

άλυκῆς κ^ϑ/ in the Aphrodito Papyri = κόλλαθον of Salt?

In the preceding article (pp. 83-86 above) dealing with two Syriac containers (σαβιθά and κόλλαθον) cited by Epiphanius of Eleutheropolis, I excluded from my discussion of κόλλαθον five references to the contraction κ^ϑ/ that came up in a search of κόλλαθον in the Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri.¹ I did so on several grounds, primarily because the contraction dealt exclusively with άλυκῆ in the eighth century registers and accounts of Aphrodito and did not conform with the use of *kollathon* in other documents. I also had reservations concerning the interpretation of άλυκῆ as “salt.”

The Semitic word *kollathon*, unvocalized, is derived from the determinative *qũltā*, “a jar,”² which Epiphanius defines as “half a liquid *seah*, which is 25 *xestai*.” The thirteen instances that the Duke Databank takes as κόλλαθον that are not abbreviated as κ^ϑ/ (all from the VI-VIII centuries) contain the basic elements of the Semitic root *klt*—e.g., κόλ(λα)θ(ον). These instances also clearly indicate jars that could contain a variety of products, such as oil, vinegar, wine, pickled fish, fish sauce, cheese and poultry.³

Turning to documents containing the contraction κ^ϑ/, H. I. Bell noted in his comments on the occurrence of the abbreviation in *P.Lond.* IV 1414.25 that it is also found in the Coptic text *P.Lond. Copt.* I 463, where it is resolved as κόλλαθον. He also notes the appearance of κόλλαθον in the Coptic texts *CPR* II 234.13 and

¹ “A Note on Syriac *Sabitha* and *Kollathon* in the Egyptian Papyri,” above, pp. 83-86.

² See קולת, det. קולתה in M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat Gan 1990) 563.

³ See *BGU* II 37.3-4; *CPR* VIII 85.20; *P.Apoll.* 93.6,14,15, 94.3, 96.6-8; *P.Bal.* II 315.5; *P.Got.* 17r.3.11, v.15, 81.4; *P.Laur.* IV 184.3-4; *P.Ness.* III 89.43, 99.39-40; *SB XVI* 12262.2.4.

MPER V 32.⁴ Bell concludes his comments with "If the κ^θ/ here used as a measure of salt is not = κόλλαθον, it is probably κύαθoc." In his list of abbreviations, the contraction is given as κ/ = κόλλαθον(?), but in the index it is given without any mark of its being questionable.⁵

The question that must be considered is whether κ^θ/, as the equivalent of *kollathon*, represents a jar as it does in other documents, or whether the abbreviation does not represent *kollathon* at all and is an otherwise unknown measure in post-Conquest Egypt. Another question to be raised is whether ἀλυκῆς associated with κ^θ/ in the Aphrodito papyri should be taken as "salt."

At the outset it is clear that the Aphrodito accounts and registers which record allowances of food (δαπάνη) for the households of Arab officials and the armed forces are stated not in terms of containers (i.e., jars) but in recognizable measures. Wheat, bread and poultry are measured out in *artaba*; oil, cheap wine/vinegar and honey in *xestai* or *metra*.⁶ When these commodities were packed for transportation, they were undoubtedly put into sacks, jars or (wine)skins. It follows that where ἀλυκῆς κ^θ/ appears in the

⁴ Cited in Bell by the older abbreviations *RKT II* and *PERM V*. In *CPR II* 234.13, the contracted form κ^θ/ is part of a line in Greek, while *kollathon* is given uncontracted in the Coptic in line 10. In *MPER V 32*, the word is also uncontracted. W. E. Crum, in his notes on *P.Lond.Copt.* I 463, cites the discussion in *WO I*, p. 764.

⁵ Note in *P.Laur.* IV 192, a document from Aphrodito, κ^θ/ in line 36 is expanded to κ(ολλά)θ(ου) without any indication that it is questionable. Note also, by way of contrast, in *P.Laur.* IV 184.2-3, of unknown provenance, the use of the Semitic trilateral in the expansion of κολλ(ά)θ(ων) in an account dealing with jars of wine.

⁶ Metals such as iron and bronze were weighed. Anchors and γονάχια (cloaks or blanket-like wraps) were treated as individual items priced at so much per item. The word γονάχιον should be added to the list of Semitic words that crop up in the Egyptian documents. See my article, "The Words τομάχιον and γονάχιον in the Egyptian Papyri," *ZPE* (1990) 241-242.

context of items treated as measures, the contraction also signifies a measure and not a container known as a *kollathon* or a *kuathos*.⁷

There are six Aphrodito documents in *P.Lond.* IV (1393 [=SB III 7241], 1414, 1434, 1435, 1448, 1515) and one in *P.Laur.* IV 192 that provide the number of κ^θ/ of "salt" per nomisma. in *P.Lond.* 1434, 1435 and *P.Laur.* 192, the number of κ^θ/ per nomisma is 36, expressed as τοῦ λς in 1435.106. Accordingly, each κ^θ/ is the equivalent of 1.33 carats and fractions thereof (1/4 = 0.33 car.; 1/3 = 0.44 car.). The three documents that reflect this relationship of ἄλυκῆς κ^θ/ to the nomisma is summarized as follows:

P.Lond. 1434.221-222: 36 = 1 nom.; 222a: 18 = 1/2 nom.; 223: 576 = 16 nom.; 234 and 238: 1 1/34 = 3/48 nom.; 235-237: 1 1/34 = 1/24 nom.

P.Lond. 1435.82: 144 = 4 nom.; 106: 126 = 3 1/2 nom.

P.Laur. 192: 2/3 = 1/42 nom.

A different rate of κ^θ/ to the nom. is given in SB 7241.60-61 (=P.Lond. 1393), in which 122.5 are quoted at 20 to the nom. (τοῦ κ), which would equal, if stated, 2.4 car. each or 80% more than the 36 rate. Similarly 1414, a long but fragmentary account, offers another rate expressed by τ^θ(ν) ιβ; e.g., line 58, 8 at the rate of 12 per nom. = 2/3 nom.; line 101, 4 at the rate of 12 per nom. = 1/3 nom.; lines 103 and 117, 2 at the rate of 12 per nom. = 1/6 nom.⁸ This rate is triple the 36 rate and 80% more than the 20. Two accounts, 1448 and 1515, do not come close to these rates. in 1448, the price of 3 αλ^ο κ^θ/ is given as 1/2 nom., which would be the equivalent of 6 per nom.; in 1515 the price of 6 is 4 nom. or 2/3 nom. each.

The above are data for numbers of κ^θ/ of "salt" in terms of rates per nom. Other citations without rates are given in 1433.51.119.167 of 1 3/4 κ^θ/; similarly in 1449, there are 13 citations ranging from 1 1/2 to 61 1/2 κ^θ/.

⁷ Unusually in a collection of papyri, the index of words to *P.Lond.* IV has only one clear reference to a jar, *knidion* in 1375.17.

⁸ Incorporated into these figures for 1414 is a rate of 1 1/8 car. per κ^θ/, which escapes this writer.

Another view has been put forth by R. Rémondon in *P.Apoll.* 93 A 8n, and followed by the editors of *P.Mert.* II 100.3n, that κ^ϕ/ should be expanded to κ(α)θ(αρά). The word ἄλυκῆς, for lack of a clearer meaning, is taken as “salt” which would make the phrase “clean salt.” The editor of *P.Mert.* holds that “salt... seems the more likely sense, especially as it is a common item in food-supplies to the fleet and the workmen, and ἄλς itself never occurs in the Aphrodito accounts.” However, unlike the Aphrodito documents, the ἄλυκῆς in both of these accounts appears not associated with a measure but as the contents of a container known as a λάκον.

If there is substance to the above analysis, κ^ϕ/ should not be taken as a container known as a κόλλαθον nor as the adjective καθαρά but instead as a measure of indeterminate nature. As for ἄλυκῆς, it is questionable that salt was the commodity that was being measured by units of κ^ϕ/. The common word for salt ἄλς does not loom large in the documents. Preisigke, *WB* and its supplements list a small number of citations in contrast to the Duke Databank files for *P.Lond.* IV, which list 55 matches for ἄλυκῆ. Further, the measure for ἄλς, not often stated, is the *artaba*. *P.Wisc.* II 183 records one *artaba* “of fine salt” (ἄλς λεπτοῦ) as a load for a donkey. *P.Oxy.* VIII 1143.5.7 also cites the *artaba* as a measure for salt, and *BGU* III 731.ii.11 calls for 20 *artabas* of salt. In general however, purchases of salt are not given in terms of measures, certainly not in fractions of a measure as is ἄλυκῆ.⁹

There is no doubt that the adjective ἄλυκός can mean “salted” as in *BGU* I 14.iv.22, where τιμῆς τυρῶν ἄλυκῶν is clearly “the price of salted cheese.” As a noun or substantive in the feminine, ἄλυκῆ suggests something more than ἄλς, something that is salty or salted. A hint of this can be found in *BGU* IV 1069.v.9, an account which lists the τιμὴ ζύτου εὐπατρικ[ου] καὶ ἄλυκῆς. Preisigke, *WB* rightly suggests “Salzspeise (?)” rather than “salt.” The phrase that comes to mind is something like “beer and pretzels.” In other words, a food rather than a mineral.

The citations of ἄλυκῆ in *P.Lond.* IV bear a resemblance to the citation in *BGU* 1069 in that the word is closely connected to oil.

⁹ See, e.g., *P.Ryl.* IV 629.45,90,294; *P.Mert.* II 34.10,11.

There are some 15 citations in the accounts and registers that read (ὑπὲρ) τιμῆς ἐλαίου (καὶ) ἄλυκῆς δαπάνης κτλ. for various Arab officials and workmen in Egypt and elsewhere. What is being dealt with in these accounts appears to be a staple food-product that is salted so that it will not spoil, one that travels well—like modern salted cod¹⁰—and one that combines well with oil in the diet of the times.

To sum up, the precise meaning of κ^ϑ/ and ἄλυκή in the late documents remains elusive. What can be said with some certainty is that the contraction κ^ϑ/ should not be expanded to read κόλλαθον and that it represents a measure of indeterminate nature, meaning units of ἄλυκή. As for ἄλυκή in *P.Lond.* IV and *P.Laur.* IV 192, the word should not be taken as “salt” but as a salted or preserved food-product associated with other foods in the early Arab documents, such as wheat, bread, poultry, wine/vinegar, honey and, especially, oil.

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¹⁰ It is tempting to speculate that ἄλυκή is made up of ἄλς and ὕκης, salted sea-fish that can be sold whole or in pieces. If it is significant, it should be noted that the index of words has not one reference to γάρου or ὀψάριον.