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A GREEK EPITAPH FROM NUBIA REDISCOVERED

A FIRST MENTION of the text published below is found in a report by M. Almagro, R. Blanco Caro, M. A. García Guinea, F. Presedo Velo, M. Pellicer Catalán and J. Teixidor on the “Excavations by the Spanish archaeological mission in the Sudan, 1962-1963 and 1963-1964”, appearing in *Kush* 13 (1965) 78-96, esp. 94-95 + pll. XXI b & c. The stele is reported to have been found at Ad-Donga (North Argin), 11 km north of Wadi Halfa, West Bank of the Nile, in Area A-III, located beyond the tell, nearly half a kilometre from the Nile, where it was found *in situ* in a thin wall. In this report the text is stated to be dated to Martyrs era year 809. This indication, however, now turns out to be erroneous and misleading, as the text is dated after the era of Diocletian. In fact, it presents one of the latest attestations of the use of this era in an inscription. After this first mention of the stele it was mentioned another time in an article by J. Teixidor, M. A. García Guinea and E. Van den Eynde Ceruti, “El poblado medieval cristiano de Ad-Donga (Argin Norte, Sudán)”, *Sautuola: Revista del Instituto de Prehistoria y Arqueología Sautuola* 5 (= *Estudios en Homenaje al padre Carballo*, Santander 1986-1988), pp. 271-287, esp. p. 282. In the short description of the stele the additional information is given that the stele was found on January 13th, 1964, in the crossing of well built walls, very close to the external wall of ‘zone VI’ (*sic*, S.T.T.–K.A.W.), and that its character is funerary.

After these first reports, the stone simply went ‘missing’ for a long time, i.e. there apparently never appeared a full publication. By chance the

authors of this contribution happened to discuss the subject of its present location during a congress on Arabic papyri (!) organized at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, March 2002; we are most pleased to publish here this interesting text which became ‘submerged’ for too long a time. The inscription is now kept in the Museo Arqueologico Nacional at Madrid, under the inventory number 1980/103/1. We are most grateful to the Museum’s curator in charge, Ms M^a Carmen Pérez Díe, for kindly permitting us to publish this text, and to Ms A. Torija (CSIC, Madrid), who helped us most efficiently with taking a photo.

For the Greek text of the stele under review cf. in particular various similar inscriptions in *I. Faras* IV, SB IV 7432, V 8763 (1157) and III 6035 = 8765 (1181); the latter text was recently republished with an extensive commentary by E. Bernand, *Inscriptions Grecques d’Égypte et de Nubie au Musée du Louvre*, Paris 1992, nr. 115 (pp. 169-174); cf. also A. Łajtar “Bemerkung zu einem christlichen Epitaph aus Nubien im Louvre”, *ZPE* 98 (1993), pp. 245-247. We refer to this re-edition below as ‘*I. Louvre* 115’.

The dimensions of the stele are: outer frame (h.) 46 x (w.) 28 cm; inner frame: 35 x 19 cm. *Margins:* at the top 4.5, at the left 4, at the right 5, at the bottom 4-6 cm. *Thickness of the stone slab:* ca. 8 cm.

In the top margin one finds:

Δ(ιοκλητιανού)

1 † Α ἀπὸ ὠθ ☆ Ω

Then the main text in the inner frame proceeds with

2	ὁ θ̄(εὸ)ς τῶν πν(ευμ)άτων (καὶ) πά- σης σαρκός, ὁ τὸν θάνατον	
4	καταργήσας (καὶ) τὸν Ἄδην κα- ταπατήσας καὶ ζῶην τῷ κόσμῳ χαρισάμενος, ἀνά- παυσον τὴν ψυχὴν τὸν	✠
8	δοῦλόν σου Κοσμᾶ ✠ Ἀβραάμ (καὶ) Ἰσαὰκ (καὶ) Ἰακώβ ἐν τόπῳ ἀναψύξεως, ἐντ’ ἀπέδρα ὀδύνη (καὶ) λύπη (καὶ) στεναγμ-	ἐν ποις κόλ

PLATE



A stele from Ad-Donga (North Argin)
Museo Arqueologico Nacional in Madrid inv. no. 1980/103/1

- 12 ὅς. Πᾶν ἀμάρτημα πραχέν
 λόγον ἢ ἔργον κατὰ διάνοι-
 α ὡς μόνος ἀγαθός καὶ φιλά-
 ν(θρωπ)ὸς συγχώρισον, ὅτι οὐκ ἔσ-
 16 τιν ἄν(θρωπ)ὸς <ὄς> ζήσεται (καὶ) οὐχ ἀμ-
 αρτήσει. Σὺ γὰρ εἶ μόνος θ(εό)ς,
 πάσης ἀμαρτίας ἐκτὼν
 ὑπάρχεις· δικαιοσύνη σου
 20 δι(καί)οσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰ(ῶ)να, κ(ύρι)ε,
 ὁ λόγος σου ἀλήθεια· σὺ γὰρ
 ἀνάπαυσον τὴν ψυχὴν τὸν
 δούλόν σου Κοσμᾶ Σενη-
 24 ταλμην τῆς ζωῆς αὐ-
 τοῦ· οὐδ. Παχὼν κς
 ἡμέρα· Σαββάτων.
 Γέννητο. Ἀμήν.

7-8, 22-23. τοῦ δούλου σου | 10. ἐνθ' | 12. πραχθέν | 13-14. διάνοιαν |
 15. συγχώρησον | 18. ἐκτός | 20. δικαιοσύνη | 24. <τὰ ἔτη> τῆς ζωῆς | 27. Γένοιτο

In the LH margin, opposite lines 12-14, there is a 5-pointed star.

In the RH margin, opposite lines 6-9 one should read: *ἐν κόλποις

The main text of the inscription is a rather vulgar copy of the Greek text of the 'Prayer for the dead'. In order to facilitate comparison between the two texts we print below the Greek text of this prayer in the *Euchologion sive rituale Graecum* (ed. J. Goar, Venice 1730; repr. Graz 1960), in the same layout as found on the stele from Nubia:

ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πά-
 σης σαρκός, ὁ τὸν θάνατον
 καταπατήσας τὸν διάβολον κα-
 ταργήσας καὶ ζωὴν τῷ
 κόσμῳ σου δωρησάμενος, αὐτὸς κύριε, ἀνά-
 παυσον τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ κεκοιμημένου δούλου σου N.N. ἐν
 τόπῳ χλοερῷ, ἐν τόπῳ ἀναψύξεως, ἐνθα ἀπέδρα
 ὀδύνη, λύπη καὶ στεναγμ-
 ὅς. Πᾶν ἀμάρτημα τὸ παρ' αὐτοῦ πραχθέν,

ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἔργῳ ἢ διανοί-
 α, ὡς ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλά-
 νθρωπος Θεὸς συνχώρησον, ὅτι οὐκ ἔσ-
 τιν ἄνθρωπος ὃς ζήσεται καὶ οὐχ ἄμ-
 αρτήσει. Σὺ γὰρ μόνος
 ἔκτὸς ἁμαρτίας,
 ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα,
 καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἀλήθεια, ὅτι σὺ
 εἶ ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ ἀνάπαυσις τοῦ κεκοιμημένου
 δούλου σου N.N.

The text of the prayer is closed off by a formula which is not present on the stele under review: *Χριστέ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν. Καὶ σοὶ τὴν δόξαν ἀναπέμπομεν σὺν τῷ ἀνάρχῳ σου Πατρὶ, καὶ τῷ παναγίῳ καὶ ἀγαθῷ καὶ ζωοποιῷ σου Πνεύματι, νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.*

A translation of this prayer was presented by J. F. Oates in *JEA* 49 (1963), p. 166:

God of spirits and all flesh, You who have trod under death and have rendered ineffectual the devil, and have given life to Your world, rest the soul of Your departed servant (NAME) in a place of verdure, in a place of refreshment; therein grief, pain, and mourning have fled. Pardon every sin done by him in word, or deed, or thought, since You are a good God and love mankind, because there is no man who will live and will not sin. For You alone are outside of sin, Your justice is justice for ever, and Your word is truth, because You are the resurrection, the life, and the repose of Your departed servant (NAME), Christ our God, and to You we send up glory with Your everlasting Father and the all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and always and for ever. Amen.

Commentary

1. Year 809 of the era of Diocletian corresponds with 1092/1093. For this era (coterminous with the era of the Martyrs) cf. in latest instance Chapter 8 in R. S. Bagnall & K. A. Worp, *The Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* (2ed.) (forthcoming).
2. Probably there was originally a dash on top of the letters ΠΝΑΤΩΝ (= πν(ε-μ)άτων), like elsewhere on top of *nomina sacra* (cf. ΝΟΣ, ΑΝΟΣ, and ΘΣ in

- ll. 15-17), but at this point the frame carving of the stone ends, and the stone's surface is now very eroded.
- 4-5. Note the inversion of the participles vis-à-vis the prayer text; according to E. Bernand this is common in such texts from Nubia.
 6. *χαρισάμενος* instead of *δωρησάμενος* is, according to *PHI CD-ROM # 7*, at this point the normal verb in Christian inscriptions from Nubia.
 8. Note the initial omission of the *ἐν κόλποις* phrase and its being added afterward (see below, note on the RH margin). On the frequent use of this phrasing, see *I. Louvre* 115.8n.
 - 9-10. Here only the third element of the most elaborate formula found in such *stelae*, i.e. *ἐν τόπῳ φωτεινῷ, ἐν τόπῳ χλοερῷ, ἐν τόπῳ τῆς ἀναψύξεως* is given; this is not quite normal, see *I. Louvre* 115.9-10n.
 - 12-14. The regular prayer text was *Πᾶν ἁμάρτημα τὸ παρ' αὐτοῦ πραχθέν, ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἔργῳ ἢ διανοίᾳ, ὡς ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλόανθρωπος Θεὸς, συνχώρησον*, but the stonemason lost track of it; instead, he presents the accusatives *λόγον ἢ ἔργον*, uses a prepositional construction *κατὰ διάνοια(ν)*, inserts *μόνος* before *ἀγαθός* (anticipating the same word in l. 17) and omits the word *Θεός* (inserting it in l. 17).
 - 17-19. The stele contains two statements put asyndetically next to each other (*Σὺ γὰρ εἶ μόνος θεός, πάσης ἁμαρτίας ἐκτὼν [l. ἐκτὸς] ὑπάρχεις*), whereas the prayer has only one (*Σὺ γὰρ μόνος ἐκτὸς ἁμαρτίας*).
 20. One could argue that *κε = κ(ύρι)ε* stands in fact for *καί*, like the prayer has *καί* before *ὁ λόγος*.
 21. The reading of *γάρ* is uncertain, but the phrase *σὺ γὰρ ἀνάπαυσον* finds parallels in *I. Gr. Chr. Eg.* (ed. G. Lefebvre) 666.21 and *I. Louvre* 115.19.
 - 23-24. We do not know of another attestation of a personal name *Σενηταλμην* (we have considered the alternative reading *Σενητολμην*); it is remarkable that this name does not occur already in l. 8. In itself, Egyptian personal names in *Σεν-* are predominantly female, but there are a few attestations of male Egyptian names in *Σεν-* like *Σενοῦθιος* (cf. F. Preisigke, *Namenbuch*) and they appear also in Coptic (cf. W. Brunsch, "Index zu Heusers *Personennamen der Kopten*", *Enchoria* 12 [1984], p. 150); therefore, there is no need to reckon with Kosmas being an *ἀπάτωρ* (= 'a son without a legal father'). Unfortunately, we ourselves could not devise an Egyptian or Nubian 'model' name for the Greek transcription found here. In a private communication Adam Łajtar (Warsaw) suggests to read *Σενη Ταλμην* (for *Ταλμιν*), in which the second element would refer to the city of Talmis (Kalabshah) in North Nubia, while *Σενη* could have been a title or an office: "someone of Talmis".
 25. Pachon 26 = 21.v, hence the date of the inscription is 21.v.1093 (cf. above, note to l. 1). Indeed, this date corresponds with a Saturday (cf. V. Grumel, *La Chronologie*, 316).
 26. Occasionally, one finds *τὰ Σάββατα* (pl.) in Greek, cf. G.W.H. Lampe, *Pa-*

tristic Dictionary, s.v. We think, therefore, that a reading ἡμέρα Σαββάτω{ν} is unnecessary.

27. Before γένοιτο there may be a trace of a letter, but we have not been able to read it and maybe the trace is only a phantom. For γένοιτο at this point in the inscription (with Ἀμήν) see *I.Gr.Cbr.Eg.* 237.11 (Near Sohag?) and 665.25 (Nubia).

Right hand margin: no doubt the stonemason added the lines in this margin as an afterthought, after he noticed his omission of ἐν κόλποις in l. 8; for some unclear reason he inverted the position of the syllables κολ and ποίς. The use of the asterisk in an inscription is remarkable; for an epigraphical parallel for this uncommon usage our colleague Dr Jacques van der Vliet (Leiden) kindly refers us to *Faras IV. Inscriptions grecques chrétiennes*, (ed. J. Kubínska), text nr. 9, p. 41 pl. 10, where one finds in the bottom margin (ll. 24-25 of the text on p. 42) two times '+ἡμέρα', where these crosses/asterisks refer to identical signs in the main text, in l. 21 before πῆ, and in l. 22 after ῑ (cf. Kubínska's text 10.27-28, where one should take Φαρ(μοῦθι) ἡμέρα δ together). For the use of the asterisk in Greek literary papyri cf. K. MacNamee, *Sigla and Selected Marginalia in Greek literary Papyri* (Bruxelles 1992; = *Pap. Brux.* 26), p. 9 n. 4; originally it was used by the famous ancient philologist Aristarchus of Samothrake in order to mark genuine Homeric lines found incorrectly elsewhere in the Homeric poems, later it acquired various different uses; cf. A. Gudeman in *RE* XI cols. 1921-1923, sub "Kritische Zeichen".

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