ERSIE MANTZOULINOU-RICHARDS

FROM SYROS (III): FORGED KABEIRIAN EX-VOTOS


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FROM SYROS (III):1
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The existence of a Kabeirion on the island of Syros is well attested by the evidence of a large variety of numismatic inscriptions (CYPΙΩΝ KΑΒΙΡΩΝ, or such)2 which indicate that the cult was dominant on the island, especially in the imperial period, rivaled only by that of Isis. Some evidence even suggests that there may have been more than one sanctuary of the Great Gods, but no diggings were ever done to confirm this.

In 1989 the author discovered a group of small inscribed votive tablets (7 marble, 1 clay) in the stockroom of the Archaeological Museum of Syros (Hermoupolis). Most of the tablets have a small vase in relief. The craftsmanship of the carving and reliefs is poor, but obviously done by the same hand.

After closer examination of the tablets, it became obvious that they were forgeries. According to the museum's inventory book, the provenance of all the tablets described below is Syros, and, because of their uniqueness, it seemed worthwhile to attempt to trace their accession to the museum, but these efforts were unsuccessful.3 Nonetheless, the fact that the tablets were assigned official inventory number(s) and had been displayed, and the fact that the forgeries may have been based on now-lost authentic models would seem to warrant their publication. This also poses a possibility that similar genuine and/or fake tablets exist unidentified in both public and private collections.

The sources used for the Syros forger's "borrowed" texts were Diogenes Laertius' collection of epigrams on the Syriot philosopher Pherecydes, and parts of two inscriptions (Inscr.Graecae on Syros [XII.5]), one of which he copied from the printed text (IG XII 5.678), even reproducing faithfully the editor's epigraphical brackets and word hyphenation. This tablet (no. 2 below) is the basis for condemning the others as forgeries since they are all inscribed by the same hand.

In the descriptive list that follows, tablet number 1, since it contains the names of the gods, is the "pilot tablet" that relates the others to the Kabeirian cult.

1. The "pilot tablet": oval white marble tablet (Plate VII a). Height 0,165, width 0,12. In relief a column with a pitcher (chous) on top. At the bottom the inscription:

ΘΕΩΝ ΚΑΒΕΙΡΩΝ

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3 For problems concerning the inventory books of the Hermoupolis Museum, see ZPE 93,1992,88, note 2.
The marble of this tablet is worn more than the others and is the only tablet referring to the Kabeiri. (Inv.no. 317, old no. E.28).

2. Oblong white marble tablet with rounded upper corners (Plate VII b). Height 0,15, width 0,12. In relief a two-handled vase and underneath an inscription with dried red slip in the letters. (Inv.no. 315, old no. E.33).

ENΘAΔΕΤΗΝΙΕΡΑΝ | ΚΣΕΦΑΛΗΝΚΑΤΑ | ΓΑΙΑΚΑΛΥΠΤΕΙ (hole) | ΠΕΛΙΟΝ-Κ-Ο | ΜΟΥΣΑΙΟΣ | ΦΙΛΟΠΙΑΤΡΙ

Copied from IG, XII.5.678, lines 13, 14, 15:

ENΘΑΔΕ ΤΗΝ ΙΕΡΑΝ Κ[EΠΑ],Λ[ΗΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΓΑΙΑ ΚΑΛΥΠΤΕΙ]
ΑΜΠΕΛΙΟΝ, ΔΟ-------------------------------
ΜΟΥΣΑΙΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΠΙΑΤΡΙ[Σ-----------------------]

The forger replaced the first bracket with a C (=ΚΣΕΦΑΛΗΝ), ignored the other brackets and copied part of the hyphenation. (In the museum stockroom, Inv.no. 352).

3. Roughly rectangular white marble tablet with rounded corners (Plate VII c). Height 0,14, width 0,11. In the center a one-handled vase in relief. Above it the inscription

ΧΑΙΡΕ
(Vase)
NEΙΚΟΚΡΑΤΗ
ΦΙΛΑΡΓΥΡΟΥ

(Inv.no. 314, old no. E.32)

The forger omitted the Γ in the father's name. Words copied from a funerary stele on display in the Hermoupolis Museum (Inv.no. 324). The stele inscription reads:

NEΙΚΟΚΡΑΤΗ ΦΙΛΑΡΓΥΡΟΥ | ΚΑΙ ΠΩΛΑΛΗΣ ΥΕΙ ΧΡΗΣΤΕ | ΧΑΙΡΕ (IG, XII.5.691).

4. Oblong white marble tablet with a wide relief of a stamnos (Plate VII d, left). Height 0,15, width 0,105. Above the vase the number (?) I and under the vase the initials ΔΠ. (Inv.no. 311, old #E.29). This tablet and numbers 5 and 6 below are related.

5. Similar to the one above with the number II above the vase and the same initials below it (Plate VII e, center). (Inv.no. 312, old #E.30).

6. Small square white marble tablet with the relief of what resembles a kantharos vase with a lid. (Plate VII f, right). Height 0,10, width 0,105. Number III above the vase and under it the full name,

ΔΩΡΑΠΡΙΑΜ δ

In order to fit the last letters a ligature δ was used instead of ΟΥ in the father's name. The name appears to be in either the genitive or vocative case, the nominative being Δωράκζ.

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4 For a similar case, see also B.Corbett and G.Woodhead, "A forger of graffiti", BSA L (1955),251-262, Plates 50-53).
Although not recorded on Syros, both names have been recorded in the area of the Aegean.\footnote{P.Fraser and E.Matthews, \textit{A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names}, Oxford (1987) I, 144. The name Δοράς appears in Amorgos, Kalymnos and Samos. For the rare name of Πρίμος see IG XII.5.178 (SEG XXVII.527) \textquotesingle\textquotesingle Αντίδοτος Πρίμου Πάριος.} Inv.no. 313, old no. E.31).

7. Small oblong tablet with a raised double frame on four sides. (Plate VII g). Height 0,175, width 0,125. The inscription text is from Diog.Laertius I.120 (epigram on Pherecydes by Douris).

ΦΕΡΕΚΥΔΗΝ | ΤΗΣ | ΣΩΦΙΑΣ ΠΙΑΣΗΣ | τής σωφίς πάσης ἐν ἐμοί τέλος ἦν δέ
ΕΝ | ΕΜΟΙ | ΤΕΛΟΣ ΗΝ | ΔΕ | ΤΙ | ΠΛΕΙΟΝ | τι πλεῖον, Πυθαγόρη τῶμῳ λέγε ταῦθ',
ΠΥΘ | ΑΓΟΡΗ | ΤΩΜΟ | ΔΕ | ΓΕ | ΤΟΥΘ | ὅτι πρῶτος ἀπάντων ἔστιν ἢν ἢ Ἔλλαδα
ΟΠΕΡ | ΠΡΩΤΟΣ | ΑΠΑΝ | ΤΩΝ | ΕΣΤΗΝΑΝ | γῆν· οὗ ψεύδομαι ὧδε ἀγορεύων. (Loeb)
ΕΛΛΑΔΑ | ΓΗΝ | ΟΥ | ΨΕΥΔΟΜΑΙΩΔΣΑΙ

The forger added Pherecydes name, used word spacing and made copying mistakes. Lack of space prevented him from finishing the epigram which he ended with three smaller meaningless letters. (Inv.no. 316, old no. E.37).

8. A clay tablet made in a mold with the relief of a youth's head in profile looking left. (Plate VII h). The right lower corner and bottom are missing, the remainder of the tablet is broken in two matching pieces. Height 0,15, width 0,11, thickness 0,02. The carved inscription appears under the head in four lines and was copied from one verse of an epigram from the same inscription as Tablet 2 above. (Inv.no. 271, old no. E.41).

IG,XII.5.678, v.20

ΠΟΥΛΥΤΙ [ | πουλύ τι πασάων προφερεστάτη ἐσκε...etc.
ΣΑΩΝ [ |
ΦΕΡΕ [ |
Η [ |

This last forgery is excellent and foolproof. Had it been found by itself and properly edited, it would probably have been added to Syriot prosopographia without question.

Athens
Ersie Mantzoulinou-Richards
a)–h) Votivtafeln aus Syros (Archaeological Museum of Syros)