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FROM SYROS (III): FORGED KABEIRIAN EX-VOTOS

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FROM SYROS (III):¹ FORGED KABEIRIAN EX-VOTOS

The existence of a Kabeirion on the island of Syros is well attested by the evidence of a large variety of numismatic inscriptions (CYPIΩN KABIPΩN, 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

¹ E.Mantzoulinou-Richards: "From Syros (I): Polybius the Architect", ZPE 87,1991,35-36, Tafel Ia; "From Syros (II): Three more stelae of the Hermoupolis Museum", ZPE 93,1992,88-90, Tafel III.

² Warwick Wroth, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Crete and the Aegean Islands* (in the British Museum), pp.124-126, nos. 13, 14, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27 as typical examples.

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).

ΕΝΘΑΔΕΤΗΝΙΕΡΑΝ | ΚΣΕΦΑΛΗΝΚΑΤΑ | ΓΑΙΑΚΑΛΥΠΤΕΙ (hole) | ΠΕΛΙΟΝ-Κ-Ο | ΜΟΥΣΑΙΟΣ | ΦΙΛΟΠΑΤΡΙ

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

ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΤΗΝ ΙΕΡΑΝ Κ[ΕΦΑ]Λ[ΗΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΓΑΙΑ ΚΑΛΥΠΤΕΙ]
ΑΜΠΕΛΙΟΝ, ΛΟ -----
ΜΟΥΣΑΙΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΠΑΤΡΙ[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)

ΝΕΙΚΟΚΡΑΤΗ

ΦΙΛΑΡ(Γ)ΥΡΟΥ

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

The forger omitted the Γ in the father's name.⁴ Words copied from a funerary stele on display in the Hermoupolis Museum (Inv.no. 324). The stele inscription reads:

ΝΕΙΚΟΚΡΑΤΗ ΦΙΛΑΡΓΥΡΟΥ | ΚΑΙ ΠΩΛΛΗΣ ΥΙΕ 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 ὄ

In order to fit the last letters a ligature ὄ 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 Δωρᾶς.

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.⁵ 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 ΣΟΦΙΑΣ ΠΑΣΗΣ	τῆς σοφίης πάσης ἐν ἔμοι τέλος ἦν δέ
ΕΝ ΕΜΟΙ ΤΕΛΟΣ ΗΝ ΔΕ ΤΙ ΠΛΕΙΟΝ	τι πλεῖον, Πυθαγόρη τὼμῳ λέγε ταῦθ',
ΠΥΘ ΑΓΟΡΗ ΤΩΜΟ ΔΕ ΓΕ ΤΟΥΘ	ὅτι πρῶτος ἀπάντων ἔστιν ἄν' Ἑλλάδα
ΟΠΕΡ ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΑΠΑΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΣΤΗΝΑΝ	γῆν· οὐ ψεύδομαι ὧδ' 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).

ΠΟΥΛΥΤΙ [
ΣΑΩΝ [
ΦΕΡΕ [
Η [
[

IG,XII.5.678, v.20

πουλύ τι πασάων προφερεστάτη ἔσκε...etc.

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

Athens

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⁵ P.Fraser and E.Matthews, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, Oxford (1987) I, 144. The name Δωρῶς appears in Amorgos, Kalymnos and Samos. For the rare name of Πρίαμος see IG XII.5.178 (SEG XXVII.527) Ἀντίδοτος Πριάμου Πάριος.



a)



b)



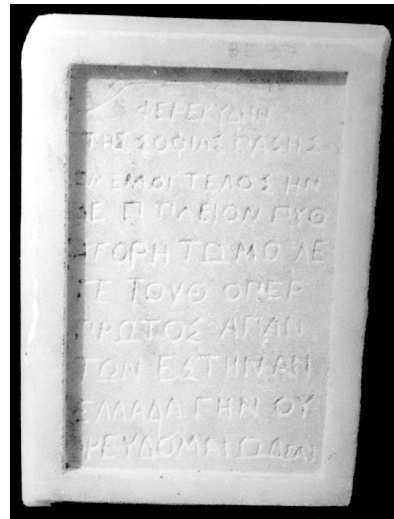
c)



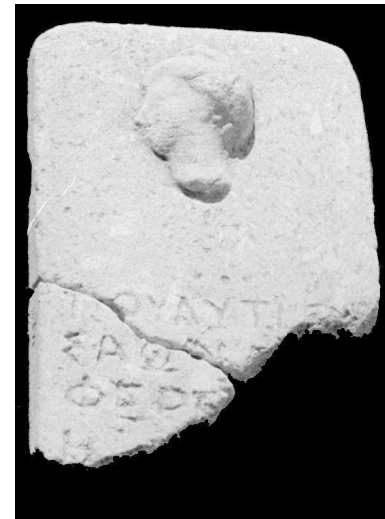
d)

e)

f)



g)



h)

a)–h) Votivtafeln aus Syros (Archaeological Museum of Syros)