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NYNPHION

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## NYNPHION

In *Archeologia Classica* 17 (1965) p. 193, G. Manganaro published the text of an inscription found by P. Orsi in Monte Casale.<sup>1</sup> It is a limestone slab, 53 cm. long, 13 cm. high, 6 cm. deep, split down the middle. The letters are 1 cm. high, and their archaic form suggests a date not later than 6th century B.C. The editor reads the following text:

Καλ(λ)ικράτῆς Κάλος ὁ το(ῶ) [Καλ(λ)]ίπ(π)ου νόθος, Αἴσα Μουνφί-  
 ονος τοκῆς, ἦοι κ'ἔλαβον χῶρε(ν) ἦοι, ἠὸς μέ[λ]ῆν ἄμεινο-  
 ν καὶ ἠὸς ἄμ' εἶμαι (= εἶναι [*sic*]).

He comments as follows: "Sembra trattarsi senz'altro di un documento – anche se metrico – di natura giuridica, relativo all'acquisto, da parte di due genitori, di un terreno per la sepoltura (χώρη!) del figlio Μουνφίων – a mio avviso corruzione di Μορφίων – e di sè stessi." This is a strange inscription ("in qualche punto lascia perplessi" says the editor);<sup>2</sup> it is also an interesting inscription. I want to emphasize the name Αἴσα, up to the present not documented, and the funerary significance of χῶρη, which is missing in dictionaries.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, however, I am going to concentrate on the name Μουνφίων.

The lettering of the inscription is like that of other archaic inscriptions of the Syracusan area: trident *chi*, *rho caudata*, close *het* etc. The most peculiar features are the *my* and the *ny*. The *ny* appears in three different forms: Ν, Ν and ΝΛ as it is seen in the infinitive ΕΙΛΛΑΙ.<sup>4</sup> The *my* is indicated by the sign ΝΝ, as we see in ΝΝΕΛΕΝ, ΑΝΝΕΙΝΟΝ and ΑΝΝ'. This letter, created to avoid any confusion with the ΝΛ (= /n/), has no parallels in Greek epigraphy. These considerations help to interpret correctly the name ΝΝΟΥΝΦΙΟΝΟΣ. It is rather difficult to assume that this comes from Μορφίων, as the editor proposes,<sup>5</sup> because this explanation supposes a phonetic evolution not known in Greek. We cannot even consider the Μουνφίται which Fr. Ribezzo read in an inscription of Mazara del Vallo since M. Segre showed that the correct reading was ΜΙΟΥΝΦΗΛΙ, i.e. Μ(ἄρκον) Ἰούν(ιον) Φήλι(κα).<sup>6</sup> As we have seen, in the alphabet of this inscription the phoneme /m/ is shown by the sign ΝΝ, while ΝΛ indicates /n/. If we accept that

<sup>1</sup> Today the identification of M. Casale with the ancient Κασμῆναι (a Syracusan military settlement founded in the second half of the 7th century) is accepted. See A. Di Vita "Un contributo all'urbanistica greca di Sicilia: Casmene", *Atti VII cong. int. arch. class.* (II), Rome 1961, pp. 69-77. The inscription today is in the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Siracusa, n. 50114. My thanks to Dott.ssa Concetta Ciurcina who allowed me to see it.

<sup>2</sup> Also see J. and L. Robert, BE 1967 n. 709, and L. Dubois, *Inscriptions grecques dialectales de Sicile*, Rome 1989, n. 104.

<sup>3</sup> I have found it only in Athens, IG I suppl. 491, 32 (Φιλίππη. / Ἐμ(μ)ένῳ χῶρα, "ita recte videtur haec legisse Koehler, χῶραν de sepulturae loco dictum interpretatus", Kirchoff *ad loc.*) and in Catania, IG XIV 464.

<sup>4</sup> The same letter is found in the inscription of a Sicilian caduceus (or weight) published by L. Robert (*Collection Froehner* n. 83), whose alphabet F. Bechtel studied (*KZ* 46 [1914] p. 294). In fact, in this object the *ny* has four strokes ("so dass man das Zeichen für ein *My* hält"), and it differs only from the *my* because of the shorter length of the fourth stroke.

<sup>5</sup> A. Landi, *Antroponimia siciliota*, Rome 1981 p. 82 ambiguously repeats this explanation: "Nome corrotto per Μορφίων? (Manganaro)".

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Ribezzo *RIGI* 17 (1933) pp. 49-50 and M. Segre *Mondo Classico* 4 (1934) pp. 68-70. Remarks of G. de Sanctis about this case in *Rivista di Filologia* 12 (1934) p. 134 and the answer of Ribezzo in *RIGI* 18 (1934) 114-6.

EI/ΛAI equals εἶναι, we should accept that ΛΟΥΝΦΙΟΝΟΣ equals Νουνφίονος. This name can be best explained as the Doric form of the name Νυνφίων (where <Y> = /u/), written thus by a speaker of Ionic dialect (where <Y> = /ü/) who used <OY> in order to show the *u*-pronunciation of the Doric form of the name.<sup>7</sup> The fact that this inscription was written in a Ionic dialect (l. 2 χώρα, l. 3 εἶναι) and was found in a Syracusan place (and therefore of Doric dialect) supports this hypothesis.

This interpretation must be completed with two supplementary clarifications:

a) It is generally accepted that the Ionic of Euboea preserved the *u*-pronunciation of <Y>; given that all the Ionic colonies in Sicily were Euboeans, this phonetic datum seems to contradict my interpretation. Nevertheless, recently it has been recognized that the available documents imply only that <Y> had the value of /u/ when the Euboean colonization occurred (8th - 7th cent.), not that the shift /u/ > /ü/ did not take place later.<sup>8</sup> In any case, we may assume that the later arrival of other Ionians brought the sound /ü/.

b) The *υ* of the word νόμῳ was short (cf. the accentuation of Νύμφις). This fact could contradict the interpretation Νουνφίον = Νυνφίων because it supposes the use of the digraph <OY>, normally used to indicate a diphthong or a long vowel, to demonstrate the short /u/. But the same phenomenon is found in a Corinthian vase of the 6th cent. B.C.: Ἀχιλλεοῦς (Kretschmer *Vaseninschr.* p. 38), where <OY> denotes the second element (short) of the diphthong /eu/, and, in Boeotic, in Νουμόδωρος (IG VII 3184).

Thus the mysterious Μουνφίων disappears. Νυνφίων is an ordinary name but only sparsely documented. The only examples that I know of are Σωκράτης Νυμφίονος of Rhodes (IG XII 1, 49, 53 = Sylloge<sup>3</sup> 619,53) and *L. Argentarius Nymphio* in a Latin inscription from Spain (CIL II 5493). The inscription from Casmenae provides the oldest example of this name and, at the same time, an early testimony of the cult of the nymphs in the Syracusan territory.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The digraph <OY> in this inscription indicates /o:/, or even /u:/, as we see in the genitive -π(π)ου.

<sup>8</sup> M. del Barrio "Consideraciones sobre la evolución /u/ > /ü/ del jónico-ático a partir del análisis de algunas formas euboicas", *Cuad.Fil.Clás.* 24 (1990), esp. 178-9.

<sup>9</sup> With regard to the rest of the inscription, I would propose a new reading:

[K]αλ(λ)ικράτῆς καλός. οἶο[ ] ἰπ(π)ου νόθος, Αἴσα Νουνφί-  
[ο]νος τοκῆς ἡοι, κῆλαβον χόρῃ(ν) ἡ[ο]ι ἡδὲ μέ[λ]ειν ἄμεινο-  
ν καὶ ἡδὲ ἄμ' εἶναι,

i.e.: "The lovely Kalikrates. (...), the *nothus* of (...)ippus, Aisa, the daughter of Nynphio, (were) his parents, and they took this plot of land to care better for him and to remain close to him", where Kalikrates is the deadman (not his father) and Nynphio his mother's father (not the deadman).