

Adam Łukaszewicz

AN INSCRIPTION FROM HERMOPOLIS

THE AIM OF THIS PUBLICATION is to present an interesting item from the material excavated by the Polish archaeological expedition of the Ateliers for Conservation of Cultural Property (PKZ) to Hermopolis in the years 1987–1990.¹ A more detailed commentary may follow in due time.

An inscription from the foundations of the basilica of Hermopolis is a text on a granite base, found in the trial pit K (Fig. 1). The inscription contains now only three preserved words:

Θεῶι νέωι
Ἑρμῇι

To the god New Hermes.

The rest of the text has been obliterated. The extant part of the inscription is not very carefully engraved, which certainly may be in part due to the hard material upon which the text was written, but may also be a symptom of an improvised decision to set up the monument and a hasty execution.

¹ For further information, see BARAŃSKI 1996. The author wishes to express his thanks to Marek Barański for providing a photograph of the inscription and for his encouragement to discuss that inscription in the present publication.



Fig. 1. Inscription of the god 'New Hermes' (photo M. Barański)

The final *iota* in $\Theta\epsilon\omega\iota$ was written as an *iota adscriptum* in a reduced form, due to lack of space. Such way of writing is not frequent. The only photograph which I could use does not allow to be sure whether there was another *iota*, which could be expected after $\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega$. However, it seems that one can be seen at the end of line. Ἑρμῆι has a full-size *iota adscriptum*.

The date of the inscription is probably Roman. The support of the inscription is a polygonal pedestal of considerable size: the total height is 1.87 m, the width in the upper part is 0.78 m. On the base stood a sculp-

ture, now lost, undoubtedly representing the ‘God New Hermes’. Otherwise, we could perhaps speculate on a re-use of the base, from which a former inscription was removed to make place for a short text honouring the New (or Young) Hermes. However, the result would not be very handsome, and such interpretation is not really probable.

Whether the dedicatory text accompanied a full size monument or a *herma* cannot be inferred from the traces of the attachment. According to the excavator’s statement, holes for prongs were visible on the upper surface of the pedestal. In the vicinity, a lower part of a marble statue in Greek style was found (Kiss 1996: 41–44, pl. XXIV).

In 1945, Alan Wace wrote that in a building opposite the north-west corner of the *temenos* fragments were found of a statue of Aphrodite in marble. Wace expected more fragments and stated that apparently, once there were more statues around (Wace 1945: 106–109). The fragment published by Kiss for an obvious reason cannot be a part of an Aphrodite. Kiss interpreted that statue as Hermes, which would be no wonder at Hermopolis. He did not give the dimensions of the statue, though, neither did he mention the base with inscription concerning the God New Hermes. The extant part of the statue is c. 65 cm high and 52 cm wide, which suggests a statue slightly over the natural size. That statue of Hermes was certainly once set up on a base. However, the incomplete state of the statue does not allow a connection with our base with inscription in honour of the New Hermes.

At any rate, the appellation ‘God New Hermes’ is not a standard designation of the main Hermopolitan divinity. Hermes had many aspects. In Hermopolis, it was above all Hermes Trismegistos, the wise Thot, lord of magic.² He is perhaps meant in a visitor’s graffito in the tomb of Ramesses VI (1054b).³ In that text, dated to the third year of Marcus

² For Hermes Trismegistos, see QUAEGBEUR 2019. Quaegebeur’s list of epithets of Hermes on p. 160 contains no ‘new Hermes’. He (p. 149 n. 59) quotes Hölbl’s opinion that the epithet Trismegistos can only be of Egyptian origin. See HÖLBL 1981: 182; THISSEN 1977a. For Hermes Trismegistos, see also FOWDEN 1986; BULL 2018. For the oracular importance of Hermes Trismegistos, see SKEAT & TURNER 1968; HÖLBL 1994: 157.

³ The numbers concerning the graffiti in the Egyptian royal tombs refer to the publication of *I. Syringes*. The graffiti from the tomb of Ramesses VI are currently studied by the present author and documented together with some assistants from the University of Warsaw.

Aurelius and Lucius Verus (163–164 CE), one Dylus, who writes in the name of his whole family, makes a long *proskynema* directed to a wise god, helpful to those who study and take care of the sick ones. Among numerous inscriptions of visitors there are also records of citizens of Hermopolis. These wall inscriptions demonstrate the ubiquitous presence of Hermopolites, usually holders of important functions in the provincial society (see Łukaszewicz 2023).

Hermes was also known as *Ἑρμῆς πανδερκής*, ‘Hermes seeing everything’ (e.g. *I. Syringes* 1743). In a graffito of the Roman period, one visitor of the tomb of Ramesses VI in the Valley of the Kings surprisingly declares his devotion to Hermes Binastes (‘Hermes the Screwer’). The ithyphallic aspect of Hermes is known from time immemorial.

However, the sense of the inscription on the base from Hermopolis must have originally concerned a person who was deified as a New Hermes. It is only natural that in Hermopolis it was Hermes who served for the purpose of that politically conditioned deification.

In the Roman period, the individual honoured in this way could only be a Roman emperor or an important member of the imperial family. The honorific text which followed after the initial epithet was most probably obliterated as a consequence of the *damnatio memoriae* of such person. However, the initial *nomen sacrum* of the Hermopolitan god Hermes, was left untouched. It is evident that in the city of Hermes the words ‘God New Hermes’ could not be deleted. After that operation, which could only have a political reason, the words ‘To the god New Hermes’ without the original context could be perhaps interpreted as referring to a youthful (*νέος*) aspect of Hermes. It is certainly a question what happened to the statue representing the ‘New Hermes’. If it was an image of a *damnatus*, it had to be removed together with his name from the base. What sense would then have an empty pedestal with the mere invocation of the New Hermes? Was the original image replaced by a statue of Hermes?

The original flattering dedicatory text could have concerned a regnant who visited the city. Among members of the Roman ruling class who visited Egypt, apart from the Augusti, there were only a few persons of sufficiently high rank to receive a divine status: Mark Antony, Germanicus, and Antinous. However, Germanicus and Antinous (since his death in 130 CE

in the vicinity of Hermopolis officially declared a god) were not subject to a formal *damnatio memoriae*.

Mark Antony was denigrated by Octavian's propaganda and after his death in 30 BCE, Octavian, who had just conquered Egypt, ordered the destruction of all his monuments (Plut. *Ant.* 86.5). Mark Antony played rather the role of Dionysos (Vell. Paterc. 2.82; Plut. *Ant.* 56.6–10; Cass. Dio 50.25.3–4), but was also assimilated to Heracles, his pretended mythological ancestor (Plut. *Ant.* 4.36).

Already under the Ptolemies, Hermes and Heracles appeared together in a dedicatory inscription of a gymnasiarch and members of a gymnasium in 185–181 BCE (Launey 1987: 846). Hermes appears in sculpture with the infant Dionysos, which reflected a connection of these two divinities. A family connection of Mark Antony with the *gens Iulia* implied also a link with Venus-Aphrodite.

An inscription found in Alexandria in the area of Ramleh Station praises Mark Antony as a 'god' and as one 'inimitable in love matters' (SB V 8777 = SEG XVIII 641; see Łukaszewicz 2020). That bold dedicatory text could fit well a supposed deification of Antony as Hermes Binastes. The epithet, known from a Theban graffito mentioned before, suggests an excessive sexual activity. It is certainly connected with the ithyphallic *hermae* known in the Hellenic world.

The shape of letters in the inscription from Hermopolis is somewhat similar to the inscription from Alexandria praising Antony as an inimitable lover, engraved in a perfunctory way on what had been a hard stone

⁴The written evidence concerning the sexual excesses of Antony is summarised in Plutarch's *Vita*. In the British Museum, there is a fragment of a marble relief of early imperial date, showing the prow of a boat with a man in the typical Egyptian head cover. On the deck a couple is engaged in an intercourse *a tergo* (WALKER & HIGGS 2001: no. 356). My interpretation of that scene differs from some published commentaries. The lovers seem to be Antony and Cleopatra. The ship shown on the relief navigates on the Nile and not on the sea. An explanation of the joint appearance of hippopotami and dolphins as a kind of metaphoric synthesis of the sea and the Nile is erroneous. The presence of the Nile fauna and flora identifies the setting as the river Nile. Dolphins lived once also in the waters of the Nile Delta. Another image which may perhaps represent Antony in a boat on the Nile is a Campana relief, see WALKER & HIGGS 2001: no. 358.

base of a statue (see Łukaszewicz 2020: fig. 1). In the Augustan propaganda, both written and visual,⁴ Antony appears as a *débauché*.

Mark Antony, during his long stay on the Nile, could certainly travel also to Middle and Upper Egypt. Among other honorific titles, he was also appointed a gymnasiarch in Alexandria (see Schrapel 1996: 269). He could certainly be honoured also in the gymnasium of Hermopolis. However, all these arguments in favour of Mark Antony as a possible New Hermes are not conclusive, and it is still not certain who the God New Hermes of the Hermopolitan inscription originally was.

Hermes the divine messenger could perhaps be associated with Germanicus, who, in 19 CE, came to Egypt at the time of famine and with an intention to help (Sueton. *Tiberius* 52). He was received with enthusiasm, especially in Alexandria (*P. Oxy.* XXV 2435; see also Łukaszewicz 1998). Acclamations and various honours were bestowed on him all over the country.⁵ Germanicus was benevolent to the Egyptians (see *P. Lond.* VI 1912 [Alexandria, 41 CE], l. 27), but feared the wrath of the emperor Tiberius to whom these events accompanying Germanicus' visit would certainly be reported. Germanicus issued an appeal to stop these homages which were only due to the emperor and his mother Livia (*SB* I 3924 [unknown provenance, 19 CE]; see also Weingärtner 1969: 108–121). The mention of unrivalled divine status (*θειότης*: *SB* I 3924, l. 39) of Tiberius and Livia may suggest that in some acclamations divine honours were attributed Germanicus. That movement did not help and Tiberius accused his adoptive son before the senate (Sueton. *Tiberius* 52). On the way back from Egypt, Germanicus suddenly died, and the public opinion considered Tiberius as the one who ordered his murder. But the emperor accused the enemy of Germanicus, Piso, the governor of Syria, of the assassination of Germanicus, and Piso committed suicide.

The true reason of the warm welcome reserved to Germanicus and even a frenzy of the Alexandrians and many other Egyptians was in my opinion the family relationship of Germanicus with Mark Antony and in this way indirectly with the deceased queen Cleopatra VII (Łukaszewicz 1998). Germanicus visited the whole of Egypt, reaching Elephantine and

⁵ For the visit of Germanicus to Egypt, see WEINGÄRTNER 1969.

the First Cataract. We have no direct record of his stay in Hermopolis, but his visit to the city of the great god Hermes on the way to Thebes is more than probable. At the news about the disgrace and accusations of Germanicus, the Hermopolitans could perhaps (spontaneously or at a local administrative order) obliterate his name on the monument.

Emperors like Caligula, Nero, or Domitian could have also received similar divine honours. However, they did not visit Hermopolis. Vespasian and Titus spent time in Egypt, but there is no mention of their stay at Hermopolis.

Hadrian came to Egypt in 130 CE (Sijpesteijn 1969). His itinerary in Egypt is known and a visit to Hermopolis is certain (Halfmann 1986: 193–194, 207). In Egypt, Hadrian was object of veneration. The documents referring to his reign begin with a papyrus from the Apollonios archive, which contains an official announcement of celebrations of the inauguration of Hadrian's reign (*P. Giss.* 3 [117 CE]). He was interested in Egyptian religion and antiquities.⁶ He visited temples and bestowed privileges on the Egyptian priests (Łukaszewicz 1981). During his visit, at the end of October 130 CE, his favourite Antinous, who was born at Claudopolis in Bithynia and accompanied Hadrian in his journeys, drowned in the Nile, and Hadrian enrolled him amongst the gods.

On the bank of the Nile opposite to Hermopolis, the new city of Antinoopolis was founded by the emperor on 30th October 130 CE.⁷ Also the neighbouring Hermopolis certainly received monuments commemorating the deified Antinous. Antinous undoubtedly could be a candidate for the title of New Hermes, but it would be difficult to explain the *damnatio memoriae* and the obliteration of the entire text except the name of the god. Antinous was associated with various gods, like Agathodaemon, Osiris, and Dionysos (Poethke 1975: 323), but no identification with Hermes is known. There was no official *damnatio* of Hadrian and no ban on the memory of Antinous, the beautiful victim of an accident (or a murder?) on the Nile.

⁶ Inscriptions confirming Hadrian's visit to the colossus of Memnon: *I. Colosse Memnon* 28–33; see ROSENMEYER 2018: 141–168.

⁷ THISSEN 1977b: 925; KÜHN 1913; HUSSON & VALBELLE 1992: 225–226; MCKENZIE 2007: 154–159; ŁUKASZEWICZ 2018: 22 and *passim* (first edition 1986: 20).

The key to the interpretation of the inscription under discussion is not the degree of probability of the supposed candidate to the divine status of the New Hermes, but rather an explanation of the *damnatio*, which could refer neither to the earlier deified emperors who visited Egypt like Vespasian or Titus, nor to Hadrian or Antinous. If the obliteration of the text of the inscription had been a work of the Christian period, the words 'god New Hermes' would not be spared. This shows that the erasure of the lost text was a result of a political condemnation of the deified man.

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Abstract: The article presents a new edition and translation of *P. Mert. II 81*, offering textual corrections based on available high-resolution images. The palimpsest document is a letter from Epoeis to Demetrios (whom she calls ‘son’, most likely in an affectionate, non-literal sense) discussing a dispute involving a priest. Epoeis relates she has been engaging in persistent oracular consultations seeking divine guidance for Demetrios, which demonstrates how oracles were used in everyday decision-making in Roman Egypt. The letter provides insights into kinship terminology, social relationships, and ritual practices. The newly restored text clarifies episodes of family negotiation, possibly personal debt, and the handling of sensitive affairs through temple oracles.

Keywords: oracular inquiry, Roman Egypt, private letters, kinship terminology, documentary papyri, palimpsest, family relationships.

Lajos BERKES & Anton KISTOL

Jesus’s reply to Abgar and a tax receipt:

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Abstract: The article presents the first edition of two Coptic ostraca held in the collection of the Dnipro Museum: one contains a fragmentary copy

of Jesus' apocryphal letter to Abgar and the other is a tax receipt from Djeme, dated to 717 AD.

Keywords: Dnipro Museum, Coptic ostraca, Egypt, apocrypha, tax receipt.

Jelle BRUNING

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Keywords: slavery, slave trade, sale contracts, Egypt, Arabic papyri.

Katarzyna DE LELLIS-DANYS, Grzegorz OCHALEA,

✉ Aleksandra PAWLIKOWSKA-GWIAZDA

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Abstract: First editions and re-editions of six Coptic and Copto-Greek ostraca from the collections of the Warsaw National Museum and the University of Warsaw. Five objects come from the Polish-French excavations at Edfu (Egypt) in 1930s, one from the Polish works at Faras (Nubia), and one is most likely of Middle-Egyptian provenance. The pieces from Edfu represent the well-known types of texts on potsherds known from other publications of the material from this site. They include receipts and accounts connected with deliveries of wine and crops. The text from Middle Egypt is an addition to the collection some 170 ostraca of the so-called *etmoulon* type. The ostrakon from Faras is the only literary text in the lot, preserving the beginning of Psalm 1. The edited ostraca are also studied from the perspective of their materiality, presenting the characteristics of vessel forms and fabrics used for their production.

Keywords: Coptic and Copto-Greek ostraca, Edfu, Faras, Middle Egypt, *etmoulon* ostraca, wine, literary ostraca, Psalms, materiality.

Giulio IOVINE

<i>Fragmentary legal document(s?) from the archive of Ammon scholasticus (P. Duke inv. 190-193 and 195)</i>	111
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Abstract: Edition, translation and commentary to some scattered fragments from the Duke University papyri collection (P. Duke inv. 190-193 and 195), which are part of the so-called archive of Ammon *scholasticus* (1st half of 4th

cent. CE) and may cover a single occurrence, a petition or records of court proceedings, referring an individual pretending to be a priest to escape his liturgies.

Keywords: archive of Ammon, late antique Egypt, Egyptian priesthood, petition, court proceedings.

Adam ŁUKASZEWICZ

An inscription from Hermopolis 145

Abstract: Hermopolis was an important cultic and administrative centre of Graeco-Roman Egypt. During three seasons (1987–1990) a Polish-Egyptian archaeological expedition directed by Marek Barański carried out excavations in the city's Great Basilica. The inscription under discussion is one of the results of these excavations.

Keywords: Hermopolis, archaeological works, Greek inscription, Hermes.

Gabriella MESSERI

Conto di vino (SB XII 10892 verso) 155

Abstract: First edition of a wine account extending over six columns. Columns i–iv (iv is lost) record the sale of vintage wine and columns v–vi payments to the parties involved (intermediaries, administrators, camel drivers, and donkey drivers) made with the profits from the sale of wine. The vineyards are located in the area of Karanis. The account was most likely written in 194 CE using the back of the land administration register SB XII 10892 edited by Anna Świderek in *JJP* 16/17 (1971) and republished by the author *JJP* LIV (2024).

Keywords: wine account, wine production, wine prices, land transport, Karanis (Arsinoites).

Radosław MIŚKIEWICZ

Diocles' Law (Dem. 24.42) and the problem of the validity of laws in Athens in the late fifth century BCE 179

Abstract: The article examines the significance of Diocles' Law (Dem. 24.42) for the growing problem of (in)validity of laws in the Athenian legal order in the late fifth century BCE. Diocles' Law should be understood as part of the broader set of vital principles that constituted an 'evolving law reform' aimed at consolidating laws and strengthening the rule of law and democracy after deep constitutional crises. This study reconstructs the factual and legal background to which specific clauses of Diocles' Law refer (sections 2.1–2.4; ἐν δημοκρατία, κυρίου εἶναι, the archonship of Eucleides, ἀναγεγραμμένοι).

More broadly, it outlines the challenges the Athenians faced at that time, and the measures they took to address them, arising not only from the two oligarchic coups d'état, but also from mounting problems in their legal, constitutional, and judicial order. The article also argues that an analysis of Greek legal language – and its manoeuvrings as seen in Andocides' *On the Mysteries* – confirms that issues of the validity (κυρίους εἶναι) of laws must be distinguished from those concerning their application (χρησθαί). Even though the latter also played a role at the time, especially due to the *caesura* marked by the archonship of Eucleides (403/2), the central argument is that Diocles' Law was enacted to impose order specifically on the validity of laws at a very particular historical moment. This law was relevant retrospectively to 'the scrutiny of the laws', with the vital involvement of ἀναγραφεῖς τῶν νόμων from the beginning of their work in 410, and, more broadly, to future law-making. In addition (section 3), the article eventually identifies the principle of 'legal certainty', which underpinned the introduction of Diocles' Law, and formed a key part of Athenian legal culture at the end of the fifth century BCE.

Keywords: Diocles' Law; validity of law; application of law; classical Athens, law reform, law-making, the scrutiny of the laws, legal certainty, law consolidation.

Anna PLISECKA

The stick and the carrot: Notes on P. Col. VI 123, ll. 6–8 237

Abstract: The article formulates a hypothesis that the penalties referred to in lines 6–8 of *P. Col. VI 123* (Alexandria, 200 CE) are related to two edicts copied in *P. Oxy. XLVII 3364* (Oxyrhynchus, 209 CE), ll. 1–9, in which Septimius Severus and Caracalla ordered the population to return to their homeland. In these edicts, penalties were imposed both on the fugitives and on their protectors, but additionally, as an incentive to follow the imperial order, a period of amnesty was announced. Similar amnesty is mentioned also in the Columbia papyrus.

Keywords: ἀπόκριμα, ἰδία, imperial edict, amnesty, petition.

Jakub URBANIK

The purpose of P. Dionysia (P. Oxy. II 237) and its mysterious beginning 251

Abstract: This article presents a new hypothesis regarding the function the so-called *Petition of Dionysia* (*P. Oxy. II 237* = *P. Dionysia*). The study re-examines the papyrus' structure and its procedural context, focusing on its newly deciphered mysterious beginning (col. i) by Constantinos Balamoshev. The findings suggest that *P. Dionysia* be not the original petition but rather a copy, possibly official, produced during its administrative processing. I conjecture that the document represents a late procedural stage, possibly including the governor's final decision and subsequent requests for execution.

Keywords: Dionysia, juristic papyrology, Roman administration of justice, court/judicial procedure, Roman Egypt, local law, Reichsrecht, Volksrecht.

Joanna WEGNER

Clerical authority in late antique Egypt: A papyrological perspective 283

Abstract: Papyrological sources from late antique Egypt attest to a variety of non-religious contexts in which clergy below the episcopal level – mainly presbyters and deacons – exercised authority in rural settlements. These contexts include formal and informal representation of village communities, mediation in conflict, and policing of the morals. While these phenomena have already drawn the attention of scholars, they were often viewed strictly as an outcrop of the religious authority wielded by the clergy. The present contribution is an attempt to nuance this perspective by taking into consideration the diverse socio-economic factors which contributed to the social standing of the clergy. It uses Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, with its subsequent reiterations, as the main theoretical framework and builds on the concepts of capital accumulation and convertibility between social fields in order to arrive at a multifaceted analysis of the clerics' position as fully integrated members of rural societies.

Keywords: late antiquity, Greek and Coptic papyri, clergy, institutional church, authority, field theory, forms of capital.

Marzena WOJTCZAK & Jakub URBANIK

To sell or to have sold? Hypotheke-praxis and dikaia time in P. Budge 311

Abstract: A tiny archive composed of the famous Coptic arbitration protocol *P. Budge* and three associated Greek documents, a settlement of claims, a sale, and a loosely connected marriage document, bring forward a fascinating controversy of the tormented times between the Persian and the Arab conquests of Egypt. Its settlement testifies to the operative force of law, legal awareness of its users, and dispute-resolution strategies in an environment of intrinsic legal plurality. A new text edition, providing an in-depth study of this material, delving into the dispute resolution method, rhetorics, and proper reconstruction of the events, is presently in the works. Before it is published, we would like to present here an aspect of this matter, closely connected to the very origin of the dispute, viz. our hypothesis on the nature of the security provided by the borrower, the widow Thekla, to her creditors, the consorts Philemon and Thekla. This central matter of the *P. Budge* controversy witnesses the profound legal awareness of its parties. Operating within the legal framework provided by Roman law, and without attempts to transgress it, the law-users of seventh-century Edfu managed to bend and form it to serve best their needs, creating a flexible form of security,

fitting the circumstances of Thekla-the-Widow and the creditors couple. It is amazing to see how, even at the dusk of its domination of Egypt, the Roman legal *forma mentis* was so strongly present in this inherently plural society.

Keywords: Edfu, arbitration, late antique Egypt, securities, *hypothèque-praxis*, *dikaia time*, legal practice, *apotage*, *hypothekimaia asphaleia*.

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