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## Two Greek Christian epitaphs from Egypt in the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Cracow

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Adam Łajtar

**TWO GREEK CHRISTIAN EPITAPHS  
FROM EGYPT IN THE PRINCES CZARTORYSKI  
MUSEUM IN CRACOW\***

THE PRINCES CZARTORYSKI MUSEUM in Cracow<sup>1</sup> boasts in its collection two Christian epitaphs of Egyptian provenance. Both of them were bought on the antiquities market in Egypt in the early 1890s by Prince Władysław Czartoryski, the founder of the Museum.

\* I would like to thank the authorities of the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Cracow for granting me permission to publish these two inscriptions. For help during my work in the Princes Czartoryski Museum and supplying me with all necessary data, I am very much obliged to Ms. Krystyna MOCZULSKA, the head of the Department of Ancient Art of the Museum. I also thank Ms. Dorota DZIERZBICKA for correcting my English.

The following abbreviations are used throughout: Crum, *Coptic Monuments* = W.E. CRUM, *Coptic Monuments* [= *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*], Cairo 1902; Gignac, *Grammar* = F.Th. GIGNAC, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* [= *Testi e documenti per lo studio dell'antichità* 55], 1: *Phonology*, Milano 1976, II: *Morphology*, Milano 1981; Kamal, *Stelae* = I. KAMAL, *Coptic Funerary Stelae* [= *Catalogue général des antiquités du Musée Copte*], Le Caire 1987; Lefebvre, *Recueil* = G. LEFEBVRE, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Égypte*, Le Caire 1907.

<sup>1</sup> For the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Cracow, see Z. ŻYGULSKI (jun.), *Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie. Zbiory Czartoryskich. Historia i wybór zabytków* (National Museum in Cracow. The Czartoryski Collection. A History and a Selection of Objects), Warszawa

Władysław Czartoryski (1828–1894), head of one of the most prominent Polish families and leader of the Polish conservative party in exile, started to collect works of art in the early 1860s.<sup>2</sup> Living permanently in Paris, he had the possibility to make purchases on the Western European art market, mainly in France and Italy.<sup>3</sup> His collection was originally kept in the family seat in Hôtel Lambert in Paris before it was gradually transferred to Cracow after the foundation of the Museum in 1876. The collection of Władysław Czartoryski was rather heterogeneous. It was famous mainly for works of Western European art including, among others, paintings by Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt. Quite early, Czartoryski also started to collect objects of ancient art and handicraft. By the 1880s, he added Aegyptiaca to his collection. Through his agents: Makarios Shenouda, a Copt, native of Luxor, and Stanisław Marusiński, a Pole living in Nagada in Upper Egypt, in 1884/1885 he bought and transferred to Cracow over 150 objects, including a sarcophagus, mummy cartonnages, stone and wooden stelae, stone and pottery vessels, figurines of bronze and terracotta, objects of daily use, jewellery, etc.<sup>4</sup> In December 1889, Czartoryski himself set out to Egypt where he stayed until March 1890. His Egyptian itinerary is not

1978. For its collection of antiquities, see Krystyna MOCZULSKA, 'Krakowskie zbiory sztuki starożytnej' (The Collections of Antiquities in Cracow) [in:] J. ŚLIWA (ed.), *Archeologia Śródziemnomorska w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim 1897–1997. Materiały sympozjum naukowego Kraków, 21–23 października 1997*, Kraków 1998, pp. 95–109 (101–105).

<sup>2</sup> For Władysław Czartoryski, see M. KUKIEL, 'Czartoryski Władysław książę', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* 4 (1938), pp. 300–302.

<sup>3</sup> Krystyna MOCZULSKA, 'Kontakty kolekcjonerskie Władysława Czartoryskiego we Włoszech (C. Borrani, R. Mancini, Ch. Casati)' (Władysław Czartoryski's Contacts with Art Collectors in Italy [C. Borrani, R. Mancini, Ch. Casati]), *Meander* 40 (1985), fasc. 5–6, pp. 211–215.

<sup>4</sup> Krystyna MOCZULSKA, J. ŚLIWA, 'Identyfikacja zabytków egipskich ze zbiorów Czartoryskich z wykazami zakupów z lat 1884 i 1885' (Identification of Egyptian Objects in the Czartoryski Collection with Purchases of the Years 1884 and 1885), *Zeszyty Naukowe UJ CCLXXXII, Prace Archeologiczne* 14, Kraków 1972, pp. 85–104; Hanna SZYMAŃSKA, 'Gromadzenie zabytków egipskich dla zbiorów krakowskich' (Gathering of Egyptian Objects for Cracow Collections), *Zeszyty Naukowe UJ CCLXXXII, Prace Archeologiczne* 14, Kraków 1972, pp. 105–114; EADEM, 'Agent Władysława Czartoryskiego w Egipcie' (An Agent of Władysław Czartoryski in Egypt), *Meander* 25 (1970), fasc. 11–12, pp. 495–504.

known in detail.<sup>5</sup> We are only aware of his visit to Luxor at the beginning of 1890.<sup>6</sup> There, he remained in contact with Urbain Bouriant, the Director of the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology in Cairo, who directed archaeological excavations in the Theban Valley of the Kings at the time.<sup>7</sup> One can suppose that Bouriant was Czartoryski's guide during his Luxor visit and gave him advice as to the purchase of antiquities. During his stay in Egypt Czartoryski bought almost 180 objects and dispatched them to Cracow via Vienna. The lot comprised some valuable pieces like the stela of Merer from the First Intermediate Period,<sup>8</sup> two mummy portraits from Roman times,<sup>9</sup> and some Coptic textiles.<sup>10</sup> It also included two Christian funerary stelae published in this paper.

The place where Władysław Czartoryski bought the stelae and the conditions of this purchase are unknown, not to mention their findspot and circumstances of their discovery. Formal criteria of the stones suggest their provenance from Upper Egypt, from the Luxor – Armant – Esna area (see commentary to individual objects below). This provenance may further be corroborated, and perhaps even narrowed down, by another,

<sup>5</sup> For some information, see Krystyna MOCZULSKA, 'La correspondance entre Władysław Czartoryski et l'antiquaire Tanos et l'achat d'antiquités chypriote (1892–1893),' *Folia Orientalia* 19 (1978), pp. 191–200, especially pp. 193–194.

<sup>6</sup> On January 22, 1890, at Medinet Habu he met Charles E. Wilbour who made a note of this meeting in his memoirs; cf. Ch. E. WILBOUR, *Travels in Egypt (December 1880 to May 1891)*, Brooklyn 1936 (edited by J. CAPART), p. 546.

<sup>7</sup> For Urbain Bouriant, see P. BOURIANT, 'Notice sur Urbain Bouriant', *Rec. Trav.* 26 (1904), pp. 29–32; É. CHASSINAT [in:] *BIFAO* 3 (1903), pp. 213–214; P. BOURIANT, 'Bouriant, Urbain' [in:] W. R. DAWSON, E. P. UPHILL & M. L. BIERBRIER (eds.), *Who was who in Egyptology*<sup>3</sup>, London 1995, p. 59; Azis S. ATIYA, 'Bouriant, Urbain' [in:] *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 11 (1991), pp. 414–415. His name appears in the correspondence between Władysław Czartoryski and the Cypriote antiquarian Marius Panayiotis Tano (or Tanos) who lived in Cairo at the beginning of 1890s; cf. MOCZULSKA, 'La correspondance' (cit. n. 5), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> J. ČERNÝ, 'The Stela of Merer in Cracow,' *JEA* 47 (1961), pp. 5–9.

<sup>9</sup> J. A. OSTROWSKI, 'Zagadnienie portretów z Fajum' (The Problematics of the Fayoum Portraits), *Rozprawy i sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie* 10 (1970), pp. 59–82.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. S. J. GAŚSIOROWSKI, 'Późnohellenistyczne i wczesnochrześcijańskie tkaniny egipskie w zbiorach polskich' (Late Hellenistic and Early Christian Textiles in Polish Collections), *Prace Historii Komisji Sztuki* 4 (1930), pp. 251–292. Some pieces are described by Krystyna MOCZULSKA and illustrated in: *Sztuka koptyjska (Coptic Art)*. Catalogue of an exposition held in the National Museum at Warsaw, Warsaw 1984, nos. 141, 153, 154, 161, 171 & 172.

somewhat ‘antiquarian’ argument. Among the objects bought by Władysław Czartoryski in Egypt in 1890 there was a rectangular slab with a relief representation of a fish facing right with a large Latin cross placed atop its head.<sup>11</sup> There is an evident connection between this piece and a slab kept at the Louvre, inv. MA 3034. Its subject is the same as that of the Cracow slab except that on the latter the fish is facing left.<sup>12</sup> Originally the two slabs must have been placed near each other – the Cracow slab on the left, the one from the Louvre on the right – as decoration of a structure, perhaps a church altar.<sup>13</sup> It is known that the Louvre slab was donated to the museum in 1891 by Urbain Bouriant, the Director of the French Institute in Cairo, who indicated Armant as its provenance and this also must be the place of origin of the Cracow slab. Obviously the two slabs were available together on the Upper Egyptian antiquities market in the early 1890 when it was scrutinized by Władysław Czartoryski in the company of Urbain Bouriant. The Polish aristocrat bought one slab of the set and the French orientalist purchased the other one.<sup>14</sup> It is well imaginable that the slabs from Armant were offered for sale accompanied by other objects of the same provenance. The two gravestones discussed in this paper might have also been part of such a lot from Armant offered by a local inhabitant or by an antiquarian in Luxor.

<sup>11</sup> This slab is kept now in the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Cracow under the inv. no. XI-A-995. It remains unpublished. For a brief description, see Krystyna MOCZULSKA in: *Sztuka koptyjska (Coptic Art)*. Catalogue of an exposition held in the National Museum at Warsaw, Warsaw 1984, no. 17, with photo on p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> For the Louvre slab, see F. Coche de la FERTE, *L'antiquité chrétienne au Musée du Louvre*, Paris 1958, p. 88, no. 7 with photo on p. 7. A photo of the slab is also to be found in: *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 1 (1991), p. 272, s.v. ‘Art and Architecture, Coptic’ (P. du Bourguet); note that the animal represented on the slab is identified as a dolphin in the latter publication.

<sup>13</sup> A good idea of what the two slabs looked like when combined may be obtained from a slab in the Coptic Museum Cairo, CC 8647 (earlier Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 8601); cf. CRUM, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 861 = KAMAL, *Stelae*, no. 213; a good photo of this slab is to be found in: *Coptic Art II. Sculpture – Architecture*, Cairo, without year, p. 50. It shows a cross amidst two fishes with heads directed to the center. The scene is flanked by altars (?).

<sup>14</sup> However, another scenario is also possible: Urbain Bouriant purchased two slabs together and then sold one of them to Władysław Czartoryski. The letters of the antiquarian Marius Panayiotis Tano to Władysław Czartoryski show Bouriant acting in this way indeed. Cf. MOCZULSKA, ‘La correspondance’, *passim*, especially p. 199.



Epitaph of Konstantios (?)

– photo courtesy of the Princes Czartoryski Museum

## 1. EPITAPH OF KONSTANTIOS (?)

The stela has an inventory number XI-A-997. It is made of limestone. It measures 38 cm in height and 63.5 cm in width. The stone surface is slightly weathered, but otherwise the object is preserved completely. The stela has the form of a triangular fronton decorated with acroteria. The central acroterion is elaborated in such a way that it is level with the top of the fronton and extending sideways, and the prominent, lateral acroteria are fan-shaped. All three acroteria are adorned with acanthus leaves. The listels bordering the fronton on both sides have decoration in the form of branches painted green. Their internal sides are decorated with an ornament of connected hearts. The hearts are flanked by small bumps, one on each side of each heart. Within the fronton, there is a representation of two peacocks drinking from a cup standing on a column with a square base and a leafy (?) capital. The figures of peacocks bear traces of green paint, the background was painted red. A one-line inscription in

Greek is cut on the lower listel of the fronton. The hand is round epigraphic majuscules of Late Antique type, neither nice nor careful.

The object has remained unpublished hitherto. It was briefly described by Krystyna Moczulska in: *Sztuka koptyjska (Coptic Art)*. Catalogue of an exposition held in the National Museum at Warsaw, Warsaw 1984, no. 19 with photograph on p. 54. The inscription was mentioned by me *ZPE* 125 (1999), p. 161, no. 108.

Based on stylistic criteria of the relief and the palaeography of the inscription, the object may be dated to the 6th–7th cent.

τὸν εὐλαβέστατον καὶ ἀγιότατον μονάζοντα Κωνσάντιος.

read ἀγιότατον | read Κωνσάντιος (for Κωνσάντιον? [cf. commentary])

(Someone commemorates)

*the most pious and most holy monk Konstantios.*

The object in question has several analogies in possession of various museums in Egypt and abroad. Five pieces were kept at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo at the beginning of the 20th century and are now at the Coptic Museum in Cairo. These are: Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, nos. 8676, 8677, 8678, 8717, 8769 with pl. XLVIII = Kamal, *Stelae*, nos. 120, 117, 115, 132, 151 respectively; the Greek inscription of Crum, *Coptic Monuments* 8676 = Kamal, *Stelae*, 120, is republished in Lefebvre, *Recueil*, no. 483. Two pieces are kept at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, inv. 1a 5831 and 1a 5832, where they were brought in as part of the Golenishchev collection in 1911; for a brief description and photos, see *L'art copte en Égypte. 2000 ans de chrystianisme. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du monde arabe, Paris, du 15 mai au 3 septembre 2000 et au Musée de l'Épébe au Cap d'Agde du 30 septembre 2000 au 7 janvier 2001*, p. 134, nos. 118 and 119. All these objects, including the Cracow stela, have very similar general features and comparable dimensions varying from 32 to 47 cm in height and 43–75 cm in width. With the exception of the Cairo piece Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 8717 = Kamal, *Stelae*, no. 132 which has two unidentified birds among acanthus leaves, and the Moscow piece 1a 5831, which depicts an eagle with unfolded wings, all remaining objects bear in the fronton the same

scene showing two peacocks drinking from a cup placed atop a high stand. The differences between them are limited to the use of ornamental motifs and the technique of execution. In connection with the Cracow piece, the object Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 8676 = Kamal, *Stelae*, no. 120 deserves a special mention, as it has the same ornament of hearts flanked by bumps decorating the inner sides of the listels.

All these objects are undoubtedly tops of funerary stelae. This is clearly illustrated by the example of a stela in the Coptic Museum in Cairo decorated with a relief representation of an aedicula, with the fronton shaped like the one in the Cracow and related objects; cf. Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 8675 = Kamal, *Stelae*, no. 140. These tops were elaborated separately from the main bodies of stelae and were placed on top of them. The provenance of these objects is unknown. Kamal, *Stelae*, indicates that his number 115 = Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 8678 was found in Kom el-Rahib, a village about 10 kilometres north of Samalut in Middle Egypt. However, this information seems to be a pure invention, as it is not given by Crum. The Moscow piece was bought on the antiquities market in Luxor in 1888, which points to its Upper Egyptian provenance. The main body of the stela Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 8675 = Kamal, *Stelae*, no. 140 is decorated in the manner characteristic of tombstones from the Luxor-Armant-Esna area. On this ground, one can suppose that the Cracow and related objects also come from this part of Egypt.

The scene shown on the fronton is symbolic. It illustrates the subject exploited in Psalms, especially in *Psalms* 42: The human soul pursues God and drinks from His word as the animals drink from the spring. This subject was very popular in Early Christian art including the art of Christian Egypt. It is not without meaning that the animals shown in the scene are peacocks. The peacock was considered a symbol of immortality by the early Christians. This was connected, among others, with the belief that peacock meat does not get spoilt. The peacock also symbolized eternal bliss that awaits one in Paradise. Its tail with numerous eyes was taken for an image of a starlit sky and further for the everlasting happiness of the righteous ones who may behold God's presence. This symbolism is very adequate for funerary art which the Cracow and related pieces belong to. For the peacock and its symbolism in Early Christianity, see H. Lothar,

*Der Pfau in der altchristlichen Kunst*, Leipzig 1929; for the peacock in the art of Christian Egypt, see K.-H. Brune, 'Der Pfau in der koptischen Kunst' [in:] M. Immerzeel & J. van der Vliet (edd.), *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August – 2. September 2000* [= *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 133], Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA 2004, II, pp. 1185–1203.

The text of the inscription as it stands on the stone is rather strange for an epitaph. It says that a certain Konstantios commemorates a monk whose name was not given. As the name of the dead is an essential element of epitaphs, one can suppose that our text is corrupted. There are two possible explanations of this corruption:

- (1.) The stonemason or less probably the redactor of the inscription forgot to indicate the name of the deceased. Provided this was the case, the inscription should have been translated: *Konstantios (commemorates) the most pious and most holy monk (name)*.
- (2.) *ΚΩΣΤΑΝΤΙΟΣ* is the name of the deceased. It stands mistakenly in nominative instead of being in accusative. Such a mistake is easily explicable in psychological terms: one frequently uses the nominative instead of oblique cases. Additionally, it might have been facilitated by phonetics of the contemporary Greek in which 'ν' and 'ς' tended to disappear in final position, to appear in non-etymological context, and to replace each other; cf. Gignac, *Grammar* I pp. 111–114 and 124–132. I consider the second possibility to be more probable than the first one and I adopted it for the text printed above.

*Εὐλαβής* or *εὐλαβέστατος* was a typical epithet of ecclesiastics, including monks, used both in relation to living persons and to the dead (in the latter case, it often had the form *τῆς εὐλαβοῦς μνήμης*); cf. E. Hornickel, *Ehren- und Rangprädikate in den Papyrusurkunden. Ein Beitrag zum römischen und byzantinischen Titelwesen*, Dissertation Gießen 1930, p. 13 f.; E. Jerg, *Vir venerabilis. Untersuchungen zur Titulatur der Bischöfe in den ausserkirchlichen Texten der Spätantike als Beitrag zur Deutung ihrer öffentlichen Stellung* [= *Wiener Beiträge zur Theologie* 26], Wien 1970, pp. 101 f. & 165. Nevertheless, it is very rare in epitaphs of ecclesiastics known from Christian Egypt. I only note *SB* III 6186 (epitaph from Dukhelah west of Alexandria; 6th century).

For ἀγιώτατος, see Hornickel, *Ehren- und Rangprädikate*, p. 1. It was a typical epithet used in relation to ecclesiastics, especially of high rank.

For the omission of 'v' before 'c' in Latin loanwords (here Constantius), see Gignac, *Grammar* I pp. 117–118. It occurs very often in the language of the Greek papyri from Egypt dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods.

## 2. EPITAPH OF ABRAHAM

The object has the inventory number XI-A-996. It is a round-topped stela made of limestone. It measures 38 cm in height and 25 cm in width. The stone is relatively well preserved. Small chips of the surface occur only on side A on the level of the capital of the left-hand column, and on side B at the top right, thus affecting the last letters of the inscription. The stela is decorated in bas-relief on two sides, and the decorations differ from each other both from the iconographic and stylistic point of view. Perhaps the stela was executed by two stonemasons or it was reused at a later time without hammering the original decoration. I am unable to state which side is the main or the original one.<sup>15</sup> The designation A–B used here is purely conventional.

The decoration of side A occupies the whole surface of the stone. It shows an aedicula with spirally fluted columns with Corinthian capitals supporting a triangular fronton. The listels of the fronton are decorated with an ornament of stylized lotus buds placed alternately from bottom to top and from top to bottom. The fronton has side acroteria, probably in the form of palmettes, and its top is surmounted by concentric circles. In the fronton, a palmette with 10 petals is visible. The corners of the fronton are filled in with small bumps. Birds stand on the listels, one on each side. Within the aedicula, there are two large fish depicted vertically, parallel to each other, one turned upwards, the other one downwards. A small Greek cross takes up the space between the head of one fish and the back of the other, immediately under the fronton.

<sup>15</sup> If the decoration of the sides is contemporary to each other, one can speculate that the side with the inscription is the main one.

The decoration of side B occupies the upper 3/4 of the surface. It is a circle with a Maltese cross inside, placed within a square. The centre of the cross is marked with a bump. Triangular elements, perhaps schematic representations of rays, are visible between the arms of the cross. Four branches with leaves grow out of the circle and fill up the corners of the square. A Greek inscription in two lines is placed in the rounded upper part above the rectangle. Line 1 bends upwards following the edge of the stela, line 2 runs horizontally along the upper edge of the square. The letters are round majuscules.

The stela has not been published hitherto. It was described briefly by Krystyna Moczulska in: *Sztuka koptyjska (Coptic Art). Catalogue of an exposition held in the National Museum at Warsaw*, Warsaw 1984, no. 20, with photo on p. 55. The inscription was mentioned by me in *ZPE* 125 (1999), p. 161, no. 107.

The stela is datable to the 6th–7th century on the basis of stylistic criteria.

† εἰς θεός·  
Ἀβραάμ.

*There is one God.  
(Here lies) Abraham.*



Epitaph of Abraham  
– photo courtesy of the Princes  
Czartoryski Museum

The decoration of side B – a cross within a circle – is characteristic of a large group of Christian funerary stelae from Upper Egypt, from the Luxor – Armant – Esna area. Also the form of the inscription – the invocation  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma\ (\acute{o}\ \beta\omicron\eta\theta\acute{\omega}\nu)$  + name of the deceased in the nominative – is typical for epitaphs from this area; for the shape of Christian funerary stelae and the form of funerary inscriptions from the Luxor – Armant – Esna area see Lefebvre, *Recueil*, pp. xxvii–xxviii; A. Mallon, ‘Copte (Épigraphie)’, *DACL* III 2 (1913), col. 2876–2877; D. Zuntz, ‘Koptische Grabstelen: Ihre zeitliche und örtliche Einordnung,’ *MDAIK* 2 (1932), pp. 22–38, *passim*, and especially 24–25. These two elements indicate that the stela in question originated exactly from this part of Egypt.

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