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THE EPISTAPH OF BISHOP MARTYROPHOROS


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In the editio princeps,¹ the last two lines read:
22. ἀπὸ μαρτ(ίς)ν ὥσε ᾲΔ, Μεχείρ ἄμ. ἸϹ² γ’ λ.ο. ἄνα–
23. παςο(ν) ἡμέρα ΤΡΒΜΟΑΠΙϹΔ

A. Łajtar has significantly improved the reading of the first segment:⁴ ἀπὸ μαρτ(ίς)ν ὥσε ᾲΔ, Μεχείρ ΚΡ λ.ο.””im Jahre 875 der Martyrerära, am dreundzwanzigsten (Tage des Monats Mecheir’ (18. Februar 1159)”. He notes that ΜΕΧΕΙΡΑ is Old Nubian and stands for ΜΕΧΕΙΡ– vehement. In the next line he

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² ΙϹ in the transcription; lunate sigma on the plate.
³ ΣΔ in the transcription; lunate sigma on the plate.
⁴ “Varia Nubica (I-II)”, ZPE 104 (1994) 203-204.
reads ἡμέρα PARSEVAL, tentatively resolves ἑρμίτη [i.e. ἡμέρα τὸ τίτπ — "(er starb) am dritten Tag (der Woche)", d.h. am Mittwoch"], and convincingly suggests that ἙΡ could just as easily be ˘ΣΦ, an Old Nubian stem meaning "to live". On the basis of parallels, he writes: "Vielleicht sollen wir ... dieses Fragment der Inschrift in dem Sinne 'Die Jahre seines Lebens waren + ein Numerale’ lesen, aber das mögliche Numerale ἙΝ ganz am Ende gibt einen so geringen Wert an, daß es sich nicht um die Lebenszeit des Bischofs handeln kann".

Building upon Łajtar’s interpretation, I propose: ἡμέρα ἑρμίτης τὸ τίτπ ἑρς — "the years of his enthronement are 2, those in which he lived 54".

ἡμέρα: “lifetime, years” — see Hägg (above, n. 1) 59.6

ἐρμίτης: cf. H. Kortenbeutel, “Ein griechischer Grabstein aus Nubien”, ZNTW 37 (1938) 61-64, where he publishes an inscription whose final clause reads: ἑρμίτης οὐκίριος οὐκριγουλον ὁ ὀβλὸ “and the years in which he lived are 73”, and J.W.B. Barns in P.L. Shinnie and H.N. Chittick, Ghazali, A Monastery in the Northern Sudan, Sudan Antiquities Service: Occasional Papers 5 (Khartum 1961) 94 No. 79 τακκά ἑρκέας ἐκείνης ὁ ὀβλὸ “and the years in which he lived are 81”. These two texts suggest that the engraver’s ἑρς is an error for the expected preterite II subjunctive: ἑρς ἕν <ὄ>, which we are to understand as "(the years) in which he lived". The engraver appears inadvertently to have set over the ὁ the stroke intended for the second ὀ and to have omitted the intervening οὐ.

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