

The Scroll
of
Autumn
Savannah

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the
Writer

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Translator's Introduction

A few years ago there was a minor rockfall on the eastern tip of the Island of Xive on the planet Mottle Blue. The rockfall was near the historical site of the Esyup said to have been founded by Autumn Savannah¹. The fall revealed artefacts that may have been of interest to archaeologists and so was reported to the University of Uli-Rratha. As is so often the way with these things, it was a while before a team could be sent to investigate. Archaeological excavations cost money and universities are always under budgetary constraints. However, in February 2022 a team led by post doctoral student Jason Wincannon, himself an exo-terrestrial archaeologist, uncovered a small cache of documents. These documents were preserved and sent to the Classical History Department of the University of Uli-Rratha in Aferraron where a superficial check deemed them to be of limited historical interest. The documents were passed to Karen Watkins, a graduate student in that department, for translation and classification before being digitised and added to their archives.

All the documents, save one, related to the day to day dealings of the Yeinoba Vyliacennie im Rozum ny Duch Esyup and were, as such, of little interest to any save a handful of historians and archaeologists. Records of wages paid, goods purchased, lands leased and so forth can be very dry reading. However, one small scroll, hidden within a pile of others, caught Karen's eye and when she translated it she emailed me immediately, knowing my interest, both academic and personal, in Autumn Savannah.

I doubt anyone will ever be able to comprehend the extent of my astonishment and excitement when I received that email. I was sitting at my desk after a typically tedious departmental meeting and was contemplating an unappetising egg salad sandwich for lunch. I opened the email and nearly fell off my chair in disbelief. This small scroll was written by the hand of Autumn herself!

As an academic I cannot overstate the importance of this scroll, as is the case with any document written by a historical figure shrouded in myth, but at a personal level it brought solidity to a figure I knew so well but who only may have had solidity and substance in my heart. No longer do I have to dispute with colleagues and other academics about whether or not she even existed. This was the proof and my heart was filled with joy.

1 See *The Annals ~ The Fourth Tale*.

As to the nature of the document, much is unclear. The document's substance is a brief description of Autumn's final few days at the Yeinydd ru Morathke ny Feandrakek Esyup before she left on her travels and is written in the first person. The opening section of the document is missing, not uncommon with scrolls where the outer surface gets damaged and worn with time, so we do not know if it formed part of a book she was writing, a letter to someone or something else entirely. That it was found near the site of the Esyup she founded on Xive suggests perhaps that the document was written to someone there, possibly even Grimme himself, but that is mere conjecture. Certainly there are no questions asked about or instructions given to the Esyup in what remains of the document. That it could be a letter is suggested by Autumn's signature at the conclusion of the document but such signatures are fairly common in classical Aferraron as a means of attesting to the authenticity of individual scrolls within a series. Perhaps this was the first scroll in an autobiography that Autumn was writing. We shall never know unless another cache of documents is found.

Whatever the document's intent, it is a fascinating insight into Autumn's world. What follows is my own translation of Autumn's words from the archaic Aferraronian into modern English.

The Scroll

{missing} ... custom at the dawn of each new day. A gong sounds for the ending of such contemplation for Novices and Examiners and the beginning of their formal studies. After midday sustenance Novices and Examiners move into the arena for development of their defensive skills.

Such was my life until I became Krisana and the equal of a Master. For us the gong did not sound. Our contemplations end when our contemplations end and none could gainsay. After contemplation we, too, devote ourselves to study and training of the mind but ours follow no fixed path. Our debate and discussion flows freely like the rivers and the winds and nothing is forbidden. After midday we go our separate ways; Krisanas to develop our skills of defence and Masters to develop their skills of debate. All come together for the evening meal and thereafter Novices and Examiners, of which there are many, endeavour to best Krisanas and Masters through questioning and disputation and, likewise, Krisanas and Masters seek to expand on the training given by the Examiners and extend the minds and thoughts of all.

It may seem that there is little mixing between the upper and lower members of the Esyup but this is not so. Ours was a small community and on occasion there were no Masters or Krisanas. Indeed when I was bestowed with the honour of Krisana there was but one Krisana although there were two Masters, including my own mentor Noxu. Despite this seeming segregation it is the philosophy of our Order that everyone of any rank was obliged to attack without warning and at any time another of equal or higher or lower rank. Through this obligation we keep our senses attuned and such skills as we have honed.

Such then were my days as I passed through my early summers as a Novice and progression to Examiner wherein I instructed Novices in the skills of the mind and the body while receiving instruction myself from the Krisana and Masters. And so it came to pass that in time the three Masters and Krisana discussed my further progression. After much deliberation I was proposed for Krisana for it was held by all three that three Masters and one Krisana would not serve the

purposes of the Esyup as a unity and such a view was put before the Novices and Examiners for discussion.

My own view was that I should not be accorded either distinction. My ground for this assertion was that, notwithstanding all my efforts to overcome such, my vanity maintained a belief that I was superior because I had within me the makings of both Master and Krisana. I put this view before the Esyup for discussion for to endeavour to hide my true nature was an anathema to me and contrary to all I had been taught. The communal discussion of my true nature occupied us all for three consecutive nights and revealed unseen truths to me, not least of which was the view that my rejection of either Krisana or Master on the grounds of my vanity was but a further expression of that vanity and not sufficient reason of itself.

I accepted the rank of Krisana and humbly made my vows before all assembled with due ceremony.

And so we come to my departure from my Esyup, the place where I had spent all but the first short part of my life. The place that had sustained and nurtured me and which had given me many values and skills and honours. The place which I repaid with desertion.

When first I took my place as Krisana at the high table for the evening meal I was much engrossed with the formalities and paid little attention to the meal itself. However at the second evening meal I observed that my spoon fitted well with my hand and at the same time fitted well with my bowl. This intrigued me. How was it that a simple piece of wood carved into a shape much like any other spoon fitted both my hand and the bowl so well? My hand, although similar to the hands of others was not identical to them. My bowl, although similar to the bowls of others was not identical to them. I put the thought to one side and entered into the evening's discussions as was expected of me. At contemplation the next day I thought further upon the matter. It seemed to me that there were many things that fitted well with other things and many things that did not fit well with other things. Further contemplation led to the thought that some things have a natural place, such as a spoon in the hand, and other do not, such as the body on a branch of a tree. The one is comfortable and natural and the other is uncomfortable and not natural. The latter can be

endured with an effort but the former needs no effort or endurance.

In our afternoon discussion I brought this thought up with Noxu, my mentor throughout my time at the Esyup and by this time a Master for many summers. It was apparent that he did not find the matter as engrossing as I and replied that the spoon was made to fit the hand whereas the branch was made to fit the tree and not my body. I responded by saying that there were many ways to make a spoon and only some of those ways allowed the spoon to fit comfortably in the hand. He responded by saying that trees made many branches and doubtless some were comfortable to lie on. Thereupon I reminded him of a Novice two summers previously who left the Esyup after a short time because she was not happy there. Clearly the Esyup was not her place because she did not comfortably fit the Esyup nor did Esyup comfortably fit her. Noxu considered this for a long time then asked me a simple yet obvious question for which I had no ready answer as such a question had not come to me. He asked me what was my place.

I considered that question for five days. During that contemplation it came to me that the manner of the Esyup was flawed. Much emphasis was placed on free thought and questioning but we knew little of the world outside the Esyup and in consequence although we perceived our thoughts as free they were in fact constrained by ignorance. Only rarely did anyone bring fresh thoughts to the Esyup and in consequence there were few fresh ideas to build upon. We spent our time thinking and rethinking the old and what we thought was new was merely an extension of the old. On the fifth day I resolved to change that. Mayhap it was only my vanity reasserting itself but I had come to believe that this Esyup, the place I had lived my entire life, the place I held to be my sanctuary, was not my place.

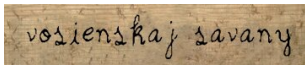
On the sixth day I returned to Noxu and told him of my conclusions. His response surprised me greatly for he informed me that he, too, had reached the same conclusion many summers before although by a different path but he had found himself wanting. When I asked what he meant by this he replied that he had ventured out into the world but lacked the courage and fortitude he needed and had returned to the Esyup after but a short time.

This confession brought great fear upon me. If Noxu, my mentor,

lacked the fortitude to find his place in the world what horrors would lie before me if I ventured forth alone and without his guidance? I still remember his words and the tone of his voice:

“Autumn, my child. I know not the ways of men and women but I have loved you as I believe a father loves his only child and that love brings with it a burning desire to protect and cherish you but if you do not go forth into the world and seek your true place then I shall cast you out with my own hand and deny your existence henceforth.”

And so it was I left the Esyup that very day with the blessing of Noxu upon me.



vozienskaj savany

(Autumn Savannah)