curtis, *Garum and Salsamenta*, 1991, 157.

<sup>35</sup>, and <sup>135</sup> *CIL* IV.5651. Cf. *CIL* IV. 2588 (*liquamen*), 5638 (CoD),<sup>2</sup> 5597 (wine). Another instance mentioned by Curtis is *CIL* XV 4691 g(ari) f(los) Lucr(etianum) / C. C(orneli) H(ermerotis).<sup>3</sup> Lucr(etianum) is thought to denote some recipe or production process for fish sauce attributable to a man called Lucretius.<sup>4</sup> In fact No. 5638 too appears to have had the name in full as C·Corn[eli·Her]m[erotis], according to the convincing restoration. No. 5597 has the phrase 'in usus C.C.H', identifying Hermeros, it seems, as the consignee.

In the light of these parallels Doc. Mas. 820.2 should be read and restored as C·Corne]li·Hermerotis. A slight awkwardness arises from the circumstance that Plate 22 shows a narrow blank space between *li* and the broken left edge of the jar fragment. The blank might be due to the writer's effort to avoid a bad patch on the surface, or it might be that the ink of one or two letters was abraded or washed off. Whatever the explanation of the appearance of the surface, the comparison of the inscriptions is convincing. The original is at present not available for inspection.

The editors say that they assume that all their Latin jar inscriptions and amphora stamps date from the reign of Herod, 37-4 B.C., because of considerations set out on pp. 133-134, chief of which is the existence of some items that name Herod or give consular dates that fall within his reign. They say that it is much less likely that the Roman garrison before A.D. 66 or the legionary detachment there after the end of the siege in spring A.D. 73 or 74 were responsible for any imports from Italy. However, their introduction to another item, No. 822, notes that three jars of the same type as that one, a type usually assigned to the first century A.D., were found in Pompeii, making already the sort of link that is repeated in No. 820, and three more in Rome, all six bearing inscriptions 'almost identical' with that of 822; their words betray a sense of discomfort and embarrassment at continuing to attribute 822 to the Herodian period. It looks too as if their items 823-825, also with inscriptions in red ink, need to be grouped with 822.

If the proposed link of No. 820 with the C. Cornelius Hermeros recorded on the jar from Pompeii is justified, the date of No. 820 must be reasonably close to the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79: 'Although these vessels could remain in use for some years, the extant painted inscriptions no doubt referred to people who were active during the last year or final few years of the city. The Pompeian vessels were found most often in business establishments where food was served or in rooms of private homes where eating or cooking took place'.<sup>5</sup> Curtis is here referring specifically to inscriptions mentioning one or other of the

<sup>2</sup> An unidentified product, see Curtis (n. 1), 9, n. 12; 65 n. 94.

<sup>3</sup> Mentioned in Curtis (n. 1), 200, n. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Curtis (n. 1), 166; cf. Curtis, 'A. Umbricius Scaurus of Pompei', n. 70, in *Studia Pompeiana . . . Wilhelmina F. Jashemski*, ed. R.I. Curtis, 1988, i, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Curtis (n. 1), 95.

Umbricii Scauri, a family of dealers in fish sauces, but the argument applies to all jar inscriptions from Pompeii.

The not too remarkable conclusion is that not all the Latin jar inscriptions from Masada need be ascribed to the reign of Herod. There are also some from a later date. It may prove impossible to assign a date to the smallest fragments, but there is every prospect that some of the larger ones will be dated more satisfactorily as we learn more from the study of amphoras, and these may shed light on the associated finds at Masada.

To return to No. 820: the layout of the text is rather uncertain. The main text of the more complete Pompeian parallel, *CIL* IV i 2588 (p. 176, Tab. XLVI.7) = 5716 (Suppl. ii p. 642), runs:<sup>6</sup>

liq(uaminis) f(los)  
exc(el)l(ens)  
scom(bri)  
C·Corneli·Hermerotis

In our case the left edge is cleanly vertical. The plate is closely trimmed above e]xcel( ) and there is a substantial blank space between this and the remains of the name in line 2; no dimensions or scales are given. The figure XIII is written downwards in the right margin, perhaps in a second hand; the writing is much faded, so that something may have been lost to one or both sides and the figure might have been different, e.g. LXIII, or XIII, or LXVIII, or XXVIII. In the horizontal text it may be that some shorter lines are concealed from us by the damage, but it looks as if the inscription was in only two lines, plus the marginal numeral, and might now be printed as follows:

up to 8 letters      e]xcel(lens)  
                                  ] (vac.)  
C· Corne]lli· Hermerotis

Downwards in the right margin:

(m.2?) XIII

If the product was the same as in the model from Pompeii, line 1 would easily accommodate *liq(uaminis) f(los) e]xcel(lens)*, 'quality refined clear fish sauce', which might be enough;<sup>7</sup> *scom(bri)*, 'of mackerel' is more difficult, but shift might be made to accommodate it, either by making line 1 slightly longer than

<sup>6</sup> The expansions of the abbreviated words are based on those given by Curtis, (n. 1), 162, and n. 14.

<sup>7</sup> See Curtis (n. 1), 196.

line 2, or believing in a short line 1a for it. *Liquaminis flos scombri excellens* is attested once, like *liquaminis flos excellens scombri*.<sup>8</sup> However, although the text was reprinted in an article devoted to fish sauces, the initials of C. Cornelius Hermeros, if not the full name, are also associated with wine and another unidentified product (see above at n. 2), so that it is better to proceed no further with our text than to restore the full name. The adjective *excellens* is applied to *garum*, *liquamen*, and *muria*,<sup>9</sup> and to wine and *defrutum*.<sup>10</sup> There is a possibility that in the future the jar fragment could be identified by the experts as part of an amphora of a shape characteristic of a particular product, but this has not yet been done.

We are left to speculate how exactly Pompeii came to be connected with Masada in this way. Curtis places Hermeros among 'Five men, perhaps non-Pompeians since their names appear on amphorae, who may have participated in the Pompeian fish sauce business as merchants, not producers'.<sup>11</sup> I am not sure what he envisages: were they active in Pompeii, selling produce received from elsewhere, for instance, or were they simply exporting to it from their own headquarters, wherever these were? One of the amphoras which carry the initials of his name is of a shape associated with Spain, Pelichet 46 (see above para. 4), and said to be datable to a period stretching from the middle of the first century A.D. to the middle of the second century.<sup>12</sup> Is it possible that Hermeros worked in Spain and exported both to Pompeii and to Judaea? Or did his purchaser in Pompeii (or Spain?) send it to Judaea? I am sure this does not exhaust the possibilities.

St Leonards-on-Sea

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<sup>8</sup> See Curtis (n. 1), 196.

<sup>9</sup> See Curtis (n. 1), 195-6.

<sup>10</sup> See *Masada* II, No. 820.1 n. and 819.2 and n.

<sup>11</sup> P. 96 n. 230,

<sup>12</sup> Curtis (n. 1), 42, with a figure illustrating shapes, names and dates.