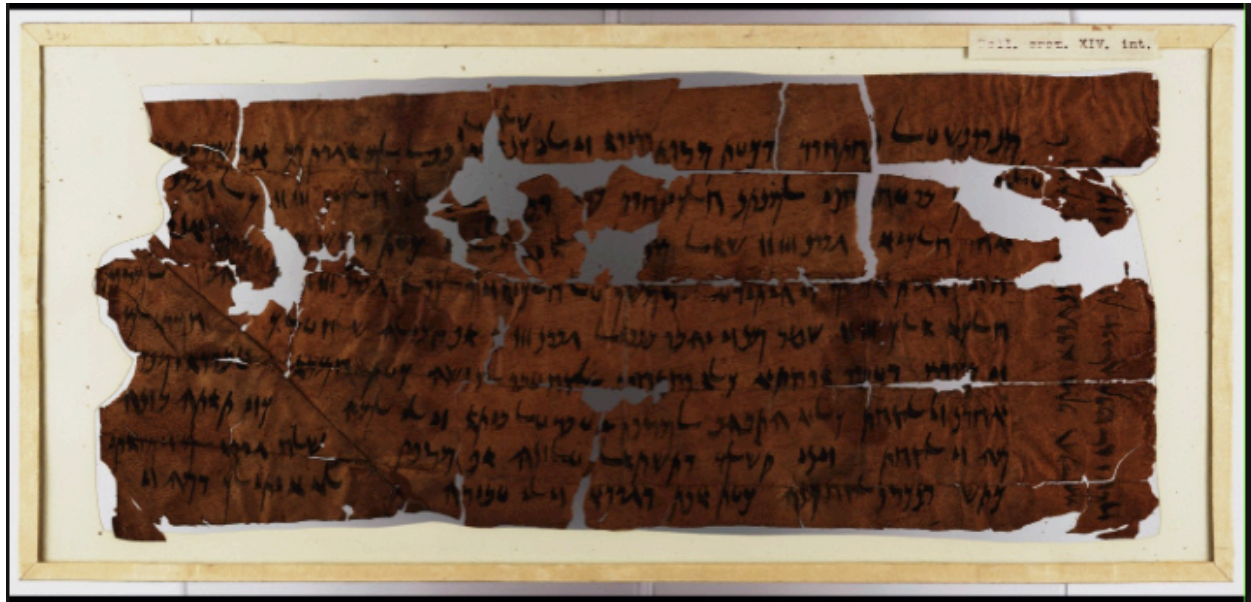


Arshama the Boss from Hell; or, "Questioned Forcefully, and a Severe Sentence Will Be Produced for You..."



And now, moving from the twenty-first century back 2500 years to a much earlier age of information technology: John Ma <https://twitter.com/Nakhthor/status/908024914011193344> — much peace and strength attend him! — reminds me of his "accessible edition of some letters of a member of the Achaimenid elite, the actual satrap of Egypt", Prince Arshama, quite possibly the great-grandson of King of Kings Darayavush I, writing in the late 400s B.C. to various of his subordinates <http://arshama.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>:

- the Persian Artavanta on the ground on Egypt, who appears to be serving more-or-less in a public law capacity — recognizing property rights, and inflicting and remitting punishments.
- the Egyptian Nakhthor, bailiff of Arshama in more-or-less a private management capacity.
- the Persian Armapiya, commanding armed forces in Egypt, concerning his unwillingness to follow the instructions of Psamšek, who appears to be another of Arshama's bailiffs in Egypt.
- plus some others, and a few letters from others to Nakhthor as well...

Arshama sounds like the boss from hell: threatening people with being "questioned forcefully, and a severe sentence will be produced for you" appears to be his favorite thing to say. Nakhthor sounds like he is trying to grab what he can and live an easy life. And yet the Arshama-Nakhthor relationship appears much better than is that of Varuvahya with his bailiff...

FROM ARŠAMA THE PRIN[CE TO ARTAVANTA WHO IS IN E]GYPT: CONCERNING [...]:

From Aršama to Artavanta: I send you (wishes for) much peace and strength! And [now]: he whose name is [Ps]amšek son of 'Ankhoḥap[i], my servant, has complained in this place. He says thus:

When I was coming [t]o [my] lord [... the sla]ves of ‘Ankhoḥapi my father whom I [was bringing (?)] after me to my lord, who were:

- he whose name is Psamšekḥasi [son of ??, 1;
- ?? son of ??] ???, 1;
- ‘Ankhoḥapi son of P[šenpe]berekhef, 1;
- Aḥer[ṯais] son of Psamšek, 1;
- Pšubaste son of Ḥor[i, 1;
- ?? son of Tja]ḥapiemou, 1;
- Psamšek son of Wahpre‘makhi, 1;
- ?? son of Wah[pre‘, 1.]

In all, 8 men. They took my goods and fled from me. Now, if it seems good to my lord, let word be sent to Artavanta that [when] those [slaves] I shall present before him, the punishment which I shall order for them, it shall be done to them.

Now, Aršama says [thus]:

‘That [P]samše[kḥasi] and his companions, the slaves of ‘Ankhoḥapi, whom P[s]amšek shall present before you th[ere], you are to order the punishment which Psamšek shall [issue] for them as an order to carry out; that punishment shall be done to them.’

**[FR]OM ARŠAMA THE PRINC[E] TO [ARTAVANTA WHO IS IN EGYPT]:
CONCERNING THE GRANT OF ‘ANKHOḤAPI THE OFFICIAL WHO...:**

From Aršama to Ar[tavan]ta. I send yo[u] wishes for m[u]ch peace and strength! [And now: the grant was given b]y the king and by me to ‘Ankhoḥapi my servant, whwas an offi[cial] among my domains which are in U[pper and Lower Egypt. Now, Psa]mšek the son of ‘Ankhoḥapi who now has been made an official instead of him among my domains which are in Upper [and] Low[er Egypt, he has asked to receive] that grant whi[ch] by the king and by me was [g]iven to ‘Ankhoḥapi. Let Psamšek his son be authorised to receive that grant there in E[g]ypt.

FROM A[RŠAMA THE PRINCE TO ARTAVANTA...]: CONCERNING:

[From Aršama to] Artavanta: [I send] you [wishes for much] peace [and strength!] And no[w, there is peace in this place before me. May there also be] peace there before you.

[And now:]... Kosakan the plenipotentiary (*xvaršbara)... was among my domains which [are in Egypt]t which all... to me. (As for) you, issue an order... let them come to me.

From Aršama to Artavanta: I send you [wishes for much peace and strength!] Here [for me there is peace. May the gods appoint peace [also there for you!] And [now: ...he whose] name is Nakhthor [son of ??... my servant] who is in Egypt, has sent word to me. Thus he sa[ys]:...?? son of Inharou... that one was removed from among the domains of [my] lord [...

Now, Aršama says thus: 'If...

FROM ARŠAMA THE PRINCE TO ARTAVANTA ('ARTAHANTA') WHO IS IN [EGYPT]: CONCERNING THE CILICIANS, [SLAVES] OF MINE, [WHO WERE NOT] ABLE, [TO ENTER] INTO MIŠPEH (?):

From Aršama to Artavanta ('Artahanta'): I send yo[u] wishes for much peace and strength! And now, (there is) peace in this (place) before me. May there also be peace there before y[o]u.

And now: there are Cili[cian] men, my slaves, in Egypt:

- he whose name is Pariyama, 1;
- he whose name is Ammuwana, 1;
- he whose name is Saraka, 1;
- he whose [n]ame is ???, [1;]
- he whose name is [???, 1;
- he whose name is Sadasbinazi [1;]
- he whose name is I[nda]ma (?), 1;
- he whose name is Sarmanazi, 1;
- he whose name is Ka', 1;
- he whose name is Bagafarnah, 1;
- he whose name is Piyatarunazi, 1;
- he whose name is Asmaraupa,
- he whose name is Muwasarma,

In all, 13 men.

They were appointed (as) pressers (?) among my domains which are in Upper and Lower Egypt. After, when Egypt rebelled, and the armed force were garrisoned, then that Pariyama and his companions were not able to enter into the fortress. After, the wicked [I]n[h]arou seized them, and they were with him.

Now, if it seems like a good thing to you, let an order be issued by you, so that a person should not do anything bad to that Pariyama and his companions. Let them be released. Let them do my work as previously.

FROM [A]RŠAMA TO ARMAPIYA: CONCERNING THAT PSAMŠE[K] SAID: ‘THEY DO NOT OB[EY] ME’:

From Aršama to Armapiya:

And now: Psamšek my official has sent (word) to me. He says thus:

Armapiya with the (armed) force which is at his control (‘to his hand’) do not obey me in the affair of my lord which I am telling them.’

Now, Aršama says thus:

‘The affair of my estate which Psamšek shall tell to you and to the force which is at your control, in that affair obey him and act. Thus let it be kn[o]wn to you: If Psamše[k] afterwards should send me a complaint about you, you will be questioned forcefully, and a severe sentence will be produced for you.’

Bagasrava knows this order. Aḥpepi (or ʾḤWPY) is the scribe.

FROM ARŠAMA TO MARDUK THE OFFICIAL WHO IS IN [...]; NABUDALANI THE OFFIC[IAL] WHO IS IN LA‘IR; ZATUVAHYAH THE OFFICIAL [WHO IS IN] ARZUḤIN; UPASTABARA THE OFFICIAL WHO IS IN ARBEL, ḤL[.], AND MATALUBAŠ; BAGAFARNAH THE OFFICIAL [W]HO IS IN SA‘LAM; FRADAFARNAH AND HAU[MADA]TA THE [O]FFI[CIAL]S WHO ARE IN DAMASCUS:

And now, [behol]d, he whose name is Nakhtḥor, m[y] official, [is goi]ng to Egypt. As for you, give [him ra]tions from my estate which is in your provinces, day by day:

- white flour, two measures (ḤPNN);
- inferior (?) flour, three measures;
- wine or beer, two measures;
- [cheese (?)], one.

And for his servants, ten m[e]n, to each per day:

- flour, one measure;

- fodder in proportion to his horses.

And give rations to the following men: two Cilicians, one artisan, in all, three men, my servants who are going with him to Egypt, to each man per day: flour, one measure. Give them this ration, from one official to the next official, in accordance with the route which is from province to province, until he shall reach Egypt. And if he should be in any one place more than one day, then for those days you shall not give them further rations.

Bagasrava knows this order. Rašta is the scribe.

FROM ARŠAMA TO NAKHTHOR THE OFFICIAL WHO IS IN EGYPT, IN LOWER (EGYPT): CONCERNING THE INSTRUCTION WHICH [...]:

From Aršama to Nakhtor:

And now: previously, when the Egyptians rebelled, then Samšek the previous official, our personnel and goods [which] are in Egypt he guarded with force, so that there was not any loss from my estate. Also, from elsewhere ('another place'), personnel of artisans of every kind and other goods, sufficiently he sought and made over to my estate.

And now: it is thus heard by me here, that the officials who are [in Lo]wer Egypt are being diligent in the disturbances (?), and are forcefully guarding the personnel and goods of their lords. They are also seeking others from elsewhere, and are add[ing t]o the estate of their lords.

But you and your colleagues are not so doing.

Now, I have also previously sent word to you concerning this: 'You are to be diligent. Guard [my] personnel and goods forcefully, so that there shall not be a[n]y loss from my estate. Also, from elsewhere, personnel of artisans of every kind, seek in sufficient numbers, and bring them into my courtyard, and mark them with my brand, and make them over to my estate, just as the [pre]vious officials were doing.'

Thus let it be known to you, if from the personnel or from my other goods there should be any loss, or from elsewhere you should not seek and should not add to my estate, you will all be questioned forcefully, and a severe sentence will be produced for you, Nakhtor.

[Ar]taḥaya knows this order. Rašta is the scribe.

FROM ARŠAMA TO NAKHTHOR THE OFFICIAL, [KENZA]SIRMA AND HIS COLLEAGUES [THE ACCOUNT]ANTS, WHO ARE IN EGYPT: CONCERNING THE FIELDS OF PAMUN WHICH I HAVE GIVEN TO PEṬOSIRI:

From Aršama to Nakhtor, Kenzasirma and his colleagues:

And now: he whose name is Peṭosiri the plenipotentiary (*xvaršbara), my servant, has sent word to me. He says thus:

There is a man [whose] name is Pamun, my [fa]ther. When there was unrest (?) in Egypt that man perished. And his domain, which he whose name is Pamun, my father, was occupying as heir, a seed-place of 30 ardab, th[at] domain was abandoned within (Egypt) since the people of our household all p[erished]. It was not given (?) 3. to me, the domain of Pamun my father.

Let there be thought for me. Let them give it to me. Let me occupy it as heir.

Now, Arša[ma] says thus:

‘If it is thus, in accordance with these words which Peṭosiri has sent [to me,— that] he whose name is [Pamun] his father, that one, when there was unrest (?) in Egypt, perished with the people of [his household, and] his domain, of that Pamun his father, a seed-place of 30 ardab, that one was abandon[ed, and to my estate] it was not made over, and it was not given by me to another servant of mine,— then I give the domain of that Pamun to Peṭosiri. You tell him that he shall occupy (it as heir, and the tax, in accordance with (that) which Pamun his father was previously paying, he shall pay to my estate.’

Artavahyah knows this order. Rašta is the scribe.

FROM ARŠAMA TO NAKHTHOR THE OFFI[CIAL], KENZASIRMA AND HIS COLLEAGUES THE ACCO[UN]TANTS, WHO ARE IN EGYPT: CONCERNING....:

From Aršama to Nakhtor, Kenzasirma and his colleagues:

And now: he whose name is Ĥinzani (?), a sculptor, my servant, whom Bagasrava brought to Susa, that one, give rations to him, and to the people of his household, as to the other personnel, my stonecutters... ???? ‘on my memorandum / ration-list’, ????. And let him make statues [on] which there shall be horsemen (?), and let him make a statue of a horse with its rider, just as previously he made before me, and other statues. And send them, and let them bring (them) to me at once, with haste and h[ast]e!

Artavahyah knows thi[s o]rder. Rašta is the scribe

FROM ARŠAMA TO NAKHTHOR THE OFFICIAL, KENZASIRMA AND HIS COLLEAGUES THE ACCOUNTANTS, WHO ARE IN EGYPT: CONCERNING THE ORDER WHICH...:

From Aršama to Nakhthor, Kenzasirma and his colleagues:

And now: Varuvahya the prince says to me thus in this place, saying:

The domain which was given to me by my lord in Egypt, that one, they do not bring me anything from there. If it seems like a good thing to my lord, let a letter be sent by my lord to Nakhthor the official and the accountants, in order that they might make an order to him whose name is Aḥatubaste, my official, to the effect that the revenue of those domains he should disburse, and should bring it to me with the revenue which Nakhthor is bringing.

Now, Aršama says thus:

‘As for you, make an order to Aḥatubaste the official of Varuvahya, to the effect that the revenue of the domains of Varuvahya in full, and the accrued interest, he should disburse and bring, and he should come with the treasure concerning which an order was issued by me to bring it to Babylon.’

Artavahyah knows thi[s o]rder. Rašta is the scribe.

FROM VARUVAHYA, TO NAKHTHOR, AND KENZASIRMA THE OFF[ICIALS...]:

From Varuvahya, to Nakhthor, and Kenzasirma and his colleagues:

And now: Here I have complained to Aršama concerning Aḥatubaste, my official, that he is not bringing me any re[ven]u[e]. Oth[er officials (??)] are bringing [revenue (?)] to Baby[lon].

N[o]w, as for you, be diligen[t] and make an order to [m]y official so that the revenue of [those domains he should br]ing to me to Babylon. Ac[t] thus, in order that you might please me.

Also, behold: (it is) many years that that domain [...] was not suitable. Also, Aḥatubaste my official, or his brother or his son, let him come to me to Babylon with the revenue.

**FROM VIRAFŠA TO [N]AKHTḤO[R THE OFFICIAL WHO IS IN] EGYPT:
CONCERNING... WHICH... MISAPATA:**

From Virafša to Nakhtḥor:

And now: Misapata my official has sent word to me. He says thus, saying:

In Babylon, a letter from Aršama was given to Psa[mše]k the son of ʿAnkhoḥapi, ordering him to give me Cilicians, [4+]1 [men]. And in Babylon [he had already given] me Cilicians, in all, [10] men. After, he asked for Cilicians, 5 men, from [Nakh]ḥor, and he did not give (them) to me.

Now Virafša says thus:

‘Behold, as for you, look at the letter of Aršama which they brought to Psamšek concerning the Cilicians which they promised to me, 5 men. And you, give to Misapata those Cilicians who are 5, apart from the 5 men whom they gave to me/him in Babylon.’

Also, he has sent a complaint against you, saying:

The wine which is in Papremis (?), and the grain of the lands, all of it, Nakhtḥor has taken and made it over to himself.

Now, the wine, the grain, and anythin[g] else, which you have taken, return all of it and give it to Misapata. Let him make it over to my estate, lest, when you come to this place, you shall pay damages for what you took, and you shall be questioned about this.

Also Misapata has sent word, saying:

The personnel of my lady he assaulted, and he took goods from her.

Now, as for you and my personnel, it is no business of yours. And whatever goods you took from my personnel, return and give them to them thus, so that Misapata shall not again send a complaint ag[ainst you].

FROM ARTAḤAYA TO NAKHTḤOR...:

From Ar[t]aḥa[ya] to Nakhtḥor:

I send you wishes for much peace and strength! And no[w: as for yo]u, be diligent.... Act thus, in order that you should pleas[e] the gods and Aršama. Also, that which you have sent, [he brought] to me, by the hand of ???...

- ...linen-tunic, 1;
- skins of purple, 2.

That man has brought them to me, but [I was] not [pleased]. You sent and [he brought to me what I was not la]cking, and I was no[t] pleased. You are very praiseworthy to me and... [that] the gods shall appoint peace for you.

How Nakhthor is supposed to eat on his journey from Bab-Ilim, the Gate of the God Marduk, to Egypt after he leaves Damascus is not clear to me...

There is lots going on here—a huge amount in a small number of words, especially given that so much of the language is repetitious and formulaic, with scribe-time apparently not being something that anyone wants to economize on...