ÉGYPTE GRÉCO-ROMAINE

Inscriptions from Tombs at Bir esh-Shaghala

Introduction (R.B.)

Excavations during the past decade by the Supreme Council of Antiquities have uncovered a number of cemeteries belonging to the ancient city of Mut (Mothis in Greek), which was the capital of the Dakhleh Oasis in the Roman period as it is today. ([1]) At one of these, Bir esh-Shaghala, about 3 km northwest of the town of Mut, these excavations have found several large mud-brick tombs which originally had pyramidal superstructures, now largely eroded, and subterranean burial chambers, many of which are well preserved. Maher Bashendi, the director of the Dakhleh Oasis inspectorate of the SCA and the excavator of this cemetery, will publish the tombs from this site with collaborators. He has kindly allowed us to publish here, in advance of that full report on the site, the Greek and demotic texts found on and in two of the tombs, Tombs 5 and 6. ([2])

A. Tomb 5

Two inscriptions stand over the doorway of this tomb, on a sandstone lintel block, one in Greek and the other in Demotic. The Greek is in large majuscule letters, the Demotic in much smaller characters.

1. Incised Greek inscription over the door (R.B.)

Dimensions: 115 cm wide, 15 cm high; letters 6-7 cm high. Fig. 1.

Ἀπολλώνιε [a] ἀγαθώτατε [b]
2   χαῖρε.

"Excellent [b] Apollonios [a], farewell."

Commentary:

(a) The name Apollonios is extremely common in Egypt. *Trismegistos People* (consulted 29 April 2014) shows 6336 instances in all languages. We learn from the Demotic inscription that Apollonios was also called Peto(u)phois, a name derived from the Lykopolitan god Upuaut (Wepwawet), but his family evidently did not care to record this fact in the Greek inscription, where only the Hellenic element was on display. The connection between Apollo and Upuaut is not evident, and I have not found another case of an Apollonios with a second name based on Upuaut, but it is interesting that in the probably Lykopolitan *P.Oxy.Census* Fr. 2, l. 31 we find a mother recorded as Σεναπολλῶ(τος) Πετουφώ[ιτο(ς)]. Apollonios's mother here, however, has a characteristically Panopolitan name. Apollonios is not distinctive to any locale, and the connection may be no more determinable than that of the names of Polykrates alias Petetriphis in *P.Panop. Beatty* 1.184. Apollonios is in no way distinctively Panopolitan, in any case.

(b) Although the superlative of ἀγαθός is ἄριστος in standard Greek, ἀγαθώτατος appears both in literature (*LSJ* cites Diodorus Siculus 16.85; there are nearly a hundred forms of the word in the *TLG*) and in documents. It is rare in inscriptions, however, with only 7 instances in the *PHI* database and just one gravestone from Egypt among them, *SEG* 20.628 (from Terenouthis). This superlative occurs 11 times in a *DDbDP* search. I have found no instance of the vocative form seen here in the inscriptions or the papyri, although it appears in a variety of authors, none early, including the Alexander Romance and Julian.

2. The demotic inscription over the door (G.V.)

Dimensions: 66 cm wide, letters 1.5-2.0 cm high. Figg. 2-6.

Beneath the Greek inscription, there is one line of Demotic that reads as follows (note the overlappings in the drawings, which have been made from the photographs) (Figg. 4-6):

p3 ⌐mḥr¬ [a] P3-dì-wpy [b] s3 P3j-stḥ [c] ntj-ìw=w ḏd n=f 3pwlnys [d] mw.t=f T3-šr-p3-‘l‘l [e] ‘nḫ by=f nḥḥ ḏ.t. [f]

"The pyramid [a] of Petophois [b] son of Pisechthis [c], who is (also) called Apollonios [d], his mother is Senpelilis [e]. May his ba live for ever and ever .[f]"

From both the epigraphic and the onomastic point of view, a general dating to the first or second century CE seems almost certain (see notes **e** and **f**). Such a dating is consistent with the not very distinctive Greek lettering. Judging from the (still unpublished) decoration of the tomb itself, ([3]) and taking into account

(3) I am much obliged to Maher BASHENDI (Dakhleh oasis inspectorate) and to Colin HOPE (Monash University) for making possible a visit to the site in February 2015.

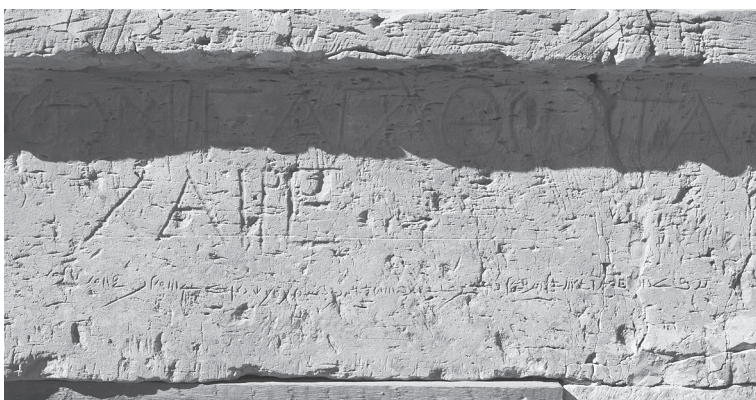Fɪɢ. 1. —Tomb 5, Greek and Demotic inscriptions above door.

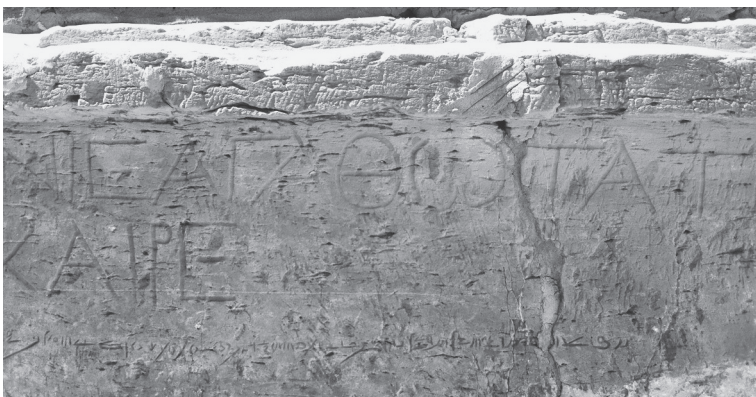Fɪɢ. 2. — Tomb 5, Demotic inscription.

Fɪɢ. 3. — Tomb 5, Demotic inscription.

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FIG. 4. — Tomb 5, Demotic inscription, facsimile, part 1.

FIG. 5. — Tomb 5, Demotic inscription, facsimile, part 2.

FIG. 6. — Tomb 5, Demotic inscription, facsimile, part 3.
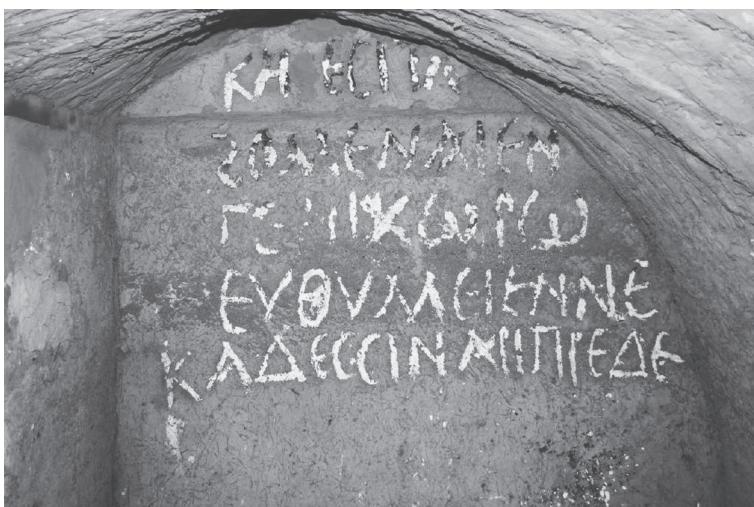
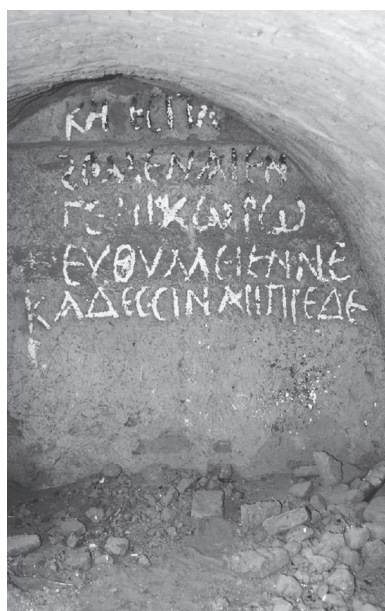FIG. 7. — Tomb 6, view of interior.

FIG. 9. — Tomb 6, dipinto 1, detail.

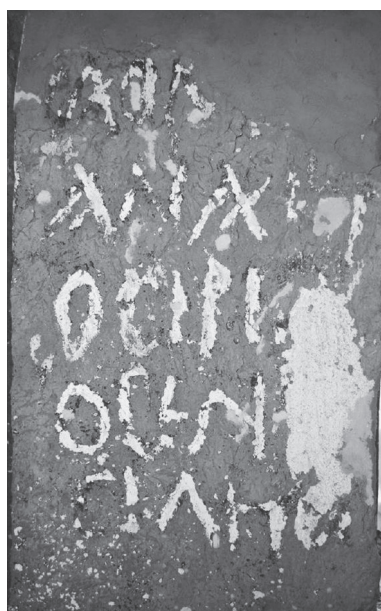
FIG. 8. — Tomb 6, dipinto 1,
general view of wall.

FIG. 10. — Tomb 6, dipinto 2,
detail.

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the plausible dating of another decorated tomb of this necropolis to the first century CE (BASHENDI 2013, 67), a similar dating of the demotic inscription is probable. If so, the tomb with its inscriptions is considerably younger than the demotic ostraca from nearby Mut el-Kharab, there being none that can be confidently dated to the end of the Ptolemaic Period, let alone to the Roman Period (VITTMANN 2012).

Regarding the tomb owner, it seems to be a reasonable assumption that he had twofold roots. The father, to judge from his name *P3j-stẖ* "He of Seth", apparently belonged to a local family, whereas the mother, or at least her ancestors, presumably came from the area between Panopolis and Lykopolis: Senpelilis is a typically Panopolitan name (below, note **e**), though the son's name – it frequently was the mother who conferred the name on a child (POSENER 1970) – would rather seem to point to Lykopolis (note **b**).

Commentary:

This is the first example for a late pyramid-tomb with a demotic inscription on it. The pyramid-tomb which was discovered in Tuna el-Gebel in 2007 has only a short Greek inscription identifying its owner (KESSLER *et al*. 2008; FLOSSMANN & SCHÜTZE 2010). For other late pyramid tombs see BASHENDI 2013, 52 n. 5.

(a) The end of the group 𓊹 𓏤𓄿 is unclear (presumably the house-determinative) but the identification with the word for "pyramid" is not doubtful. For the reading *mḥr* instead of *mr*, see QUACK 2003. ([4]) In demotic documents of the Ptolemaic period, pyramid-tombs are occasionally mentioned, cf. *Chicago Demotic Dictionary* M, 139 (version 13 July 2010; with traditional reading *mr*). See also above, first paragraph of commentary.

(b) 𓍯𓏏 is not *P3-dì-(t3-)rpy,* Petetriphis (LÜDDECKENS *et al*. 1980-2000, 343; VLEEMING 2011, II 1047 s.v. *P3-dì-T3-rpy.t*) as I had originally thought on the basis of the misleading last but one determinative but *P3-dì-wpy,* Petophois (LÜDDECKENS *et al*. 1980-2000, 297). This becomes unequivocally clear from the full spelling of the owner's name as *P3-dì-wp-w3(w)t* in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the tomb. *Wpy* is a common demotic rendering of *Wp-w3wt*, and in another tomb of Bir el-Shaghala the same spelling is even found in hieroglyphs (BASHENDI 2013, 64; 78 fig. 26).
The name *P3-dì-wpy* "He whom Upuaut (the god of Lykopolis / Assiut) has given" is so far unknown from the demotic documents from Mut el-Kharab, but given the existence of an ancient road connecting Assiut with the Dakhleh

(4) The recent attempt by SCHWEITZER 2011, 142-144, to defend the traditional reading *mr* seems to me unconvincing.

(the Darb el-tawil, cf. GRAEFF 2004, 73-74) as early as the Old Kingdom, the presence of an individual of possibly Lycopolitan descendance would not be too surprising. ([5]) With a view to the typically Panopolitan mother's name (note **e**), however, it must be taken into account that there is at least one example for a compound name with Upuaut from that area: *Wpy-ỉw* ʼΟπιγηυς mummy label BM 24503 (LÜDDECKENS *et al.* 1980-2000, fasc. 18, 139 ad p. 115; ARLT 2011, 64 no. 92).

(c) *P3j-stḫ* ("He of Seth") was hitherto unknown from demotic sources, ([6]) but it occurs in several unpublished papyrus fragments from Kellis. The strong possibility has to be considered that *P3-stḫ*, a very common name in the unpublished demotic ostraca from Mut el-Kharab, is not just "Seth" with the definite article but should rather be interpreted as *P3(j)-stḫ*. The hieroglyphic equivalent *P3-n-stḫ* has been identified on a 22th Dynasty statue of very poor workmanship said to come from Mut el-Kharab (JACQUET-GORDON 1991; JANSEN-WINKELN 2007, 472 [157]), and in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the tomb, the name is written . The alphabetic spelling *s-t-ḫ* + divine determinative corresponds to the way "Seth" ([7]) is written in the demotic and abnormal hieratic ostraca from Mut and in the Hibis temple, whereas the archaizing spellings *stš* known from hieratic religious and mythological texts and the abbreviation *st*, *sṯ* common in demotic texts of the same character normally does not occur in sources from Khargeh and Dakhleh, where Seth had his own cult and his own clergy.

This is not the place to discuss the positive and negative roles of Seth according to context, cf. SMITH 2010. For Seth in Dakhleh and Khargeh, see especially KAPER 1997, 55-85; YAMANI 2002; GOBEIL 2010; HOPE & KAPER 2011; VITTMANN 2012; VITTMANN, forthcoming (a) and (b).

P3j-stḫ almost certainly corresponds to Greek Πισηχθις ([8]), which is frequently attested in the Western oases, cf. HEILPORN & WORP 2007, 222-223; ([9])

([5]) A Ptolemaic ostracon from Mut el-Kharab mentions the "men from Siut" (*rmṯ.w Sjwṯ*, oMut 32/21, 3).

([6]) For other theophoric proper names constructed with *p3j*, cf. LÜDDECKENS *et al.*, 1980-2000, 434-444.

([7]) For an overview of the spellings of "Seth," see LEITZ 2002, 691-698; for the evidence in Dakhleh and Khargeh, see KAPER 1997, 55-58; GOBEIL 2010, 109-110; and below.

([8]) Roger Bagnall, after I had communicated to him my reading of the demotic inscription, drew my attention to Greek Πισηχθις, which already a long time ago, he told me, he had tentatively associated with Seth.

([9]) On p. 222 n. 8, a tentative explanation as **p3-sḥ.ṯ* "the man of the Oasis" is suggested. There are several problems with this proposal, which cannot be fully discussed here (*p3-s…* should rather yield ψ-, not πισ-; the *nisba* of *sḥ.t* (Coptic ⲥⲱⲱⲉ) is unlikely to have been pronounced [sēḫt]; the usual demotic word for "oasis" is *wḥy*, not *sḥ.t*, cf. also the hieroglyphic designation of Seth as *nb wḥ3t* "lord of the oasis" in Deir el-Haggar, see KAPER 1997, 58, and *Stḫ n wḥ3t* in Edfou, see LEITZ 2002, 695b).

S꜏ALOMONS & W꜏ORP 2009, 41; 88-89; and B꜏AGNALL & R꜏UFFINI 2012, nos. 113.3; 265.1; 183.3. Consequently, Σηχθις, which likewise occurs (cf. S꜏ALOMONS & W꜏ORP 2009, 93), is simply "Seth" used as a personal name. Apparently, for "euphonic" reasons, the sound combination [tḫ] in [pisētḫ] underwent a metathesis to [ḫt]. Inner Egyptian parallels for a similar metathesis (¹⁰) involving the sounds ḫ, s and t are ⲱⲋⲥ (and ⲱⲋⲋ) < ꜣsḫ, ꜣsḫ "to reap, to mow" (C꜏RUM 1939, 538b; Č꜏ERNÝ 1976, 232); Late Demotic wshy and similar (besides etymologically correct wsḫ.t) < wsḫ.t "hall" (*Chicago Demotic Dictionary* W, 164-167 [version 7 August 2009]; cf. ⲟⲩⲱϣⲥ < wsḫ "to be wide," ⲟⲩⲟⲥϧ in Akhmimic, for which see C꜏RUM 1939, 503b-504a; Č꜏ERNÝ 1976, 221); *ⲥⲱⲡⲧ, ⲥⲟⲡⲧⲝ "to choose" (besides regular ⲥⲱⲧⲡ) < sbt < stp "to choose" (C꜏RUM 1939, 365a; Č꜏ERNÝ 1976, 166). The case of ϩⲣⲃ (ϧⲉⲣⲉⲃ in Bohairic, ϩⲣⲃⲉ in Akhmimic) "form, likeness" < Demotic ḫrb, ḫbr < ḫprw is equally noteworthy. (¹¹)

Although there are no Demotic or Coptic spellings *sḫt / *ⲥⲉϩⲧ for "Seth," it seems probable that -σηχθις is not just a kind of adaptation to Greek phonology (and orthography), but rather a reflection of a (local?) Egyptian phonetic development or at least a variant of pronunciation. Interestingly, there are some isolated cases in hieroglyphic and hieratic texts where the second and third strong consonants in Seth's name have changed place:
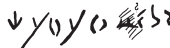
(1) [hieroglyphs] Libyan War inscription of Merenptah, 69 (K꜏ITCHEN 1982, 10:10; 19th Dynasty; listed by L꜏EITZ 2002, 691 and 694 [reference 62]);

(2) [hieroglyphs] *(sic)* Smaller Dakhleh stela, top (J꜏ANSEN-W꜏INKELN 2007, 364; 25th Dynasty, reign of Pianchi);

(3) [hieroglyphs] Smaller Dakhleh stela, 5 (J꜏ANSEN-W꜏INKELN 2007, 364);

(4) [hieroglyphs] hieratic ostracon Mut el-Kharab 0/20+32/1, 1 (V꜏ITTMANN 2012, 21 and fig. 1; Third Intermediate Period); with normal spelling [hieroglyphs] in line 2;

(5) [hieroglyphs] second and third occurrence of the god's name on a new year's bottle from Tell Marqula (Dakhleh) (Y꜏AMANI 2002, 427; 434-435). At the beginning of the short inscription (*Swtḫ wp rnp(t) nfr(t) n ḥm-nṯr Swtḫ n* (sic) *Swtḫ-jr-dj-s* "Seth who(?) opens a happy (new) year to the prophet of Seth, Sethirdis"), "Seth" is written [hieroglyphs].

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(10) For metatheses in Egyptian language, cf. P꜏EUST 1999, 190 (4.9.2.4); 193 (4.10). Carsten Peust, when questioned by me about the plausibility of an equation *Stḫ* = σηχθις / [sêcht] from the phonetic point of view, kindly confirmed that he considers it to be highly probable.

(11) C꜏RUM 1939, 701b-702a. Č꜏ERNÝ 1976, 292-293 does not mention the derivation from *ḫprw* but this can be considered as certain, cf. O꜏SING 1976, II 550 (420).

Admittedly, such spellings are exceptions, and example (5) betrays a certain lack of epigraphic competence, ([12]) the regular phonetic spelling in the Western oases, as already stated, being *sw-t-ḫ* ([13]) and *s-t-ḫ*. However, of course, a tendency towards rendering the traditional pronunciation of the god's name might have been at work even if the actual pronunciation was different. One might argue that the form Σηθ transm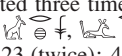itted by Plutarch (GRIFFITHS 1970, 631 index s.v. Seth), the identical designation of a man with the head of a donkey in magical papyrus Leiden I 384, IV 21 (JOHNSON 1975, 38-39 and pl. X), and Old Coptic cht derive directly from the shortened form *St*, *St̂* < *Swtj*. Against such an assumption one could object, however, that the place name *Šny-stḫ* (< *N3-šny-n-stḫ* "The trees of Seth," Chenoboskion / Qaṣr aṣ-Ṣayyād) developed to ϣⲉⲛⲉⲥⲏⲧ in Coptic (ČERNÝ 1976, 163; *Chicago Demotic Dictionary* Š, 159 [version 24 March 2010]), thus neutralizing the original difference between *Swtḫ* / *Stḫ* and *Swtj* / *St*. ([14])

(d) This individual is also mentioned in the Greek section. Demotic renderings of Apollonios are very numerous, cf. LÜDDECKENS *et al.* 1980-2000, 12-14.

(e) ↯ ⳡ∪⳽∕☉ 🐍 is *T3-šr.t-p3-'l'l* (the small oblique stroke after the *šr*-sign is probably not intentional). This name, which is also mentioned in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the tomb, ([15]) is typical for the Roman Panopolite, cf. LÜDDECKENS *et al.* 1980-2000, 1118; VLEEMING 2011, II 1062-1063 (index under *T3-šr.t-p3-'l'l*).

(f) This formula (with variants) is extremely common in mummy labels and other funerary objects such as papyri, sarcophagi and stelae; cf. ARLT 2011, 110-113; VLEEMING 2011, II 1091-1092 (index); for occurrences in graffiti cf. THISSEN 1989, 196-197; VLEEMING 2014, 325; 327.
The particular way of writing *ḏ.t* with the writhing serpent (⟨glyph⟩) instead of the normal *ḏ*-serpent (⟨glyph⟩) is not attested prior to the Roman period, cf. ERICHSEN 1954, 688; VLEEMING 2011, e.g. nos. 569; 606; 779; 794; 858 (all from the Panopolite nome, second to third centuries CE); Berlin P 8351, III 4 and V 2 (SMITH 1993, 122; first century CE, provenance unknown); HARKNESS, I 15 etc. (SMITH 2005, 358; first century CE, Middle Egypt).

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(12) Another epigraphic curiosity attested three times in two different monuments of approximately the same period is the misspelling ⟨glyph⟩, ⟨glyph⟩, with an oversized *t* that has assumed the shape of *r*, cf. JANSEN-WINKELN 2007, 23 (twice); 472 (156).

(13) In this way very frequently in the Great Dakhleh Stela, lines 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 etc. (JANSEN-WINKELN 2007, 23-25).

14) For the different spellings of the divine name "Seth" in Egyptian, cf. above note 7; TE VELDE 1977, 1-3; PEUST 1999, 184-185 (4.8.3).

(15) *Tj-šr(t)-pj-'r'r*, the element *'r'r* "shrewmouse" being written with two coiled snakes (⟨glyph⟩).

B. Tomb 6 (R.C.)

The two dipinti presented below were found on the walls of the inside chamber of Tomb 6. On the eastern and southern walls of the tomb, the two dipinti stand out (Fig. 7). They are written on the mud plaster with a brush in white paint, in large letters. They display texts in Epic Greek that attest to the will of the deceased to appear as a man of culture, familiar with Homer and other poets. There also might be a reference to Empedocles in the first *dipinto*. The hand of text 1 is more regular and well spaced than the other. Text 2 is written in a somewhat undisciplined hand, but the condition of the walls at the time of writing and the later deterioration prevent one from being sure about the identity of the writer. It is possible (albeit not certain) that a clumsier writer tried to imitate the style of the first hand. The hand of both texts is a Roman informal hand that is similar to a bookhand and could be assigned roughly to the second century CE. Some letters (for example Ω) are round, but some of the letters of ΕΘΟΣ (a test word) tend to become narrow, especially E. Both dipinti are written slowly.

1. Painted Greek inscription in white paint on the wall under the vault, at left from the door

Dimensions: 160 cm wide, 95 cm high; letters 14-18 cm high. Figg. 8-9.

	Κηρες πλ[α]	Κῆρες πλ[α-]
2	ζομεναι (a) εν	ζόμεναι ἐν
	γ ενι χωρω (b)	γ’ ἐνὶ χώρῳ
4	ευθυμει εν νε	εὐθύμει ἐν νε-
	καδεσσιν (c) αριπρεδε	κάδεσσιν, ἀριπρεπέ-
6	ς. (d)	ς.

"The Fates roaming (a) in one place; (b) distinguished man (d), be of good courage among the dead. (c)"

Commentary:

Some observations about metrics are interesting. ([16]) This text appears to be a combination of two incomplete hexameters. Κῆρες πλαζόμεναι represent a hemistich up to the caesura penthemimera. After a lacuna of 1 and ½ foot, ἐν γ’ ἐνὶ χώρῳ is a satisfactory clausula that starts at the bucolic caesura. In this text there appears to be a substitution of ἐνὶ χώρῳ, which often occurs in poetry in a similar position and with ἐνί preposition, with ἐνὶ χώρῳ with ἐνί numeral. Such a replacement might have happened for a literary effect that seems beyond the capacity of a modest writer of a *dipinto* in this location. This text is heavily Homeric but might also contain a reference to a text of Empedocles, the Presocratic philosopher of the

(16) I thank Alain Martin for these suggestions including the possibility that this text shows a reference to Empedocles.

fifth century BC. His fragments 120-122 D show that he envisaged every sort of harmful and pernicious powerful beings present in Hades, e.g. 121, Φόνος τε Κότος τε καὶ ἄλλων ἔθνεα Κηρῶν. Empedocles appears on papyrus. A. Martin and O. Primavesi did the *edition princeps* of the great papyrus of Strasbourg from the late first century AD in 1999. Then in 2009 a much more modest fragment of the *Physica* dating to the second century was published, *P.Oxy*. LXXIII 4938.

Traditionally the Fates (Κήρ, Κῆρες) were female spirits of death. Hesiod in *Theogony* 211-225 mentions that Night bore "black Fate" and the "avenging Fates" together with other creatures like Blame, Woe, Deceit, or Nemesis. All these goddesses appear dark, angry, and avenging. In the *Shield of Heracles* (248-257), an archaic Epic work attributed to Hesiod, there is a longer and darker description of the Fates. They hover over dead and dying men in the battlefield, gnashing their white teeth, eager to drink blood. When they find one, they clasp their claws about him and send his soul to Hades. After drinking his blood, they throw him behind them in search of another dead.

In Homer the Fates are always associated with "dark death," but they are mentioned rapidly, with fewer details, and appear less fierce, as in *Iliad*, e.g., 2.834, in which "the fates of black death are leading men." There is an interesting reference in *Odyssey* 11.171, because it is located in Hades, when Odysseus meets his mother. Homer was preeminent in education from the early years. Educated people and students at the grammarian's and sophist's levels read the *Iliad* in its entirety but did not read the whole *Odyssey*. They did not seem to care for the folktale adventures of Odysseus but liked to revisit the Homeric protagonists as in book 4 and 11 (see CRIBIORE 2001, 194-97). The Κῆρες also appear in tragedy, especially in Euripides (e.g., *Hercules* 481), another author who was beloved in Egypt.

There are two possible ways to interpret the text of this dipinto. According to one, which follows tradition, the Fates are roaming in or around the tomb. They are terrifying spirits from which the dead must protect himself. Someone (and it is unclear who) exhorts him not to lose heart in going down to the Underworld because he will distinguish himself among the dead. This is an interesting observation: the owner of this imposing tomb belonged to the upper class and would have a position of privilege in the Underworld too. A second way of interpretation is probably less likely and would concern Fates that are rather benign beings. They might address the deceased to encourage him as he is going down to the Underworld. In this case, the dipinto would show a new way of treating the Κῆρες, emphasizing their gentle side and the fact that they would not be hostile to the dead. These Fates would be very different from the avenging spirits of the *Shield of Heracles* that are thirsty for blood, and they do not even fully resemble those appearing in Homer. They would be interested in the souls' destiny after death. In this case, the vision of the pagan Underworld would be tamed; the dipinto is surely too early for Christianity to play a role here.

(a) πλαζομεναι "roving, wandering" is another Epic word. It occurs once in the *Iliad* 10.91, several times in the *Odyssey*, e.g., 16.64, and in fragment 20 of Empedocles.

(b) χωρω "space, place," preceded by the preposition ἐνί is present very often in Apollonius Rhodius, although this writer took it from Homer, where it is used in both Epics, e.g., *Il.* 3.344 and *Od.* 10. 211, 253, and 271. See also Empedocles fr. 121, ἀτερπέα χῶρον.

(c) Νεκαδεσσιν, from νεκάς, νεκάδος in *Il.* 5.886 for "heaps of the dead." The meaning slightly evolved into "the dead" as in *AP* 15.40.43.

(d) αριπρεδες, read αριπρεπης. This is an Epic term used in the *Odyssey*, e.g. 8.176 where it applies to outstanding physical aspect or in 8.390 to "glorious" kings. The exchange of Π and Δ is very peculiar and would not seem to depend on phonetic spelling. It is possible that the writer did not know this adjective and was copying from a model that was written confusedly at that point so that he also exchanged E and H.

2. Second painted Greek inscription, also in white paint on mud plaster, on the wall to the left of the door as seen from inside

Dimensions: 50 cm wide, 115 cm high; letters about 14 cm high. Fɪɢ. 10.

The text preserved is of limited extent. Some lines (perhaps two) are missing on the top, and something is also missing on the right. It is unclear if the text continued on the other side of the door, where traces remain of white paint. This text is in worse condition than the other and shows various marks and scratches that are not writing, as for example that before "unharmed" in the first line. In comparison to that of text 1, this hand is less capable in handling the brush, so that the strokes are quite thick.

	αβλ[—4—] (a)	ἀβλ[ηχρός?] or ἀβλ[αβής?],
2	ανακτ[ος] (b)	ἄνακτ[ος]
	Οσιριδ	Ὀσίριδ-
4	ος εν β[α]	ος εν β[α-]
	σιληο[ις] (c)	σιλήο[ις].

"… mild (or unharmed) (a), in the palace (c) of the lord (b) Osiris."

Commentary:

The mutilations of this text prevent one from seeing a clear metrical structure. Ὀσίριδος ἐν βασιλήοις, however, would fill the second hemistich, after the trochaic caesura.

(a) One possible restoration of line 1 might be with the adjective ἀβληχρός. This could refer to a "mild, easy" death that the man buried here encountered.

This word appears often in Homer but one reference stands out. In *Od.* 11.135, in the Underworld Teiresias appears to Odysseus and predicts that he will encounter "a gentle death" in old age, surrounded by his prosperous people. It is also possible, however, that the adjective might have been ἀβλαβής "unharmed." In this case the text would not refer to what happened to the dead before entering the Underworld but to his descent there. The expression would refer to text 1 and specifically to the fact that the Fates did not get hold of the body of the dead and did not mangle it.

(b) The appellative ἄναξ, "lord, master," is applied to Osiris in a very unusual combination. This word occurs very frequently in Epic poetry (Homer and Apollonius Rhodius) and in tragedy, in Euripides but also in Sophocles. It refers to the gods, especially Apollo and Zeus, but sometimes to men too, as when it distinguishes Agamemnon as the supreme chief of the army in Homer (e.g., *Iliad* 1.442). Native cults continued to flourish in Roman Egypt. Plutarch in *Isis and Osiris*, a work that does not have much originality, described the myths related to the afterlife concerning Osiris and the festival in his honor. Mortuary cults were central to domestic religion, and the tradition of Osiris was assimilated into local religion (FRANKFURTER 1998, 73 and *passim*).

(c) In line 5 there is an iotacism, and one should read βασιλείοις instead of βασιλήοις. But why should Osiris reside in a kingly palace, and where would this be? The expression ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις (but without reference to Osiris) appears often in Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica*, e.g., 2.7.1. It is very unlikely that this writer of the first century BCE had a direct influence on this text, but he may have inspired Plutarch, where the expression occurs very frequently (e.g., *Lucullus* 2.7.6). The first two books of Diodorus in fact contain material in common with *Isis and Osiris*. Plutarch repeatedly calls Osiris "king" (e.g., 354 F6). Since Osiris was eminently a god of the afterlife, his palace must have been in the Underworld.

These two dipinti are a striking confirmation of the syncretism characteristic of Roman religion in Egypt. They are also a moving testimony of the importance of education, which followed an individual from his early years to the tomb. The man buried here may have given directives on how he wanted his tomb to be adorned, or perhaps his descendants took care that his culture might be recognized on his walls. But there is another hypothesis that might not be less true. Homer, Euripides (and even more Empedocles) were cultural tokens that distinguished a person of some wealth and status. Whatever the realistic level of education of the departed, he valued highly the aura of distinction that culture could bestow on him.

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