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The Journal of Juristic Papyrology 33, 161-175

2003

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Adam Łajtar

THREE GREEK EPITAPHS FROM BANGANARTI*

THE THIRD SEASON OF WORK of the Polish Joint Expedition to the Middle Nile (also known as the Southern Dongola Reach Survey – SDRS) was conducted in 2003 at Banganarti, a village on the right bank of Nile c. 10 km. south of Old Dongola, the capital of the medieval Christian Kingdom of Makuria.¹ Excavation unearthed a church constructed in the 10th century and subsequently remodelled on several occasions. The walls of the church bear numerous inscriptions scratched into the plaster by persons

* I would like to thank Dr. Bogdan ŻURAWSKI, Director of the Polish Joint Expedition to the Middle Nile, for his invitation to participate in the work of the Expedition and for the permission to publish these three inscriptions.

The following abbreviations are used throughout the article: *IKhartoumCopt.* = J. VAN DER VLIET, *Catalogue of the Coptic Inscriptions in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum*, Leuven 2003; *IKhartoumGreek* = A. ŁAJTAR, *Catalogue of the Greek Inscriptions in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum*, Leuven 2003; *IVarsovie* = A. ŁAJTAR & A. TWARDECKI, *Catalogue des inscriptions grecques au Musée National de Varsovie* (= *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology, Supplement* 2), Varsovie 2003; Lefebvre, *Recueil* = G. LEFEBVRE, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Égypte*, Cairo 1907.

¹ The toponym Banganarti is Nubian and means 'Island of the Locust.' For a description of the site and a preliminary presentation of results after three seasons of work, see B. ŻURAWSKI, "Survey and Excavations between Old Dongola and Ez-Zuma," *Sudan & Nubia* 6 (2002), pp. 73–85.

visiting this place of worship.² As many inscriptions contain invocations and prayers to Archangel Raphael, one may presume that the church functioned under the name of this very Archangel.

Below this church another church was discovered.³ It probably was constructed in the 7th/8th c. An inscription in black ink near the south edge of the apse was found to contain a prayer to the Archangel Raphael for a King Zacharias, most probably Zacharias I (first half of the 9th c.). It indicates that this 'Lower Church', like the 'Upper Church', must have been dedicated to the Archangel Raphael.

During the 2003 season, three funerary stelae with inscriptions in Greek were discovered. All three were found in a secondary context, but they doubtless originally were placed on graves surrounding either the 'Lower' or 'Upper Church'.

1. EPITAPH OF MARKOS, A HEGEMON (PLATE I)

The stone was found inserted, the script upside down, in the pavement of an elongated room behind the main chapel of the 'Upper Church'. Originally, it must have been placed in a grave situated near the 'Lower Church'.

It is a roughly rectangular slab of a blue-grey marble, 37.8 cm. high, 23.5 cm. wide, and 4.8 cm. thick. But for some minor surface damage, the stone is entirely preserved. Its reverse is unworked, whilst the plainly incised text covers its entire upper surface. Delicate guidelines indicating both the bottom and the top of letters are visible in lines 1–4 and 7 of the inscription. The hand may be described as round epigraphic majuscles (note *alpha* 'á barres brisées', *sigma* both square and lunar). The stonemason used *nomina sacra* ($\overline{\theta\nu}$ in line 2, $\overline{\theta\varsigma}$ and $\overline{\pi\nu\omega\nu}$ in line 7). He abbreviates words through shifting the last written letter ($\overline{\mu}$ and $\overline{\iota\delta}$ in line 5), or by crossing the last written letter by an oblique stroke ($\overline{\delta\iota\omicron\kappa\lambda}$). *καί* is written either in *scriptio plena*, or in an abbreviated form *κ*, or as a *siglum* S. Numerals are marked by a horizontal dash above, and β (= 2) in line 5 also has points on both its

² Over 650 inscriptions were identified by the end of the 2003 season. For a general presentation of this material, see the contribution by the present author in this volume.

³ Only the apse and the south pastophorium have been identified thus far.

sides. The initial *iota* in the names Ἰσαάκ and Ἰακώβ has a trema. Letter heights range between 1.1 and 2.5 cm.

26th February, AD 786

† νεύσει καὶ κελεύ-
σει θεοῦ τοῦ ζών-
τος ἐκοιμήθη

4 Μάρκος ὁ ἡγεμῶν
μη(νὶ) Φαμενώθ • β̄ •, ἰνδ(ικτίωνος) θ̄,
ἔτους ἀπὸ Διοκλ(ητιανοῦ) φ̄β̄.

ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων (καὶ) πά-

8 σης σαρκός, ἀνά-
παυσον τὴν ψυχὴν
αὐτοῦ ἐν κόλποις
Ἀβραάμ (καὶ) Ἰσαάκ (καὶ)

12 Ἰακώβ, ἐν χώρῳ φω-
τινῶν, ἐν τόπῳ ἀνά-
ψύξεως, ἐνθα ἀπέ-
δρα ὀδύνη καὶ λύ-

16 πη κ(αὶ) στεναγμός. †

12-13. φωτεινῶ

Through the inclination and order of the living God, Markos, a Hegemon, fell asleep in the month of Phamenoth (day) 2nd, in the 9th indiction, in the year from Diocletian 502. God of spirits and of all flesh, rest his soul in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in a shining place, in a place of refreshment, from which pain and grief and lamentation have fled away.

- 1-3. The formula νεύσει καὶ κελεύσει is rare. It is found in the epitaph of Petros, Eparch of Nobadia (died AD 798), recovered at Old Dongola; cf. *IKhartoum Greek* 23, with commentary in which similar formulae in Greek and Coptic (ἐν τῇ κελεύσει θεοῦ κυρίου, κατὰ νεύσιν καὶ κατὰ κέλευσιν, ΖΙΤῆ ΤΕ-ΚΕΛΕΥCIC ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ) are cited. It occurs also in a fragmentarily preserved epitaph *IKhartoum Greek* 73 from Khor Dam el-Tor near Bageri. The designation θεὸς ὁ ζών is unparalleled in Nubian inscriptions, but is attested elsewhere in epigraphic texts; cf. e.g., *Studia Pontica* III, 15, l. 10;

MAMA IV, 359, ll. 11–12; A. C. Bandy, *The Greek Christian Inscriptions of Crete*, Athens, 1970, no. 102, ll. 1–2; Lefebvre, *Recueil* 48, ll. 3–4. It is of scriptural origin; cf. e.g., *Tob.* 13.2: εὐλογητὸς θεὸς ὁ ζῶν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, and see further *Ps.* 41:3; *Dan.* 4:22; 5:23; 6:21; *Math.* 16:16; 26:63; *Apoc.* 15:7. It was extremely popular in patristic literature. It refers to God the Father.

4. The office of ἡγεμών is attested here for the second time so far in Christian Nubia. The other attestation is yielded by the epitaph, now in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum, commemorating a ἡγεμών with the name Theodorou (Theodoros); cf. *IKhartoumGreek* 29. The Theodorou epitaph may be dated on palaeographic grounds to the 8th–10th c. According to the register book of the Museum, it came to light in Tanqasi. There are two villages of this name between the 3rd and 4th Cataracts: one on the right bank, immediately south-east of Banganarti,⁴ and the other on the left bank, several km. west of Merowe. The discovery of the epitaph of the *Hegemon* Markos at Banganarti advocates strongly for the former of these two villages as the provenance of the epitaph of the *Hegemon* Theodorou. I believe we can even hypothesise that both *Hegemones* were originally buried not far from each other in the cemetery surrounding the ‘Lower Church’ at Banganarti.

The exact meaning of the term ἡγεμών relative to Christian Nubia remains unknown; for a detailed discussion of this question, see *IKhartoumGreek* 29, commentary to line 5. Since in the Eastern Roman Empire of 5th–6th c., the word ἡγεμών was a *quasi terminus technicus* for the governor of a province (lat. *praefectus, praeses*), we may suppose that the same or similar meaning may also be applied to it in Nubia. The *Hegemones* Markos and Theodorou living in the 8th–10th century may have been governors of some administrative units within the Kingdom of Makuria.

- 5–6. Indiction and the Era of Diocletian are the standard systems used to indicate a year in early epitaphs from Nubia, until the first half of the 10th c. Both indications agree with each other here, not always the case in Nubian inscriptions. It should be noted that the present epitaph is the second oldest dated funerary inscription from the Dongola area, the oldest being the epitaph of a woman Kel discovered at Old Dongola and dated to AD 785; cf. *IKhartoumGreek* 20.
- 7–16. The prayer for the dead contained in these lines clearly is modelled on the prayer of the *Euchologion Mega* type characteristic of Nubian funerary inscriptions (for that, see *infra*, commentary to inscription no. 3). It preserves from this prayer the initial invocation to God and the list of places of eternal rest for the deceased’s soul. As far as I can see, the prayer from Markos’

⁴ Some local people even say that the Banganarti *kom* is part of Tanqasi village.

epitaph has no exact parallel in Nubian epitaphs written in Greek, but more or less similar prayers do occur; the differences consist in the kind of invocation and the choice of names for the places of rest. An example is the epitaph of Christina originating from Merowe (*IKhartoumGreek* 30) with the prayer reading (ll. 4–13): κ(ύρι)ε Ἰ(ησο)ῦ Χ(ριστ)ῆ, ἀνάπα[υ]σον τὴν ψυχῆ[ν] αὐτῆς [ἐ]ν τόπῳ φω[τιν]ῶ, ἐνθα ἀπέδρα δδίνη καὶ λύπη κ(αὶ) στε[ναγ- μός]. It is interesting to observe that the expression ἐν τόπῳ φωτεινῶ from the *textus receptus* of the prayer of the *Euchologion Mega* type was changed here to ἐν χώρῳ φωτεινῶ; as for φωτινων extant on the stone, it is most probably only a graphic variant of φωτεινῶ under the change of ‘εἰ for ‘ι’ and the addition of non-etymological ‘ν in the final position. The epitaph of Ioannes, a monk of Benganarti(?), found in el-Khandaq, a village on the left bank of Nile some 30 km. north of Benganarti (*IKhartoumGreek* 15), contains the request (ll. 8–10): δὸς ἀ[ν]άπαυλαν ἐν χ[ώρ]ῳ φωτινῶ, which apparently should be emended to: ἐν χώρῳ φωτεινῶ; χώρα instead of χώρω, probably arose under the influence of the expression: ἐν χώρῳ ζώντων. These two epitaphs, both originating from the Old Dongola area, seem to suggest the existence in this part of Nubia of a tradition to use χώρω instead of τόπῳ in the expression ‘in a shining place,’ either within the prayer of the *Euchologion Mega* type or elsewhere.

2. EPITAPH OF AN UNKNOWN WOMAN (PLATE II)

This stone was found in the rubble filling the apse of the ‘Lower Church,’ also acting as the foundation for the two eastern supports of the cupola of the ‘Upper Church’. It must have originally been placed in a grave connected with the ‘Lower Church.’

Slab of light grey sandstone, 34 cm. high, 29 cm. wide, 9.5 cm. thick. The upper edge and the upper right corner of the slab are lost, the stone surface, particularly to the centre and in the lower left corner, is much worn and crumbles to the touch, the upper left corner shows traces of contact with fire or hot ashes, both lower corners are chipped. The plainly incised text covers the entire upper surface of the slab. Letters are cut without guidelines, but quite nicely and carefully. The hand may be designated as round epigraphic majuscles. The lapicide uses *nomina sacra* ($\overline{\theta\nu}$ in line 3, $\overline{\kappa\nu}$ in line 7). He abbreviates words by shifting the last preserved letter ($\overline{\delta\iota\omicron\kappa\lambda\eta}$ in line 8). The diphthong ‘ou’ is ligatured and placed over the ‘τ’ in the word ἔτους in line 9. καί is recorded as the *siglum* S. The numeral ‘β’ (= 2) in line 9 has a horizontal dash above it. The initial *iota* in the name

Ἰακώβ in line 12 is provided with trema. Larger units of the text are separated by points (ll. 5, 6, 7) while there is a double point after ἀπελεύση in line 8. The height of letters varies between 1.2 and 2.1 cm.

The stone may be dated to a year in the sequence: AD 784–794, 803/804, 813/814, 823/824, 833/834, 843/844, 853/854, 863/864, 873/874, possibly to AD 853/4 or 792/3 (cf. commentary to lines 7–9).

- [†] βουλ[ήσει τοῦ παντοκρά]-
 τορος θ[(εο)ῦ ca. 13–14]
 ἡ τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ δ[ούλη ca. 3–4 λιποῦ]-
 4 σα ἀμήτορα [ca. 8–10 τέ]-
 κνα, • ἀποδοῦσ[α ca. 8–10]
 γῆς τῆ γῆ • πληρ[ωθῆ τὸ τοῦ]
 κ(υρίου)υ λόγιον • ὅτι γ[ῆ εἶ (καὶ) εἰς γῆν]
 8 ἀπελεύση : M . A [ca. 8–10]
 β̄, ἔτους ἀπὸ Διοκλητ(ιανοῦ) φ . ᾿ . Χ̄[(ριστ)ὲ ὁ θ(εός)],
 ἀνάπαυσον τὴν ψυχὴν αὐ-
 τῆς ἐν κόλποις Ἀβραὰμ (καὶ)
 12 [Ἰσ]αὰκ (καὶ) Ἰακώβ, • ἔνθα οἱ
 [ἄγι]οι σου ἀνάπαυλαν . χ[.]
 υυ [μ]ενοι, ἀμήν. †

Through the will of Almighty God, the servant of God [name] died leaving [- - -] children motherless (and) giving back to the earth what was of the earth in order to fulfill the saying of the Lord: “Dust thou art and into dust thou will return,” in the month of [- - -] 2nd, in the year from Diocletian 5[.]. O Christ God, rest her soul in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, where Your saints found rest (before), amen.

- 1–2. Will of God – βούλησις – as a cause of death of a person is a frequent reference in Greek epitaphs from Nubia. As a rule, it occurs together with a divine inclination – νεύσις – in a formula νεύσει καὶ βουλήσει opening the inscriptions; a list of occurrences of this formula is compiled in *IKbartoum Greek 1*, commentary to lines 1–2. Here, βούλησις apparently occurred alone, unless νεύσις was mentioned in the line immediately above the present line 1. One should observe, however, that the sequence † νεύσει καὶ is too short with its 10 letters to fill the entire length of this supposed line which, similar to other lines, must have contained ca. 18–20 letters. If the formula νεύσει

καὶ βουλήσει really did occur in this inscription, it must then have been twisted into a much elaborated introductory statement, as in the epitaph of Mariankouda, *Tetrarch* of Makuria, found in Hambukol (*IKhartoumGreek* 18).

2. A verb stating the death of the commemorated person should have been contained in the lacuna on the right side of this line. As the lacuna has about 13–14 letters, only a long verb-form like ἀνεπαύσατο or ἐτελεύτησεν is suitable in this place. ἐκοιμήθη, which occurs most common in this context in Greek epitaphs from Nubia, is definitely too short.
3. We expect to have the name of the dead woman in the lacuna between δ[ούλη and λιπού]σα. It must have been rather short, containing about 3–4 letters. There is no room for other elements of the presentation of the dead person, such as her filiation or information on her social status.
- 4–5. After ἀμήτορα we expect another attribute referring to τέκνα, for example: [τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέ]κνα, [νήπια τέ]κνα, [τέσσερα τέ]κνα *vel sim*. The intimately overtone sentence λιπού]σα ἀμήτορα [- - - τέ]κνα remains without analogy in the rather formulaic and arid Nubian epitaphs in Greek, deprived of any element of personal or familial sentiment. On the other hand, it finds parallels, both in wording and in its socio-psychological contents, in Classical Antiquity. A mother who left her children orphans at her death is a common motif in Greek epitaphs from Hellenistic and Roman times, and occurs particularly often in Greek funerary poetry; c.f. e.g., *IG* VII 455: λιπούσα πόσιν καὶ τέκνα μοι φίλια; *IG* IX 2, 312: δισὰ δὲ τέκνα λιπούσαν ὁ παντοβαρῆς λάβε μ' Ἀδης; *TAM* V, 546: νήπια τέκνα λιπούσα. Its redactor might have been influenced by an Antique or Byzantine source unknown to us which he had to his disposal, when putting the sentence under consideration into the epitaph. The sentence testifies to a good knowledge of Greek and Greek literary motifs in the 8th/9th century in the Dongola area. One can suppose that the woman who received such an exceptional epitaph belonged to highest echelons of the Nubian society of the period.
- 5–6. We expect something like ἀποδοῦσ[α τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς] γῆς τῇ γῆ.
- 7–8. This is a quotation of the words God said to Adam, according to *Gen.* 3:19: ἐν ἰδρώτι τοῦ προσώπου σου φάγη τὸν ἄρτον σου ἕως τοῦ ἀποστρέψει σε εἰς τὴν γῆν, ἐξ ἧς ἐλήμφθης· ὅτι γῆ εἶ καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύσει. In view of its eschatological connotation, these words enter into the funerary liturgy of various churches, including Greek Orthodox and the Coptic; cf. J. Goar, *EYXOLOGION sive rituale graecorum*, Venice, 1730 (reprint, Graz 1960), p. 427, bottom. They are very often quoted in Coptic epitaphs from Nubia (cf. *IKhartoumCopt.*, nos. 3, 5; 4, 4; 5, 3–4; 6, 5; 17, 3; 18, 3; 19, 3; 20, 3; 27, 5), whilst they are rather rare in Greek funerary inscriptions. Apart from the present epitaph, I am aware of only two examples: the epitaph of Mariankouda,

Tetrarch of Makuria, who died in AD 887, found at Hambukol (*IKhartoumGreek* 18, line 13, with the introduction: τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ φήσαντος τῷ Ἀδάμ τῶ), and the epitaph of a woman Iesous[- - -] found in Faras and now in Berlin (Lefebvre, *Recueil* 334; an improved reading in: H. Junker, *ZÄS* 60 [1925], pp. 117–120; the introduction is: κατὰ τὴν τοῦ παντοκράτορος θεοῦ ἀμετάθετον ἀπ[ὸ]φασιν, ἦτοι τῶ).

- 8–9. The reading of the dating clause creates some problems. It most probably began just after the double point in the middle of line 8 with the indication of a month day: *μηνί* + a month name + a numeral. The crucial point in reading this is the letter following ‘μ’ which may be either ‘η’ or ‘π’. In the first case, we would have: *μη(νί) Ἀ[θύρ]* = ‘in the month of Hathyr’, in the second: *μ[η](νί) Πα[ῦνι]* = ‘in the month of Pauni’, or *μ[η](νί) Πα[χών]* = ‘in the month of Pachon’. With this second reading we must assume the existence of a smaller letter ‘η’, now lost, shifted to mark an abbreviation. Both *Ἀθύρ* as well as *Παῦνι* and *Παχών* are rather short names, apparently too short to fill the lacuna at the end of line 8. This suggests that the numeral β̄ (=2) at the beginning of line 9 is not the number of a day of the month, but a number of indiction. The complete reading would be: *M . A[. . . + a numeral, ἰνδ(ικτιώνος)] β̄*, but uncertainty must remain. The number of years according to the Era of Diocletian contained in line 9 apparently had two letters, of which the first is undoubtedly ‘φ’ (= 500). The second letter after ‘φ’ looks very much like ‘χ’, thus belonging any more to the numeral, but being the first letter of an invocation to God; cf. below, commentary to line 9. In the light of the above reasoning, we can date the present epitaph broadly to one of the years of the sequence: *φα’-φι’* (= 501–510), *φκ’* 520, *φλ’* (= 530), *φμ’* (= 540), *φν’* (= 550), *φξ’* (= 560), *φο’* (= 570), *φπ’* (= 580), *φρ’* (= 590) of the Era of Diocletian, i.e., AD 784–794, 803/4, 813/4, 823/4, 833/4, 843/4, 853/4, 863/4, 873/4. This date may be further narrowed due to the observation that the second letter of the number of years according to the Era of Diocletian was probably rounded at the bottom like ‘α’, ‘ε’, ‘θ’ or ‘ο’. If this observation is correct, the following possibilities remain: *φα’* (= 501), *φε’* (= 505), *φθ’* (= 509) and *φο’* (= 570) of the Era of Diocletian, i.e., AD 784/5, 788/9, 792/3, 853/4. Of this series, year 570 of the Era of Diocletian actually corresponds with the second indiction provided the number β’ at the beginning of line 9 is the number of the indictional year (cf. above). Also, year 509 of Diocletian (AD 792/3) partly falls with the second indiction, under the assumption that the indiction is of Egyptian and not Constantinopolitan type. The use of the Egyptian type of indiction in Christian Nubia seems to be attested by the foundation inscriptions at Faras cathedral (cf. *IVarsovie* 101, commentary to line 7). In the latter case, only the names Pachon nad Pauni come into question as a possible supplement in line 5. Hathor of the second indiction of

the Egyptian type of that cycle already falls within the year 510 of the Era of Diocletian.

9. The prayer for the dead began apparently with the invocation to Jesus Christ. Invocations to Jesus Christ are rare in Nubian epitaphs, as compared with invocations to God the Father; see *IKbartoumGreek*, commentary to inscription 2, Part B, ll. 1–2.
- 12–14. The request for rest in a place where the saints of God already have found rest is paralleled by a request for rest *ἐνθα (πάντες) οἱ ἅγιοί σου προαναπαύονται* that occurs in two epitaphs from Old Dongola: the epitaph of Petros, the Eparch of Nobadia, who died in AD 798 (*IKbartoumGreek* 23, ll. 14–15) and the epitaph of an unknown man, probably of the 8th–10th c. (A. Łajtar, *Oriens Christianus* 81 [1987], p. 123, no. 7, ll. 5–6). The word *ἀνάπαυλα* occurring here is very rare in inscriptions, which normally use *ἀνάπαυσις* to designate the eternal rest of human souls. In Nubia, we find it only in the epitaph of Ignatios, the Bishop of Faras, who died in AD 802 (Kubińska, *Faras* IV, pp. 26–31, no. 4, l. 9): *καλὴν ἀνάπαυλαν ἔσχευ*, and in the epitaph of Ioannes, a monk of Benganarti(?), found in Khandaq (*IKbartoumGreek* 15, ll. 8–10): *δὸς ἀ[ν]άπαυλαν ἐν χ[ώρ]α φωτιωῶ*. After *ἀνάπαυλαν* we undoubtedly have the male participle medium in the nominative plural of *ἔχω* (cf. *ἀνάπαυλαν ἔσχευ* in the epitaph of Bishop Ignatios cited above). The reading possibilities include: *ἐχ[ό|μ]ενοι*, *σχ[ό|μ]ενοι*, and *σχ[ή|μ]ενοι*. The number of letters offered by each of these possibilities is too small to completely fill the lacuna at the beginning of line 14, therefore we must admit a free space of 2–3 letters.

3. EPITAPH OF A KING? (PLATE III)

The stone was found inserted, the script facing up, in the pavement of the ‘Upper Church’, in the north part of the central space enclosed by four supports that originally carried a dome, in the axis of the passage between the pulpit and the north-east support. The surface of the stone was covered with lime mortar that had preserved the inscription, at least partly, from complete erasure by wear from the feet of walking persons.

Slab of firm grey sandstone, 46 cm. high, 24–24.5 cm. wide, and 10 cm. thick. The stone is preserved intact; the lower left-hand corner that had broken off was glued. The surface is much worn, particularly at the bottom, the edges being heavily chipped. At the bottom, the slab has an offset, 2.5–3.5 cm. wide, running along the lower edge. It possibly was intended as a

means of aiding to set the slab in an upright position. The plainly incised text covers the entire upper surface of the slab. The letters are not very carefully cut, and lack guidelines. The hand may be designated as Nubian-type majuscles. The lapicide uses *nomina sacra* ($\overline{\theta\varsigma}$ and $\overline{\pi\nu\alpha\tau\lambda\omega\nu}$ in line 1, $\overline{\phi\iota\lambda\alpha\nu\omicron\varsigma}$ in line 17, $\overline{\alpha\nu\omicron\varsigma}$ in line 19, $\overline{\theta\varsigma}$ in line 21). He abbreviates words by shifting the last preserved letter ($\delta\omicron\upsilon$ in line 7). The diphthong 'ou' is ligatured in the word σου in line 7. *καί* is recorded as the siglum S. Letters height varies between 0.8 cm. (*omikron*) and 2.9 cm. (*phi*).

11th–13th cent. (palaeography)

- † ὁ θεός [τῶ]ν πνευμάτω[ν]
 (καὶ) πάσης σαρκός, ὁ τὸ[ν θ]ά-
 νατον καταργήσας (καὶ) τὸν
 4 Ἄδην καταπατήσας (καὶ)
 ζωὴν τῷ κόσμῳ χαρι-
 σάμενος, ἀνάπαυσον
 τὴν ψυχὴν τ[ὸ]ν δοῦλ(ον) σου
 8 ΒΑC . Δ ἐν κόλποις
 Ἄβραάμ (καὶ) Ἰσαὰκ (καὶ) Ἰακώβ,
 ἐν τόπῳ φωτειῶν ἐν
 τόπῳ ἀναψύξεως, ἔ-
 12 θα ἀπέδρα ὀδύνη (καὶ)
 λύπη (καὶ) στεν[αγμός]. πᾶ[ν]
 ἁμάρτημα παρ' [αὐτ]οῦ
 πραχθὲν λό[γω] ἢ ἔργῳ
 16 ἢ κατὰ διάνοια [ὡ]ς ἀγα-
 θὸς (καὶ) φιλάν(θρωπος) συγχώρη-
 σον ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς
 ζήσεται πᾶς ἄν(θρωπος) (καὶ)
 20 οὐχ ἁμαρτήσης εἰ μὴ σὺ
 μόνος ὁ θεός ὑπάρχεις εἰς
 τὸν αἰῶνα (καὶ) εἰς τὸν αἰῶ-
 [ν]α τῶ[ν] αἰών[ων] .[.] .[.] Y.[.]
 24 [.] .[.] Π[.] .[.] AN[.] .[.]
 [.] .[.] [-----].

9. read Ἰσαάκ || 10. read φωτεινῶ || 16. read διάνοιαν || 18. read ὅς || 20. read ἁμαρτήση

God of spirits and of all flesh, You who have defeated death and trodden down Hades and given life to the world, rest the soul of Your servant [- - -] in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in a shining place, in a place of refreshment, from which pain and grief and lamentation have fled away. As a good God and loving mankind, forgive every sin committed by him in word or in deed or in thought since, except for You, there is no one who would live and would not sin (cf. commentary). (You), O God, remain for ages, and for ages of ages [- - -].

The present epitaph supplements the group of some 40 Nubian epitaphs in Greek containing a long and elaborated prayer for the dead beginning with the words: ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός. The same prayer has been known, with some minor differences, for over 14 centuries in the Greek Orthodox church, where it has been transmitted in the manuscript tradition of euchologia, hence the designation 'the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type' forged by some editors; for the history of the prayer and a most exhaustive list of Greek epitaphs from Nubia making the use of it, see A. Łajtar, "Varia Nubica IV: Das älteste nubische Epitaph mit dem Gebet vom sogenannten Typus Euchologion Mega?," *ZPE* 113 (1996), pp. 101–108. It should be noted that the text of the prayer contained in the present epitaph differs considerably at the end (ll. 17–23) from the standard version occurring on Greek epitaphs from Nubia which reads: συγχώρησον ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος ὃς ζήσεται καὶ οὐχ ἁμαρτήσῃ· σὺ γὰρ μόνος, ὁ θεός, πάσης ἁμαρτίας ἐκτὸς ὑπάρχεις καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἡ ἀλήθεια. σὺ γὰρ εἶ ἡ ἀνάπαυσις καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ δούλου σου τοῦ δεινός καὶ σοὶ τὴν δόξαν κτλ. Differences of the same kind as compared with the *textus receptus* of the prayer occur in the epitaph of Theodorou, a *Hegemon*, found in Tanqasi, now in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum (*IKhartoumGreek* 29), ll. 10–17: συγχώρησον τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτοῦ πᾶς ἄν(θρ)ωπος ζήσεται οὐχ ἁμαρτήσῃ· σὺ γὰρ εἶ ὁ μόνος ἀναμάρτητος, ἐκτὸς ἁμαρτ(ῆ)ματος ὑπάρχει· σύ, ὁ θ(ε)ός, πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων ὑπάρχεις εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος διαμένει. In particular, both epitaphs have a similarly corrupted form of the phrase: 'for there is no man who would live and not sin' with πᾶς inserted before ἄνθρωπος; cf. commentary *ad locum*. Apparently, these two epitaphs are interdependent with each other in this phrase. Either the earlier epitaph of Theodorou served as a model for the present inscription or, more likely,

both have a common source, possibly an euchologion containing a corrupted version of the prayer for the dead. As both epitaphs originate most probably from the same place (cf. above, commentary to inscription no. **I**, line 4), one may presume this euchologion was held at Banganarti church.

4. The common praxis of scholars who deal with the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type is to begin the word 'hades' with a small letter (ᾠδης) and to translate it as 'hell'. I followed this praxis in earlier publications, but am now convinced that the word in question should be capitalised and rendered as 'Hades.' What the Byzantine author of the prayer meant here was not 'hell' in the sense of Christian theology, but the pagan Greek god Hades, ruler and personification of the underworld. Numerous Byzantine representations show him as a nude male monster trampled by Christ during His resurrection; for this motif in Byzantine art, see S. Skrzyniarz, *Hades. Recepcja, sens ideowy i przemiany obrazu pogańskiego boga w sztuce bizantyńskiej (Hades. Reception, ideology and transformation of the image of a pagan god in Byzantine art)* [= *Ars vetus and nova* 8], Kraków 2002.
6. 'ν' at the end of the line is written obliquely due to lack of space.
7. The reading τ[δ]ν δοῦλ(ον) is not obvious, but is more probable than τ[ο]ῦ δοῦλου(ου). Use of the accusative τὸν δοῦλον instead of genitive τοῦ δούλου very often occurs in Nubian epitaphs in Greek as an indirect object after ἀνάπαυσον τὴν ψυχὴν. For this phenomenon, see *IKhartoumGreek* 3, commentary to line 6.
8. The first part of the line until ἐν κόλποις provided information about the dead. It probably contained six letters. The first three letters can surely be identified as 'βαϛ'. The identification of the fourth and the fifth letters is uncertain, the sixth letter looks like 'δ'. It is possible that the fourth letter had a horizontal dash above that might also have extended to above the next letter to the right. The occurrence of the letter 'δ' in the sixth position excludes the possibility of reading the name Βασίλιος, regardless of its standing in the nominative or an oblique case. Any other personal name beginning with Βασ- (either from the stem βασιλ- or βασσ-) is hardly possible in Christian Nubia, and in any case no such name ends with -δ. Under these circumstances, the best solution is to consider the letters 'βαϛ' as an abbreviated notation of the word βασιλεύς = 'king' and to see in the following letters the name of this king. The reading βασιλέα, without a name, is excluded for palaeographic reasons as are also the readings of other oblique cases of the word βασιλεύς. The most common personal name ending in -δ is in Christian milieu Δαυίδ. If it really occurred here it must have been recorded in an abbreviated version as ΔΑΔ. This notation is well attested with

reference to the Biblical King David and also was used for persons of later history. It is evidenced in Nubia; cf. e.g., the epitaph of King David found in Soba, *IKhartoumGreek* 79, line 5. Putting together all these observations, we come to the reading: ἀνάπαυσον | τὴν ψυχὴν τ[ὸ]υ δοῦλ(ον) σου | βασι(ιλέως) Δα(υίδ) = ‘rest the soul of Your servant King David.’ This reading should be taken with much caution. The word βασιλεύς normally was abbreviated in Nubia not through suspension as βασι(ιλέως), but through contraction as βασι(ι)λ(ε)ύς (see, however, S. Jakobielski, *A History of the Bishopric of Pachoras on the Basis of Coptic Inscriptions* [= *Faras* III], Warszawa 1972, p. III, l. 1: μή(τη)ρ βασι(ιλέως)), and the reading of the first letter of the name as ‘δ’ is difficult palaeographically.

Provided that the stele actually commemorated a king of the name David, we have at least two candidates for its ownership. Thanks to Arabic sources, we know that David was the name of two kings, father and son at that, who sat on the throne of Dongola in 1260s/1270s.; cf. U. Monneret de Villard, *Storia della Nubia cristiana* [= *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 118], Rome, 1938, pp. 211–216; S. Munro-Hay, *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 29 (1982–83), pp. 118–120; D. Welsby, *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia. Pagans, Christians and Muslims along the Middle Nile*, London, 2002, pp. 243–245. Palaeographically, there are no obstructions against dating the present stele into this period. Assuming that it truly belongs to one of these two Kings, it would be the youngest Greek epitaph known from Nubia thus far. As the list of the kings of Makuria has many lacunae, however, one cannot exclude the possibility of yet another king David who lived either earlier or later than the 1260s/1270s. It should be noted that David is attested as a royal name also in Alwa (*IKhartoumGreek*, no. 79, probably 9th/10th cent.) and in the Kingdom of Dotawo (*IN* III 30 i 4 in margin, before AD 1155).⁵

18–25. The whole sentence beginning with ὅτι is not understandable as it stands. Apparently, we are dealing with the contamination of two otherwise similar phrases here: ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος ὃς ζήσεται καὶ οὐχ ἁμαρτήσῃ from the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type, and πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ὃς ζῆ ἁμαρτάνει from a source unknown to me. The same is also valid for the epitaph of the *Hegemon* Theodorou; cf. above, general commentary to this inscription. The following εἰ μὴ σὺ μόνος ὁ θεός fits well the first of these two phrases under the condition that we eliminate the word ἄνθρωπος: ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὃς ζήσεται καὶ οὐχ ἁμαρτήσῃ εἰ μὴ σὺ μόνος ὁ θεός. Possibly, the original form of this sentence was as such, but was later corrupted through

⁵ The document states that Moses George, the then king of Dotawo, was nephew of King David. Both Moses George and David might have been not only kings of Dotawo, but all Makuria including Dotawo as its northern part.

the insertion of *πᾶς ἄνθρωπος*. On the other hand, *σὺ μόνος ὁ θεός* must also be the subject for *ὑπάρχεις*. Thus, to introduce order into this entire part of the text we have additionally to assume a haplography. The hypothetical reconstruction of the original form would read: *ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὁς ζήσεται {πᾶς ἄνθρωπος} καὶ οὐχ ἁμαρτήσῃ εἰ μὴ σὺ μόνος ὁ θεός· (σὺ μόνος, ὁ θεός), ὑπάρχεις εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κτλ.* The rest of the inscription is too damaged to allow a certain reconstruction.

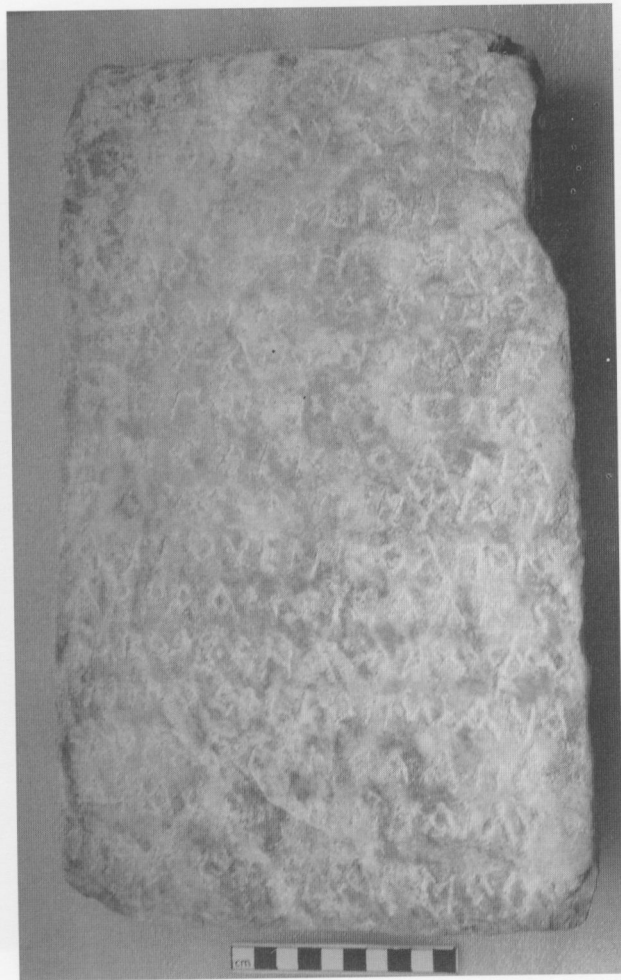
The three epitaphs from Banganarti discussed above have parallels mainly amongst inscriptions originating from Makuria, especially from the Dongola area. The office of *Hegemon* attested by Inscription 1 is on record also in an epitaph that came to light in Tangasi, a village neighbouring with Banganarti to the south. The formula *νεύσει καὶ κελεύσει* opening Inscription 1 occurs in the epitaph of Petros, Eparch of Nobadia, found at Old Dongola, and in an epitaph from Khor Dam et-Tor in the area of the 4th Cataract. The request for rest *ἐν χάρω φωτεινῶ* appearing in the epitaph of the *Hegemon* Markos is paralleled only by the epitaph of Ioannes, a monk from Banganarti(?), discovered at el-Khandaq, several kilometres north of Dongola. The request for rest amongst the saints of God who went for rest before, on record in our Inscription 2, has analogy in an appropriate part of the Dongolese epitaphs of the Eparch Petros and an *incognitus*. The rare word *ἀνάπαυλα* occurring in this request is found in the epitaph of the monk Ioannes found at Khandaq. The Euchologion Mega-type prayer contained in our Inscription 3 shows variations of the *textus receptus* of the prayer that are paralleled, at least partly, by the epitaph of the *Hegemon* Theodorou from Tanqasi. Both epitaphs may depend on a version of the prayer contained in an euchologion used for service in Banganarti church. All this testifies to the existence in and around Dongola of an individual socio-cultural milieu organised, as is obvious, around the King's court, the courts of the highest officials and Church institutions. Initially, this milieu expressed itself in written form only in Greek, and later in both Greek and Old Nubian.⁶ The Greek, particularly at the earlier period, in 8th/10th

⁶ This is well documented in the finds of Polish Missions in both Old Dongola and Banganarti. The lack of Coptic is remarkable. At Old Dongola, Coptic occurs only in monastic contexts (two fragmentary epitaphs and several wall inscriptions discovered in the Monastery on Kom H). At Banganarti, only one modest dipinto in Coptic is found amongst the 650 wall inscriptions recorded thus far.

cent., was of exceptionally good quality. As far as epitaphs are concerned, this milieu is characterised by the use of separate prayer versions, and the predilection for special expressions or words. Some epitaphs, e.g., our Inscription 2, are still rooted in an antique tradition.

Adam Łajtar

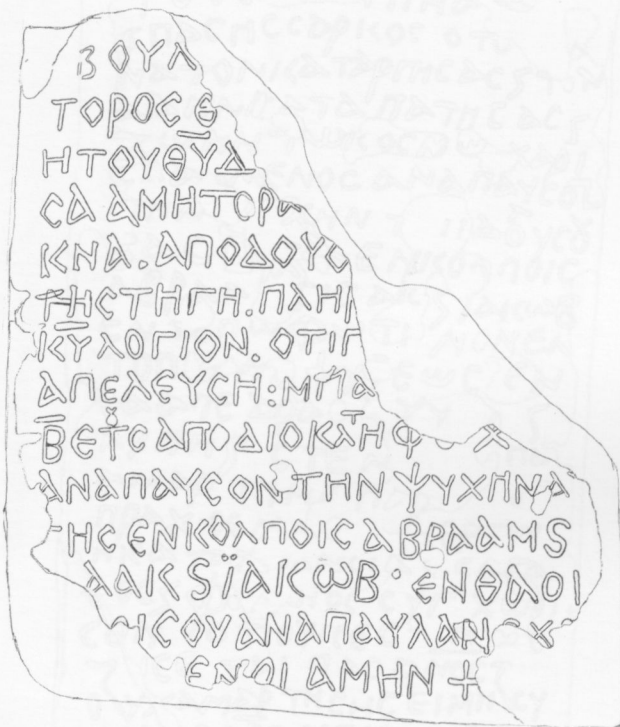
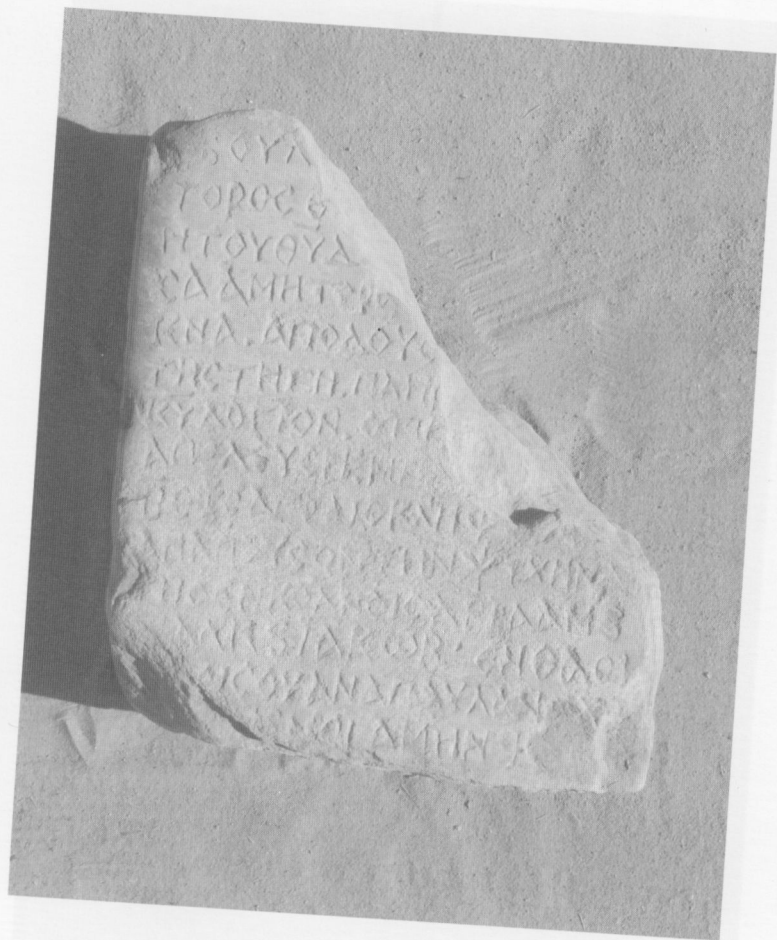
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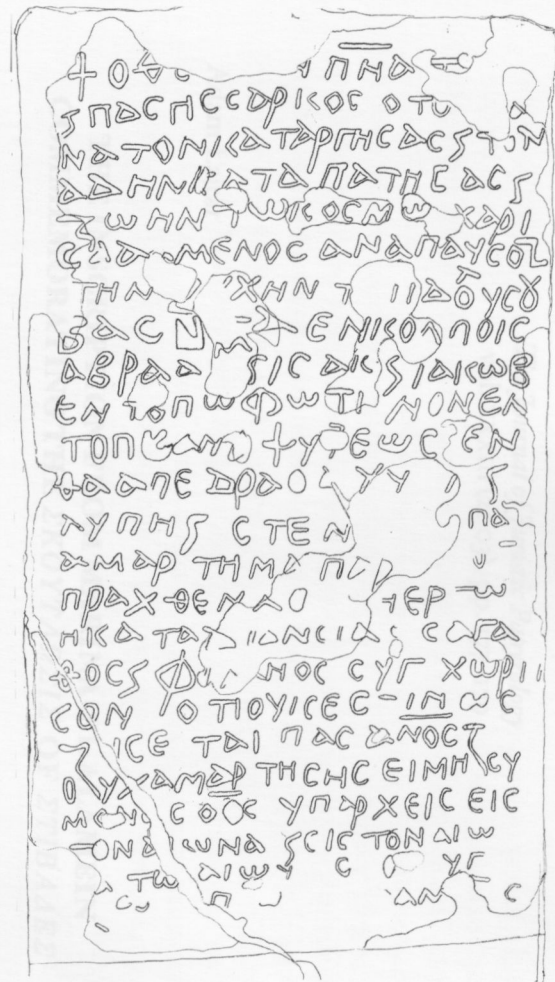
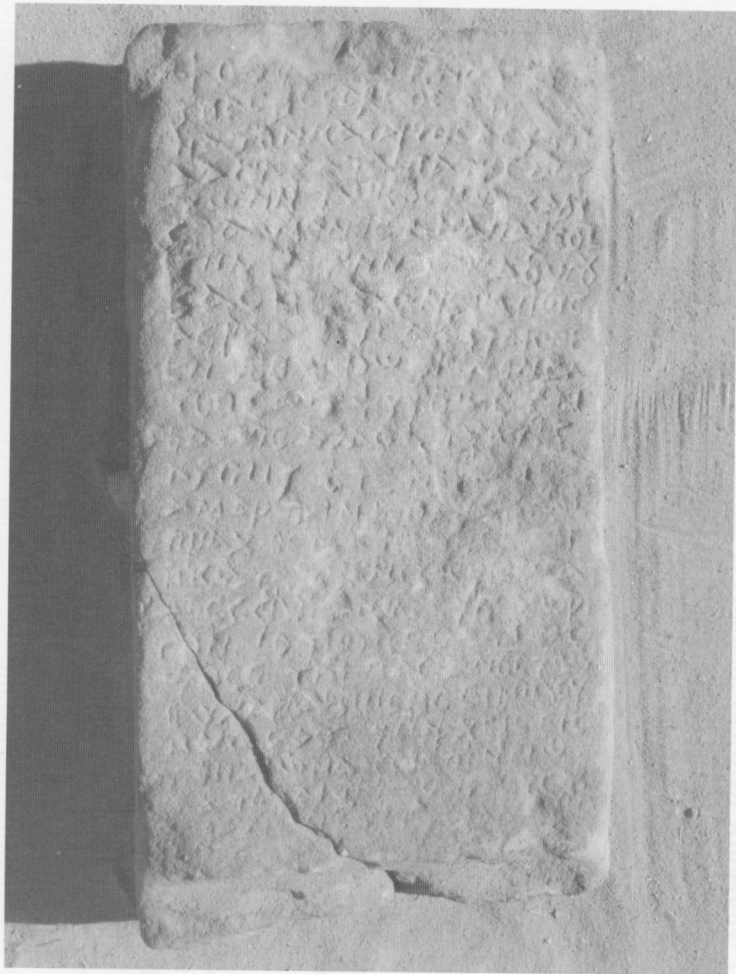
† ΝΕΥΣΕΙ ΚΑΙ ΚΕΛΕΥ
 ΣΕΙ ΘΥ ΤΟΥ ΖΩΝ
 ΤΟΣ ΕΚΟΙΜΗΘΗ
 ΜΑΡΚΟΣ Ο ΗΓΕΜΩΝ
 Η ΦΑΜΕΝΩΘ· Β· ΙΝΘ
 ΕΤΟΥΣ ΑΠΟ ΔΥΟ ΚΧ ΦΒ
 ΘΕΣ ΤΩΝ ΠΗΝΩΝ ΣΠΑ
 ΣΗΕ Σ ΑΡΙΚΟΣ ΑΝΑ
 ΠΑΥΣΟΝ ΤΗΝ ΨΥΧΗΝ
 ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΚΟΛΠΟΙΣ
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 † ΥΣΕΩΣ ΕΝΘΑ ΑΠΘ
 ΔΡΑΘΕ ΨΗΚΑΙ ΛΥ
 ΠΗΚΣΤΕΝΑΓΜΟΣ †

Epitaph of Markos, a *begemon*.

Photo by P. Pearce



Epitaph of an unknown woman.
 Photo by C. Calaforra-Rzepka



Epitaph of a king (?)
 Photo by C. Calaforra-Rzepka