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. 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. A diplomatic transcription follows:

1  ]...[ 2]
2  νλοιπὸν[ 3]
3  ντοοψ[ 4]
4  χαναβῆν[ 5]
5  ςευηνην .[ 6]
6  μιφωνησα[ 7]
7  μαντο[ 8]

The editor restores: τὸ ν λοιπὸν (2), τὸ δψ[ον (3), and ἰναβῆν [α (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." (2) This version is based on Babrius 9. (3) Lines 1-2 paraphrase the end of Babrius 8.

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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.
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).
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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, evidence for an ancient paraphrase of Babrius independent of the later paraphrastic tradition, 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.

Sijpesteijn's only argument for his first hypothesis follows: "... looking at the sequence of the words τὸ ὀφεῖν, ἀναβηθαίνει and σαῦρην 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 ἀναβηθαίνει. In a context concerning haleutika the verb would most naturally mean 'to go on board [a boat]. 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 ἀναβηθαίνει 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, there is nothing in our fragment to rule out the possibility that it means 'to board'. 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) xlvii.

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); PAhm. 2.26 (pp.26ff); and D. C. Hesseling, 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.n.1.

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

11 Note too that the editor obscures his interpretation of ἀναβηθαίνει by restoring exempli gratia ἐντεινει ἀειν in line 3.
Is it possible then to find in evidence for Sijpesteijn's view? He comments: "In line 5 some form of the aorist participle of the verb *cuvϕωνεῖν* (possibly *ἀκυψικωνεῖν*) 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, *cuvϕωνεῖν* would naturally mean 'to sound together'. To use it even metaphorically of fish that refuse to dance to the fisherman's tune is exceedingly awkward. And since there is only one musician in our fable, *cuvϕωνεῖν* 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 *ἀκυψικωνεῖν*, the verb is very rare and unlikely here, and is in any case subject to the same objections as *cuvϕωνεῖν*. Finally, *ἐμφώνησα*[, which offers no support for Sijpesteijn's hypothesis, may be restored at line 6. In sum, the preserved text of *PHak.* offers evidence too uncertain to permit identification with *Aes.*

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 *ἐχθος* [sic] instead of *ὀψον* in their version, the former uses *τὰ δικτυα* and the latter *ἀμφιβλητρον* instead of *οἰκονη*. "Οἰκον and *οἰκονη* 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. Second, *ὀψον* is a conjecture of the editor. For all we know, *ὀψεῖ* or *ὀψος* may have been the form at

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12 LSJ s.v. 1.
13 To maintain the editor's first hypothesis one would have to restore along the following lines: *ἀνάμει φωνῆς ἀκοννη.? - νε? - νε? - ειν? or perhaps *ἀνάμει φωνῆς ειν? - ειν? - ειν?*
14 LSJ, Stephanus–Dindorf TGL, and Sophocles Lex. offer only one instance, Plotinus 1.1.12.
15 Lampe, Stephanus–Dindorf, and Sophocles (s.v. *ἐμφώνει*) cite three passages from Patristic writers. One of these (Clem. Al. Paed. 1.5) is in fact a paraphrase of Biblical *halēutika* (NT, John 21.1ff). Unfortunately *PHak.* 1 can be identified with neither passage.
16 See Perry, op.cit. (supra n.6) xiii ff.
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PHak. 1.3. Third, ὄψον (vel sim.) and κατήνη 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, ἦ γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῶν ὀδῶν ἀπεκλείεται; According to Sijpesteijn, "with λοιπόν the remaining possibility could be expressed." But how could this be done with what is presumably the masculine gender (τὸν 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 1.7. 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.