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Adam Łajtar

**THE JEWISH EPITAPH SB IV 7295:
A SUGGESTION FOR THE READING**

SB IV 7295 is written on a limestone block with recessed field, 41 cm high, 19 cm wide and 8,5 cm thick. The external appearance of the block and the form of the inscription are characteristic of Jewish tombstones from Leontopolis (Tell el-Yehoudieh). This inclined the first editor of the inscription (S. de Ricci) to ascribe it, however with a question mark, to this very site, a suggestion that has been commonly adopted by later scholars.

The stone was bought before 1913 for the collection of the Lyceum Hosianum at Braunsberg in East Prussia (now Braniewo in Poland). After the Second World War it was transported, together with the majority of the Braunsberg collection, to the National Museum Warsaw, where it still is kept under the inventory number 198826.

The complete lemma of the inscription is as follows:

From the stone in the collection of the Lyceum Hosianum in Braunsberg, S. de Ricci, *Rev. épigr.*, n.s. 1, 1913, p. 148, no. 11 with facsimile (J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain* 1, Paris 1914, p. 497; SB IV 7295; CIJ II 1475; CPJ III 1475). From the photo provided by the National Museum Warsaw: W. Horbury & D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Cambridge 1992, p. 134f., no. 64, pl. XXII.

The text printed below is based on autopsy of the stone in the National Museum Warsaw:¹

¹ On this occasion I benefited from the help of Mr. Alfred TWARDCKI from the Department of Ancient Art of the National Museum at Warsaw to whom I would like to express my sincere thanks here.

[. . .]να
 [. . .]ον μ-
 μικρὰν
 4 πασίφ-
 ιλον
 κλαύσ-
 ατε, ὡς
 8 ἐτῶν τρι-
 άκοντα δ-
 ύο. (ἔτους) ε' Τῷ βι
 δ'

The upper left corner of the block is broken off aslant. As a result of this three or four letters are missing at the beginning of the first line of the inscription, and one letter at the beginning of the second line. After that, in the second line, we have the lower part of a letter with one vertical stroke. S. de Ricci saw here an *upsilon*; his facsimile even shows the oblique stroke of *upsilon* at the right-hand side. He read: [. . .]να[. . .]ιον without any attempt at supplement. Horbury and Noy took this partly preserved letter for iota. They printed: [. . .]να[. . .]ιον and suggested in their commentary the reading [Ἀθη]νά[ρ]ιον or [Θεο]νά[ρ]ιον.

After the autopsy of the stone I am convinced that S. de Ricci was mistaken in his judgement of the partly preserved letter in line 2. Besides the vertical stroke at the bottom there is no oblique stroke at the top to the right-hand side suggesting *upsilon*. What S. de Ricci took for the oblique stroke is in fact a crack in the stone surface along the break. The reading of Horbury and Noy is possible. The crucial letter might have been *iota* and the whole text before μικρὰν might be read as a female name from the group of diminutiva in -ιον staying in accusative, thus [Ἀθη]νά[ρ]ιον or [Θεο]νά[ρ]ιον. However, there exists another possibility. The letter in question might have been *rho* as well. Under this circumstances we can also consider the reading: [. . .]ν ἄ[ω]ρον μικρὰν ἢ πασίφιλον ἢ κλαύσατε κτλ. This reading has a serious palaeographic argument behind it. The lacuna at the beginning of line 2 is rather wide. It is apparently too wide for *rho* (to be supplemented according to the suggestion of Horbury and Noy) but fits perfectly for *omega*. The epithet ἄωρος, otherwise quite rare in Greek epitaphs from Egypt, occurs very often in Tell el-Yehoudieh inscriptions. It is attested in 28 cases out of 48 Tell el-Yehoudieh prosa epitaphs containing epithets that are completely preserved or securely supplemented, as counted after the corpus of Horbury and Noy.² It is ascribed to people whose

² For similar observations see also F. DUNAND, "»Mort avant l'heure ...« Sur l'espérance de vie en Égypte tardive", [in:] *Egyptian Religion. The Last Thousand Years. Studies to the memory of Jan*

age at death was between 2 and 50. Still more important for our present investigation is the fact that in the majority of cases (21 out of 28) ἄωρος takes the first place when it appears within a series of epithets. It would also be the case here.

If we accept the reading ἄλ[ω]ρον we have to look for a female name of three or four letters having the accusative in -v to supplement the name of the deceased woman contained at the beginning of line 1. Among personal names occurring in Tell el-Yehoudieh inscriptions these requirements are fulfilled by Νίκη (*Horbury-Noy*, no. 61). The Jewish inscriptions from elsewhere as well as the papyri offer the names: Μαρία (*Horbury-Noy*, no. 120 [from Antinoopolis]; *CPJ* II 223 and 227 [from Apollonopolis Magna]) and 'Ρουᾶ (*Horbury-Noy*, no. 15 [from Alexandria]). Other names, not attested till now in the Jewish milieu of Egypt, are possible as well.

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