A NOTE ON THE MEANING OF THE TERM ΜΟΝΟΚΤΙΣΤ(ΗΣ)

In December 2000 a Jordanian team working inRibat, a small village located some 50 km north of Amman, uncovered the remains of a Christian oratory. Among the most prominent of the remains of this building was a large mosaic pavement. Atop the rectangular mosaic and encased within its eastern border could be found a brief dedicatory inscription written in Greek that marked the completion of the building. While the inscription was subsequently published as SEG 51:2435, this edition included a number of uncertainties and errors owing to the fact that the inscription was transcribed incorrectly in a number of places in the initial archaeological report. Consequently, in an attempt to improve the reading of the inscription Denis Feisell and Pierre-Louis Gatier have recently suggested a number of modifications to the inscription. Based on these improvements the inscription ought to be read as follows:

ἐν δόξα(ι)ν τῆς ἡ(λίας) τιμάθες
ἐκ προσφορ(α)ς θεοῦ Γαρβενί
μονοκτιστ(η)ς(ι)ν ἐπελαθα(σί)θη (θη)σι
ἐκάστη(ν)αν ταύτῃ ὑποτέκα Γαρβενί

5 μη(ῆς) ἀπολάλλη (χριστιά)νη τῇ ἑν(οδο)ίᾳ(ν)

While Feisell and Gatier both felt that the likely reading at the beginning of l. 3 was μονοκτιστ(η)ς, the genitive of μονοκτιστης, they expressed some doubt concerning this reading since it appeared to constitute a hapax legomenon whose meaning was not discernible. As they noted, “Διὸ καὶ διὸ, τοῦτο θεός τις δὲ φαναίρον (μαρτιούμενον ητο, εἰς τούτο περὶ δυσις).”4 Yet, notwithstanding the doubts expressed by Feisell and Gatier the context of the inscription suggests that μονοκτιστης is not only the correct reading but must also have the meaning of “sole founder”. There are a number of Greek verbs, nouns and adjectives composed with the prefix μονο- that mean “to do (the action of the implied verb) alone” or “without assistance”. Accordingly, the meaning of μονοκτιστης must be something like “sole founder” since the masculine noun κτιστης means a “founder” or even a “builder”.5 Therefore, the addition of this otherwise unattested epithet to the name of the donor simply told those who read the inscription that he was not one of several benefactors of the oratory of St. George but the person who had financed the entire building on his own.

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HERACLES ON OETA (TrGF Adesp. 653 Kν.–Sн.): Two Supplements

POxy. 2454 (= TrGF Adesp. 653 Kν.–Sн.) consists of the fragmentary remains of two columns, the first containing the line-ends of thirty iambic trimeters, the second the beginnings of another thirty. They belong to a tragedy about the last moments of Heracles’ life composed, according to most scholars, in post-classical, rather than in classical, times. In this fragment the hero first recalls the great rivals he has defeated (lines 1–32), and then, after a two-line interruption by another character or by the chorus (II 33f.), he complains of the harassment of Hera and laments that it is a woman who has killed him (ll. 35–60). In order to understand this last section better I shall propose two supplements based on comparison of this fragment with the two extant tragic versions of the same episode, namely Sophocles’ Women of Trachis and the Hercules Oetaeus attributed to Seneca.6

1. In the second section of Heracles’ speech (ll. 35–60) the goddess Hera appears many, maybe in line 43 (ὁ Θεός οὗτος φέρεται) and certainly in lines 40 (τε αὐτή νῦν... άρετος Ἰου...). See also νάνα (κακόν) μονοκτιστής (II 5), and μης (τινάς) μηθης (II 5). In the last instance Heracles laments that his death has been caused by his wife Deianeira: “a woman who (the verb is missing) Hera’s jealousy” (γυνὴ τοῦ Ἡρας ζηλωτικής).7 Once more we find the connection between Hera’s harassment of Heracles and Deianeira’s plot, which we know especially from the Hercules Oetaeus, where the already defeated hero declares that if destiny had sanctioned his death at the hands of a woman, he would have preferred to fall to “Juno’s jealousy”, and invites the goddess

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4 Parallels between this tragedy (the attribution of which to Seneca is rejected by many scholars) and the papyri fragments have been collected by Canatella (n. 5) 56–7, 52–4, and by L. Alisi, Sitz bgr. tragico POxy 2454 (POxy. vol. XXVII) e un possibile echi in autori latini, Archivio 46 (1966) 3–12 (pp. 6–9). The comparison with the Hercules Oetaeus has proved useful for PF 4, maybe part of Aeschylus’ Heracles (cf. fr. “737 Rath), which was completed by Niebel (presumably R. G. M.) as οἰκοδόμοι που ήμαστε παραπλησίων λατρεύοντας της ἡμερής συμπαθείας (ll. 5) from the description that Heracles gives of the effects of the poison in his body in I. 1291–24 in medulla… namque niger palmenus arenas fibras dissectant, ad fales siccias occidit… polum cernam conspexit; see Niebel in H. Lloyd-Jones’ “Appendix” to H. Weir Smyth (ed.), Aeschylus, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass.–London 1957) 589; also Canatella (n. 3) 51.

5 Ηρας ζηλωτικής λογοσκευάζεται ξυλείας, ex. gr. Canatella (n. 3) 55, cf. Sen. H.O. 1675–7 Juno cur laetam diem i se furete (i.e. Alcmena) durat! pariciar gaudet suae speciae lucturum. Taking into account that in tragedy Heracles often laments dying without glory and being laughed at by his enemies, as later in line 56 (τοῦτον σφιχθεῖ θανάτου δικαιούμενον μοιράζεται, suppl. Lloyd-Jones) and also in I. 754 (θάλακι σέ ἥκει, δακρύξτης δέ φροντίζει, Βασιλείας γίνεται / μὴ παρὰ κοβολίδοις ἰμcheduled πατρίδος) and 1383 (ἡρας ζηλωτικής μοιραίαν ἐπιθέει βλέπεισθαι), I would propose ex. gr. “Ἡρας μὴ τελέσθω γαῖας τούτης ζηλωτικῆς μοιρᾶς; or, as Williams now suggests, τελέσθω ἡ γαῖας ἰματικής, that is, “Hera is turning me into a greater source of joy for my enemies”.

6 See Canatella (n. 5) 54–5.

7 Canatella (n. 5) 56, suggested completing the line this way: γυνὴ τοῦ (ἐν οἷς ἦν Χριστιανής) κακοντηκτης, but the majority of editors (E. G. Turner, H. Lloyd-Jones, R. Kamnicht – B. Senn) have (rightly) interpreted της (‘Hecuba ζηλωτικῆς’ as a syntactical unit.)