A Greek epitaph from Nubia rediscovered

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.
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 Mª Carmen Pérez Die, 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’Egypte 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:

\[\Delta(ιοκλητιανού)\]

1 † A ἀπὸ ὥθ † Ω

Then the main text in the inner frame proceeds with

2 ὁ ὅ(εδ)ς τῶν πν(ευμ)άτων (καί) πά-

σης σαρκός, ὁ τῶν θάνατον

4 καταργήσας (καί) τὸν Ἄδην κα-

tαπατήσας καὶ ἥων τῶ

κόσμω χαρισάμενος, ἀνά-

παυσον τὴν φυχήν τῶν

8 δούλον σου Κοσμά τοῦ Αβραάμ

(καί) Ισαάκ (καί) Τσκῶβ ἐν τόπῳ

ἀναψέως, ἐντ’ ἀπεδρά

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

ό Θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πά-
σης σαρκός, ὁ τὸν θάνατον
καταπατήσας τὸν διάβολον κα-
tαργήσας καὶ ζωῆν τῷ
κόσμῳ σου δωρησάμενος, αὐτὸς κύριε, ἀνά-
pαισι πὴν ψυχήν τοῦ κεκοιμημένου δούλου σου Ν.Ν. ἐν
tότῳ χλοερῷ, ἐν τότῳ ἀναψύξεως, ἐνθα ἀπέδρα
δούλῃ, λύπη καὶ στεναχώ-
ός. Πᾶν ἀμάρτημα τὸ παρ’ αὐτοῦ πραξθέν,
ἐν λόγω ἡ ἐργὴ ἡ διανοία, ὅσ ἁγαθός καὶ φιλάνθρωπος Θεὸς συνχώρησον, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος ὃς ζήσει καὶ οὐχ ἀμαρτία.

Σὺ γὰρ μόνος ἐκτὸς ἀμαρτίας, ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἀλήθεια, ὅτι σὺ εἰ ἠνάστασις ἡ ζωή καὶ ἡ ἀνάπαυσις τοῦ κεκοιμημένου δούλου σου Ν.Ν.

The text of the prayer is closed off by a formula which is not present on the stele under review: Χριστέ ὁ Θεός ἡμῶν. Και σοι τήν δόξαν ἀναπέμπομεν σὺν τῷ ἀνάρχῳ σου Πατρί, καὶ τῷ παναγίῳ καὶ ἁγαθῷ καὶ ζωοποίῳ σου Πνεύματι, νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, αμήν.

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**


2. Probably there was originally a dash on top of the letters ΠΝΑΤΩΝ (= πν(ε-)ν(α)των), 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 φωτείνῳ, 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 Πάν ἀμάρτημα τὸ παρ' αὐτοῦ πραχθὲν, ἐν λόγῳ ἡ ἔργῳ ἡ διανοία, ὡς ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλανθρωπος Θεός, συνχώρησον, but the stoncutter lost track of it; instead, he presents the accusatives λόγον ἡ ἔργω, uses a prepositional construction κατὰ διάνοια(ν), inserts μόνος before ἀγαθὸς (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 (Σύ γάρ εἰ μόνος θ(εό)ς, πάσης ἀμαρτίας ἑκτῶν [l. ἑκτός] ὑπάρχεισ), whereas the prayer has only one (Σύ γάρ μόνος ἑκτός ἀμαρτίας).

20. One could argue that κε = κ(ύρι)ε stands in fact for καϊ, like the prayer has καϊ before ὁ λόγος.


22-24. 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 Σενούθιος (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 ἄπατωρ (= '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 ημέρα Σαββάτων 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 Αμήν) see I.Gr.Chr.Eg. 237.11 (Near Sohag?) and 665.25 (Nubia).

Right hand margin: no doubt the stonecutter added the lines in this margin as an afterthought, after he noticed his omission of εν κόλποις in l. 8; for some unclear reason he inverted the position of the syllables κολ and ποις. 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 Parz IV. Inscriptions grecques chrétiennes, (ed. J. Kubinska), 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 'ήμέρα', where these crosses/asterisks refer to identical signs in the main text, in l. 21 before πη, and in l. 22 after ι (cf. Kubinska's text 10.27-28, where one should take Φαρ(μούθι) ημέρα 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 Samothrace 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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