A christian prayer from Ramses IVth tomb in the Theban Valley of the Kings

The Journal of Juristic Papyrology 24, 19-22

1994
A CHRISTIAN PRAYER FROM RAMSES IVTH TOMB
IN THE THEBAN VALLEY OF THE KINGS

The text under consideration is a dipinto written in black ink on the left wall of the tomb’s corridor. The hand is an upright, well-practised cursive and may be dated to the Vlth century. Upsilon as a part of -ου- is usually reduced to a curve over the preceding omikron.

The inscription was published in 1920 by J. Baillet with several cruces (Inscriptions grecques et latines des tombeaux des rois ou syrinxes à Thèbes I [= Mémoires Publiés par les Membres de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire 42], Le Caire 1920, pp. 71-72, no. 302, pl. 4). We believe that the photograph permits to establish the text with almost hundred per cent certainty. Below, Baillet’s reading is printed in left hand side, our in right hand side:
εὐχαρίστησαι πᾶσαι εὐχαριστία 
πνευματική κεσεπτάρσι παν-
tόκρατορ.

1. παντόκρατορ? (cf. com.) 4. Ἁμώνιο (cf. com.) ἀνα-
χωρητά; 9. ἐμὲ; 10-11. πᾶς (cf. com.); 11. δέσποτα

"O Lord the Almighty, and the saint apa Kollouthos, and the saint apa Pathermouthis, and the saint apa Ammonis anachorite, ask God to grant life to Artemidora together with Papnouthios for a short time according to your will and make me, Panouthis, to thank (you) with every spiritual thank (or: in every spiritual prayer), o Lord the Almighty."

1. παντόκρατορ: nominative instead of vocative or an orthographic mistake, omega for omikron.

2. Saint Kollouthos, a martyr of Diocletian time, has been one of the most celebrated saints of the Coptic church (there is, however, no entry Kollouthos/Col-

louthus in The Coptic Encyclopedia; see W.E. CRUM, 'Colluthos, the martyr and his name', Byzantinische Zeitschrift 30, 1929-30, pp. 323-327). He was a patron-saint of Antinoe from where he originated and where he suffered his martyrdom. Antinoe, therefore, was the most important centre of his cult (cf. A. PAPACONSTANTINOU, Le culte des saints en Egypte d’après la documentation papy-
rologique et épigraphique grecque (Vᵉ-VIIᵉ siecle), unpublished dissertation, Strasbourg 1993, pp. 226-231). In documents concerning his cult places there he is called either ἅγιος Κολλοθοῦς or ἅγιος ἂπα Κολλοθοῦς; in Greek docu-
ments the first form occurs more often while in Coptic texts the latter prevails (cf. S. TIMM, Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit III, Wiesbaden 1985, pp. 1348-1350). This hesitation could be reflected also in our inscription where ἂπα has been added later, probably under the influence of two other in-
stances occurring here: ἅγιος ἂπα Πατηρμοῦθις and ἅγιος ἂπα Ἀμμοῖος.

Ἀπα is a title of respect, not necessarily meaning that the man was either an an-
chorite or a monk (cf. T. DERDA – E. WIPSZYCKA, ‘L’emploi des titres abba, apa et papas dans l’Egypte byzantine’, JJP 24, 1994, pp. 23-56). It was, however, a common habit in Christian Egypt to provide with this title the names of saints, including the martyrs of the great persecution of the 3rd and of the beginning of the 4th century (cf. ibidem, p. 34).

2-3. For St. Patermouthis, cf. R.-G. COQUIN, The Coptic Encyclopedia VI, p. 1908, s.v. Patermouthis, Saint. He originated from Oxyrhynchus but the place of his life as a hermit is not recorded. He was celebrated in various places from Saqqara to Esna with predominance of Middle Egyptian localities.
3-4. Most probably 'Άμμωνης for 'Άμμώνις (from 'Αμμώνιος). Both the saint's name and his designation ἀναχωράης stay here in nominative instead of being in vocative. The use of nominative for vocative is a phenomenon frequently encountered in late koine and cannot surprise in connection with the regular vocatives ἄγιε Κολλούθε and ἄγιε Πατερμοῦδη.

Two saint hermits with the name Ammonios are known to us: 1) Ammonius of Kellia, an originist monk from the end of the 4th century (A. GUILLAUMONT, The Coptic Encyclopedia I, p. 113 sq., s.v. Ammonius of Kellia) and 2) Ammonius of Tunah near el-Ashmunein, contemporary of the famous Apollo of Bawit who intervened in his life (R.-G. COQUIN, The Coptic Encyclopedia I, p. 114, s.v. Ammonius of Tunah). In our opinion it could have been the latter who was concerned here since the saints invoked in this prayer, which is a manifestation of personal piety, seems to be specifically Middle Egyptian ones.

5-9. παρακαλέσατε τον θεόν (...) ποίησον εὐχαριστήσαν: the author of the prayer addresses God twice, for the first time — indirectly, through the three saints; for the second time — directly.

7-8. χαρίσασθαι ζωήν τῇ Ἀρτεμώωρᾳ μετὰ Παίπνουθιου εἰς ὀλίγον χρόνον πρὸς τὸ θέλημα σου: The author of the prayer is a pious Christian who gives the two persons entirely at God's disposal. He only asks God to grant them as much life as God wills. This time for mundane life on earth, determined by God, is minimal and insignificant if compared with timelessness of God himself and with the eternal life after death, which is stressed by the phrase εἰς ὀλίγον χρόνον.

ὀλίγος χρόνος is a common expression; numerous examples of its occurrence are quoted by LSJ and W. BAUER, WB zum NT. The expression combined with the verb ζών usually appears in the funerary inscriptions (from among non-Christian texts, cf. e.g. CI II 1513, a metrical epitaph from Tell el-Yehoudieh commemorating a certain Rachelis who died at the age of 30: εἶ δ' ὀλίγος ζήσας τοῦ ὀλίγου μου χρόνου τῇ ζωῆς [line 4]; for the Christian ones see Th. MACRISY – J. EBERSOLT, ‘Monuments funéraires de Constantinople’, BCH 46, 1922, p. 358: καὶ γάρ ὁ ταπινός ζησας τῶν ὀλίγου μοῦ χρόνου τῇ ζωῇ [line 11]; ICUR IX 24268: Αὐστάλη, ἡμῶν πρωτότοκοι τέκνοι, ὡσ' ἡμῶν ἐδόθης πρὸς ὀλίγον χρόνον, εὐχοὺ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν). It stresses the fact of a pre-matured death of a person. Although the meaning of the whole expression in funerary epigraphy is different than in our dipinto from Thebes its formulaic use might have influenced the wording in this case.

9. Πανοῦδης might be considered as a simple mistake of the writer (for Παπνοῦδης) but we could not find any evidence for the loss of πι before νυ. Πανοῦδης, however, is a name with the same meaning as Παπνοῦδης; the only difference is the lack of the article in the former (cf. F. HEUSER, Die Personennamen der Kopten, Leipzig 1929, p. 24, 25). It is quite probable then that in our inscrip-
tion both names, Πανούθις and Παππούθις (Παππούθις), refer to the same man. He might have been a son or, less probably, the husband of Artemidora. It is likely that the inscription comes from his very hand or, at least, that he was its formulator.

9-12. A standard expression is κατά τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ or διὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ. πρὸς τὸ θέλημα — “nach seinem Willen” is however registered by Bauer, WB 247-248 (s.v. θέλημα).

10-11. The reading of the very end of line 10 makes difficulties for the ink has faded considerably here. We accept Baillet’s ευχαριστία although we ourselves can distinguish only ευχαριστια. The syntax of this part of the inscription is puzzling. ευχαριστία πνευματική, as it is written, could be either nominative or dative. The first possibility gives of course no sense, the latter should be taken as dativus instrumentalis dependent on the infinitive εύχαριστήσαι. If so, πασαί is to be interpreted as an equivalent of the dative πασῇ. On the basis of the evidence given by F. Th. Gignac, A Grammar I, pp. 247-248 this might be considered a phonetical phenomenon (interchange of αι and η is recorded by him with numerous occurrences, especially in ending of the subjunctive of the active aorist), but it cannot be totally excluded that for the author of this inscription πάσα had a levelled declension with the vowel of the nominative extended to the oblique cases (cf. Gignac, A Grammar II, p. 6 where he noted the same phenomenon in nouns’ declension).

ευχαριστῶ, ευχαριστία must appear here with the meaning “to thank (to the God) in a prayer”, “personal prayer”. Baillet was of the opinion that the expression ευχαριστία πνευματική suggests heretic influence. Contrary to him we see nothing unorthodox in it. In early Church, in combination with ευχαριστία the term πνευματική must have had only the meaning “spiritual” which is quite usual in describing an ideal Christian offering: cf. Just. Dial. 118.2 (Migne 6.749c): μη ... θυσίας ἀφ’ αιμάτων ... ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον ἀναφέρεσθαι, ἀλλὰ ἄλλης ἡμῶν καὶ πνευματικῆς καὶ εὐχαριστίας; Irenaeus Theol., Fragmenta deperditorum operum, Fragment 36, lines 14-16: ἡ προσφορὰ τῆς εὐχαριστίας οὐκ ἐστὶ σαρκικῆ, ἀλλὰ πνευματικῆ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ καθαρὰ; Origines [Dub.], Selecta in Psalmodia (Migne 12.1672): Ψαλμὸς ῞αβα: ἦ Ψυλώ σε, ὦ Θεός μου, κ. τ. ἐ. “Τψψωσε, Θείως οὐκ εὐχαριστίαν εστίν εὐχαριστία τοῦ καθαροῦ ἐπὶ τοῖς συμβάσσαιν αὐτῷ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀγαθῶς.

It should be pointed out, however, that all the authors quoted above are of rather early date and none of them wrote in days of great theological controversies of antiquity. This could be the reason why Baillet suggested heretic influence.

Tomasz DERDA
Adam ŁAJTAR