

TWO COPTIC INSCRIPTIONS IN THE ABOU EL-GOUD STORAGE MAGAZINE

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ABSTRACT

[AR] إثنان من النقوش القبطية المحفوظة بالمخزن المتحفي بمنطقة أبو الجود تتناول هذه المقالة نشر إثنان من النقوش القبطية المحفوظة بالمخزن المتحفي بمنطقة أبو الجود، أحدهما تم تسجيله في مجموعة تحمل عنوان البرت تاوضروس، والآخر هو جزء من مجموعة بعنوان زيادات معبد الأقصر. هذان النقشان كتبا باللهجة الصعيدية. وعلى الرغم من عدم وجود أي بيانات عن موقعهما الأصلي. إلا أنه من المحتمل أنه تم العثور عليهما في جبانات تقع بالقرب من أديرة.

[EN] In this article, two inscriptions preserved in the Abou El-Goud storage magazine are published. One of them was registered in a collection entitled «Albert Tawdros», while the other is a part of a collection entitled «Ziyādāt Ma'bad al-Uqşur» (Surplus from the Luxor Temple). These inscriptions are written in Sahidic Coptic. Despite there is no data on their provenances, they likely come from cemeteries located near monasteries.

KEYWORDS: Armant, Dayr Anba Hadra, epitaphs, inscriptions, monastery of St. Pisentios, Sahidic Coptic, stonemason.

I. INTRODUCTION

The two inscriptions published below were kept in Luxor temple storage rooms before being transferred to the Abou El-Goud storage magazine. There is no information on these inscriptions except that one of them was registered in the collection entitled «Albert Tawdros» under the registration number 305. This stela was in possession of a person called Albert Tawdros before the Antiquities Protection Law of 1983 and it was given to the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation as a gift by his heirs in 1984, while the other was registered in the collection entitled «Ziyādāt Ma'bad al-Uqsur» (Surplus from the Luxor Temple), and it bears the registration number $\frac{452}{س}$.

The first epitaph is for a sister called Gera. This text is composed of four formulae and does not mention any information on her character. The second gravestone is for a monk called John. The text is composed of one formula including the name and function of the tombstone owner.

II. EPITAPH OF GERA, A SISTER [FIGURE 1]

Albert Tawdros

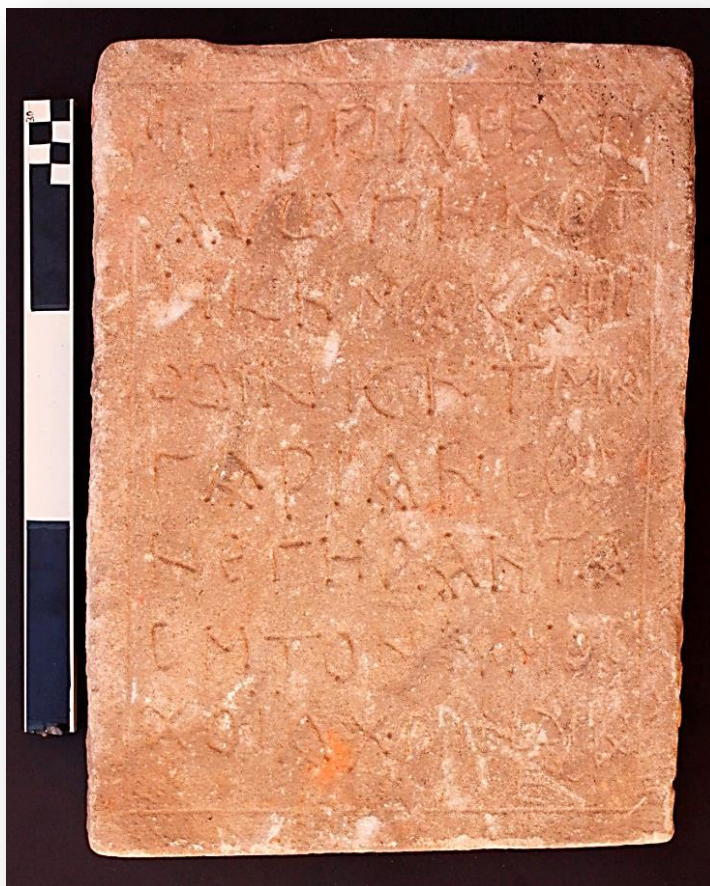
Registration N^o. 305

Dayr Anba Hadra (?)

716-768 AD (?)

This is a rectangular sandstone stela. Its measurement is h. 35.8 cm x w. 26.0 cm. The text starts with the cross potent¹ and consists of nine lines written in Sahidic Coptic and framed by incised line. Margins are mostly regular. No decorative elements are incised. The ends of letters are irregularly marked by a point. Some odd spellings appear (ll. 1-4). Letters are large, irregular and shallow cut. Letter α written in a capital form. Superlinear strokes are used irregularly. Trema is placed above ι (l. 8). Letter \omicron in $\text{IN}\Delta\text{IOK}$ written below the letter ι (l. 8).

¹ KAMEL & GIRGIS 1987: 24.



[FIGURE 1]: Epitaph of Gera, a sister ©Photo taken by the researcher

Text

- [1] † ΠΡΗΜΕΕΥΕ
- [2] ΔΥΩ ΠΗΚΟΤ-
- [3] ΗΚ ΝΜΑΚΑΡΙ-
- [4] ΟΟ ΕΝ ΙC ΝΤΜΔ-
- [5] ΓΑΡΙΑ ΝCΩ-
- [6] ΝΕ ΓΗΡΑ ΝΤΔ-
- [7] CΜΤΟΝ ΜΜΟC
- [8] ΧΟΪΑΧ Θ ΙΝΔΙΟΚ/
- [9] €

1. ἠῤῥῆμεεϋε: ἠῤῥῆμεεϋε || 2-3. ΠΗΚΟΤ|ΗΚ: ΠΕΝΚΟΤ|ΕΚ || 3-4. ΜΑΚΑΡΙ|ΟΟ: μακάρι|ος || 8. ΙΝΔΙ{Ο}Κ(ΤΙΑΝΟC): ΙΝΔΙΟΚ/
stone, ἰνδικτιών.

Translation

† The memorial and the blessed rest in Jesus of the blessed sister Gera, who went to rest on Khoiakh 9, indiction 5.

Commentary

The writer has divided the text into four formulae; the opening formula ⲛⲣⲛⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ | ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲛⲕⲟⲩⲥⲛⲕ ⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲟ ⲉⲛ ⲓⲥ (ll. 1-4), name formula ⲛⲧⲙⲁ|ⲓⲅⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲥⲱ|ⲛⲉ ⲓⲅⲣⲁ (ll. 4-6), death formula ⲛⲧⲁ|ⲥⲙⲧⲟⲛ ⲙⲙⲟⲥ (ll. 6-7), and the date formula ⲭⲟⲓⲁⲭ ⲑ ⲓⲛⲁⲓⲟⲕ/| ⲉ (ll. 8-9).

- 1–4 ⲛⲣⲛⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ | ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲛⲕⲟⲩⲥⲛⲕ ⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲟ ⲉⲛ ⲓⲥ Similar opening formulae appear in two epitaphs from Dayr Anba Hadra: [ⲛ]ⲉⲓⲟⲟⲩ ⲙⲡⲣ ⲛⲙ|[ⲉⲉⲩⲉ]ⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲛⲕⲟ|[ⲧⲕ ⲙ̄ⲛⲉⲛ]ⲙⲁⲕⲁ|[ⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲉⲓ]ⲱ[ⲧ], and ⲛⲡⲣ^(sic)ⲛⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ | ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲛⲕⲟⲩ ⲛ̄^(sic)|ⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲓⲟⲛ^(sic) | ⲛⲛⲉⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲓ[ⲟⲛ] | ⲛⲱ^{(sic)2}. As for ⲛⲣⲛⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ, the interchange of ⲛ and ⲙ is usual³, but it is noticeable that it was later neglected in the genitive ⲛ (l. 3). It is remarkable that this word ⲛⲣⲛⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ came at the beginning of the tombstones of Hermonthis and Qasr Ibrīm also, but in this formula ⲛⲣⲛⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄-/ⲙ̄- NN⁴. The Coptic word ⲛⲕⲟⲩⲥⲛⲕ is close to ⲛⲕⲟⲩⲥⲕ. This interchange of ⲛ and ⲉ is not used in the whole of the text except in this word⁵. This unusual spelling ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲟ of the Greek word *μακάριος* is not attested in Förster⁶. It is certain that the last ο of ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲟ is ⲥ, but it is written in a non-common way because it appears like this on other funerary stelae dated to the eighth century from Dayr Anba Hadra⁷.
- 4–6 ⲧⲙⲁ|ⲓⲅⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲥⲱ|ⲛⲉ ⲓⲅⲣⲁ This variant ⲙⲁⲓⲅⲁⲣⲓⲁ of the Greek word *μακάριος* is not attested in Förster⁸. One should note that the stonemason uses the interchange between ⲓ and ⲕ⁹ herein in contrast to the previous case in ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲟ (ll.3-4). It is possible that Gera, whose funerary stela this is, was a nun. The name ⲓⲅⲣⲁ occurs in this spelling ⲕⲓⲅⲣⲁ in Dayr Anba Hadra¹⁰.
- 6–7 ⲛⲧⲁ|ⲥⲙⲧⲟⲛ ⲙⲙⲟⲥ This formula, in general, was commonly used in the tombstones¹¹. Apparently, the use of this formula on the gravestones of Dayr Anba Hadra appeared in 716-768 AD (the 2nd redaction) and 786-892 AD (the 3rd redaction) according to Munier's classification and Krause's correction to the dates of the tombstones of that region¹². Despite this formula is distinguished by adding the pronominal preposition (i.e. ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲕⲙ̄ⲧⲟⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ⲛ̄ⲓⲅⲧⲣ) to its end, it sometimes occurs without it¹³.

² MUNIER 1930–31: N^o. 138, ll. 2-5, N^o. 140, ll. 2-6 (=HASITZKA 1993: vol.1, N^o. 636 & N^o. 638).

³ KASSER 1964: 32; KAHLE 1954: vol.1, 98-100.

⁴ DEKKER 2015: 12.

⁵ KASSER 1964: 37; For the interchange of ⲛ and ⲉ, see KAHLE 1954: vol.1, 70-71.

⁶ FÖRSTER 2002: 491-496.

⁷ KHALIL 2019: N^o. 3, l. 3, ll. 5-6, N^o. 5, l. 2; It occurs also on an ostrakon dated to the seventh and the eighth centuries from Maks Qibli-Elhesn, see: AHMED 2009: 172, 174 [N^o.3], 178, 184.

⁸ FÖRSTER 2002: 491-496.

⁹ KAHLE 1954: vol.1, 95-96.

¹⁰ MUNIER 1930–31: N^o. 93, l. 4 (=HASITZKA 1993: vol.1, N^o. 591).

¹¹ On this formula, see: TUDOR 2011: 196.

¹² MUNIER 1930–31: 259; KRAUSE 1975: 79.

¹³ It appears in the second and the third redactions, see: MUNIER 1930–31: 259 & N^o. 17, ll. 6-7 (=HASITZKA 1993: vol.1, N^o.514) the case in which the pronominal preposition does not appear.

8 $\text{IN}\Delta\text{IO}\text{K}$ /This variant $\text{IN}\Delta\text{IO}\text{K}$ /of the Greek word ινδικ(τιών) is not mentioned in Förster¹⁴.

The formulae of this epitaph are very close to those of Dayr Anba Hadra. Based on Munier and Krause¹⁵, the use of the death formula and the absence of the prayer formula «in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob» at the end of the text set the current epitaph in the second redaction (716-768 AD).

III. EPITAPH OF JOHN, A MONK [FIGURE 2]

Ziyādāt Maʿbad al-Uqṣur

Registration N^o. $\frac{452}{\text{س}}$

Armant (?)

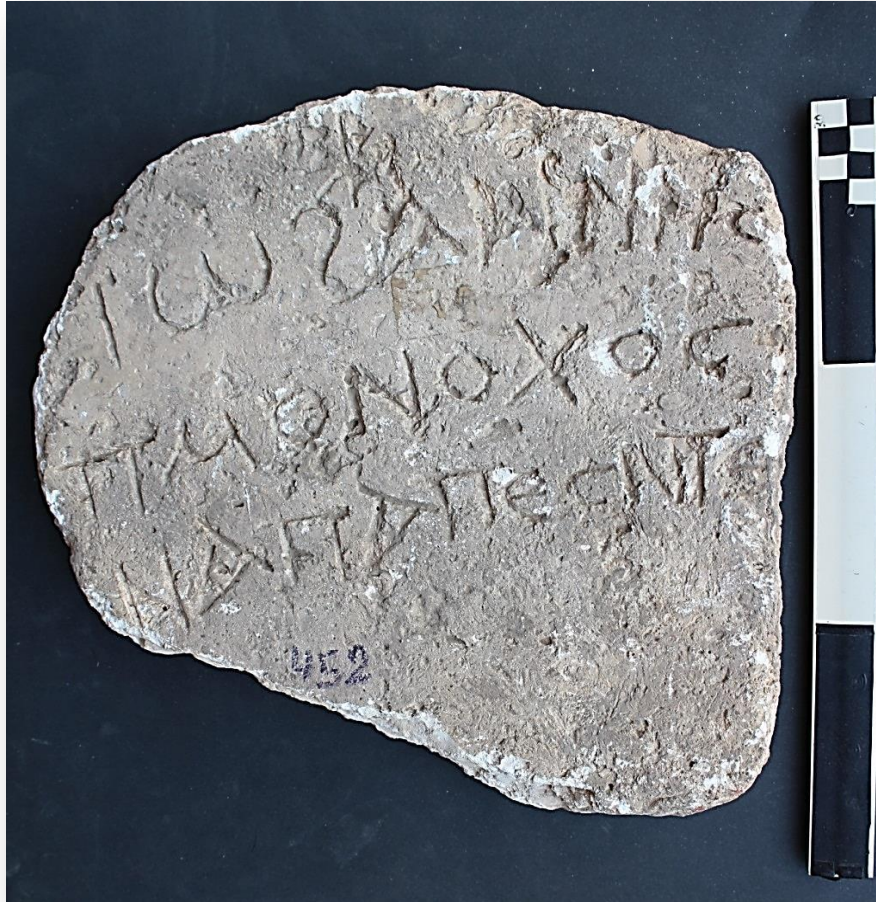
6th-8th cent. (?)

Irregular shape of limestone stela. Its measurement is h. 28.0 cm x w. 25.6 cm. It contains a four-line inscription written in Sahidic Coptic, leaving a big blank margin below the text. The irregular shape of the left-hand side is caused by some broken parts. The Monogram of Christ¹⁶ carved above the text. The inscription lacks any decorative elements. Lines seem slightly sloping. Letters are upright and clear. Superlinear stroke is neglected above the genitive N (l. 4). Trema is placed over I (l. 2).

¹⁴ FÖRSTER 2002: 347-352.

¹⁵ MUNIER 1930-31: 259; KRAUSE 1975: 79.

¹⁶ KAMEL & GIRGIS 1987: 24.



[FIGURE 2]: Epitaph of John, a monk ©Photo taken by the researcher

Text

- [1] Ⲛⲓ
- [2] ⲒⲬⲬⲀⲚⲚⲚⲘⲤ
- [3] ⲡⲘⲞⲘⲞⲬⲞⲤ
- [4] ⲚⲀⲘⲀ ⲡⲈⲤⲤⲚⲤⲈ

Translation

Ⲛⲓ John, the monk of Apa Pesente.

Commentary

This funerary stela only mentions the name formula. The scribe did not record the date of death or any other information about the deceased except that he was a monk in the monastery of St. Pisentios.

2–4 ἸΩΣΑΝΝΗΣ | ΠΜΟΝΟΧΟΣ | ΝΑΠΑ ΠΕΣΝΤΕ A similar formula appears in some undated tombstones. Two of them are from unknown provenances †. ΛΠΑ ΙΣΑΚ | ΠΝΕϸ ΠΜΟ|ΝΟΧΟΣ ΝΑ|ΠΑ ΠΕΣΝΤΕ¹⁷ and ΜΑΦΑΜ ΠΜΟΝΟΧΟΣ | ΝΑΠΑ ΠΕΣΝΤΕ ΕΤ | ΝΑΝΟΥϸ ΦΑΡΜΟΥΘΙ Β¹⁸. Three others are from Armant ΧΜΓ | ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ Ω ΒΟΗΘΩΝ ΔΜΗΝΖΙ^(sic) ΙΩΒ | ΠΜΟΝΟΧΟΣ ΝΝΑΠ|Δ ΠΕΣΣΝΤΕ,]ΑΖΑΜ ΠΜΟΝ|ΟΧΟΣ ΝΑΠΑ ΠΕΣ|ΝΤΕ, and †ΠΛΗΜΨΥΡΟΣϸ ΠΔΙ|ΔΚΩΝϸ ΝΑΠΑ ΠΕ|ΣΝΤΕϸ¹⁹. One should note that all texts almost agree on this expression NN ΠΜΟΝΟΧΟΣ ΝΑΠΑ ΠΕΣΝΤΕ, where the orthographic form of Greek word ΜΟΝΟΧΟΣ (μοναχός)²⁰ and the saint’s name ΠΕΣΝΤΕ are almost the same. On the other hand, the current gravestone lacks ornamental and decorative elements, unlike the previous ones²¹. The absence of information on the monks of monastery of Apa Pesente seems to have been common in the gravestones of Armant. A large number of them have been dated between the sixth and the eighth centuries²².

The formula of this tombstone is very close to those of the monastery of Apa Pesente in Armant, and John, whose epitaph this is, may have been a monk in the same monastery. Because many of the region’s funerary stelae have been dated between the sixth and the eighth centuries. Therefore, I speculate that this epitaph might have been engraved at the same time as well.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although there are neither date nor data on the provenance of the two Coptic inscriptions published above. In this paper, I suggest that the epitaph of Gera might be written in Dayr Anba Hadra between 716 and 768 AD, while the epitaph of John might be inscribed in the monastery of Apa Pesente in Armant between the 6th and the 8th centuries.

¹⁷ BIONDI 1907: N^o. 17, ll. 1-4 (=HASITZKA 1993: vol.1, N^o. 692).

¹⁸ BRUNSCH 1994: N^o. A 11872, ll. 1-3 (=HASITZKA 2006: vol.3, N^o. 1638).

¹⁹ CRUM 1902: N^o. 8449, ll. 1-5, N^o. 8472, ll. 1-3, N^o. 8655, ll. 1-3; BOUD’HORS & HEURTEL 2010: 25, footnote 122.

²⁰ FÖRSTER 2002: 531-532.

²¹ For the ornamental and decorative elements of these funerary stelae, see CRUM 1902: N^o. 8449, PL. X, N^o. 8472, PL. XIII & N^o. 8655 [Crum mentions that its style is as the same of N^o. 8636, PL. XL].

²² BOUD’HORS & HEURTEL 2010: 25.

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