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Two Greek Inscriptions from Karanis[*]

Plates 1–2

During a recent visit to the Kom Aushim Magazine (Karanis) we had the opportunity to examine two Greek inscriptions. The catalogue's terse ledger provided their physical dimensions and reported that they were found at Karanis by the University of Michigan.[1] While no date was given for the finds, other items listed in the catalogue in close numeric proximity to the present inscriptions, which carry the inventory numbers 65 and 66, were dated to the late 1950s (1958–1959). It appears, therefore, that these two pieces were found and logged at about the same time. However, the University of Michigan did not formally excavate at Karanis past 1935; thus, the attribution to the University of Michigan is rather curious. Upon further investigation, it was brought to our attention that Elinor Husselman, curator of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan between 1925 and 1965, visited Karanis for an extended period sometime in late 1957/early 1958, although she did not conduct an official excavation.[2] It seems likely that the pieces were discovered during her visit; hence the attribution to the University of Michigan in the catalogue.[3] Since these pieces have not been published, we present here editions of both inscriptions.

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[1]   The catalogue records are written in Arabic; we thank Ahmed Hassan for translating them for us.

[2]   We would like to thank Terry Wilfong, Acting Director and Curator for Graeco-Roman Egypt, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, for providing us with much useful information regarding the University of Michigan excavations at Karanis, and for information relating to Elinor Husselman's visit to Karanis in the late 1950s. A brief biography of Husselman's academic career can be found at Brown University's website *Breaking Ground: Women in Old World Archaeology*: http://www.brown.edu/Research/Breaking_Ground/introduction.php. See also T. G. Wilfong, *[Obituary] Elinor Mullett Husselman*, BASP 33 (1996) 5–10. While Husselman apparently made records of her visit to Karanis, their whereabouts are unknown.

[3]   No official excavation would have been required to catalogue the pieces. If the pieces were located somewhere on the surface, upon seeing them Husselman could have simply informed the guards or inspectors who could have registered them at the magazine. For example, a lot of the "surface" finds of the University of Michigan's 1924–1935 excavations were made by "summer guards" on the site, sometimes with vague descriptions of the findspot as seems to be the case with the present two inscriptions.

Inscription I: Christian Funerary Stele (pl. 1)

This piece is catalogued in the Kom Aushim Magazine with the inventory no. 65 and is ascribed to the "Coptic Area" of Karanis, although there is no such designation in the Michigan excavation reports. However, since a "Coptic cemetery" is known at Karanis, perhaps this is the findspot of the inscription as it is a funerary stele.[4] The epitaph is carved on a limestone column that is broken off at the bottom and measures approximately 65 cm in height and has a diameter of 12 cm. As the column appears to be a late pharaonic style with a campaniform capital, it was likely repurposed for the present inscription.[5] Immediately below the capital is an inscribed ring 2 cm in height. There are also traces of red and white residue in places that could suggest that at one point it was painted.

The inscription consists of two lines: the first is written horizontally and wraps around the column, while the second line intersects the first at a 90-degree angle and is written in a larger script. Therefore, the layout of the inscription gives the appearance of a "Tau" cross, or cross of St. Antony, that is shaped like the letter T.[6] Surrounding the inscription are three small crosses, above and at the beginning and end of the horizontal l. 1, that take the form of the cross pattée where the four arms have equal lengths and their extremities are spread out.[7] The text also contains a *nomen sacrum* for κύριος (l. 1, $\overline{\kappa\epsilon}$).

The script is inscribed competently and clearly giving the impression it was the work of a trained cutter. In l. 1 the text is bilinear with an average letter height of 3 cm while l. 2, which runs vertically, is about twice as large with an average letter height of 6 cm. Alphas are inscribed with a broken crossbar, epsilon and sigma are written with lunate forms, and omega is written ω instead of Ω. The mu (l. 2) is inscribed with a low saddle resembling a Coptic mu. From these paleographic characteristics, assigning a precise date to the inscription is difficult as similar graphic features appear on burial stelae from the Fayum from the late fourth through eighth centuries CE. Nevertheless, there are other features that permit a more precise dating. Since the inscription employs ἀναπαύειν ("to give rest"), a verb that does not appear regularly on Christian funerary

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[4]   On the "Coptic Cemetery" at Karanis see P. Buzi, *Lo scavo di una necropoli di età tardo-antica a Karanis (Kom Aushim): alcune annotazioni*, REAC 6 (2004) 97–106.

[5]   We have not been able to find another Christian funerary inscription on a similarly styled column. On campaniform capitals see G. Maspero, *Manual of Egyptian Archaeology and Guide to the Study of Antiquities in Egypt*, New York, London 1902, 58–60.

[6]   I. Kamel, *Coptic Funerary Stelae (Catalogue général des antiquités du Musée copte)*, Cairo 1987, 24, 36. On the different types of Christian crosses employed in Fayumic burial inscriptions see S. Schaten, *Christian Funerary Stelae from the Fayum*, 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, 259–261. Buzi, *Lo scavo* (note 4) 103 notes that a number of epitaphs from the Coptic cemetery at Karanis contain Christian crosses.

[7]   Kamel, *Coptic Funerary Stelae* (note 6) 24, 36.

stelae before the fifth century CE, this likely provides a *terminus post quem*.[8] Additionally, the presence of the cross pattée, which is not well attested before the sixth century, suggests that the artifact is probably not from an earlier period.[9] Therefore, we are inclined to date this epitaph to the sixth or seventh century CE.

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+ κ(ύρι)ε ἀνά Φ παυσεν +

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1. inscr. κ̅ε̅; *l.* ἀνάπαυσον.

   "O Lord, give rest to Phoibamon."

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Notes

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1 ἀνάπαυσεν. The author erroneously inscribed ἀνάπαυσεν — a form that is nowhere documented — instead of ἀνάπαυσον (aor. imper. sing.), which is widely attested in funerary inscriptions: Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae* (note 8) 256–261. On the o > ε interchange see F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods. Volume I: Phonology*, Milan 1976, 289–290. On the use and meaning of ἀναπαύειν in funerary epitaphs see A. Łajtar, *Bemerkungen zu drei kürzlich veröffentlichten griechischen Inschriften aus der Spätantike*, ZPE 114 (1996) 144. While the accusative case typically follows ἀνάπαυσον, the dative is also periodically attested: e.g. *SB* I 3910 (Christian period; Antinoopolis): + κ(ύρι)ε, ἀ|νάπ(αυσον) Μ|αρία; see also F. Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, Leiden, Boston 2015, s.v. ἀναπαύω.

2 Φυβάμῳ. As the name is presently spelled it is unusual because the normal dative form is Φοιβάμμωνι (acc. is Φοιβάμμωνα). After the omega there is uninscribed blank space on the stone so that it gives the impression that the name is fully preserved. Therefore, this inscription is either attesting an unusual spelling of the name or the letter that follows the omega has been completely effaced before the column breaks off. On the οι > υ interchange see Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri* (see directly above) 197–199. There are two Greek examples with similar spellings where οι is replaced by υ: *P.Münch.* III 93.1.6 (V/VI CE; Hermopolite): Φυβάμμωνος; *P.Bodl.* I 116 descr.5 (VI/VII CE; provenance?): Φυβάμ[μ]ωνα. There are also two similar Coptic examples: *P.Mon.Apollo* 1.4 (VII CE; Bawit): ϥⲩⲃⲁⲙⲱⲛ; *P.Ryl.Copt.* 203.9 (first half VII CE; provenance?): ϥⲩⲃⲁⲙⲙⲱⲛ. Other epigraphic attestations of the name Phoibammon from the Arsinoite nome from roughly the same period include *I.Fay.* III 149.3 (IV–VI CE), *IGChrEg* 95.3 (Byzantine),

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IGChrEg 110.1 (Byzantine), and *IGChrEg* 111.6 (Byzantine); however, in all of these the spelling is Φοιβ-.

<div align="center">Inscription II: Dedicatory Inscription for "Good (Luck)" (pl. 2)</div>

This inscription bears the catalogue inventory no. 66 and was reportedly found in "Area 4" of Karanis. However, this designation does not correspond to the site identification system employed by the University of Michigan; likewise, we were not able to glean anything about "Area 4" at the Kom Aushim Magazine.[10] The inscription is written continuously across three sides of the plinth of a basalt column. The square base measures approximately 18.5 cm and the plinth has a height of about 4 cm before it transitions into the torus and then the column. The entire piece (base and column) is about 21 cm in height before it breaks off; the column is polished with no fluting and has a diameter of about 12.5 cm.

The text averages 2.5 cm in height and although the letters, which lack any ornamentation, are written close together, they never touch. Alphas are written with a straight crossbar, epsilons take a lunate form while eta and pi are written in a distinct upright form. The crossbar of theta is attached on both sides and omega is written ω instead of Ω. Paleographically the text shares some general graphic trends with the following inscriptions from the Fayum: *I.Fay.* I 24 (= *SB* V 7687; I BCE/I CE), *I.Fay.* I 44 (= *SB* I 3950; I CE), *I.Fay.* I 73 (= *SB* V 8895; 24 BCE), *I.Fay.* II 130 (= *SB* I 5794; Rom. Imp. Period). In light of these parallels, we are inclined to date the text to the first or second century CE. Furthermore, some analogous inscriptions, including two from Karanis, date to this period: *I.Fay.* I 81 (= *SB* III 6202; Rom. Imp. Period; Soknopaiou Nesos); *I.Fay.* I 90 (= *SB* I 1542; 190 CE; Karanis); *I.Fay.* I 93 (= *SB* V 8159; I/II CE; Karanis); *SEG* VIII 501 (= *SB* V 7538; II CE; Egypt).

The inscription contains a dedication as it mentions the name of the person who has "set up" (ἀνατιθέναι) the column for the purpose of "good (luck)" (ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ). The phrase ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ, which represents an appeal for divine beneficence,[11] appears on a number of artifacts (coins, stamps, papyri, ostraca) in a wide variety of contexts,[12] although it is more often associated with the cults of Sarapis and Isis.[13]

<div align="center">[Πολ]υβιαν[ὸς] | ἀνέθηκα ἐπ' | ἀγαθῷ.</div>

"I, Polybianos, have set up (this column) for good (luck)."

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[10]   See note 3 above.

[11]   On the Egyptian usage of this phrase see E. Peterson, *Εἷς Θεός: Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur antiken „Ein-Gott"-Akklamation*, Göttingen 1926/Würzburg 2012, 316–317.

[12]   G. Nachtergael, *Documents grec de l'ancienne Collection George A. Michaelidès*, CdÉ 79 (2004) 225–226. *O.Mich.* I 658 (III/IV CE; Karanis). On this ostracon see also H. C. Youtie, *Sambathis*, HTR 37 (1944) 209–218.

[13]   L. Criscuolo, *Un'epigrafe augurale su testa di coccodrillo*, Aegyptus 70 (1990) 87 n. 1.

Notes

1 [Πολ]υβιαν[ός]. Based on parallel inscriptions, including two from Karanis, a personal name is expected in the nominative case before ἀνέθηκα (*I.Fay.* I 90, *I.Fay.* I 93, *SEG* VIII 501). There are only a handful of names that contain the letter combination -υβιαν- and are attested in Egypt: Ἰουβιανός (*P.Lips.* I 52.13; 372 CE; Thebaid; but most often spelled Ἰοβιανός from Lat. *Iuvianus*; cf. BL 1.209) or Πολυβιανός (*P.Achmim* 6.1.3; 197 CE; Panopolis). We are inclined to restore Πολυβιανός for the following reasons: Ἰουβιανός is a rare form of Ἰοβιανός; the damaged portion of the stone that precedes the extant text most likely accommodates three letters instead of two since the cutter started inscribing the text at the very beginning of the left edge of each side, as shown by the two other faces of the base. Following the nu there is space for only two letters.

ἀνέθηκα. The bottom of the right leg of the first alpha is still visible. While the aor. indic. 3rd sing. ἀνέθηκεν is most common in dedicatory inscriptions where ἐπ᾽ ἀγαθῷ follows, the first person ἀνέθηκα is also attested: *I. AlexImp.* 44 (= *SB* V 8284; II/III CE; Alexandria); *I. AlexImp.* 60 (= *IAlexandriaMus* 129; *SB* I 1544; II CE; Alexandria); *I. AlexImp.* 80 (= *IAlexandriaMus* 133; *SB* I 1324; II/III CE; Alexandria); *SB* I 349 (II/III CE; Schedia); *SEG* XXVII 1108 (= *SB* V 8384; mid III CE; Senskis Temple).

ἐπ᾽ | ἀγαθῷ. Recurrent expression found on a number of artifacts mainly of Egyptian origin or influence for dedicatory purposes. The phrase can have a comparable meaning to εὐτυχῶς and ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ; see Criscuolo, *Un'epigrafe* (note 13) 87–88.

Lincoln H. Blumell
Department of Ancient Scripture
Brigham Young University
210F JSB
Provo, Utah 84602, USA
lincoln_blumell@byu.edu

Chiara Aliberti
Classics Major
Brigham Young University
760 N 800 E #104
Provo, Utah 84606, USA
chiara@byu.edu