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Tomasz Markiewicz

NEW FRAGMENTARY COPTIC TEXTS
FROM DEIR EL-BAHRI*

The 1999/2000 excavation season of the Polish-Egyptian Archeological and Conservation Mission at Deir el-Bahri (under the auspices of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archeology of the Warsaw University)¹ led to the discovery of several minor Coptic texts. They were all found in shafts of the Third Intermediate Period tombs (end of the 22nd dyn. to the beginning of the 26th dyn.) executed in the Northern Chapel of Amun on the Upper Terrace of the Hatshepsut Temple. The tombs were robbed in Antiquity and later filled with debris and the material found in them could not be stratified.²

All texts are probably connected in some way to the Coptic monastery of St. Phoibammon,³ but, owing to their poor state of preservation, nothing more specific can be said about them. Only one ostrakon may with some degree of probability be attributed to the well-known archive of the bishop Abraham, who resided in the monastery around 600 A.D.⁴

* I would like to thank for the assistance Prof. Włodzimierz GODLEWSKI (Warsaw) and Dr. Zbigniew SZAFRAŃSKI (Warsaw).

¹ For the activities of the Mission in the 1999/2000 season see L. GIDDY, "Digging Diary 1999-2000", *Egyptian Archeology* 17 (Autumn 2000) 29-30 and the forthcoming report in *Polish Archeology in the Mediterranean*, vol. XII.

² Personal communication of Dr. Mirosław BARWIK and Dr. Zbigniew SZAFRAŃSKI (Warsaw).

³ For the topography and architecture of the monastery see W. GODLEWSKI, *Le monastère de St. Phoibammon*, Varsovie 1986, 21-50.

⁴ For the general outline of the history of the monastery see W. GODLEWSKI, *op. cit.* (n. 1) 60-78. For the archives of the monastery see *ibidem*, 51-59. For the person of the bishop Abraham see M. KRAUSE, *Apa Abraham von Hermonthis. Ein oberägyptischer Bischoff um 600*, Phil. Diss. Berlin 1956.

1. LETTER TO VICTOR.

This ostracon bears fragment of a letter addressed to the *presbyteros* Victor. The upper part of the original sherd with the beginning of the letter is missing, along with the its left portion, so that the beginning of each preserved line is also missing. The hand does not seem to be very rapid but neither is it quite inexperienced.

Field No. NA/Tx.4
VIIth cent.?

6 cm x 8 cm

Shaft 4
Fig. 1

] .. [
] .ϠΔ[
]Δ ΚΑΤΑ ΘΕ ΚΩΙ[ΝΕ ?]
 x + 4 ε]ΤΒΕ ΠΡΟΝ ΕΚΩΙΝ[ε
]Τ ΧΟΟΥ ΠΡΩΒ [...]
] ΕΦΕΨΩΠΕ Ϡ ΤΑΣ
 ΠΡΕΣ]Β, ΒΙΚΤΩΡ ΖΙΤῆ
 x + 8 ΦΔΡ]ΜΟΥΤΕ

.....
 [...] as you demand (?)
 [x + 4] [...] because of the command, as you demand (?)
 [...] send the thing [...]
 [...] May it happen. To give it
 [to] *presbyteros* Victor from
 [x + 8] [... Phar]moute.

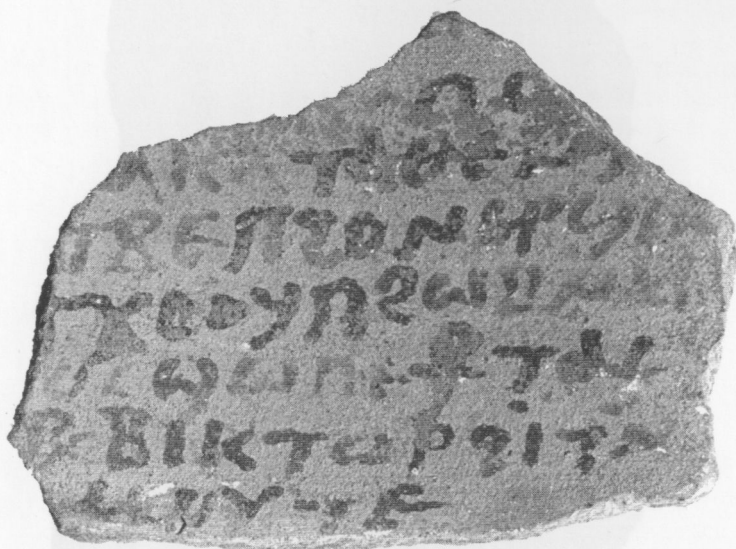
x + 1. Faint traces of one or two letters.

x + 5. At the end of the line faint traces of several letters, now illegible.

Unfortunately not much can be said about the contents of this letter due to its poor state of preservation. The only sure information is that it was addressed to a priest named Victor, who could be (however very tentatively) identified with the well-known disciple of the bishop Abraham.⁵

⁵ For the discussion of the name Victor appearing in the Deir el-Bahri ostraca see T. MARKIEWICZ, "Five Coptic ostraca from Deir el-Bahri" *JJP* 29 (1999) 81-82.

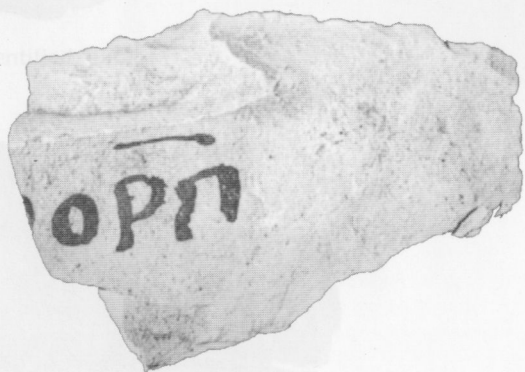
PLATE I



1. Letter to Victor



2. Fragment of a letter (?)



3. Beginning of a letter (?)

All photographs by Waldemar Jerke,
Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the Warsaw University

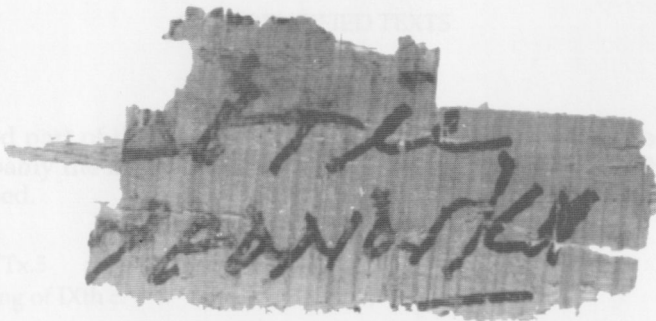
PLATE II



4. Unidentified text



5. Unidentified text



6. Unidentified text

All photographs by Waldemar Jerke,
Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the Warsaw University

2. FRAGMENT OF A LETTER?

This is a small piece of an amphora belly with five fragmentary lines running parallel to the ribs. The only clearly identifiable word is $\tau\alpha\delta\alpha\epsilon$, which may (but need not to) be part of the address formula.⁶

Field No. NA/Tx.2

Shaft 4

before beginning of IXth c.

5 cm x 5,7 cm

Fig. 2

]ΜΠϞϞΙ[
]ΝΨΗΝΚΩ[
]ΚΤΔΔϞΕΙ[
 x + 4]ΚΩΡϞ[
]ΤΜ[

3. BEGINNING OF A LETTER?

Field No. NA/Tx.3

Shaft 4

before beginning of IXth c.

3 cm x 4,5 cm

Fig. 3

This small limestone flake was likewise found in the shaft no. 4 in the Northern Chapel of Amun on the Upper Terrace. It bears only three letters: $\sigma\rho\pi$ preceded by traces of another letter, perhaps ψ . This may be a fragment of an introductory formula from Coptic letters $\psi\rho\rho\pi$ $\mu\epsilon\eta$...⁷

4. UNIDENTIFIED TEXTS

4.1

The preserved part of this ostrakon bears fragment of just one line of the original text, probably the initial one, as the upper part of the sherd (with ribs) was left uninscribed.

Field No. NA/Tx.5

Shaft 1

before beginning of IXth c.

4 cm x 8 cm

Fig. 4

]ϞΝϞΟΤΒΕΤΔΡΜ[

⁶ A. BIEDENKOPF-ZIEHNER, *Untersuchungen zum koptischen Briefformular unter Berücksichtigung ägyptischer und griechischer Parallelen*, Würzburg 1983, 41.

⁷ A. BIEDENKOPF-ZIEHNER, *op. cit.*, 41.

4.2

This sherd bears fragment of an unidentified text which nature I was unable to determine due to its poor state of preservation (the upper, lower, left and right part of the ostracon are missing).

Field No. NA/Tx.1
before beginning of IXth c.

4 cm x 6 cm

Shaft 4
Fig. 5

x + 4
] [
] ΗΣ ΠCΝΔΥ ΝΝΗ [
] ΕΝΔ ΡΗC ΤΑΜΙΟ [
] ΝΤΕΤΝΤΑΔΥ [
] ΧΩΤΝ
] ΚΡΙCIC

4.3

This small papyrus fragment was found alongside with the ostraca in the Northern Chapel of Amun on the Upper Terrace. It contains a tiny fragment (ends of two lines) of an unidentified text – notable is the Greek word ἀνάγκη.

Field No. NA/Pap.1
before beginning of IXth c.

5,2 cm x 2,5 cm

Fig. 6

] ΧΕ ΤΜ
] ΨΕ ΑΝΑΓΚΗ

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