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A GREEK EPITAPH IN THE BIERZO DISTRICT MUSEUM, SPAIN

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Since November 1997 the Bierzo District Museum in Ponferrada (León) in Spain has held a funerary stele with a Greek epitaph (Lám. IX). The present short report is intended to give the complete text of this. A detailed study of other matters relating to the epigraphy, linguistics, iconography, history and so forth of the exhibit will have to await another occasion<sup>1</sup>.

The Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum XXXVIII (1988), no. 1918, published this inscription on the basis of the photograph in an auction catalogue (Sotheby's Sales Catalogue: Antiquities, London, 12 December 1988, 52/53, no. 95) without indicating its provenance or confirming its second-century date. The inaccuracies and lacunae in the text given render it necessary to undertake a further reading, which can be offered here as an outcome of direct scrutiny of the inscription itself.

The text consists of four lines in capital letters. The measurements in millimetres of the piece as a whole are 655 high by 425 wide by 165 deep, at most, for the base and 105 for the upper part. The field where the inscription is set measures 85 high by 353 wide; the length of line 1 is 280, of lines 2 and 3 is 350 and of line 4 is 320. The decorative motifs are an arch measuring 430 high by 350 wide, and figures which are 340 high by 263 wide.

The text reads as follows:

ΣΟΡΤΙΑΣΚΑΙΣΑΣΙΣ  
ΕΠΙΤΗΟΥΓΑΤΡΙΠΙΜΟΝΙΚΑΙ  
ΣΟΡΤΙΑΣΕΠΙΤΗΑΔΕΛΦΗ  
ΚΙΑΠΑΡΑΜΕΝΩΝΗΡΩΝΙ

Σορτίας καὶ Σάσις  
ἐπὶ τῇ θυγατρὶ Πίμονι καὶ  
Σορτίας ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδελφῇ  
Κία παραμένων Ἡρώνι

The epitaph is clear for the most part. It is a memorial set up by Sortias and Sasis to their daughter Pimonis and by Sortias to his sister Kia. The names “Sortias”, “Sasis” and “Kia” are all documented in the ancient region of Lycia<sup>2</sup>. There is no evidence for “Pimonis” as such, but in the same area, Lycia, personal names with a similar formation are found as happens for the feminine form Σέμονις<sup>3</sup>. Thus, it would not appear too risky to advance the idea that the inscription might come from this region in Asia Minor.

The difficulty of the text lies in understanding its ending, παραμένων Ἡρώνι, where both the first word and the second lend themselves to various possible interpretations. παραμένων may be taken as a proper noun, “Paramenon” or “Parmenon”<sup>4</sup>, or as a participle of the verb παραμένω, “to remain faithful”. It was, indeed, from this verb, used in a legal sense to refer to those slaves who had obtained their liberty but were still bound to serve their former master, that the personal name just mentioned, “Parmenon” or “Paramenon”, (“True”, “Loyal”) was derived being a name typical of slaves<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> I should here like to express my thanks to the Director of the Bierzo District Museum, Jesús Courel, for supplying me with the measurements of the piece, to its owner, Plácido Barrios, and to professors Miguel García Figuerola, Manuel García Teijeiro, Gaspar Morocho Gayo, and Emilio Suárez de la Torre for their valuable assistance and advice.

<sup>2</sup> For Σορτίας, see *Tituli Asiae Minoris* II.2, nos. 544 and 836; for Κία, see *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes* III, no. 158. L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Personennamen*, Prague 1964, also includes documentation of Sortias (no. 1453) and Sasis (no. 1379-2), but in a masculine form.

<sup>3</sup> Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Personennamen*, no. 1399.

<sup>4</sup> There are numerous parallels for this name. See, for example, P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews (eds.), *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, Oxford 1987, s. u., for the Aegean islands, *SEG* XXXIII (1983) no. 511 (Macedonia), *SEG* XL (1990), no. 992 (Milasa), *SEG* XLII (1992), no. 794, and others.

<sup>5</sup> On the arrangement called παραμονή, see the work by W. L. Westermann, The Paramone as a General Service Contract, in *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 1 (1948) 9–50; A. E. Samuel, The Role of Paramone Clauses in Ancient

If this is a proper noun, then there is an epitaph to a third person, dedicated by someone called Paramenon to someone else called Heron. This is the view taken by the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, although, as I see it, there are some difficulties with it. The grammatical structure of this putative last dedication does not follow the same pattern as the previous two, since it lacks the preposition, the article, any indication of relationship, and even the conjunction *καί* which would link it with the preceding phrases *ἐπὶ τῇ θυγατρὶ* and *ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδελφῇ*, and this cannot be ascribed to a lack of space, forcing abbreviation of the dedicatory expression, since there is still a wide right-hand margin remaining.

It seems more likely that *παραμένων* is a participle referring back to the person whose name starts the inscription, Sortias, expressing his loyalty and connexion to Heron. This Heron<sup>6</sup> could equally well be Sortias's former master or a god with whom the dedicator had some time of special relationship. Heron is not one of the gods that appear in some manumission documents drawn up under the auspices of some divinity, such as Apollo, sometimes Artemis, and even Serapis or Isis<sup>7</sup>. The second possibility would be rather odd, since Heron is a warrior god, one shown riding a horse in breastplate and helmet. His cult spread from the second century B.C. onwards, mostly in Egypt, although its origin seems to have been either Thracian or Anatolian<sup>8</sup>.

In conclusion this epitaph can be seen as one further instance of the institution of *παραμονή*, which survived into the first few centuries A.D. in Roman Greece, and even in the Eastern Provinces<sup>9</sup>, although on a much reduced scale in comparison with the famous second century B.C. manumissions from Delphi.

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Documents, in *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 15 (1965) 221–311; K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, Cambridge 1978, chapter III; B. Adams, *Paramoné und verwandte Texte. Studien zum Dienstvertrag im Rechte der Papyri*, Berlin 1964; J. Hengstl, *Private Arbeitsverhältnisse freier Personen in den hellenistischen Papyri bis Diokletian*, Bonn 1972; and W. Waldstein, *Operae libertorum. Untersuchungen zur Dienstpflicht freigelassener Sklaven*, Stuttgart 1986.

<sup>6</sup> The personal name Heron is very well known in Greek inscriptions from Roman Imperial times. See, for instance, J. Bingen, *Epigraphica* (Thrace, Rhodes), *ZPE* 6 (1982) 183; D. Hagedorn, *Zur Verwendung von υἱός und θυγάτηρ vor dem Vatersnamen in Urkunden römischer Zeit*, *ZPE* 80 (1990) 227–278 and *SEG XXXVII* (1987), no. 1652.

<sup>7</sup> See P. Roesch and J.M. Fossey, *Neuf actes d'affranchissement de Chéronée*, *ZPE* 29 (1978) 126.

<sup>8</sup> On the cult of Heron, see E. Will, *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Vol. 1, Munich and Zurich, 1990, pp. 391–394. Further epigraphical references are gathered in H. Wankel, R. Merkelbach, et al., *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*, Bonn 1979, Vol. I no. 3132 (*SEG XXXIV* (1984), no. 1132).

<sup>9</sup> Rome together with some specific regions in the Near East also had parallels to this arrangement among their models of slavery and the relationship between masters and freedmen. See G. Fabre, *Libertas*, Rome, 1981 pp. 7 and 132.



Epitaph of the Bierzo District Museum, Detail (Photography of IMAGEN M.A.S.)  
J.-M. Nieto Ibáñez, pp. 173–174