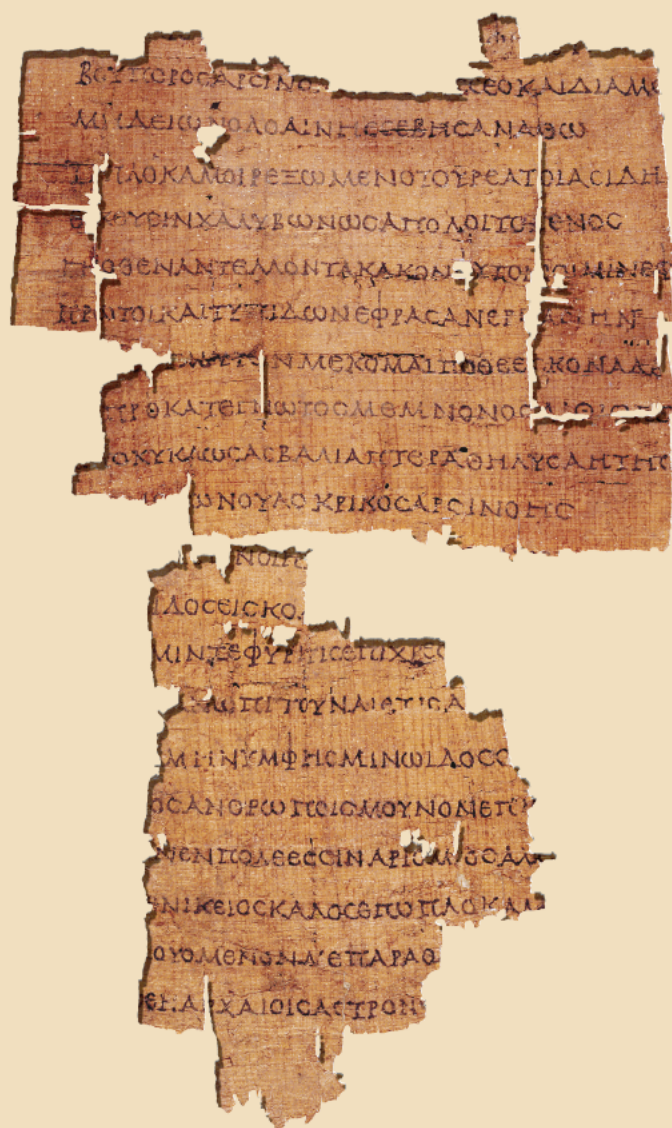


analecta papyrologica

XXXVIII 2024/2



SICANIA
university press

analecta papyrologica

XXXVIII 2024/2



ACCADEMIA FIORENTINA
DI PAPIROLOGIA
E DI STUDI SUL MONDO ANTICO

ANALECTA PAPYROLOGICA

Rivista di fascia A/ANVUR *peer reviewed*

diretta da

Anna Di Giglio-Rosario Pintaudi

comitato scientifico

Daniele Castrizio

Paola Colace Radici

Alain Delattre

Lucio Del Corso

Lucietta Di Paola

Hermann Harrauer

Luigi Lehnus

Antonio López García

Alain Martin

Moamen Mohamed Othman

Francesco Pagnotta

Carlo Pernigotti

Graziano Ranocchia

Dominic Rathbone

Giuseppe Solaro

Silvia Strassi

Gihane Zaki

Antonino Zumbo

analecta papyrologica

XXXVIII 2024/2

SICANIA
university press

In copertina:

PSI IX 1092 – Callimaco: Chioma di Berenice
Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana

ISSN 1122-2336

© 2024, SICANIA by Sabir s.r.l.
Via Catania 62, 98124 Messina
www.sicania.me.it
info@sicania.me.it

Direzione scientifica in convenzione con
Accademia Fiorentina di Papirologia e di Studi sul Mondo Antico
Firenze

Tutti i diritti sono riservati all'Editore.
È vietata la riproduzione, anche parziale, dell'opera.

*A Manfredo Manfredi e Isabella Andorlini,
papirologi.*

A CHRISTIAN FUNERARY INSCRIPTION FOR PHEBRONIA IN THE MAGAZINE AT FUSTÂT (OLD CAIRO)*

In the Fall of 2019 during an inventory of the lower level of the storage magazine in Fustât (Old Cairo) a small collection of inscriptions was uncovered¹. The collection consists of about 20 pieces that range from fully intact texts to fragments preserving a handful of legible letters. The majority of the pieces are in Greek, but one is bilingual (Greek and Coptic), and two are entirely in Coptic. The provenance of the pieces and their date of acquisition are unknown as they were hitherto uncatalogued², but upon further investigation we discovered that one of the Coptic pieces had been previously published and was part of a collection of five Coptic inscriptions excavated in Manqabâd (Lykopolite Nome) in 1976³. It is not known whether the other texts in this recently discovered collection were found at approximately the same time and in the same region. Since the lone published text in this group got separated from the four other texts it was excavated with, we are inclined to think that these inscriptions likely represent an assortment that were found at different locales at different times. However, we also believe it is possible that some sub-groups could exist within the larger collection and that a few pieces might be directly related in terms of provenance and/or time of acquisition.

A feature that unites many of the inscriptions is that they are Chris-

* We want to sincerely thank the two reviewers who recommended various emendations that improved the article. Any errors or infelicities in this work are the sole responsibility of the authors. Translations are our own unless otherwise noted.

¹ This was carried out under the direction of the chief of committee for inventory at the magazine.

² A catalogue of these and other pieces found at the time of the cleaning and maintenance work was undertaken by the co-author, Amer El Mesiry, in 2020.

³ It was originally published in A.R. ABDAL-TAWAB-A.H. AL-MANSUB IBRAHIM-S. SCHATEN, *Coptic Stelae from Manqabâd*, «BSAC» 40 (2001), pp. 53–58 in part. pp. 56–57 (no. 3 = SB Kopt. 4.1960). The article reports that these five inscriptions were stored in the Fustât Magazine and that they did not have inventory numbers at the time of publication.

tian funerary stelae and can be readily identified as such through the use of various formula and distinct Christian imagery⁴. One Greek text in this group that is unique from the rest is a funerary inscription for a woman named Phebronia. Whereas most of the Greek funerary inscriptions are rather laconic and typically contain little more than the name of the deceased accompanied by their date of death and perhaps a formulaic funerary expression, this inscription is considerably longer as the deceased is commemorated with effusive language that finds few inscriptional parallels. We therefore present an edition of this epitaph since it represents a notable contribution to Christian funerary epigraphy in late antique Egypt⁵.

Funerary Inscription for Blessed Phebronia

The sixteen-line epitaph is inscribed on a rectangular slab of polished marble⁶. While the stone is broken off at the bottom right and left corners, the text is not affected and only the bottom portion of some of the imagery is lost. At the base of the inscription in the center of the stele is a large, forked cross, with foliage on either side. The foliage springs from the base of the cross and is seemingly emblematic of the cross as a kind of “tree of life”⁷. On either side of the foliage are shrubs that resemble the sedge plant that mirror the forms found at the tops of the adjacent foliage. The stone is faintly scored with horizontal lines that mark the upper and lower perimeters of each line so that the text is strictly bilinear; average line height is 2.8 cm and on full lines the inscription ranges between 15 to 22 characters per line. There are traces of red paint on certain letters suggesting that the text was originally painted.

⁴ We have already published the one bilingual (Greek and Coptic) inscription and the sole unpublished Coptic inscription: A. EL MESIRY-L.H. BLUMELL, *Two Christian Funerary Stelae in the Magazine at Fustât (Old Cairo)*, «CdÉ» 98 (2023), pp. 326-333. We have also published some of the other Greek epitaphs: L.H. BLUMELL-A. EL MESIRY, *Some Christian Epitaphs in Greek in the Magazine at Fustât (Old Cairo)*, «ZPE» 230 (2024), pp. 153-166.

⁵ Amer El Mesiry reports that these pieces are scheduled to be moved to the Islamic Museum in Cairo. The stele now carries the inventory number 87/h.d.

⁶ The sides of the stele are unworked as is the backside.

⁷ A cross with foliage springing from its base was commonly found in late antique Christian art and was thought to envision the cross as a tree of life: see P.C. FINNEY, *Tree in Eerdmans Encyclopedia of Early Christian Art and Archaeology*, Vol. 2, Grand Rapids Michigan 2017, pp. 642-644. The tree branches stretch out symmetrically and its foliage repeatedly takes an ω-shape, except for at the top which is sedge-shaped.