

# Łajtar, Adam

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## Collection Froehner 81, a Christian epitaph from Nubia : notes on the reading

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Adam Łajtar

COLLECTION FROEHNER 81,  
A CHRISTIAN EPITAPH FROM NUBIA:  
NOTES ON THE READING

To Zbyszek, Master and Friend,  
*μνήμης χάριν*

*Collection Froehner* 81 is a Greek Christian epitaph containing a prayer for the dead of the Euchologion Mega type<sup>1</sup>. The prayer indicates a Nubian origin of the stone, though its exact provenance is unknown<sup>2</sup>. In analogy to other Nubian epitaphs of this group, the inscription lists at its end informa-

<sup>1</sup> The inscription's lemma is as follows: NEROUTSOS BEY, Bull. de l'Institut égyptien 1875, p. 101 [from the stone kept then in the private antiquities collection of M. Daninos in Cairo]; A. DUMONT, *Fragment de l'office funèbre de l'église grecque, sur une inscription d'Égypte*, BCH I, 1877, pp. 321-327, pl. XIII [from a squeeze procured by Neroutsos Bey] (reproduced with additional notes by Th. HOMOLLE [in:] A. DUMONT, Th. HOMOLLE, *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'épigraphie*, Paris 1892, pp. 582-589; W. WEISSBRODT, *Ein ägyptischer christlicher Grabstein mit Inschrift aus der griechischen Liturgie im königlichen Lyceum Hosianum zu Braunsberg und ähnliche Denkmäler in auswärtigen Museen*, "Verzeichnis der Vorlesungen am Königlichen Lyceum Hosianum zu Braunsberg", Winter-Semester 1905/6, p. 5, no II; G. LEFEBVRE, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Égypte*, Le Caire 1907, no 664 [the stone was already in the Froehner collection at that time]; S. DE RICCI, *Lettres d'Égypte*, CRAI 1909, pp. 156-160, no 2; R. AIGRAIN, *Manuel d'épigraphie chrétienne*, vol. II: *Inscriptions grecques*, Paris 1913, no 51; C. M. KAUFMAN, *Handbuch der altchristlichen Epigraphik*, Freiburg 1917, pp. 146-147; M. G. TIBILETTI BRUNO, *Iscrizioni Nubiane*, Pavia 1964, no 12); L. ROBERT, *Collection Froehner. Inscriptions grecques*, Paris 1936, pp. 125-126, no 81, pl. XLI (from the stone).

For the prayer for the dead of the Euchologion Mega type in Nubian epitaphs, cf. the recent discussion by T. HÄGG, *Two Christian Epitaphs in Greek of the Euchologion Mega Type*, [in:] *The Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia*, vol. VI: *Late Nubian Cemeteries*, Solna 1982, pp. 55-62, especially pp. 55-56.

<sup>2</sup> The situation in 13th century Nubia (for the date of this epitaph to A.D. 1243, cf. infra) would suggest that the most probable provenance of the stone was the territory of Nobadia between Faras and Qasr Ibrim. This area has been the source of the majority of late Nubian epitaphs (XI-XIII cent.).

tion about the deceased, the date of his demise in particular. This fragment of the inscription was read by previous editors in various ways (listed are only the important variants of the reading):

1. ἀπὸ μαρτύρων | ἔτει ξ', σελήνης (ἡμέρᾳ), ιθ' Χοιάκ, ἀνάπαυσον | (καὶ τὸν) γράψαντα — A. Dumont.
2. ἀπὸ μαρτύρων | (ἔτει) ξ', σελήνης (ἡμέρᾳ), ιθ' χοιάκ. Σῶτηρ ἀνάπαυσον | καὶ τὸν γράψαντα — A. Dumont, Th. Homolle.
3. ἀπὸ μαρ<sup>τ</sup> θξ σελλενι ιθ χοι<sup>κ</sup> ΠΡ αναπαυσοῦ ΟΡ αψ(?)ονα — W. Weissbrodt
4. απὸ μαρτ(υρων) | θξ σελλενι ιθ χοι(a)κ σ[ω]τ(η)ρ αναπαυσοῦ | [καὶ τὸν] γραφονα ("γραφοντα pour γραψαντα") — G. Lefebvre
5. απὸ μαρτ(υρων) Θξ σελλενι ιθ Χοι(a)κ σ[ω]τ(ε)ρ αναπαυσοῦ [καὶ τὸν] γραφον(τα) — S. de Ricci.
6. ἀπὸ μαρτ(ύρων) | — : σελλένι ιθ' Χοι(ά)κ π(ά)τ(ε)ρ ἀνάπαυσον | ΟΤΑΨΟΝΑ — L. Robert.

A verification of these readings is possible thanks to an excellent photograph of the inscription accompanying Robert's publication. On its basis the transliteration of ll. 21-23 should be as follows:

21		ΑΠΟ ΜΑΡ <sup>T</sup>
22		ΣΕΛΛΕΝΙ ΙΘ <sup>K</sup> ΧΟΙ <sup>T</sup> ΠΡ ΑΝΑΠΑΥΣΟ <sup>K</sup>
23		ΟΒ ΑΨΟΝΑ

This gives the reading:

21		ἀπὸ Μαρτ(ύρων)
22	Δξ', σελλένι <u>ιθ</u> , Χοι(a)κ πρ(ώ)τ(η). ἀνάπαυσο(ν).	
23	οβ αψονα.	

ll. 21-22: For the date contained in these lines, cf. R. S. BAGNALL, K. A. WORP, *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*, (= "Studia Amstelodamensia" I), Zutphen 1978, p. 49; id., BASP XVII, 1980, p. 18; id., CdE LXI, 1986, p. 353. Believing that a large *theta* with double circle represents the numeral 900, Bagnall and Worp date this inscription to Choiak 1st, year 960 of the Era of the Martyrs, i.e. November 27, 1243. W. WEISSBRODT guessed at this date<sup>3</sup>, which S. DE RICCI recognized<sup>4</sup> and U. MONNERET DE VILLARD ac-

<sup>3</sup> WEISSBRODT, "Verzeichnis ... Braunsberg", WS 1905/6, p. 22 sq. (cf. note 1).

<sup>4</sup> DE RICCI, CRAI 1909, p. 161 (cf. note 1).

cepted<sup>5</sup>. The day given according to the lunar calendar (19th of the moon) is late by 7 days in comparison to the day of the month (Choiak 1st)<sup>6</sup>.

II. 22-23: A horizontal stroke above OB at the beginning of line 24 clearly indicates that we are dealing here with a numeral — 72. What follows the numeral is not in Greek but in Old Nubian: **ѧያՆԱ** (= *añona*). It is the third person singular indicative of the preterite I<sup>7</sup> of the verb **ѧՅ** — “to live”. To my knowledge, this form of **ѧՅ** has not been attested till now, but analogous constructions occur frequently in Old Nubian texts<sup>8</sup>. Most probably the preterite I appears here in its function of “a descriptive imperfect”<sup>9</sup> and thus, the final fragment of the inscription is to be read: **ѧՆԱՊԱՆՏԾՈՎ. ՕԲ' ѧՅՆԱ**. — “(God), give rest (to him). He lived 72 (years)”.

Other derivatives from the root **ѧՅ** occur in the same place in other Nubian epitaphs with the prayer of the Euchologion Mega Type. In an inscription of unknown provenance, dated to A.D. 1157, the final clause in Old Nubian reads as follows: **ѧԳԻԾՆ ՕԿԿՐԻ-  
ՏՈՂՂԱԼՈՆ ՇՐ ՀՕ. ՃՎ ՃՒ**<sup>10</sup> “all the days of life were 73”<sup>11</sup>. An almost identical sentence closes the text on a stele of a woman found in Ashkeit near Wadi Halfa, dated to A.D. 1084<sup>12</sup>. Here, in. II. 23-25, the editor (J. W. B. BARNS) wanted to see **ՏԱՆՆԱ  
ՃՎ ԵՄԵՐԻԳՈՂՂԱԼՈՆ ՇՐ ՀՕ ԱԵԿՈՐԵԱ** (*sic!* ed.) **ԻՐ ՀՕ ՃԱՊՈՆԱ**, but the photograph published by Barns, though of poor quality, suggests that the correct reading should be: **ՏԱՆՆԱ ՃՎԵՆ <ՕԿ>ՔՐԻԳՈՂՂԱԼՈՆ ՇՐ՝ ՀՕ՝ ԱԵԿՈՐԵԱ ԻՐ ՀՕ ՃԱՊՈՆԱ** — “all the days of her life were 72. She departed on Mesore 13th”. The third example comes

<sup>5</sup> U. MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Storia della Nubia Christiana*, Roma 1938, p. 161.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. R. S. BAGNALL, K. A. WORP, CdE LXI, 1986, p. 350.

<sup>7</sup> The terminology used is that of G. M. BROWNE, *Nubian Verbal System*, BASP XIX, 1982, pp. 9-38. E. ZYCHLARZ, *Grundzüge der nubischen Grammatik im christlichen Früh-  
mittelalter (Altnubisch)* (= “Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes” XVIII, 1), Leipzig 1928, p. 61, calls this conjugation “emphatisch” and the tense “modus perfecti”.

<sup>8</sup> BROWNE, BASP XIX, 1982, p. 23; cf. also infra: **ՃԱՊՈՆԱ**, preterite I from the verb **ՃԱՊԻ** — “to perish”.

<sup>9</sup> BROWNE, loc.cit.

<sup>10</sup> H. KORTENBEUTEL, *Ein griechischer Grabstein aus Nubien*, ZNTW XXXVII, 1938, pp. 61-64 (= SB V 8763 = TIBILETTI BRUNO, *Iscr. Nubiane* 10). It should be noted that the Old Nubian text correctly read by Kortenbeutel was misprinted by the editor of SB V and M. G. Tibiletti Bruno.

<sup>11</sup> For this particular use of the word “day” (mainly in Greek texts) in the meaning “year” while quoting the years of life in Nubian epitaphs, cf. the discussion by T. HÄGG, op. cit. (note 1), p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> J. W. B. BARNS, *Christian Monuments from Nubia, “Kush”* II, 1954, p. 28, pl. Vb, fig. 2 (transliteration). As for the date, the editor notes: “precise date omitted; seems contemporary with last” (another inscription with the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type, dated to A.D. 1161/2 – A.L.). J. W. B. Barns is mistaken when he thinks that the inscription does not contain the date. In lines 22-23 he transliterates:

ԱՊՈ ՄԱՐΩ,

understanding it most probably (his text edition is lacking) as: **ՃՎՈ Մարտ(վր)ա(v)**. There are no doubts, however, that the reading in this place should be **{Ճ}ՎՈ Մարտ(վրաv) ա'**, year 800 of the Era of the Martyrs, A.D. 1084.

from Wadi Ghazali<sup>13</sup>: τάννα ἀγεσῆ δελτούχο(ν) τέ — “all the years of his life were 81”.

The name of the person commemorated in the inscription *Collection Froehner* 81 is mentioned in it twice (ll. 6-7 and 18-19), the letters being in both cases disposed similarly, and was read by all editors as παπᾶ Σινε|θη Τοσσινε. However, the photograph published by L. Robert shows clearly enough that above the final *eta* in what was taken until now to be the deceased's first name there is a suspended letter marking an abbreviation. Most probably this is *gamma* with a vertical stroke which constitutes an extension of the left stroke of *eta*<sup>14</sup>. The presence of an abbreviated word prompts me to divide these two fragments of the inscription in a different way: Παπασινε | θηγ( ) Τοσσινε. In this reading I would consider only Παπασινε to be the name of the deceased person. This name has not been attested yet to my knowledge, but in 12th. century documents from Qasr Ibrim written in Old Nubian there are several instances of the name παπασινε<sup>15</sup>. What is more, in one of these cases (BROWNE, op. cit., no. 44.7) we read καποτι παπασινε — “Kapoti, daughter of P.” and it cannot be excluded that here the name of the father is in fact παπασινε and the final -η, the suffix of rection. The name παπασινε(η) derives from παπας, Greek loan-word in Old Nubian for bishop. From the same root come also other Old Nubian names παπασα<sup>16</sup>, π απασι<sup>17</sup> and παπασινκούδα<sup>18</sup>. The abbreviated word θηγ( ) appears to denote the function of παπασινε, Papasine theg( ) of Tossine, but I am unable to reconstruct its full form<sup>19</sup>. If so, τοσσινε is probably a toponym connected with Papasine's function or the name of another person in whose employ Papasine stayed.

[Warszawa]

Adam ŁAJTAR

13 J. W. B. BARNS [in:] P. L. SHINNIE, H. N. CHITTICK, *Ghazali. A Monastery in the Northern Sudan* (= “Sudan Antiquities Services Occasional Papers” 5), Khartum 1961, p. 94, no. 79.

14 L. ROBERT, op. cit. (footnote 1), p. 126, remarks: “on voit que le H apres le Θ, semble lie à un Γ”.

15 G. M. BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim*, London 1991, nn. 31.14, 37.5, 37.16, 38.3, 40.4, 44.7.

16 TIBILETTI BRUNO, no. 16 (= SB 6035 = 8765): Faras, A. D. 1181; BROWNE, op. cit., nos. 30.10, 30.37, 31.11, 34 II.32, 58.12. .

17 BROWNE, op. cit., 33.17, 33.18, 33 I.34, 61.3, 62 II.4.

18 U. MONNERET DE VILLARD, *La Nubia Medioevale* I, Le Caire 1934, p. 224.

19 The presence of *theta* which in Old Nubian appears only in loan-words may suggest that the abbreviated word is a Greek one.