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## GRAVE STELAE FROM DEIR EL-NAQLUN\*

MANY OF THE EGYPTIAN GRAVESTONES from the Christian period now in private hands or in museum collections do not have a recorded provenance and few have been found *in situ* or at least in the context of a specific cemetery. Researchers have been able to attribute some types of funerary stelae to specific regions of Egypt, based on their form, elements of the decoration and epigraphic features.<sup>1</sup>

\* The following abbreviations have been used throughout: CRUM, *Coptic Monuments* = W. E. CRUM, *Coptic Monuments* [= *Catalogue général des Antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*], Le Caire 1902; 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.

All the photographs reproduced in the present article are by Włodzimierz GODLEWSKI.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. LEFEBVRE, *Recueil*, pp. xxvi–xxviii; A. MALLON, 'Copte (Épigraphie)', *DACL* III (2), Paris 1914, cols. 2819–2886; DORA ZUNTZ, 'Koptische Grabstelen. Ihre zeitliche und örtliche Einordnung', *MDAIK* 2 (1932), pp. 22–38; MARIA CRAMER, *Koptische Inschriften im Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum zu Berlin. Ihre örtliche und zeitliche Einordnung in das Gesamtgebiet koptischer Grabinschriften*, Cairo 1949; EADEM, *Archäologische und epigraphische Klassifikation koptischer Denkmäler des Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, und des Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.*, Wiesbaden 1957; *Ägypten. Schätze aus dem Wüstensand. Kunst und Kultur der Christen am Nil*, Wiesbaden 1996, pp. 112–131; Marie-Hélène RUTSCHOWSCAYA & Dominique BÉNEZETH (eds.), *L'art copte en Égypte. 2000 ans de christianisme. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du monde*

A certain group of stelae is connected with the cemeteries in Fayum Oasis.<sup>2</sup> Included are slabs decorated with an *aedicula* facade on the front, with centrally positioned cross and epitaph written in Greek or Coptic, the latter language being an obvious indication of a later dating than the Greek would suggest.

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Recent discoveries at Naqlun<sup>3</sup> have brought to light important new evidence for these Fayumic stelae. Fragmentarily preserved stelae were discovered in the area of the monastic enclosure that was burned down in the 10th century. They had been used as stone material in the rebuilding project that had taken place in the monastery before its ultimate destruction. In one case, a fragment of a stela (Nd.00.296 [see below, no. 1.1]) served as a threshold slab in the doorway between AA.30.2 and AA.40.2. The entrance was later blocked, but before the final conflagration. Therefore, the fragment must have been reused in the construction not later than the

*arabe, Paris, du 15 mai au 3 septembre 2000 et au Musée de l'Épêbe au Cap d'Agde du 30 septembre 2000 au 7 janvier 2001*, Paris 2000, pp. 125–135.

<sup>2</sup> See ft. 1 and also Anne BOUD'HORS & Florence CALAMENT, 'Un ensemble de stèles fayoumiques inédites: à propos de la stèle de Pantoleos de Toutôn' [in:] M. IMMERZEEL & J. VAN DER VLIET (eds.), *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, 1, pp. 447–476; J. VAN DER VLIET, 'Monumenta fayumica', *Enchoria* 28 (2002/2003), pp. 137–146; IDEM, 'Reconstructing the Landscape: Epigraphic Sources for the Christian Fayoum' [in:] G. GABRA (ed.), *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis. Essays from the 2004 International Symposium of the Saint Mark Foundation and the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society in Honor of Martin Krause*, Cairo – New York 2005, pp. 79–89, especially pp. 80–81; Sofia SCHATEN, 'Christian Funerary Stelae from the Fayoum' [in:] G. GABRA (ed.), *Christianity and Monasticism* (cit.), pp. 257–263.

<sup>3</sup> W. GODLEWSKI, 'Naqlun. Excavations 2000', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 12 (2001), pp. 149–154, fig. 3; IDEM, 'Naqlun. Excavations 2001', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 13 (2002), pp. 159–170, especially pp. 164–166 with fig. 7 on p. 165.

9th century. Three other fragments, of which two most probably are parts of the same slab (Nd.00.201 and Nd.01.045 [see below, no. 1.3]; Nd.00.045 [see below, no. 1.5]), were discovered in the upper layers of the rubble inside room AA.30.2, suggesting their use in structures on the first floor of the complex. The monastic architecture investigated currently in the central part of the *kom* at Naqlun has been dated provisionally to the 6th century, but it is fairly unlikely that the stelae mentioned above had been used in the original construction of Building AA. They should rather be considered as originating from a stage of rebuilding, which took place, on the ground floor as well as on the upper storey, prior to the 10th century, when the monastery burned down in a fire. The debris in AA.30.2 leaves no doubt as to the intensity of the conflagration, which even baked some of the mud bricks used in the walls. A fragment of another stela, undoubtedly of the same type, was discovered in the northern part of the monastic enclosure, in the fill of room D.24 in building D (Nd.95.034; below, no. 1.4).<sup>4</sup> All these fragments had been used in the structure of walls which were being rebuilt and must have been obtained from an already disused cemetery lying close to the monastery.

An almost complete example of funerary stelae of the type here discussed was photographed in the monastery of Naqlun by Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, in the 1920s (below, no. 1.2). The stone has been lost since. Of the entire group, this stela of Christodoros is the only one to be preserved whole; the remaining pieces are all fragmentary.

Most of the stelae found in the course of explorations at Naqlun, as well as the stela seen by Johann Georg surely belong to a single architectural type. All of them are inscribed in Greek, making use of the same formula: 'Lord, give rest to the soul of Your servant NN. He died on ..., indiction'.<sup>5</sup>

The rectangular limestone stelae of a projected height c. 100 cm at the most, 33 cm wide and from 6.5 to 11 cm thick, all had a plain, but neatly

<sup>4</sup> For excavation of building D, see W. GODLEWSKI, 'Naqlun. Excavations 1998', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 10 (1998), pp. 114–116.

<sup>5</sup> ZUNTZ, 'Koptische Grabstelen' (cit. n. 1), p. 23; see also LEFEBVRE, *Recueil*, nos. 76, 81, 83, 85, 95; CRUM, *Coptic Monuments*, nos. 84II, 8584, 8598, 8684, 8697, 8698; VAN DER VLIET, 'Monumenta fayumica' (cit. n. 2), pp. 140–142, no. 11.

dressed bottom part, apparently for mounting on a funerary monument of some kind. The decoration executed in bas-relief represents the front of an *aedicula* supported on two columns, topped with a triangular tympanum containing the image of a shell in the center and lateral acroteria in the form of four half-volutes scrolling outward, towards the edges of the stela.

The columns are shown on rectangular bases and with schematically rendered leafy capitals. The shafts of the columns are either plain or fluted, the fillets of the molding plain or decorated with a band of plaiting, or smooth leaves. A finely carved shallow shell ornament occupies the center of the tympanum, the background being plain with lotus flowers featured sometimes in the corners. The side acroteria are occasionally accompanied by a band of floral decoration engraved above the fillets of the tympanum.

Filling the *aedicula* between the columns is a big Latin cross with arms broadening towards the ends, decorated with bands of floral decoration in shallow relief. The ornament is heavily geometrized, tracing the design of a centrally positioned cross inscribed into the bigger outer cross. The joining of the arms is emphasized with a round motif in the center. The inscription is carved on either side of the vertical line of symmetry of the cross, above and below the transversal arms; it usually fills the entire available space.

The stelae preserved in better condition reveal fine execution and a unified variant of the decoration indicative of the same workshop, even though the decorative elements of the cross and tympanum demonstrate a variability that can only be explained by a fairly long period in operation of the workshop. While a viable relative chronology of the surviving stelae is still risky, the gravestones appear to have been produced for about a hundred years and rather more likely in the 6th century turning into the 7th century. The stelae of Damianos and Menas are a chronological indicator of some sort in this time range, for they seem to be the earliest in the group; the stela of Christodoros is also important for it looks to be relatively late in the series. The latest in the group may be the stela found in the debris inside Building D (Nd.95.034 [see below, no. 1.4]), but its poor condition precludes a conclusive formal analysis.

Some stelae from the museum collections in Cairo may also be included in the Naqlun series of funerary slabs: Egyptian Museum, CG 8423 = Coptic Museum, CC 200.<sup>6</sup> The same is true of Berlin pieces: inv. no. 8827,<sup>7</sup> inv. no. 4483,<sup>8</sup> and inv. no. 4728.<sup>9</sup> The general decoration scheme is very much like that of the Naqlun stelae, although some secondary differences can be observed, primarily in the ornamentation of the tympana and the positioning of the inscription, which may stand either in the architrave or in the tympanum.

A stela possibly belonging to the same family of gravestones has been published by Jacques van der Vliet.<sup>10</sup> It originates from Dayr Sinnuris and is inscribed in Greek, the inscription commemorating a certain Damianos. It is paralleled by a Greek stela of a woman named Pantona, kept in the Ermitage in St. Petersburg (inv. 11082).<sup>11</sup> These two pieces, especially the St. Petersburg one, stand close to the Naqlun stelae, both in the decoration and in the formulation of the text.

In addition to the above-described stelae with *aedicula* and cross, Naqlun has yielded yet another type of gravestones, a complete example of which was found in 2004 in the course of building works in the modern monastery (Nd.04.115 [below, no. 2.1]).<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, neither the exact provenience nor the circumstances of discovery were recorded, perhaps it was found within the Cemetery C. Unlike the stelae described above, which are rectangular in shape, this one is round-topped. It, too, is decorated with an *aedicula* in relief, but the representation is unlike that of the

<sup>6</sup> CRUM, *Coptic Monuments*, p. 96, pl. v; cf. KAMAL, *Stelae*, no. 200 with photo on p. 176.

<sup>7</sup> ZUNTZ, 'Koptische Grabstelen' (cit. n. 1), pl. Ivd.

<sup>8</sup> *Ägypten. Schätze aus dem Wüstensand* (cit. n. 1), p. 124, no. 75; inscription already in LEFEBVRE, *Recueil*, no. 795.

<sup>9</sup> *Ägypten. Schätze aus dem Wüstensand* (cit. n. 1), p. 127, no. 81; inscription already in LEFEBVRE, *Recueil*, no. 793.

<sup>10</sup> VAN DER VLIET, 'Monumenta fayumica' (cit. n. 2), pp. 140–142, no. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Unpublished. Information based on a handout distributed by Sofia SCHATEN during the symposium on Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis.

<sup>12</sup> The stela was secured by inspectors of the Supreme Council of Antiquities for the Fayum Oasis.

other pieces. The *aedicula* is framed by massif columns with floral capitals carrying a wide architrave with a Greek inscription on it. Floral decoration inside the *aedicula* forms a cross. The round top bears a palmette framed by floral ornaments in the center.

The newly discovered Naqlun stela has a very close parallel in a stela of unknown provenance now in the Coptic Museum Cairo, CC 173 (formerly Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 8698).<sup>13</sup> The two stelae have the same ‘tectonics’ (*aedicula*, wide architrave, round top), but the piece in Cairo differs in that it bears a representation of a woman as an *orans* on it.<sup>14</sup> A female *orans* was represented on a stela, a fragment of which was found in secondary context inside the monastic complex in Naqlun, room AA.30.2 (Nd.01.180 [below, no. 2.2]). In this case, the figure had been placed against a background of a wall apparently built of regular blocks.<sup>15</sup> It is likely enough that the woman had been depicted inside an *aedicula*, perhaps similar to the completely preserved stela no. 2.1 and the stela in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, CC 173.

Two other fragments of stelae apparently belonging to this second group are known from Naqlun. One was a surface find from the northern part of the monastic enclosure (Nd.97.094 [below, no. 2.3]), the other one came from the fill of building AA (Nd.99.057 [below, no. 2.4]). The latter

<sup>13</sup> CRUM, *Coptic Monuments*, p. 143, no. 8698, pl. LIII; cf. KAMAL, *Stelae*, no. 173 with photo on p. 164; W. BRUNSCH, ‘Koptische und griechische Inschriften’, *EVO* 18 (1995), pp. 65–117 with photo on p. 115. See also *Lart copte en Égypte* (cit. n. 1), p. 127, no. 103.

<sup>14</sup> Also, stela CC 193 from the Coptic Museum, Cairo (formerly Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 8672), depicting a female *orans* within an *aedicula* very much like that on stela CC 173 (= CG 8698), can be assigned to the Naqlun group, but not without a shadow of a doubt considering that the top is missing. For stela CC 193 (= CG 8672), see Crum, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 8672; KAMAL, *Stelae*, no. 193.

<sup>15</sup> This element may be compared with what we have on the stela Coptic Museum Cairo, CC 104 (formerly Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 8687). It shows a praying woman standing within an *aedicula* which has a partition running up to mid-height. The partition is decorated with a reticulate motif. For the stela CC 104 (= CG 8687), see CRUM, *Coptic Monuments*, no. 8687; KAMAL, *Stelae*, no. 104.

piece has a round top and a fragmentarily preserved palmette, thus resembling the completely preserved stela 2.1.

On the grounds of style analysis, stelae nos. 2.1 and 2.2 (and perhaps also 2.3 and 2.4) can be dated to the 5th–6th century.<sup>16</sup> Along with the analogous piece in Cairo, they may be ascribed broadly to the workshops of the southeastern Fayum.

One wonders where all these funerary stelae found in secondary context could have been set up originally? Archaeological surveying and rescue work at Naqlun has located a fairly extensive necropolis in the area to the west and southwest of the monastery.<sup>17</sup> A provisional dating based on pottery and textiles places this cemetery in the 6th–7th century AD, but there is nothing to say that it had not existed earlier as well. Tomb T.1 was discovered in 1987, five other tombs, T.2 – T.6, were excavated in 2004.<sup>18</sup> The tombs had been cut into soft bedrock. Their simple form consisted of a round vertical shaft and a simple burial chamber, resembling a *loculus*, situated at its bottom. The chamber was intended for a single burial of an individual laid to rest in a coffin of palm-leaf ribs tied together with rope. The body was wrapped in a thick linen shroud with fringed short sides, measuring 105 cm in width. Similar shrouds, additionally decorated at the ends with geometric bands of ornament executed in wool embroidery, were found during rescue excavations in 2001.<sup>19</sup> In the shaft of T.1, three amphorae of local production (LR 7) were found standing side by side. These containers have slender bodies and long necks, resembling vessels found in hermitage 44 in Naqlun, where coins and imported pottery have given a date at the turn of the 5th century. Thus, the amphorae from T.1 can be dated to the 6th century and not the 7th, as previously assumed by Tomasz Górecki.<sup>20</sup> The earlier dating is also favored by a small *orbiculus*

<sup>16</sup> Some researchers have dated the stela in Cairo to the 4th–5th century, but the 4th century seems too early for this object.

<sup>17</sup> W. GODLEWSKI, T. DERDA & T. GÓRECKI, 'Deir el Naqlun (Nekloni), 1988–1989, Second Preliminary Report', *Nubica* III.1 (1994), pp. 216, 235, 262 with fig. 25.

<sup>18</sup> W. GODLEWSKI, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 17 (in press).

<sup>19</sup> GODLEWSKI, 'Naqlun. Excavations 2001' (cit. n. 3), p. 169 with fig. 9 on p. 168.

<sup>20</sup> GODLEWSKI, DERDA & GÓRECKI, 'Deir el Naqlun' (cit. n. 17), fig. 25.1–2.



with a representation of a Dionysos with a panther (?).<sup>21</sup> One of the tombs (T. 3) was discovered undisturbed. The shaft contained seven amphorae of the LR 7 type, standing upside down on the rims. Filling the burial chamber almost entirely was a cartonnage with a skeletal wooden structure inside it protecting the head.<sup>22</sup>

Taking into consideration the considerable isolation of the Nekloni monastery and the proximity of the cemetery, which must have remained in some connection with the monastic architecture, especially the church, it appears only logical to assume that the stelae fragments found in the ruins of the monastery must have come from the local burial ground.

The identity of the people buried in the cemeteries at Naqlun remains an open issue. They could have been inhabitants of the Fayum, beneficiaries/benefactors of the monastery, or else civil residents of the monastery, like those mentioned in the *Life of Samuel* who stayed in Naqlun for a while.<sup>23</sup> The source was actually recorded somewhat later, but the fragment concerning Naqlun describes the situation which existed in the monastery in the times when Samuel lived there about 631. A Coptic document from Naqlun mentions the *oikonomos* of a hospital,<sup>24</sup> suggesting the presence of yet another kind of resident inside the monastery, that is, the infirm. For the time being, it seems certain that whoever the people buried in cemetery C were, monks they were not.

To sum up, the stelae uncovered in the ruins of the Nekloni (Deir el-Naqlun) monastic compound confirm the popularity of the Fayumic type of stelae, but they also provide firm grounds for connecting them with the cemetery situated west and southwest of the monastery. An evolutionary line for

<sup>21</sup> GODLEWSKI, DERDA & GÓRECKI, 'Deir el Naqlun' (cit. n. 17), p. 216, fig. 12.

<sup>22</sup> GODLEWSKI, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 17 (in press). Similar cartonnages are known from the cemetery in Karara, cf. H. RANKE, *Koptische Friedhöfe bei Karara und der Amontempel Scheschonks I bei Hibe*, Berlin – Leipzig 1926, pp. 2–7, pl. 1, 2 and 10; Cl. NAUERTH, *Karara und El-Hibe. Die spätantiken ('koptischen') Funde aus den badischen Grabungen 1913–1914* [= *Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägypten* 15], Heidelberg 1996. One of these cartonnages, kept at the Egyptological Institute of Heidelberg University, has been frequently reproduced in catalogues and handbooks of Coptic art; cf. e.g., *L'art copte en Égypte* (cit. n. 1), pp. 124–125, no. 100.

<sup>23</sup> *The Life of Samuel of Kalamun*, ed. A. ALCOCK, Cambridge 1983, pp. 82–85.

<sup>24</sup> The Coptic text on papyrus has not been edited yet.

the decoration of these stelae can be proposed eventually, but first more objects in better condition will have to be found and the cemetery itself investigated more thoroughly in order to verify tomb chronology on the grounds of amphorae and relatively well preserved textiles found in the graves.

### CATALOGUE OF OBJECTS

The stelae have been divided in two groups following formal criteria:

- 1) Rectangular slabs carrying a relief representation of an *aedicula* with triangular tympanum and centrally positioned cross, and having an inscription placed within the arms of the cross;
- 2) Round-topped stelae with relief representation of an *aedicula* and inscription placed on the architrave.

#### 1.1. *Epitaph of Damianos*

Found reused as a threshold in the doorway of room AA.40 in building AA. Reg. no. Nd.00.296. Now in the store-room of the Polish Mission in Naqlun.

Light cream-colored limestone. H. 49.5 cm, W. 35.5 cm, Th. 11 cm. Upper part of the stela with representation of an *aedicula* having a cross inside. Inscription within the arms of the cross. The text is arranged so that the introductory formula is above the horizontal bar and the prayer for the soul of the dead beneath it. Round epigraphic majuscules. Note the specific shape of 'δ', which resembles very much the late form of 'α': a triangular element attached to the oblique stroke on the left-hand side. On the other hand, 'α' has the middle bar broken (*alpha à barre brisée*), which is a bit 'antiquated' by the 7th century. Unpublished

Cf. W. Godlewski, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 12 (2000), p. 152, fig. 3.

7th century.

- † κ(ύρι)ε, ἀνάπαυ-  
 σον τὴν ψυχὴν  
 4 υ Δαμιανοῦ· ἐν  
 εἰρήνῃ, ἀμῆν.  
 [ἐκοιμ]ήθη  
 [-----]

*O Lord, rest the soul of Your ser-  
 vant Damianos. In peace, amen.  
 He fell asleep [---].*



2. 'η' at the end of the line was corrected from 'ν'. Obviously, the stonecutter had cut 'ν' omitting 'η', but made the necessary correction immediately upon noticing his mistake.

### 1.2. *Epitaph of Christodoros*

Findspot and circumstances of discovery unknown. In the 1920s, it was kept in the monastery at Naqlun where it was photographed by Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony. Lost.

The stone was not identified (most probably limestone). Dimensions unknown. Rectangular slab with a representation of an *aedicula* having inside a big Latin cross with ornamented arms. Inscription between the arms of the cross.

From the photograph published by Johann Georg, Herzog zu Sachsen, M. Sprengling, & P. S. Costas [in:] N. Abbot, *The Monasteries of the Fayyum*,



Chicago 1937, p. 50 (text in majuscules, English translation). From the photograph published by Johann Georg, Herzog zu Sachsen, A. Łajtar, *Nubica* III/1 (1994), pp. 269–274 (*SEG* XLV 2085).

Cf. Johann Georg, Herzog zu Sachsen, *Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Ägyptens*, Leipzig – Berlin 1930, p. 19, fig. 43 (report on the discovery). S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit* II, Wiesbaden 1984, p. 767, note 16 (mention only). O. Meinardus, *Christian Egypt. Ancient and Modern* (2 ed.), Cairo 1977, p. 452 (mention only).

7th century.

Ϙ κ(ύρι)ε, ἀνά-  
 παυσον  
 τήν ψυχή(ν)  
 4 τοῦ δούλου  
 σου Χρισ-  
 τοδώρου.  
 ἐκοιμήθη μη-  
 8 νὶ Φαρμουῦ-  
 θι κθ', ἡ' ἰν(δικτίωνος) †.

9. κ' Łajtar (corrected in *SEG*)

*O Lord, rest the soul of Your servant Christodoros. He fell asleep in the month of Pharmouthi (day) 29, in the 8th indiction.*

7. 'η' at the end of the line was corrected from 'ε'

### 1.3. *Epitaph of Menas*

Found in the filling of room AA.30.2 in building AA, in two unconnected fragments. Reg. nos: Nd.01.045 and Nd.00.201. Now in the store-room of the Polish Mission in Naqlun.



Cream limestone. Survived in two unconnected pieces: a) part of the upper left-hand side of the stela. H. 33 cm, W. 16.5 cm, Th. 6.5; b) central part of the right-hand side. H. 17 cm, W. 15.5 cm, Th. 6.5 cm. Similarly as in the epitaph of Damianos (above, no. 1.1), 'δ' resembles the late form of 'α', while 'α' has the old form of 'alpha à barre brisée'. Note the unusual form of 'χ' at the beginning of line 3. Note also the consequent use of the ligature 'ov' in line 3. Unpublished.

Cf. W. Godlewski, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 13 (2002), p. 166 (only mentioned).

6th/7th century.

Ⲫ ⲕ(ύρι)ϵ, [ἀν]ἀπαυ-  
σο[v τ]ῆν ψυ-  
χῆ[v] τοῦ δούλου

4 σο[v] Μηνᾶ

[ - - - - - ]

*O Lord, rest the soul of Your servant Menas [ - - - ].*

#### 1.4. *Fragment of a stela*

Found in the filling of room D.24 in building D. Reg. no. Nd.95.034. Now in the store-room of the Polish Mission in Naqlun.

Creamish-gray limestone.

H. 27.3 cm, W. 17.3 cm, Th. 6.7 cm.

Upper right-hand part of a stela. Surface heavily eroded, text almost completely destroyed, traces of three lines preserved next to the column of the *aedicula*.

Unpublished.

[ - - - ] Ἀ  
[ - - - ] Π  
[ - - - ]



1.5. *Fragment of a stela*

Found in the filling of room AA.30.2 in building AA. Reg. no. Nd.00.045. Now in the store-room of the Polish Mission in Naqlun.

Cream limestone. H. 37.0 cm, W. 16.0 cm, Th. 8.0 cm. Upper left-hand part of a stela. Surface eroded, text destroyed.

Unpublished.

2.1. *Epitaph of Tapakbe,  
her son Senoute, and Gregoria*

Findspot unknown, perhaps cemetery C. Reg. no. Nd.04.115. Now in the store-room of the Polish Mission in Naqlun.

Limestone. H. 54.4 cm, W. 24.5 cm, Th. 11.0 cm. Round topped stela with representation of an *aedicula*. The *aedicula* is framed by massif columns with floral capitals. The columns carry a wide undecorated architrave in which a Greek inscription is placed. Within the *aedicula*, there is floral decoration taking on the form of a cross. The round top has a palmette framed with floral ornament. Traces of red paint are visible on the stone surface, especially on the top and in the letters. The inscription is rather carelessly executed, the letters are irregular. By paleographical standards, they represent round epigraphic majuscules. Note two forms of 'α': *à barre brisée* and with an oblique stroke in the middle running from top left to bottom right. Unpublished.

Probably still 5th century.

† κ(ύρι)ε ὁ (θ)(εὸ)ς τῶν δυνάμε-  
ων, ἀνάπαυσων  
τῆν ψυχῆν τῆ δού-



- 4 λη σου Ταπαχη μετὰ  
 τοῦ τέκνο αὐτῆς Σενούτη  
 καὶ Γρηγορίαν, ἀμήν. † Φ(α)μ(ενὼ)θ κέ,  
 ι. ἰνδ(ικτίωνος)· ἐν ἡρή(νη), ἀμήν. †

2. read ἀνάπασσον || 3-4. read τῆς δούλης σου || 5 read τέκνου || 6. read Γρηγορίαν (for Γρηγορίας) || 7. read εἰρήνη

*O Lord God of powers, rest the soul of Your servant Tapakhe together with her child Senoute, and Gregoria, amen. (They died? on) Phamenoth 25, in the 1[ . ]th indiction. In peace, amen.*

- 1-2. The stone has  $\overline{\text{oc}}$  instead of  $\overline{\text{o}\theta\text{c}}$ . This may be judged in two ways: (1.) we are dealing with the omission of the letter  $\theta$  from the *nomen sacrum*  $\theta(\epsilon\delta)\varsigma$  (so in the edition above); or (2.) The stonemason mistakenly cut ‘o’ for ‘θ’, and omitted the article  $\delta$ .

The designation  $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \delta\ \theta\epsilon\delta\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \delta\upsilon\nu\acute{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\omega\nu$  is of scriptural origin; cf. *Reg.* III 17.1; IV 19.20; *Ps.* 58.6; 79.5; 79.8; 79.20; 83.9; 88.9; *Is.* 42.13. It was frequently used in early Christian literature. As for inscriptions from Egypt, it occurs in the epitaph of a deacon Phoibamon originating from the village Phnebieus in the Herakleopolites (unpublished; information provided by Sofia Schatten). The stone kept in the British Museum, inv. 1649, surely comes from the Fayum. Taking into regard the origin of the deceased and the unusual invocation to God, paralleled by the inscription here discussed, we can venture to ascribe it to the Naqlun cemetery.

4. As far as can be established, the name *Ταπαχη* is an *addendum onomasticis*. It undoubtedly is of Egyptian (Coptic) origin; its etymology is unclear to us.
5. The final ‘c’ in αὐτῆς was added when the initial ‘c’ in Σενούτη already existed. Obviously, the stonemason had committed a haplography, but he noticed his mistake and corrected it.

Σενούτη is a variant of the well known Coptic name  $\psi\epsilon\eta\omicron\upsilon\tau\epsilon$ , borne among others by a famous archimandrite of the 4th/5th century and the actual father of the Coptic literary language. The form Σενούτη is somewhat strange. It has the Greek ‘c’ against the Coptic ‘ψ’ at the beginning, but it is obviously deprived of a Greek flexional ending and was considered indeclinable by the author of the inscription. Another possibility is that Σενοῦτη stands for Σενοῦτης (= Σενοῦτις) under the loss of ‘c’ in final position. In this case, however, we have



to assume a syntactic mistake (nominative for genitive) unless it is a phonetic notation of the genitive *Σενοῦτίος* under the loss of 'ο' in the ending.

6. *Γρυγορίαν* (= *Γρηγορίαν*) instead of *Γρηγορίας* is probably purely phonetic: loss of 'ς' in final position with the simultaneous addition of 'ν', for which see 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, pp. 131–132.

The right hasta in the final 'ν' in ἀμῆν is crossed by a vertical bar. This is probably to be interpreted as a ligature of 'ν†'.

- 6–7. The interpretation of the date contained in these lines raises some problems. As a rule, dates in epitaphs refer to the death of the persons commemorated. But here we have three persons and only one date. Had all these persons – mother, child, and another woman – died on the same day? Not impossible as the evidence of a series of epitaphs from Terenouthis in the Western Delta shows, all of them being dated to the same Hathyr 11th, year 20, perhaps of the reign of Marcus Aurelius; cf. J. Bingen, 'La série *Kappa* des stèles de Térénouthis' [in:] Cecilia Saerens, R. de Smet & H. Melaerts (ed.), *Studia Varia Bruxellensia ad Orbem Graeco-Latinum Pertinentia* 1, Leuven 1987, pp. 3–14. Moreover, the epitaphs of the *kappa* series, like the epitaph here discussed, commemorate mainly women and children, which suggests that they may have found death in an accident. On the other hand, the date given in our epitaph could refer to the death of only one of the person mentioned in it, most probably Tapakhe who is listed first in the text. Another possibility is that the date is not of the death, but of the internment or of the preparation of the grave stela.

Gravestones with inscriptions commemorating more than one person are rarely attested from Christian Egypt. The following examples can be cited:

- 1) Lefebvre, *Recueil*, no. 81: Menas, Anna and Georgia (from the Fayum);
- 2) Lefebvre, *Recueil*, no. 784: Hierax and his daughter Tiesis (from the Fayum);
- 3) Lefebvre, *Recueil*, no. 786: abba Kyros and his sister Ioana (from the Fayum);
- 4) Lefebvre, *Recueil*, no. 790: Pouseik and Kosma (from the Fayum);
- 5) Lefebvre, *Recueil*, no. 808: Apaion, Tapia and Aleka (provenance unknown; ascribed to Akoris [Tehnah], but on weak grounds; the stone is more likely to have come from the Fayum);
- 6) epitaph of Menas and Gerontios kept in small collection of antiquities in Deir el-Azab which strongly suggests its Fayum provenance, published in this volume by Tomasz Derda & Jacques van der Vliet, pp. 21–33;
- 7) *Ägypten. Schätze aus dem Wüstensand*, no. 70: Theodoros and Kosma; note also Lefebvre, *Recueil*, no. 794: a gravestone for children whose names are not given. As all the examples collected above come from the Fayum, one is

excused for thinking that the custom of preparing epitaphs for more than one person was somehow connected particularly with this part of Egypt.

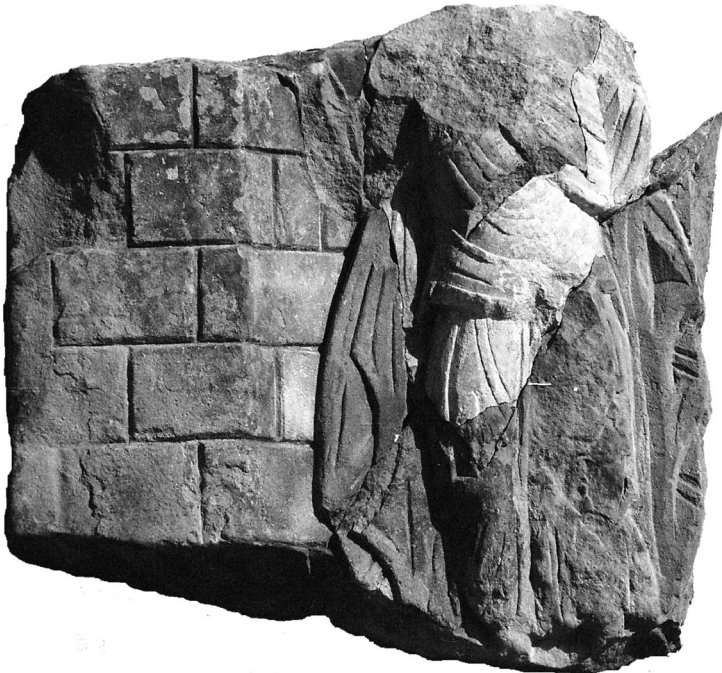
7. The second element of the indiction number is perfectly round, but 'o' is impossible in this position. Perhaps this is a mistake for 'ε': ι(ε) ἰνδ(ικτίωνος) = 'in the 15th indiction'.

## 2.2. *Fragment of a gravestone*

Found in the fill of room AA.30.2 in building AA. Reg. no. Nd.01.180. Now in the store-room of the Polish Mission in Naqlun.

Limestone. H. 12 cm, W. 23 cm, Th. 4.2 cm. Fragment from the central part of a stela. Good-quality depiction of a female figure in prayer set against a wall constructed of stone blocks. Unpublished.

Cf. W. Godlewski, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 13 (2002), p. 164 with fig. 7 on p. 165.  
6th century.





### 2.3. *Fragment of a gravestone*

Found in the northern part of the monastic enclosure, on the surface. Reg. no. Nd. 97.094. Now in the store-room of the Polish Mission in Naqlun.

Cream limestone. H. 31.0 cm, W. 16.5 cm, Th. 10.5 cm. Lower right-hand part of a stela. Text has not survived; it may have been written on the *aedicula* top or on an architrave.

Unpublished.

6th century.



### 2.4. *Fragment of a gravestone*

Found in the fill of Building AA. Reg. no. Nd. 99.057. Now in the store-room of the Polish Mission in Naqlun.

Limestone. H. 13.0 cm; W. 12.5 cm, Th. 4.0 cm. The round top of a stela with partly preserved palmette. No traces of letters.

Unpublished.

6th century.

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