

A Point of Contact Between the Archives of Pompeius Niger and of Tryphon the Weaver?

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Abstract: This article argues that the name of the aggressive female character mentioned by the sender of the private letter SB VI 9121 is Seraeus, and proposes further that through her this letter connects the family of the veteran of the Roman army L. Pompeius Niger, to whose archive it belongs, with the family of Tryphon the weaver.

Keywords: Pompeius Niger, veteran, Tryphon, weaver, archive

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Papyrus SB VI 9121 is one of five private letters which have been identified thus far as belonging to the archive of the veteran soldier Lucius Pompeius Niger.¹ P.Merton II 63 is dated 18 January 58 CE, P.Fouad 75 was written 15 October 64 CE, whereas three letters in the Oslo papyrus collection, SB VI 9120 (= P.Oslo inv. 1475), SB VI 9121 (= P.Oslo inv. 1460) and SB VI 9122 (= P.Oslo inv. 1444), are undated. The three Oslo papyri were part of a batch bought from Maurice Nahman in 1934 and were edited together by Samson Eitrem and Leiv Amundsen.² In 2013

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¹ On the Pompeius Niger archive with references to earlier studies, see R. Smolders “(Lucius) Pompeius Niger” in K. Vandorpe, W. Clarysse and H. Verreth (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, Coll. Hell. 6, Leuven 2015, 323–325.

² S. Eitrem & L. Amundsen, “Three Private Letters from the Oslo Collection”, *Aegyptus* 31 (1951) 177–183. SB VI 9121 was included also in J.L. White, *Light from Ancient*

appeared an important re-edition of SB VI 9121 by Nikos Litinas, who reconstructed the text as follows:³

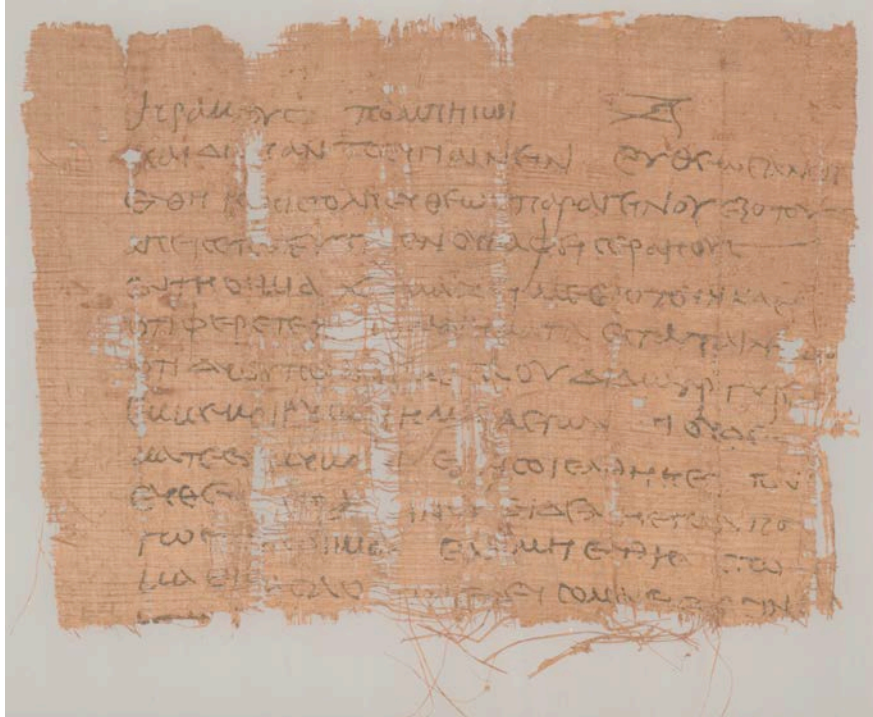
Ἡρακλοῦς Πομπηίῳ χαί(ρην)
καὶ διὰ παντὸς ὑγιαίνειν. εὐθέως ἄν σοι
ἔλθῃ ἢ [ἐ]πιστολή, εὐθέως παραγείνου. ἐξ ὅτου
Ἄπεις ἐτελεύτησεν, οὐκ ἀφεί Σεραποῦς
ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ χειμάζει με. ἐξ ὅτου⁴ 5
ὅτι “φέρετε τὰ ὑπομνήματα”, “ἔσταλται”, λέγω[ν]
ὅτι “δύο ὑπομνήματα. οὐ δίδω ἀργύριον”,
ἐκκεκοίρυκεν ἡμᾶς λέγων ὅτι “οὐ δεδ[ώ-]
κατε ἐνκύκλιον”. εἰάν σοι ἔλθῃ ἢ ἐπ[ισ]τολή,
εὐθέω[ς πα]ραγείνου· εἰ δὲ μή, ἐγὼ ὑπά- 10
γω ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας. εἰάν μὴ ἔλθῃς, ἐγὼ
καθίσασα ὄγον ἐλεύσομαι εἰς Ἀρσινο-
ήτην [ca. 25 letters]

4 l. ἀφεί 5 l. χειμάζειν; ἵκλει, l. ἐγκαλεῖ Eitrem & Amundsen 8 l. ἐκκέκρουκε or
ἐκκεκώρηκεν 9 l. ἐγκύκλιον 12–13 l. Ἀρσινοίτην

Letters, Philadelphia 1986, 143–144 (no. 92); R. Smolders, “Het archief van Lucius Pompeius Niger”, Master thesis, University of Leuven 2003, 97–101; R.S. Bagnall & R. Cribiore, *Women’s Letters from Ancient Egypt 300 BC–AD 800*, Ann Arbor 2006, 130–132 and R.S. Bagnall & R. Cribiore, *Women’s Letters from Ancient Egypt 300 BC–AD 800*, Ann Arbor 2008, A5.3, no. 26.

³ N. Litinas, “The expressions ‘to annoy’ as used in Alexandria and ‘to sit on a donkey’”, *CdÉ* 88, fasc. 176 (2013) 307–312.

⁴ The letters at the end of l. 5 are discernible but the sense is hard to make out. The first editors read ἵκλει (l. ἐγκαλεῖ) interpreting the clause as “since she demands” (Eitrem & Amundsen, “Three Private Letters”, 179 and 180 *ad* l. 5). White (*Light from Ancient Letters*, 144) translates the same text as “ever since then she taunts me”. Bagnall & Cribiore (*Women’s Letters*, 130) opt for “since then she harasses me”, while Smolders (“Het Archief”, 99) has “en beschuldigt ze me” (“and she accuses me”). It may be noted that, whereas in the *ed.pr.* ἵκλει (l. ἐγκαλεῖ) was interpreted as belonging to a subordinate temporal clause introduced by ἐξ ὅτου, the other three translations imply that ἐξ ὅτου should be understood adverbially or as elliptical, ἐξ ὅτου (sc. Ἄπεις ἐτελεύτησεν), with ἵκλει (l. ἐγκαλεῖ) belonging instead to the main clause. Litinas (“The expressions ‘to annoy’”, 310–311 *ad* l. 5) notes that all the letters after ἐξ ὅτου are in fact ambiguous: instead of the *v* of the *ed.pr.* one might consider η, αι or even λ; what was read as λ might well be α instead; the ending ει could be read as σι; and even the κ has a suspiciously different shape than elsewhere in the document. Several alternatives are discussed by Litinas but none deemed entirely satisfactory.



SB VI 9121 (= P.Oslo inv. 1460)

All editors agree about the basic plot at the beginning of the letter (ll. 1–6): the sender, Heraklous,⁵ begs Pompeius to come to her, as since the death of a certain Apeis she is being harassed relentlessly at home by a woman called Serapous (ll. 3–5). Litinas in particular reads the expression *χεμιάζει*<v> με (l. 5) as a declaration of annoyance on Heraklous' part with Alexandrian colour and considers it as an indication of the provenance of the letter.⁶ Serapous demands some *memoranda* (ὑπομνήματα). For the rest (ll. 6ff.) Litinas' interpretation seems preferable to the interpretation of the first editors: one of the two women states that two *memoranda* have been sent and refuses to pay money (ἀργύριον).⁷ Serapous

⁵ Eitrem & Amundsen thought that Heraklous might be Pompeius' wife ("Three Private Letters", 180 *ad* l. 1).

⁶ Litinas, "The expressions 'to annoy'", 307.

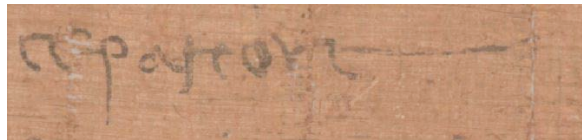
⁷ Eitrem & Amundsen read the personal name Argyrios at the end of l. 7 and take it as the subject of the verbal form in l. 8. To Litinas' comments on l. 7 it could be added that

claims (ll. 8–9) “you (pl.) have not paid tax on sales (ἐγκύκλιον)”.⁸ Comprehension of the end of the letter has also been improved by Litinas so that the recipient’s whereabouts and the sender’s means of transport are disclosed. Heraklous declares that, if Pompeius does not come to her, she will mount a donkey and come to the Arsinoite, evidently Pompeius’ temporary place of residence (ll. 9–13).

In this article we offer some observations which may contribute to clarify further the content and connections of this, in part still enigmatic, letter from Heraklous to Pompeius Niger.

Σεραποῦς or Σεραηοῦς?

The first observation pertains to the name of the person who pesters Heraklous. All editors up to the present have read the name as Σεραποῦς. Litinas, however, dotted the π and, while still maintaining the name of Serapous in the text, translation and discussion of the papyrus, he remarked in the commentary that also the feminine personal name Σεραηοῦς, attested in P.Oxy. II 267.29, could be read.⁹ It seems to us that the name of the person who pestered Heraklous is indeed Σεραηοῦς and that the document which Litinas references, P.Oxy. II 267, might have a connection to the Oslo letter.



SB VI 9121.4 © University of Oslo Library, Papyrus Collection

The left stem of the fifth letter of the name starts at a point higher than the left tip of its horizontal, descends below the baseline and curves out to the left. The rest of the letter is drawn in a continuous movement: the horizontal bar forms a loop at the right edge and continues directly into the right stem which is shorter than the left one and curves outwards too. The letters *eta* and *pi* are traced in the same basic manner in this hand but

the personal name Argyrios is rare (7 attestations in the papyrological *corpus*) and that its attestations are later than the fourth century.

⁸ These words were attributed to Argyrios in the *ed. pr.*

⁹ Litinas, “The expressions ‘to annoy’”, 310 *ad* ll. 3–4.

protrusion of the left stem over the starting point of the horizontal is characteristic of *eta* only (see e.g. Ἡρακλοῦς and Πομπηῖοι, l. 1; τῆ, l. 5; ὑπομνήματα, l. 6; ἔλθη ἡ, l. 9; μή, l. 10; μὴ ἔλθης, l. 11). Even in the cases when the two letters resemble closely (see the sequence ἡ [ἐ]πιστολή, l. 3), the left stem of the *pi* never extends higher than its point of intersection with the horizontal bar.

The spelling Σεραηοῦς is unique in the papyri. It may be considered as an alternative to the spelling Σαραηοῦς attested in SB XVI 12578.14 (86 CE), P.Oxy. XLVIII 3420.28–29 and 3428.3 (both 330–385 CE), while the spellings Σεραηῦς and Σεραηεῦς are found once each in the same document, P.Oxy. II 267.29 and 34 respectively. The most frequent form of the name is Σαραεῦς (found among others in P.Oxy. II 267.1), with alternative spelling Σεραεῦς. The name occurs in Latin form as *Saraheus* in P.Thomas 20.i.5 (269 CE).

The background for the dispute and a new reading of ll. 3–5

The argument “you have not paid tax on sales” in ll. 8–9 suggests that ownership or the right of occupation of the house which is mentioned in l. 5 (ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ) is at the heart of the dispute.¹⁰ As noted by previous editors, the quarrel is probably about inheritance since it has arisen at the death of Apeis.¹¹ Whereas other possibilities cannot be excluded, a conceivable scenario is that Seraeus is Apeis’ heir and that she presses her interests against the current occupant of the property (Heraklous) whom she hassles in what Heraklous interprets as an attempt to force her to leave the house (ll. 10–11 ἐγὼ ὑπάγω ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας).

A somewhat different construction of ll. 3–5 than the one adopted unanimously by previous editors seems to us to be more compatible with the scenario that Heraklous is threatened with eviction. Previous interpreta-

¹⁰ On the *enkyklion* tax see S.L. Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian*, Princeton 1938, 227–231 and F. Reiter, *Die Nomarchen des Arsinoites. Ein Beitrag zum Steuerwesen im römischen Ägypten*, Pap.Colon. XXXI, Paderborn etc. 2004, 216–228. The tax was due in connection with acquisition of real estate, including potential acquisition through money-loans for which real estate was used as security, see Reiter, *Die Nomarchen*, 217–218 with fn. 16.

¹¹ Eitrem & Amundsen, “Three Private Letters”, 180 *ad* l. 6; White, *Light*, 140; Smolders, “Het archief”, 98; Bagnall & Cribiore, *Women’s Letters*, 130; Litinas, “The expressions ‘to annoy’”, 307.

tions assume that *χειμάζει* in l. 5 stands for the infinitive, the last letter of which was omitted erroneously by the scribe, and that it is governed by the negated verb *οὐκ ἀφεῖ*, in the sense of “does not stop/give up”, “keeps ...”, while the prepositional expression *ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ* belongs to the syntax of the infinitive (Eitrem & Amundsen: “Serapous never stops pestering me at home”; White: “Serapous does not leave off troubling me at home”; Smolders: “... pest Serapous me onophoudelijk in het huis” [“Serapous constantly pesters me in the house”]; Bagnall & Cribiore: “Serapous does not stop disturbing me at home”, Litinas: “Serapous does not give up annoying me at home”). The above translations reconstruct a situation in which both Heraklous and her tormentor reside or find themselves *in* the disputed house. Whereas this may well have been the case, Heraklous’ anxiety seems to derive primarily from the dispute over her right of occupying the place. Another problematic point in the current construction of the passage is that the assumed syntax and semantics of ἀφήμι are unattested in the Greek of the papyri.¹² In the papyri, when ἀφήμι is construed with an infinitive, its meaning is invariably “allow”, “permit”, “let”.¹³ Word order is also odd as the expected position of the prepositional expression *ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ* is after, not before the discourse part which it complements (in the current interpretation *χειμάζει<v>*).¹⁴

An alternative construction of the lines, which is more compatible with the eviction scenario, may be considered:

ἐξ ὅτου
Ἄπεις ἐτελεύτησεν, οὐκ ἀφεῖ <με> Σεραποῦς
ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ. χειμάζει με.

¹² The construction is rare even in literary texts, see *LSJ* s.v. V.2.

¹³ Preisigke, *WB* s.v. 11. A more literal interpretation of *χειμάζει<v>*, “she does not allow me to pass the winter in the house”, would harmonize better with the syntax and semantics of the governing verb. However, this sense of *χειμάζω* is not found in the papyri either where its meaning is exclusively “pester”, “hassle” (see Litinas, “The expressions ‘to annoy’”, 307).

¹⁴ Compare P.Ryl. II 125.24–26 ἐκκενώσας τὰ προκείμενα | ἔριπεν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ μου τὴν | πυξίδα κενήν (“he emptied the contents and cast the box in my house empty”); P.Oxy. III 531.9–10 ὄρα μηδεὶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ προσκρο[ύ]σης; (“watch out, do not come into conflict with any of the persons in the house”). The context here precludes that the prepositional expression belongs to the construction of an articular participle/infinitive, in which case it may be placed between the article and the participle/infinitive as e.g. in P.Oxy. I 69.4–6 βεβασταχέναι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ ἀποκειμένων μόνας | κριθῆς ἀρτάβας δέκα.

“Since Apeis died, Seraeus does not let [me be/stay] in the house. She pesters me.”

The chief merit of the proposed construction is that the prepositional expression has a more natural position after the discourse element which it complements, the verbal form οὐκ ἀφεῖ. The papyri offer some examples of ἀφήμι in the sense of “let (be/remain)” with prepositional complement defining a place (or a state of being) and omitted infinitive.¹⁵ Admittedly, one would expect that the pronominal object of the finite verb/subject of the omitted infinitive would be stated in the first clause too. As, however, the pronoun με occurs shortly after, as the verbal object in the following short clause, one may wonder whether the letter-writer jumped ahead mentally to the second occurrence of the pronoun, thus omitting its first occurrence. Certain shortcomings notwithstanding, it should also be noted that the proposed construction fits better with Heraklous’ brachylogic style with its short clauses and staccato rhythm.¹⁶

A connection to the archive of Tryphon the weaver?

Is an identification of Σεραηοῦς possible given the low frequency of the name? A survey of the first century attestations of the name in all its varied forms reveals that most attestations come from the ‘archive’ of

¹⁵ For the sense “let”, “allow”/“permit” see *DGE s.v.* ἀφήμι A III. For constructions with omitted infinitive see *DGE s.v.* A IIIc and *LSJ s.v.* A IV. Examples from the papyri with prepositional expression denoting place or state: P.Enteux. 73.8 (Magdola, 222 BCE) οὕτως ἀφήκεν με ἐν τῇ κώμῃ (“in such a state he let me be in the village”); P.Münch. III 127.21–22 (IV) μὴ οὖν | ἀφήσης μαι (I. με) ἐν ταύτῃ θλίγῃ (I. θλίψει) “do not then let me be in such sorrow”; P.Oxy. XLV 3253.7–8 and 13–14 (III–IV CE) τοῦτο ἀπόλαβε καὶ ἄφες παρὰ | σεαυτῷ (“take it and let [it be/remain] by you”); P.Cair. Masp. I 67002. ii.14 (Aphrodito, 567 CE) καὶ μετὰ τὸ ἡμᾶς τὰ εἰρημέ(να) ἑκατὸν δέκα ἐπτὰ νο(μίσματα) παρασχεῖν, | ἀφήκεν ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ ἐπὶ ἄλλους τέσσαρας μῆνας (“and even after we [sc. I] gave the said 117 solidi, he let me be in prison for another four months”); P.Fouad 87.18–19, with BL VII 58 (VI CE) καὶ οὐ συνεχώρησεν αὐτὸν ἀνελεθεῖν μεθ’ ἡμῶν ἕως τῆς Βαῦ, | ἀλλὰ ἀφήκεν ἐν τῷ μοναστηρίῳ Ἀφροδιτοῦς (“and he [sc. comes Johannes] did not concede that he [sc. Ieremias] should come up with us to Peboou, but he let him (be/stay) in the monastery in Aphrodite”).

¹⁶ The style of the letter is commented upon by Bagnall & Cribiore, *Women’s Letters*², A5.3, no. 26: “the letter has a disjointed feeling, the result of the vehemence and worry of the writer. Clauses tumble after one another, and there is a fair amount of repetition.”

Tryphon the weaver of Oxyrhynchus and refer to his second wife.¹⁷ A loan from her to Tryphon in which their marriage arrangements are set out was contracted on 22 May 37 CE.¹⁸ Saraeus, as her name is usually rendered, figures in a number of documents from the archive connected with various episodes in her shared life with Tryphon from ca. 37 to 66 CE: renewal of a wet-nurse contract (ca. 37 CE?);¹⁹ petition concerning assault against Saraeus (June–July 37 CE);²⁰ proceedings before the *strategos* concerning the identity of a child (29 March 49 CE);²¹ petition concerning assault against Tryphon and Saraeus (7 November 50 CE);²² petition concerning

¹⁷ The papyri relating to Tryphon, some of which had been published and some only described in P.Oxy. I and II, were published fully and in chronological order in M.V. Biscottini, “L’archivio di Tryphon, tessitore di Oxyrhynchos”, *Aegyptus* 46 (1966) 60–90 & 186–292. The documents only described in P.Oxy. II were then republished as SB X 10220–10223 and 10234–10249. A later edition is in M. Vandoni, *Testi per il corso di papirologia: I documenti di Trifone (dai papiri di Ossirinco)*, Milan 1974. As rightly pointed out by M. Piccolo, “Osservazioni ad alcuni papiri dell’archivio di Tryphon”, *Aegyptus* 83 (2003) 197–213 at 198–199, the designation ‘archive’ applies loosely to this assemblage of documents as some of the papyri included in the archive by Grenfell & Hunt are not connected to Tryphon in a straightforward manner. Overviews and select aspects of Tryphon’s life and circle are found in P.W. Pestman, *Familiearchieven uit het land van Pharaos*, Zutphen 1989, 74–80; J. Rowlandson (ed.), *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook*, Cambridge 1998, 112–118 and P.J. Parsons, *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish: Greek Lives in Roman Egypt*, London 2007, 211–216.

¹⁸ P.Oxy. II 267. On the nature of the document see J.E.G. Whitehorne, “Tryphon’s second marriage (P.Oxy. II 267)” in *Atti del XVII convegno internazionale di papirologia*, Naples 1984, III 1267–1274 (with summary of the debate to that point) and T. Gagos, L. Koenen & B.E. McNellen “A First Century Archive from Oxyrhynchos or Oxyrhynchite Loan Contracts and Egyptian Marriage” in J.H. Johnson (ed.) *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society. Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond*, Chicago 1992, 181–205, at 189–192.

¹⁹ SB XIV 11415 (= P.Oxy. II 321 descr., C.Pap.Gr. I 16). Biscottini, “L’archivio di Tryphon tessitore”, 206 placed the document chronologically *after* P.Oxy. II 267, whereas M. Vandoni (“Dall’archivio del tessitore Trifone” in *Proceedings of the XIV International Congress of Papyrologists*, London 1975, 331–335) proposed the dating November 36 CE i.e. some months *before* P.Oxy. II 267, which was in turn interpreted as a loan agreement incorporating the remaining amount from the wet-nurse contract. Vandoni’s argumentation and chronology was questioned in Whitehorne, “Tryphon’s second marriage”, *passim*.

²⁰ SB X 10239 (= P.Oxy. II 315 descr.).

²¹ P.Oxy. I 37 (= C.Pap.Gr. I 19).

²² SB X 10244 (= P.Oxy. II 324 descr.) with BL XII 203.

non-compliance with the ruling of the *strategos* (after October 50 CE);²³ apprenticeship contract of their son, Thoonis (18 September 66 CE).²⁴ In four of these documents her name figures in connection with her father's name, Apion.²⁵ Could Saraeus, Tryphon's wife, be identical with Seraeus of SB VI 9121 and Apeis, at whose death the quarrel described in SB VI 9121 arose, be a hypocoristic form of Apion, since the situation in the Oslo letter may be compatible with a dispute about right of habitation as a result of inheritance?²⁶

The behaviour and circumstances in which Seraeus appears in the Oslo letter are quite in character for Tryphon's wife, who apparently had a penchant for trouble and quarrels. The documentation shows that she had been the victim of attack twice. According to Tryphon's petition to Sotas the *strategos*, SB X 10239 (June–July 37 CE), Saraeus while pregnant was attacked by Tryphon's former wife Demetrous and her mother. The reason is not disclosed, but it may have been that she had played a part in Tryphon's divorce from Demetrous, in connection to which Tryphon accused his former wife of theft (P.Oxy. II 282; 29–37 CE). Saraeus was attacked once more at a later point, apparently also by women, according to a later petition by Tryphon and again while she was pregnant (SB X 10244; 7 November 50). The latter attack may have been the result of a dispute of the couple with a certain Pesouris or Syros, son of Syros, which had unfolded a little earlier. The dispute is known from two documents: the memoranda of the *strategos* Tiberius Claudius Pasion (P.Oxy. I 37 = C.Pap.Gr. I 19; 29 March 49 CE) and a subsequent petition of Tryphon to the prefect Gnaeus Vergilius Capito (P.Oxy. I 38 and its duplicate P.Oxy. LXXVIII 5175).²⁷ Saraeus had been contracted by Pesouris (through his

²³ P.Oxy. I 38 (and its duplicate P.Oxy. LXXVIII 5175). Since Pasion is referred to as "former *strategos*" (ll. 11–12), the document must postdate SB X 10245 (October–November 50 CE) where he is still in office.

²⁴ P.Oxy. II 275.

²⁵ Σαραεῦτι Ἀπίωνος in P.Oxy. II 267.1, SB XIV 11415.2 and P.Oxy. I 38.4 and Σαραεῦτος τῆς Ἀπίωνος in P.Oxy. II 275.8.

²⁶ The accentuation of the name Apeis varies among editors. Ἄπεις (as in SB VI 9121) is most common, but also Ἀπεῖς (e.g. P.Oxy. VI 977 descr.) and Ἀπείς (e.g. P.Warr. 11.7) occur. Whereas the paroxytone form might be considered an alternative spelling of Ἄπις (i.e. the god's name as such used as a personal name), the divergent accentuations suggest that the personal name Apeis (in the editors' view) was a derivation. A distinction is also suggested by the oblique forms of Apeis usually displaying a τ-stem rather than a δ-stem.

²⁷ Gn. Vergilius Capito is attested in office 47–52 CE, see G. Bastianini, "Lista dei Prefetti d'Egitto dal 30^a al 299^a", *ZPE* 17 (1975) 272.

son)²⁸ as wet nurse for a foundling by the name of Heraklas. In the proceedings Pesouris claimed that he had removed the boy from Saraeus' care after a period because he was starved and that she subsequently broke into his house and abducted the boy. Saraeus on her part claimed that the boy she was wet-nurse for had died and that Pesouris had seized her own son claiming that he was the foundling boy. The strategos ruled in her favour on the basis of the physical similarity of the boy to Saraeus. However, as Tryphon's subsequent petition to the prefect claims (P.Oxy. I 38), Pesouris (now called Syros) refused to comply with the decision and this somehow impeded Tryphon's business.²⁹

Altogether Saraeus did not have a quiet life, it would appear. Being attacked and accused is of course not identical with the role of the aggressor that Heraklous' female tormentor has in SB VI 9121. On the other hand, it is in the nature of things that documents compiled by Tryphon, especially the petitions, would portray his wife as a victim.³⁰ In the only case where we get another's description of Saraeus' conduct, in P.Oxy. I 37.14–19 (Pesouris/Syros' account), we hear of her intruding into another person's house to abduct (or from her point of view "retrieve") a minor.

The above elements in and of themselves may be no more than pieces of circumstantial evidence. However, when considered cumulatively the relations that can be gleaned in the Oslo letter, the proximity of the names of the persons involved in it with those of Tryphon's wife and her father, and the generic similarity of the situation with situations in which Tryphon's wife figures often may allow us to entertain the possibility that Seraeus of SB VI 9121 may be Tryphon's wife.

²⁸ For the role of Pesouris' son see P. Van Minnen, "Notes on Texts from Graeco-Roman Egypt", *ZPE* 96 (1993) 119.

²⁹ Since P.Oxy. I 38 postdates SB X 10245 (see fn. 23 above), the therein mentioned incursion into a house belonging in part to Tryphon as well as the attack on him and his wife reported in SB X 10244 (perhaps one and the same episode given the corresponding dates) had intervened between the ruling of the strategos and Tryphon's petition to the prefect. This makes it all the more likely that these events are related to the dispute over the child.

³⁰ For a nuanced discussion of Tryphon's petition and the surrounding circumstances see B. Kelly, *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt*, Oxford 2011, 312–316.

The connection with Pompeius Niger

Establishing a connection of SB VI 9121 with the ‘archive’ of Tryphon through Saraeus/Seraeus would locate Heraklous and the house mentioned in her letter to Pompeius Niger firmly in the city of Oxyrhynchus. Pompeius himself was based in Oxyrhynchus, for part of his life at least, even if at the time when Heraklous contacts him he is in the Arsinoite where members of his family (Herennia, Syrion, Pompeius jr.) resided. The letters and other documents in his archive show him moving between Oxyrhynchus and the Arsinoite in the late 50s/early 60s.

In SB XII 10788b.31–38 (28 April 62 CE) he declares the ownership of part of a house at the Hermaion quarter in Oxyrhynchus, “in which I stay on occasion when I come here” (ὕπαρχει μοι ἐν Ὀξυρύγγων | πόλει ἐπ’ ἀμφοδου Ἑρμαίου | τέταρτον μέρος οἰκίας (...) | (...) ἐν ᾧ κατὰ καιρὸν ἐνθάδε παραγεινόμενος | καταγείνομαι). P.Fouad 28 (March–April 59) shows him bedridden in the wake of an injury caused by a stone-laden donkey which he subsequently took with him and confined in his house in Oxyrhynchus (ll. 17–18 τὸν ὄνον ἐνέκλισα εἰς τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ οἰκίαν). At the moment when he crossed paths with the donkey Pompeius was himself travelling donkeyback “from the countryside” to Oxyrhynchus (ll. 3–5 ἀναβάντος μου ἐξ ἀγροῦ, ἐπικαθήμενος (l. ἐπικαθημένου) ὄνω, εἰς Ὀξυ|ρύγγων πόλιν). In P.Mert. II 63 (18 January 58 CE) Herennia informs Pompeius that “everyone, even Romans and Alexandrians and inhabitants (settlers) of the Arsinoite nome” have been asked to contribute to the shrine of Souchos (ll. 4–10). Pompeius had apparently been expected to arrive in person (ll. 12–13) but had instead sent a letter (ll. 16–18). Here it may be noted that rather than the letter carrier having the unusual name Onomastos, we should probably read in ll. 16–18 of this letter

κεκόμισμαι τὴν | ἐπιστολὴν παρὰ τοῦ ὄνη|λάτου (l. ὄνη|λάτου),

“I have received the (i.e. your) letter from the donkey-driver”.³¹

³¹ Even more suspicious than the weakly attested name is that a name not mentioned previously is accompanied by a definite article. We thank Fabian Reiter for this observation. The disappearance of the name from the body of the letter excludes also its presence in the address on the *verso* where at l. 32 the first editors had restored with hesitation τῷ πατρὶ Ὀνομάστου (l. Ὀνομαστοῦ?).



CBL MP 63 (= P.Merton II 63.16–18)
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The first letter in l. 18 connects with *alpha* higher than the intersection of *mu* and *alpha* (compare *κεκόμισμαι* in l. 16), and the right stem of *lambda* has a more marked incline than the corresponding part of *mu*. A fully preserved *lambda* also produces a more even margin than would a *mu*, which would necessarily extend further left. Between *alpha* and *tau*, moreover, there is hardly space for a lost letter.

The new reading suggests that transport by donkey provided a stable line of connection between Herennia in the Arsinoite and Pompeius, who is most probably in Oxyrhynchus. If this is so, Heraklous could well have resorted to the same means of transport from Oxyrhynchus to reach Pompeius in the Arsinoite in her hour of need.³²

Pompeius' lifetime runs almost parallel to Tryphon's, and although no direct contact has been established so far, it may be noted that Pompeius had connections with the circles of the weavers of Oxyrhynchus since he apprenticed a son as a weaver.³³ It is also worth noting, although again no connection can be established with absolute certainty, that the man who ended up in courts with Tryphon and Saraeus over the foundling that she had been contracted to breastfeed went by the name of Syros, son of Syros, and that Pompeius had a brother who had the same name and patronymic.

More intriguing is the fact that Pompeius had an elder brother by the name of Apion. Two documents from the Pompeius Niger archive indicate

³² According to C. Adams, *Land Transport in Roman Egypt. A Study of Economics and Administration in a Roman Province*, Oxford 2007, 33, the Arsinoite was connected with the Heracleopolite and Oxyrhynchite nomes through a land route which headed south from Tebtunis and ran a short distance into the desert. The customs house receipts P.Oxy. LXIX 4741–4744 show the Oxyrhynchite trader Thonis passing the customs house of Tebtunis with ten loaded donkeys on July 31st and then again on August 2nd.

³³ Time-span of the archives: Pompeius Niger 31–64 CE and Tryphon 8–66 CE. Apprenticeship contract for Pompeius' son: P.Fouad 37 (48 CE).

that Pompeius owned a house in Oxyrhynchus together with his three brothers, Apion, Syros and Sarapion, inherited from their father, Syros: the inheritance agreement SB VIII 9824 (29 August 31) and Pompeius' Latin census return P.Thomas 6 (= PSI XI 1183) of 47–48 CE. The same house is also referred to in three later property declarations, SB XII 10788a–c (61, 62 and 64 CE). In these documents Pompeius' co-owners are not mentioned by name except for the last declaration, ll. 53–61 of which read: τὸ ὑπάρχον μοι εἰς | τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἡμέραν ἐν | τῇ μητροπόλει τοῦ Ὁξυρρυγγείτου ἐπ' ἀμφ[όδ]ου Ἑρμαίου πατρικὸν τέταρτον μέρος οἰκίας | καὶ αἰθρίου καὶ ἀλῆς καὶ ἐτέρων χρηστηρίων κοινῶν καὶ | ἀδιαιρέτων πρὸς Τεσεῦριν | Ἀπίωνος καὶ ἄλλους. This establishes that Pompeius' brother Apion was dead by 64 CE. The fact that his daughter Teseuris is singled out among the co-owners might suggest that this change of ownership is recent, whereas the names of the other co-owners are known from earlier declarations.

The time of Apion's death, perhaps sometime between the drafting of SB XII 10788b (62 CE) and 10788c (64 CE), when compared with the timespan of the letters in the Pompeius Niger archive (58–64 CE), makes the possibility of a connection between the (presumably recently) dead Apeis of SB VI 9121 and Pompeius' brother not impossible to contemplate. Should Apeis and Pompeius' brother Apion be identical, this would imply that SB VI 9121 is also datable between 62 and 64 CE. It would in that case be tempting to consider also Teseuris and Seraeus/Saraeus one and the same person, although such an identification remains purely hypothetical unless an etymological connection between the names can be established.³⁴ However this may be, familial connection and shared property between Pompeius and Apeis/Seraeus would explain why Heraklous involves him in her quarrel with Seraeus. Heraklous, the present occupant of the house that belongs or belonged among others to Pompeius, appeals

³⁴ The name Teseuris (with variant form Tesauris) is apparently the feminine equivalent of Pesouris, "the Syrian" (see J.K. Winnicki "Völkernamen als Personennamen im spätpharaonischen und griechisch-römischen Ägypten" in A.M.F.W. Verhoogt and S.P. Vleeming (eds.), *The Two Faces of Graeco-Roman Egypt. Greek and Demotic and Greek-Demotic Texts and Studies Presented to P.W. Pestman*, P.L.Bat. XXX, Leiden etc. 1998, 172). One might thus have expected a Hellenized form Syra being used as an alias (compare Pesouris/Syros in P.Oxy. I 37 and 38). It is still noticeable that the feminine form apparently has the root *seur/saur* and not *sour*, and it is perhaps conceivable that a reduced form *ser/sar*, caused by shift of stress to the suffix, might be the root of the name Seraeus/Saraeus.

to him for help when one of the other heirs, his niece, harrasses her over her right to occupy the place.

Another possible line of connection is through P.Oxy. XXXIV 2720 (41–54 CE) and (again) P.Thomas 6 (= PSI XI 1183). The former is a composite document which contains the receipt for the sales-tax (ll. 1–9) and the deed of sale (ll. 10–24) of a house. The transaction is between Thais, daughter of Ammeneus, with her husband Thoonis as her *kurios*, and a certain Hatreus, son of Hatreus and of Heraklous, Thais' sister (ll. 6–7 οὗ ἐπρίατο πα[ρὰ τοῦ τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτῆς] | [Ἡρακλ]οῦτος υἱοῦ Ἄτρεύου τοῦ Ἄτρεύου and l. 14 παρὰ τοῦ τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτῆς Ἡρακλοῦτος υἱοῦ Ἄτρεύου τοῦ Ἄτρεύου). The object of sale is a twelfth share in a two-storey house located in the vicinity of the Serapeum. Whether the document is connected with the archive of Tryphon or not,³⁵ it acquaints us with a certain Heraklous, daughter of Ammeneus, who is married to a Hatreus and has a son named after his father. From the Latin census declaration of Pompeius Niger P.Thomas 6 (= PSI XI 1183, 47–48 CE) we learn that he owned the third part of a house together with Didymus, Apollonius, Hatrio – all or just the last one, son(s) of a certain Hatrio – as well as with Hatrio himself.

fr. A.10–12 [domu]m · item · Oxyrynchite · metropoli · HS D
[com]munem · sibi · cum · Didymo · et · Apollonio · et · Hatrione ·
[filis ·] Hatrionis · et · Hatrione · pro · parte · III.

³⁵ The connection has been proposed hesitantly by J.D. Thomas (“[Rev.] P.Oxy. XXXIV” *CR* 20, fasc. 3 [1970] 393), who wonders whether Thoonis' patronymic in l. 13 can be restored as Θεώνιο[ς Τρ]ύφων[ος]. See also Smolders, “Het Archief”, 215 and Pestman, *Familiearchieven*, 167. However, Thais' *kurios* is 42 years old (l. 13). Thoonis, Tryphon's son by Saraeus, was not yet born at the time P.Oxy. XXXIV 2720 was written (41–54 CE), whereas Tryphon's paternal uncle, the only other Thoonis known from the archive with that patronymic, would be older (see P.Oxy. II 288.40, where he is 21 years old in 11–12 CE). Moreover, the customary use of the genitive article before patronymics in appositional constructions weighs decisively in support of the restoration of the name of Thais' husband in the ed.pr. as Θεώνιο[ς το]ῦ Τρύφω[ν] . . . In Rowlandson, *Women and Society*, 113 Thais is instead the wife of Thoonis, Tryphon's brother, which is a suitable candidate in terms of age, though the patronymic Dionysios is difficult to reconcile with the traces. In our view, the remains visible on the online image are mostly compatible with Θεώνιο[ς το]ῦ Θε[ο]ώνιο[ς], as suggested already in the commentary of the ed.pr. (*ad* l. 3). An identification could in that case be considered with Tryphon's creditor in 55 CE (SB X 10246 = P.Oxy. 304 descr.), whether this Thoonis is a family member or not.

Although not compulsory, the identity of the homonymous pairs, Hatrio/Hatreus and son, is within the realm of the possible. It is intriguing that we encounter both pairs in connection with ownership of shares in houses. The meaning of the name Hatreus, i.e. “twin”³⁶ (corresponding to Greek Δίδυμος), further strengthens the possibility that Pompeius’ associates (and in this scenario Heraklous’ husband and son) belonged to the Tryphon clan that had a Didymos as their forefather.³⁷

Identifying the sender of SB VI 9121 with Heraklous mentioned in P.Oxy. XXXIV 2720, the wife of Hatreus and the mother of Hatreus with who Pompeius co-owned a house in 47–48 CE, would explain why Heraklous, presumably in the absence of her husband and son(s), turns to Pompeius, a co-owner of the property from which she is evicted. On the other hand, a crucial piece of the jigsaw puzzle is missing in this scenario, i.e. Seraeus’ connection with the house. As, however, the death of Apion postdates Pompeius’ Latin census declaration by at least 14 years, sufficient time intervenes that would allow for changes in the ownership of that house with Apion/Apeis buying himself a share. Alternatively, one may imagine a new joint purchase by Pompeius, Apion and Hatrio. Purchase/sale of property, co-ownership of houses and loans combined with sales and/or antichretic loans are common economic activities in the circles of Pompeius and Tryphon.³⁸ Ownership of a share in a house makes it more probable that some of the owners did not live in the property but rented their part of the house to one or more of the co-owners or to a tenant. This seems to have been Heraklous’ situation, until Seraeus started harrasing her.

One may choose to interpret Heraklous’ closing statement in SB VI 9121, 8–13 “If you do not come, I will mount a donkey and come to the

³⁶ W. Spiegelberg, “Ein zweisprachiges Begleitschreiben zu einem Mumientransport”, ZÄS 51 (1913) 92 and E. Lüddeckens et al. (eds.), *Demotisches Namenbuch* 850–851 s.v. *htr*.

³⁷ Tryphon’s great grandfather was called Didymos and the name was held by one of his paternal uncles, see Biscottini, “L’archivio di Tryphon”, 63 and Rowlandson, *Women and Society*, 113.

³⁸ PSI XIII 1318 (Alexandria, after 23 August 31 CE) and P.Fouad 44 (28 August 44 CE) reflect economic activities of Pompeius Niger. Tryphon apparently co-owned a house with others, if the restoration of SB X 10245 (= P.Oxy. II 316).12–14 (50–51 CE) ἐ]πὶ ἡν | ἔχῳ σ[ὺν ἄλλοι]ς μ[ε]τόχοις | οἰκίαν is tenable. In 55 CE he buys the half part of a house which belongs to his cousin (P.Oxy. I 99), while in 59 CE he takes up a loan from a certain Antiphanes, son of Heraklas, with ownership of a house following upon repayment (P.Oxy. II 318 and 306).

Arsinoite” as a plan she is determined to carry out or as an exaggerated statement intended to urge Pompeius to rush to her aid. If she did travel to the Arsinoite, we suggest, she came there from Oxyrhynchus, and her letter may provide a link between the archives of the veteran Pompeius Niger and Tryphon the weaver.