Two Coptic Epitaphs in
the Kom Aushim Storage Magazine

On a recent visit to Egypt in February of 2014 I was shown some inscriptions in the storage magazine at Kom Aushim (Karanis) by the curator Mustafa F. Hemeida. Two of the inscriptions particularly caught my attention because they were epitaphs and were written in Coptic. The catalogue entries at the Kom Aushim magazine regarding each epitaph are very sparse. Nevertheless, as the Kom Aushim magazine serves as the wider storage facility for artefacts from the Fayoum it is highly likely that both epitaphs originated somewhere in this region ([1]). Moreover the texts show some features of the Fayoumic dialect. With the permission of the magazine curator I offer here for the first time an edition of these two epitaphs with accompanying translation and commentary.

I. EPITAPH FOR A THEOKLES

The first stele bears the Kom Aushim inv. no. 323 ([2]). The stele is rectangular, made of limestone, and lacks any ornamentation or decoration. As noted in the introduction, this epitaph is written in the Fayoumic dialect as is evidenced by the opening formula (ll. 1–2) and the body of the epitaph (ll. 4–5). While the top is broken off so that much of the first line of text is lost, because the extant text begins with a well-attested Coptic funerary formula from the Fayoum the

(1) On Fayoumic epitaphs, see A. BOUD'HORS & F. CALAMENT, "Un ensemble de stèles fayoumiques inédites: à propos de la stèle funéraire de Pantoleos de Toutôn," *Copt. Congr.* VII (2004), pp. 462–467; S. SCHATEN, "Christian Funerary Stelae from the Fayoum," *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), pp. 257–263; B. TUDOR, *Christian Funerary Stelae of the Byzantine and Arab Periods from Egypt* (Marburg, 2011), p. 228.

(2) In the catalogue records at the Kom Aushim magazine no date of acquisition is recorded and all that is stated for the catalogue entry is that the artefact was acquired through an individual named Yusef Mishrefy, for which no additional information is provided. Elsewhere in the catalogue this individual is mentioned in connection with the acquisition of other artefacts and the dates of acquisition range from the late 1970s through the 1980s.

first two lines can be reconstructed with confidence: ⲫ(ⲛⲟⲩ)† ⲁⲁⲓ ⲟⲩⲛⲉⲓ N. N. (see n. 1–2 below). Since this formula typically appears at the very start of an epitaph it seems likely that the first extant line is also the first line of text in the inscription (³). Thus, the entire inscription consists of nine lines and can be completely restored (⁴). After the final line there is a gap of 5.0 cm before the bottom edge of the stele.

The hand of the inscription is deliberate and clear with average line spacing at 2.5 cm per line. The letter forms may be described as an upright script with few noteworthy features and no decorative ornamentations or embellishments. The alpha is written in an upright form with a square shaped crossbar, the omega is inscribed with two distinct cuts, and the crossbar on the lone theta at the end of l. 3 only extends to the middle of the letter from the right side. There is a supralinear stroke above ⲫ̄† at the beginning of the first line signaling the abbreviation ⲫ(ⲛⲟⲩ)† and supralinear strokes also appear over the day of the month and year signifying that they are to be read as numbers.

The paleographic features of the inscription are difficult to date and the reference to the month and (indiction) year provides little help in establishing a specific date for the inscription, but as Fayoumic inscriptions are known to date between the seventh and tenth centuries the inscription probably falls somewhere in this chronological frame (⁵).

In a number of respects the inscription is typical of many Coptic Christian epitaphs; structurally it is similar to the following Fayoumic inscriptions: *SB Kopt.* I 461, 757; II 1146; III 1591; IV 1965 (cf. *SB Kopt.* III 1616). It begins by invoking God and asks that he might show mercy, after which the name of the deceased is inscribed followed by the very common formula ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲙⲧⲁⲛ ⲙⲁⲩ ("he rested"; Sahidic ⲙⲧⲟⲛ ⲙⲙⲟⲩ) followed by the day of the month and the indiction year that the person died. The inscription then ends with "in peace" and "amen," which is a common closing formula in many epitaphs. The name of the deceased (ll. 2–3) is spelled ⲑⲓⲱⲅⲁⲓ on the inscription and is likely a phonetic spelling of Theokles (ⲑⲉⲟⲕⲗⲏⲥ; see n. 2–3 below).

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(3) In the case of *SB Kopt.* I 757 (Fayoum) two lines of text precede ⲫ(ⲛⲟⲩ)† ⲁⲁⲓ ⲟⲩⲛⲉⲓ but in the present inscription these lines follow this formula in ll. 3–5.

(4) If something was inscribed above the first line then it was probably only a monogram like the staurogram (⳨), chi-rho monogram (☧), or the cross (+) since such symbols periodically precede the first line of text in Coptic epitaphs of the kind we are dealing with here: i.e. *SB Kopt.* II 1146 (Fayoum) the staurogram (⳨) precedes the opening formula; IV 1965 (Fayoum) a cross (+) precedes this opening formula.

(5) B. Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae* [n. 2], p. 228.

Kom Aushim inv. no. 323   Fɪɢ. 1   VII–X c.
28.5 (H) × 18.0 (W) × 8.5 cm (D)   Fayoum

    ⲫ(ⲛⲟⲩ)† [ⲁⲗⲓ ⲟⲩ-]
    ⲛⲉ̣ⲓ ⲙ̣ⲉ̣ ⲑ-
    ⲓⲱⲅⲗⲓ ⲛⲧ-
    ⲁ⳽ⲙⲧⲁⲛ
5   ⲙⲁ⳽ ⲛⲥⲩⲟ
    ⲕ̅ⲏ̅ ⲛⲧⲱⲃ-
    [ⲓ ⲛ]ⲧⲥⲡ ⲉ̅ ⳽-
    [ⲛ] ⳽ⲓⲣⲏⲛⲏ
    [⳽]ⲁ̣ⲙⲏⲛ̣

5 *l.* ⲛⲥⲟⲩ

"God, have mercy on Thiogli who rested on the 28th of Tybi in the 5th year. In peace, amen."

1–2 [ⲁⲗⲓ ⲟⲩ]|ⲛⲉ̣ⲓ The phrase ⲁⲗⲓ ⲟⲩⲛⲉⲓ is the Fayoumic form of the Sahidic ⲁⲣⲓ ⲟⲩⲛⲁ that is common in Sahidic epitaphs. The Fayoumic form of this formula occurs in the following epitaphs: *SB Kopt.* I 461.1–2: ⲡⲟ̅ⲥ̅ ⲫ̅† ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲱⲕⲣⲁⲧ|ⲱⲣ ⲉⲁ ⲟⲛⲉⲉⲓ; I 757.3–4: ⲫ̅† ⲁⲗⲓ ⲟ[ⲩⲛ]|ⲉⲓ; II 1146.1–2: † ⲫ̅† ⲁⲗⲓ ⲡⲉⲕⲛ|ⲉⲓ; III 1591.1–2: ⲡⲟ̅ⲥ̅ ⲫ̅† ⲁⲗⲓ ⲡⲉⲕⲛ|ⲉⲓ; IV 1965.1: + ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲓ ⲙⲙⲉⲉⲓ ⲁⲗⲓ ⲟⲩⲛⲉⲓ. On this formula see A. Bᴏᴜᴅ'ʜᴏʀs & F. Cᴀʟᴀᴍᴇɴᴛ, "Un ensemble" [n. 2]; B. Tᴜᴅᴏʀ, *Christian Funerary Stelae* [n. 2], pp. 178–181; see also J. ᴠᴀɴ ᴅᴇʀ Vʟɪᴇᴛ, "Monumenta Fayumica," *Enchoria* 28 (2002/2003), p. 138.

2–3 ⲑ|ⲓⲱⲅⲗⲓ In Coptic epitaphs that employ the ⲁⲗⲓ ⲟⲩⲛⲉⲓ formula the name of the deceased typically follows. This letter combination must surely therefore represent the name of the individual commemorated on the stele. Though the spelling is surely original the name Theokles (ⲑⲉⲟⲕⲗⲏⲥ) lends itself as a definite possibility based on the phonetic spelling. At least in Greek there are late attestations of the prefix θεο- being rendered θιω-: e.g. *O.Bodl.* II 2098.3 (IV–V): Θιωδώρου for Θεοδώρου; *P.Rain.Unterricht kopt.* 81.16 (V): Θίωνος for Θέωνος. The kappa and gamma interchange is well attested both in Greek and Coptic as is the eta and iota interchange. See F.T. Gɪɢɴᴀᴄ, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri. Vol. I, Phonology* (Milan, 1976), pp. 235–237. According to the *Trismegistos* People database the name Theokles and its derivations occurs just under 100 times and occurs mostly in texts from the Nile Delta followed by the Oxyrhynchite and Fayoum. Though I have been unable to locate an example of the name Theokles in Coptic I have found a couple attestations of the feminine counterpart Theoklia (ⲑⲉⲟⲕⲗⲓⲁ): G. Hᴇᴜsᴇʀ, *Die Personennamen der Kopten* (Leipzig, 1929), p. 80; *P.Lond.Copt.* I 338; cf. Grk. Θεοκλεία and Θεοκλία: *BGU* XIV 2441.4.85 (II BC); XIV 2449 + 2450.3.55 (99–70 BC); *P.Lond.* VI 1926.22 (mid IV).

4–5 ⲁ⳽ⲙⲧⲁⲛ | ⲙⲁ⳽ This is the Fayoumic form of the Sahidic ⲁ⳽ⲙ̅ⲧⲟⲛ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟ⳽, which is quite common in Sahidic epitaphs. For a Fayoumic example, cf. *SB Kopt.* I 757.1–2: ⲙⲓⲛⲁ ⲁ⳽ⲙⲛⲧⲁⲛ ⲙⲁ⳽.

5   ɴсүо The correct spelling is ɴсоү and this seems to be a case of metathesis due to a scribal error. One should note that in *SB Kopt.* IV 2098, which is also from the Fayoum, the spelling in l. 7 is ɴсү for ɴсоү.

6–7   к̄н̄ ɴтѡвı|[ı ɴ]тсп є̄ The common spelling of the month Tybi in Fayoumic is тѡві. The use of сп-, which is an attested form in both Sahidic and Fayoumic, is not very common in dating formula of the kind we have here although it is attested: *SB Kopt.* IV 2096.5–6 (Fayoum) as well as Epitaph II presented hereafter l. 8. Far more common is the use of "indiction" (year), which is almost certainly being implied here with reference to "year 5" [of the indiction].

7–8   ʒı[ɴ] ʒıрннн Given the amount of space in the lacuna the reading ʒ[ɴ] ʒıрннн seems better than ʒ[ɴ оү]ʒıрннн (ʒ̄ɴ̄ оүєıрннн) even though the latter is far more common. ʒ̄ɴ̄ єıрннн without the indefinite article is attested in *SB Kopt.* I 765.6–7; IV 1904.2; 1970.13.

9   [ʒ]а̣мнn̩ The spelling is either ʒамнn or simply амнn; both spellings are widely attested. I have opted for ʒамнn in order to fill the lacuna at the beginning of the line.

II. Epitaph for a papa Paul

This second epitaph bears the Kom Aushim inv. no. 503 ([6]). The stele is made of limestone. The top of the epitaph is broken off leaving only seven lines of text. The stele lacks any decoration and the extant lines are mostly bilinear and contain anywhere from four to seven letters per line with an average line height of 3.1 cm. Some of the inscribed letters still contain traces of black paint. The letter forms are mostly upright and regular and lack much ornamentation although the cross bar on the tau contains decorative roundels and the upper stoke of the lambda contains a loop. Probably the most unusually formed letter in the whole inscription is the alpha that is almost written on its side (e.g. ᴧ but rotated more to the right) instead of the more upright form (e.g. A) ([7]). Despite the appearance of the alpha this form of alpha is attested in other Coptic epitaphs from the Fayoum even if the rotation in these epitaphs is not as pronounced ([8]).

The top of the inscription is broken off but unlike the preceding inscription, in the present case the reconstruction is more tentative; furthermore, it cannot be determined how much text is lost before the first extant line. On the first line of legible text there is an epsilon followed by the bottom half of a vertical stoke followed by a lacuna that could accommodate two, or maybe three letters, then

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(6) The catalogue records at the Kom Aushim magazine for this artefact are very terse but do report that it was acquired in 1974.

(7) J. Jarry, "Ensemble de stèles coptes," *BIFAO* 67 (1969), p. 233 and Pl. LXVIII A (= *SB Kopt.* IV 1966): Coptic Epitaph from the Fayoum written with upright alphas.

(8) Cf. for example J. Leclant, "Une stèle à inscription fayoumique dans la collection de l'Institut d'Égyptologie de Strasbourg (Nº 1687)," *BSAC* 16 (1961–62), p. 183 with plate of inscription (= *SB Kopt.* I 461).

a horizontal leg of a letter at the end of the line. Probably the best solution is to take the final horizontal stroke at the end of the first extant line of text as a chi and the eta that follows as belonging to the same word; an obvious reading that emerges is ⲯⲩⲭⲏ. The epsilon at the beginning of the line should then be taken as the preposition. The well-attested Coptic epitaph formula that then emerges for the opening lines is … ✝ ⲙⲧⲁⲛ (Sahidic ⲙⲧⲟⲛ) ⲉⲧⲉⲯⲩⲭⲏ . . . (see n. 1–3 below).

The text of the inscription is fairly straightforward even if the name "Paul" that appears in ll. 3–4 is spelled ⲡⲁⲟⲩⲗⲉ (see n. 2–4) and is a rather uncommon form, which is found in Fayoumic documents, and the spelling of the month Pharmouthi in ll. 5–6 as ⲡⲁⲙⲟⲩ✝ (see n. 5–6) is otherwise unattested. In ll. 5–6 there is an error on the inscription as the inscriber spelled out the number "ten" and then wrote the number nineteen (ⲓ̅ⲑ̅).

The inscription concludes with a reference to "year 9" and as with the previous inscription should probably be taken to refer to the indiction year even if it is not explicitly stated.

Kom Aushim inv. no. 503   Fig. 2   VII–X c.
24.5 (H) × 21.5 × (W) × 7.0 cm (D)   Fayoum

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      - - - - - - -
      [✝ ⲙⲧⲁⲛ]
      ⲉⲧ̣[ⲉⲯⲩ]ⲭ-
      ⲏ ⲙⲡⲁⲡ-
      ⲁ ⲡⲁⲟⲩⲗ-
5     ⲉ ⲛⲥⲟⲩ ⲙⲉ-
      ⲧ ⲓ̅ⲑ̅ ⲙⲡⲁ-
      ⲙⲟⲩ✝ ⲛ-
      ⲧⲥⲡ ⲑ̅
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"… give rest to the soul of papa Paoule, on day ten (*sic*), 19th of Pamouti (Pharmouthi) of year 9."

1–3 [✝ ⲙⲧⲁⲛ] | ⲉⲧ̣[ⲉⲯⲩ]ⲭ|ⲏ This reconstruction best fits the extant text at the beginning of the inscription and is a well-attested funerary formula: *SB Kopt.* I 430.3–4; 484.1–3; 603.5–6; 608.9–10, etc. (see also B. Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae* [n. 2], pp. 181–185). Often when this phrase occurs it is preceded by additional text wherein "God," "The Lord," "The Lord God," Jesus Christ," or "The Holy Spirit," is invoked. Therefore, it seems most likely that there was text that preceded this phrase on the inscription.

2–4 ⲙⲡⲁⲡ|ⲁ ⲡⲁⲟⲩⲗ|ⲉ The name here is Paul, although it is unusually spelled. The most common form in Coptic is ⲡⲁⲩⲗⲟⲥ followed by ⲡⲁⲩⲗⲉ. As the name is presently

spelled it is attested in *BKU* III 352; *CPR* IV 67; *P.Lond.Copt*. I 1235; *SB Kopt.* III 1268.6, all documents written in Fayoumic dialect. On the use of the title papa(s) see T. DERDA and E. WIPSZYCKA, "L'emploi des titres abba, apa et papas dans l'Égypte byzantine," *JJP* 24 (1994), pp. 23–27.

5–6 ⲙⲉⲓⲧ ⲓ̅ⲑ̅ It appears that the inscriber initially intended to spell out the date in full but after writing the first element realized that there would maybe not be enough room and so gave the standard numeric abbreviation with the supralinear stroke but did not attempt to correct the inscription by crossing out or effacing the reference to "ten" (ll. 5–6, ⲙⲉⲧ).

6–7 ⲙⲡⲁⲓⲙⲟⲩ† The month of Pharmouthi (ⲡⲁⲣⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ) is clearly being referenced notwithstanding the unusual spelling for which I could not find a parallel; the loss of the ⲣ is perhaps just a mistake.

7–8 ⲛⲓⲧⲥⲡ ⲑ̅ The reference to "year 9" should be taken to refer to the indiction year. See n. 6–7 of previous inscription.

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Fig. 2. — Kom Aushim magazine, inv. no. 503 (50 %)

Fig. 1. — Kom Aushim magazine, inv. no. 323 (40 %)