

PORTRAIT OF A FREEDMAN

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art is a well-known and often-published 'Fayum portrait' of a boy.¹ The portrait is generally referred to, as the Museum's label puts it, as being of "the slave of a Jew whose father's name was Greek". This information is inferred from the translation of the inscription on the portrait as given on the label: "(...)orychoph..., admirable freedman of Johanna, son of Herakleides ... aged 15 (possibly aged 5)." No text, however, has ever been published, so far as we can determine.²

The inscription and label attracted Worp's attention during his visit to New York for the XVI International Congress of Papyrology (July 1980), as the actual inscription is quite different from what is given on the label. It seems to us worthwhile to give the text in full. It reads:

Εὐτύχης ἀπελ(εὐθήρος) Κα-
σιανοῦ Ἡρακλείδ() Εὐ-
ανδρο(ρο)) σεσημ(εἴωμαι).

The deceased is evidently Eutyches, freedman of Kasianos. A question arises whether Herakleides is the name (and Euandros thus the patronymic) of the 'signer', or Herakleides the patronymic of Kasianos and Euandros the name of the signer. We have left the names unresolved to reflect this uncertainty. At any rate, there is no Johanna, no Jewish owner or freedman, and no stated age.

The signature is curious: we cannot provide a parallel to such a signature on a mummy portrait, nor can we find any instance when σσημειοῦμαι is used in any type of source to refer to the activity

1 Accession number 18.9.2. See Kl. Parlasca, *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler* (Wiesbaden 1966) 80 no. 8; a good reproduction is found in J.E. Berger, *L'Oeuvr et l'Éternité* (Paudex [CH] 1977) 108. We thank Peter Dorman and Thomas Logan of the Metropolitan Museum for their cordial assistance in our investigation.

2 The Museum's translation comes from W.L. Westermann, and his transcription is in the Museum's files. Westermann planned to publish the text but did not do so. Parlasca (*supra* n. 1) comments on the lack of a published text, but he gives the substance of it correctly.

of the painter, in place of the expected ἐποίησα (-σεν) or ἔγραψα (-ψεν). This seems to us on balance, however, the most likely interpretation.³

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³ We thank Professor Parlasca for his helpful letters on this subject, which confirm that he also is unaware of a good parallel, though he agrees that this is the probable interpretation ("sehr überzeugend"). He also sent us an unpublished transcription by W. Schubart, which is closer to the correct text than Westermann's, though not entirely right.