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Thomas Corsten

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# TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte  
Papyrologie und Epigraphik



**Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte,  
Papyrologie und Epigraphik**

# **T Y C H E**

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LINCOLN H. BLUMELL  
MOSTAFA F. HEMIEDA

## The Curious Case of Kom Aushim Inv. no. 45 The Rediscovery of a Fragment from a Lost Inscription?

On a recent trip to Egypt in March 2013 I was shown two Greek inscriptions by the curator of the storage magazine at Kom Aushim (Karanis), Mostafa F. Hemieda. These two inscriptions have been housed in storage at the magazine since 1999 when they were seized by Egyptian police off the antiquities market in Fayum City (Arsinoe). The catalogue records for these two inscriptions are very sparse and only indicate the date of seizure, the location where they were confiscated, and render only the barest details about the physical description of the fragments. Despite the number of unknowns regarding these two inscriptions, as a result of the circumstances in which they were acquired, the provenance of one of the inscriptions can be established with some certainty owing to some very specific parallels it shares with a previously published inscription. In fact, the parallels are so unique that it may well be a broken portion of this previously published inscription that has not been seen for over a century.

Kom Aushim Inv. no. 45 (KA 45) is a basalt fragment that measures 14.5 cm × 31.5 cm × 26.0 cm (H × W × D) and preserves two legible lines of Greek text and only the topmost part of a third line that is not legible.<sup>1</sup> The top and right side of the fragment have been deliberately smoothed so that it seems likely that the fragment came from the corner of a base of some monument or statue. Owing to some remarkable parallels KA 45 shares with IFayum I 17,<sup>2</sup> a fragmentary inscription titled *Fragment d'une inscription honorifique émanant d'une association de Machairophores*, it seems very probable that KA 45 once belonged to IFayum I 17 but has been broken off.<sup>3</sup> To elaborate, IFayum I 17 is a republication of SB I 624, which in turn is a republication of an inscription first published by Seymour de Ricci in 1909 in the *Bulletin de la Société archéologique d'Alexandrie*.<sup>4</sup> As noted by de Ricci, he only saw the inscription briefly on two occasions on the antiquities market in Medinet el-Fayum

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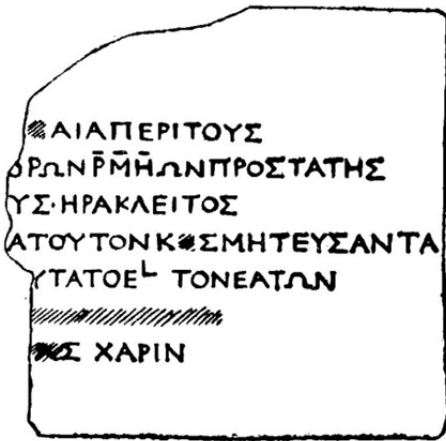
<sup>1</sup> The average line height is 4.0 cm and the average letter width is 1.7 cm.

<sup>2</sup> É. Bernand (ed.), *Recueil des inscriptions grecques du Fayoum: Tome I, La «Meris» d'Hérakleidès*, Leiden 1975, 53–55.

<sup>3</sup> The TM number for IFayum I 17 is 42999.

<sup>4</sup> S. de Ricci, *Notes d'épigraphie égyptienne*, BSAA 11 (1909) 335 (no. 13).

(Fayum City) in 1905 and again in 1908, during which time he made rapid transcriptions: “Vu deux fois très rapidement en 1905 et en 1908 à Médinet el-Fayoum chez un négociant indigène. Mes deux copies, toutes les deux fort hâtives, ne sont pas identiques.”<sup>5</sup> In his brief description of the piece he noted that the inscription was made on a dark stone and that it may have been the base of a statue: “Grande base de statue en pierre dure noire.”<sup>6</sup> While there are no extant photographs of the inscription, de Ricci did make a hasty facsimile and transcription but noted that because of the circumstances in which they were made he could not guarantee that they were entirely accurate: “Mais, je le repète, je ne puis garantir l’exactitude de ma copie.”<sup>7</sup>



? τὰ δίκ]αia (καί?) περὶ τοὺς  
 ]ορων ρμη´ ὄν προστάτης  
 καὶ ἱερε]ὺς Ἡράκλειτος  
 μετ]ὰ τοῦτον κ[ο]σμητεύσαντα  
 ]υτα τὸ ε´ (ἔτος) τὸν ἑατῶν  
 ? εὐεργέτην]. . . . .  
 εὐχαριστί]ας χάριν.

de Ricci's Facsimile and Transcription<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> de Ricci, *Notes d'épigraphie égyptienne* (n. 4), 335. In the Trismegistos entry for IFayum I 17 it states: “location unknown; seen in the antiquities trade in Medinet el-Fayum in 1905 and 1908.”

<sup>6</sup> de Ricci, *Notes d'épigraphie égyptienne* (n. 4), 335.

<sup>7</sup> de Ricci, *Notes d'épigraphie égyptienne* (n. 4), 335. When Bernand later republished the piece as IFayum I 17 he relied solely on de Ricci's facsimile and transcription. Regrettably, de Ricci never measured the fragment nor gave any indication of its size.

<sup>8</sup> Taken from de Ricci, *Notes d'épigraphie égyptienne* (n. 4), 335.





Image KA 45

Turning to KA 45 there are a number of striking parallels that would suggest that it is a broken piece from IFayum I 17: (1) the physical remains of KA 45 accord well with the terse description given by de Ricci since KA 45 is basalt (cf. “en pierre dure noire”) and the top and right side have been deliberately smoothed and could suggest that it served as the base of some monument or statue (cf. “Grande base de statue”); (2) the extant text on KA 45 mostly parallels the first two lines of de Ricci’s rather haphazard facsimile copy and exactly with its emended republication as IFayum I 17. For example, the phrase καὶ περὶ τοὺς preserved at the end of l. 1 in KA 45 is also preserved at the end of l. 1 in IFayum I 17 and in fact agrees with one of de Ricci’s transcriptions.<sup>9</sup> Though his published facsimile has AIAIIEPITOYΣ (see above), and has omitted KAI, he noted that in an earlier transcription he had read AIAKAIIEPITOYΣ for the first line, thus including the missing KAI that is clear on KA 45. Note also that the extant text on the second line of KA 45 agrees exactly with de Ricci’s facsimile, as well as IFayum I 17, and the number 148 written ρμῆ is certainly a significant parallel. Furthermore, it is certainly more than a coincidence that the last place IFayum I 17 was seen was on the antiquities market in Medinet el-Fayum in 1908 and KA 45 was more recently recovered from the antiquities market in the very same city. Therefore, if KA 45 is not a broken off fragment of IFayum I 17 at the very least it comes from an exact duplicate.

Owing to Étienne Bernand’s competent and lucid edition of IFayum I 17 there is no need to offer a complete republication of this inscription here; those seeking a detailed contextual analysis of the inscription should consult his edition. What follows then will only be a transcription of the extant text on KA 45 and relevant commentary, especially expansions and updates of material not found in IFayum I 17. Since

<sup>9</sup> Though the phrase καὶ περὶ τοὺς may appear like a fairly common one it is only attested in two inscriptions from Egypt, IFayum I 17 and I Fayum I 15.2 (see below), and two papyri, BGU IV 1190 (see below) and P.Oxy. LV 3817.17 (A.D. III/IV).

Bernand did not have recourse to an image of the inscription, but relied wholly on de Ricci's transcription and facsimile, it is appropriate to begin with a brief discussion of the paleography and date of the fragment.

On intrinsic factors alone Bernand dated IFayum I 17 to the late Ptolemaic period: "Basse époque ptolémaïque."<sup>10</sup> There are no grounds to dispute this date based on the paleography of KA 45. In fact, a date falling somewhere between 130–30 BC seems most likely based on paleographic parallels from objectively dated inscriptions (i.e. inscriptions containing a date) from the Fayum, specifically IFayum I 69 (Aug. 7, 104 BC) and to a lesser extent IFayum I 13 (46 BC) that share very similar letterforms. For the text of l. 1 de Ricci's transcription reads ? τὰ δίκ]αια (καὶ ?) περὶ τοὺς, though he admitted copying two different transcriptions in his notes: (1) ]αια και περι τους; (2) ]αια περι τους. Owing to parallels, Bernand suggested that the reading for l. 1 must have been κ]αὶ χ(ιλι)ά(ρχων) καὶ περὶ τοὺς and mused how de Ricci had missed the abbreviation<sup>11</sup> for χιλίαρχοι and noted that in other inscriptions where the abbreviation χ(ιλι)ά(ρχων) was used it was typically marked by supralinear strokes above the alpha.<sup>12</sup> KA 45 confirms the hypothesis of Bernand as it is evident that there are two faint, yet deliberate, diagonal supralinear strokes that extend from the top of the second alpha on l. 1 signaling that it is indeed the abbreviation χ(ιλι)ά(ρχων).<sup>13</sup>

#### Transcription of KA 45

1 ]αὶ ᾠ̄ και περι τους  
]ῤῥῃ̄ ων προστα[  
]. . .[

#### IFayum I 17.1–2

1 [ἡ σύνοδος τῶν ἀ φίλων κ]αὶ χ(ιλι)ά(ρχων) καὶ περὶ τοὺς  
[βασιλέας μαχαίροφ]ῶρων ῤῥῃ̄, ᾠ̄ν προστάτης

<sup>10</sup> IFayum p. 53. One of his principal reasons for this date was as a result of a parallel he located in BGU IV 1190 from c. 80 BC that mentioned the same association and seemingly employed the very same phraseology that appeared in the inscription. On this papyrus see n. 1–2.

<sup>11</sup> IFayum I, p. 54 n. 344: "On pourrait aussi supposer que le groupe *ΑΙΑ* dans la copie de Seymour de Ricci de 1905 est une mélecture pour *ΧΙΑ*, abréviation de χιλ(ι)άρχων."

<sup>12</sup> IFayum I, p. 54: "La première copie de Seymour de Ricci oriente cependant vers une solution simple. Il suffit d'admettre que les deux hastes obliques de l'*alpha* qui précède καὶ περὶ τοὺς se prolongeaient légèrement vers le haut — ce qui pouvait facilement échapper au copiste — de façon à former l'abréviation de χιλίαρχων. C'est le sigle que l'on trouve dans un décret d'asylie de Théadelphie et dans une inscription achetée à Médinet el-Fayoum."

<sup>13</sup> The supralinear strokes above the α, signaling that it is an abbreviation, are hard to see in the image but are definitely present on the inscription. The first time I examined the inscription I missed them but during a second examination a few days later, after locating the parallel in IFayum I 17, I could confirm their presence.

## Notes

1–2 [ἡ σύνοδος τῶν ἀ φίλων κ]αὶ χ(λι)ά(ρχων) καὶ περὶ τοὺς [βασιλέας μαχαιοφόρων]. The lacunae in IFayum I 17.1–2 were reconstructed from various parallels: IFayum I 15.2–3 (= SB IV 7270 [SEG VIII 573]) (III/II BC): τῶν ἀ φίλων καὶ χ(λι)ά(ρχων) καὶ περὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς (sic!) μαχαιοφόρων; IFayum II 114.14–15 (= SB III 6236 [SEG VIII 592]) (70 BC): τῶν ἀ φίλων καὶ χ(λι)ά(ρχων) καὶ περὶ ὑμᾶς μαχαιοφόρων. In particular, the reconstructed lacunae were influenced by parallels found in BGU IV 1190 (c. 80 BC), a fragmentary petition from two soldiers to a senior official. In ll. 2–5 of the papyrus the two petitioning soldiers respectively style themselves as the “president” (προστάτης) and “scribe” (γραμματεὺς) of an association and in ll. 3–5 describe the association as follows: συνόδου ῥίμ’γ τῶν (πρώτων) φίλων καὶ . . . καὶ περὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς (sic!) μαχαιοφόρων. In the *ed. pr.* and in the updated edition in the DDbDP the lacuna intervening the two conjunctions is unresolved; the *ed. pr.*, which is handwritten, marks some kind of squiggle with a supralinear stroke and in the notes raises the possibility that it may be an abbreviation and suggests either χλιοδράχμων or μετόχων as possible readings (BGU IV p. 328 n. 3); at present the online edition in the DDbDP simply has “((unintelligible))”. Bernard is certainly correct that BGU IV 1190.3–4 is a parallel and that the abbreviation for χλιάρχων should be read in this papyrus. From correspondence with Dr. Fabian Reiter of the *Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung*, who graciously provided me with a digital image of BGU IV 1190 and who eruditely confirmed this reading, it is evident that BGU IV 1190 employs the abbreviation χ(λι)άρχων in l. 3; thus, this new reading should now be included in the online edition of the text. It may be noted that there is another papyrological parallel, albeit a fairly loose one, in P.Oxy. LV 3777.7–8 (August 57 BC): τῶν πρ]ότων φίλων καὶ χλιάρχ[ω]ν μαχαιοφό[ρ]ων.

χ(λι)ά(ρχων). On the inscription this abbreviation is formed by two subtle, yet distinct, protruding diagonal strokes that extend the diagonals of the α. Even though the abbreviation resembles something like Å it is almost as though the abbreviation should be read something like Å̂. The same form of the abbreviation can also be seen in IFayum I 15.2 (= SB IV 7220 [SEG VIII 573]). Additional abbreviations for χλιάρχοι can be found in Avi-Yonah, *Abbreviations in Greek inscriptions*, 111.

2 ρῃη. Refers to the number of association members. IFayum I 17.2 ρῃη; cf. BGU IV 1190.3 where the number given for the association members is ῥίμ’γ (143). Based on Bernard’s reconstruction it seems that the association was for βασιλεῖς μαχαιοφόρων (“royal guards”). On the whole, references to μαχαιοφόροι, or μαχαιοφόροι βασιλικοί, are fairly rare in inscriptions: IFayum I 15.3 (c. 125–100 BC); IFayum I 17.2 (late Ptolemaic); OGIS II 737.6 (112/111 BC) (= SEG 20.643); SB I 4206.239 (80/79 BC); ICairoMus 259296.3.19 (80–69 BC); IFayum II 114.15 (70 BC); IGLAkoris 64.2–3 (= SB I 46) (AD I). In the papyri the term is more common. While it appears mostly in papyri from the late Ptolemaic period, μαχαιοφόροι are also attested in the Roman period with the last dated reference coming from a petition from Dec. 27, AD 287 (P.Sijp. 17.23, 24). In the Ptolemaic period μαχαιοφόροι seem to have been armed guards or escorts for various officials rather than regular soldiers. Though it has been suggested that in the Roman period the term became synonymous with “soldier,” this remains to be established and is not in accordance with the extant evidence: Preisigke, *Fachwörter*, 120; Oertel, *Liturgie*, 57, 412.

