

An Alleged Paraphrase of Babrius

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A SMALL SCRAP of papyrus owned by A. M. Hakkert (*PHak.* 1, see PLATE 1) has recently been published by P. J. Sijpesteijn.¹ The editor assigns the fragment to the third century after Christ, citing Schubart, *Griechische Palaeographie*, Abb. 90. *PHak.* 1, however, is closer in style to Abb. 80 and appears to belong rather to the middle or even first half of the second century after Christ.² A diplomatic transcription follows.³

1]. . . [] . []
2]νλοιπον[
3]ντοοψ[
4]ωαναβην[
5]σαγηνην . []
6]μφωνησα[
7]μαντο[
8] . [⁴

The editor restores: τὸ]ν λοιπὸν (2), τὸ ὄψ[ον (3), and ἀναβῆν[αι (4).

Three hypotheses are offered concerning the identity of our fragment. (1) Lines 3ff are a version of the “famous fable of the flute-playing fisherman.”⁵ (2) This version is based on Babrius 9. (3) Lines 1–2 paraphrase the end of Babrius 8.

¹ *Studia Papyrologica* 6 (1967) 8–10.

² The revised date was suggested to me by Professor W. H. Willis.

³ The transcription is based on the photograph at PLATE 1 opposite. My thanks are due to Mr A. M. Hakkert for generously providing this excellent photograph.

⁴ The following are divergences from Sijpesteijn’s report. Line 1: *lambda* cannot be read. Line 4: the final *nu*, not the *eta*, might be dotted. Line 5: no accent appears over the first *eta*, but there is a trace of a letter after the final *nu*. Line 6: I can offer no explanation for the apparent bar over the *mu*. *Sigma* and *alpha* should be printed without dots. Line 7: a dotted *mu* rather than a dotted *pi* should be read before *alpha*. Line 8: a trace of ink appears under *tau* (7).

⁵ B. E. Perry, *Aesopica* I (Urbana 1952) fable 11 (p.326) (henceforth: *Aes.* 11)=Aesop fab. 11 Hsr (*CFAes* 1.17)=fab. 24 Ch (1.73f). Other versions of this fable in Greek are: Hdt. 1.141.1–2, Babrius 9, Aphth. 33 (*CFAes* 2.148), and the “Aesopic” versions of the Vindobonensis and the Accursiana (*CFAes* 1.17f).

These hypotheses merit examination since, if they are sound, *PHak.* 1 becomes a document of considerable importance. For we would then have a second-century version of *Aes.* 11 different from any known version, testimony for the date of Babrius earlier than *POxy.* 1249,⁶ evidence for an ancient paraphrase of Babrius independent of the later paraphrastic tradition,⁷ and proof that the order of fables in the tenth-century Athoan Ms. coincides at least in part with that of an early collection of Babrian fables.⁸

Sijpesteijn's only argument for his first hypothesis follows: ". . . looking at the sequence of the words τὸ ὄψον, ἀναβῆναι and καγήνην one is immediately reminded of the famous fable of the flute-playing fisherman." He never explains precisely what this "sequence" is, nor does he assign a meaning to ἀναβῆναι. In a context concerning *haleutika* the verb would most naturally mean 'to go on board [a boat]'.⁹ But no version of *Aes.* 11 refers in any way to 'going on board'. The Augustana in fact explicitly sets our fisherman on land. Thus the natural meaning of ἀναβαίνω here militates against Sijpesteijn's identification. To support his suggestion he must take ἀναβῆναι to refer to the fish's coming out of the sea. For the only sequence that would apply is: the fisherman hopes that *the fish* will come out of the sea to the sound of his flute; his music fails, and he resorts to his net. Now although ἀναβαίνω can have this meaning,¹⁰ there is nothing in our fragment to rule out the possibility that it means 'to board'.¹¹ Moreover, the vocabulary of lines 3 and 5 is altogether common in any passage concerning *haleutika*, so the "sequence" in 3–5 cannot be held to support identification with *Aes.* 11.

⁶ On the significance of this fragment for the date of Babrius see Grenfell-Hunt, *POxy.* 10.1249 (pp.133ff); and B. E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Cambridge [Mass.] and London 1965) xlvi.

⁷ Sijpesteijn oddly underestimates the value of a paraphrase of Babrius containing fables 8 and 9. "This is nothing exceptional because we know many prose paraphrases of the fables of Babrius . . ." But none of these contains either fable 8 or fable 9. For a general account of these paraphrases see A. Chambry, *Aesopi fabulae* I (Paris 1925) 17–19, and Perry *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 299f.

⁸ Such coincidence is nowhere else attested in pre-Athoan witnesses for the text of Babrius. For details see Grenfell-Hunt, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.6); *PAmh.* 2.26 (pp.26ff); and D. C. Hesselung, *JHS* 13 (1892/93) 293ff. On the Athoan (the principal Ms. of Babrius) see esp. W. G. Rutherford, *Babrius* (London 1883) lxvii ff.

⁹ LSJ s.v. A.ii.1.

¹⁰ *NT*, *Matt.* 17.27. See also Blass-Debrunner-Funk, p.165.

¹¹ Note too that the editor obscures his interpretation of ἀναβῆναι by restoring *exempli gratia ἐλπίας ἄξει* in line 3.

Is it possible then to find in]*μφωνησα*[(6) evidence for Sijpesteijn's view? He comments: "In line 5 some form of the aorist participle of the verb *συμφωνεῖν* (possibly *ἄσυμφωνεῖν*) should be read. I suppose that the fisherman speaks to the fish that do not show a reaction in harmony with their present situation (perhaps it is better to suppose that the fisherman abuses the fish who now are dancing although they did not respond before. After all an aorist participle has been used)."

Against Sijpesteijn the following may be noted. In a context involving a musical performance, *συμφωνεῖν* would naturally mean 'to sound together'.¹² To use it even metaphorically of fish that refuse to dance to the fisherman's tune is exceedingly awkward.¹³ And since there is only one musician in our fable, *συμφωνεῖν* cannot have its literal meaning. Moreover, the common meaning of the verb in Koine and later prose ('to agree', 'to make an agreement') cannot be ruled out at line 6, for there is nothing elsewhere in the fragment to suggest a musical reference.

As for *ἄσυμφωνεῖν*, the verb is very rare and unlikely here,¹⁴ and is in any case subject to the same objections as *συμφωνεῖν*. Finally, *ἐ]μφώνησα*[, which offers no support for Sijpesteijn's hypothesis, may be restored at line 6.¹⁵ In sum, the preserved text of *PHak.* 1 offers evidence too uncertain to permit identification with *Aes.* 11.

The editor's second and third hypotheses fall with his first, but it is well to consider the arguments on which they are based. He examines three versions of the fable, those of Herodotus (1.141), Babrius, and the Augustana. "Aesop and Herodotus use the word *ἴχθυς* [*sic*] instead of *ὄψον* in their version, the former uses *τὰ δίκτυα* and the latter *ἀμφίβληστρον* instead of *σαγήνη*." *Οψον* and *σαγήνη* are used by Babrius. I think Babrius' version of the fable has been paraphrased . . ." Against this argument we may note that other collections of Aesopic fables existed in imperial times.¹⁶ Second, *ὄψον* is a conjecture of the editor. For all we know, *ὀψάριον* or *ὄψος* may have been the form at

¹² LSJ s.v. I.

¹³ To maintain the editor's first hypothesis one would have to restore along the following lines: *αὐλῶ]μ φωνῆς ἀ[κούοντες/-σαντες* or perhaps *αὐλῶ]μ φωνῆ<ι> σα[γηνεύειν*.

¹⁴ LSJ, Stephanus-Dindorf *TGL*, and Sophocles *Lex.* offer only one instance, Plotinus 1.1.12.

¹⁵ Lampe, Stephanus-Dindorf, and Sophocles (s.v. *ἐμφωνέω*) cite three passages from Patristic writers. One of these (Clem. Al. *Paed.* 1.5) is in fact a paraphrase of Biblical *haleutika* (*NT, John* 21.1ff). Unfortunately *PHak.* 1 can be identified with neither passage.

¹⁶ See Perry, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.6) xiii ff.

PHak. 1.3. Third, ὄψον (*vel sim.*) and αργήνη are common enough in such a context that nothing may be inferred from them as to authorship. Thus even if the first hypothesis could be accepted, Babrian origin would remain wholly uncertain.

The third hypothesis is even less plausible. In the Athoan Ms. of Babrius, fable 9 is preceded by the fable about the Arab and his camel (= *Aes.* 287). When asked whether he chooses to go upwards or downwards, the latter asks in turn, ἢ γὰρ ὀρθῆ τῶν ὁδῶν ἀπεκλείεθαι; According to Sijpesteijn, “with λοιπός the remaining possibility could be expressed.” But how could this be done with what is presumably the masculine gender (τὸ]ν λοιπὸν)? Furthermore, to assume without convincing and independent evidence that the order of fables in the Athoan is reflected in a second (or third) century paraphrase goes considerably beyond what little we know about the text of Babrius in this period.¹⁷

In conclusion, the available evidence is too uncertain to support the identification of *PHak.* 1.3–7 as a version of *Aes.* 11. Even less will it permit us to accept the view that this fragment paraphrases Babrius 8 and 9. Thus no argument regarding the date of Babrius or the textual history either of his fables or of the Aesopic collections can be based on *PHak.* 1.

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¹⁷ See especially the discussions of *POxy.* 10.1249 and *PAmh.* 2.26 cited in n.8. Perry, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.6) lviii with n.1, suggests that the selection and arrangement of the fables in the Athoan (A) can be traced back to “an ancient edition of Babrian fables . . . which antedates the fourth century.” His evidence, however, is only that variants are shared by A, *PAmh.* 2.26, and two mediaeval Mss. (G and B) at 3.1–3 and 11.7. Such coincidence may be held to prove these variants ancient but tells us nothing about the antiquity of the selection and order of the fables in A.