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The Date of O.Crum.VC 111

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THE DATE OF O. CRUM VC 111 AND O. BAWIT 56 - 58 & 62

In the Greek part of a bilingual Coptic/Greek ostrakon from the John Rylands Library in Manchester, published by W.E. Crum in *Varia Coptica* # 111, one finds the following text:

15 [γ]ι ταριχ̄ οργ/ β ταρ/ λακ β 16 † εγραφ/ φαμ/ κγ⁻¹⁷ ινδ, ιε ημερ/ ηλι
i.e.

15 [γ]ι(νεται) ταριχ(ίων) ὄργ(ον) β, ταρ(ιχίων) λακ β. 16 † εγράφ(η) Φαμ(ενὸθ) κγ⁻¹⁷ ινδ(ικτ.) ιε ἡμέρ(α) ηλι.

Crum translates the complete text, incl. the Coptic part as (p. 44): "Ask for 2 vessels (ὄργον) and 2 jars (λάκον) from Abraham (of) Tbak. Total (γίνεται): 2 ὄργον of pickled food (ταριχείον), 2 λάκον of pickled food (τ.). Written (γράφειν) Phamenoth 23rd, Indiction 15th, day, reckoned to day 6." and he notes that

(a) perhaps the very end of this text (l. 8) might be interpreted as 'reckoned as 6 days',

(b) perhaps *Eli* was written in a different hand, and

(c) that the meaning of the letters ηλι is uncertain. Nevertheless, in the 'Index of Names' one finds (p. 41) an entry 'Ηλι?' referring to # 111.7; as the next entry refers to the name 'Ηλίαις the presumption arises, of course, that Crum may have thought of Ηλι as an incomplete or abbreviated form of 'Ηλίαις. In fact, W.C. Till, *Datierung und Prosopographie der koptischen Urkunden aus Theben* 79 s.n. 'Eli, Hêli, Yli (= Elias?)' indeed mentions VC 111.6. All of this suggests an interpretation 'day of Eli'.

In the recent edition of O.Bawit a far more convincing solution is suggested for the problem posed by the letters ηλι; A. Boud'hors argues persuasively (# 57.6n.) that one is dealing here with a reference to a Sunday (ἡμέρα ἡλίου).¹ Now, the question is, of course, whether one can actually match an indication Phamenoth 23 (= 19.iii) of a 15th indiction with a Sunday. Consulting the tables given by V. Grumel, *La Chronologie* (Paris 1958) pp. 316-317, I find that indeed such a match occurs only on 19.iii.612, 657, 702, 747; apparently there is no match possible during the period 800 - 899 (= the 9th century, cf. fn. 2 below). Actually, there seems to be no argument to especially prefer one of these dates,² but even so the result of the exercise seems satisfactory enough. And if the text was written on a Sunday, the phrase 'reckoned to day 6' may be related to a delivery on a Friday, the 6th day of a week (cf. Cod. Just. IX 4.6.1, where ἡ τετράς = Wednesday), which for unknown reasons was recorded 2 days later.³ Assuming that all four O.Bawit texts mentioning a weekday (cf. above, fn. 1) date from the *same* 15th

¹ The question is left open, whether one should read ἡλί(ου) ἡλί[ου] or ἡλί(ου). Next to the Sunday supposed to have been indicated in O.Bawit 57.6 (also written on Phamenoth 23, ind. 15), other weekday indications are found in O.Bawit 58.5-6 and 62.6. (Phamenoth 19, ind. 15 = Wednesday [ἡμέρα Ἐρμού]) and 56 (20 Phamenoth, ind. 15 = Thursday [ἡμέρα Διός]). In general it deserves attention, of course, that such weekday indications are not common in Coptic documents. I am most grateful to Dr Boud'hors for sending me a copy of the pertinent texts.

² There are only palaeographical and prosopographical arguments to be made. As to the first, Crum does not express himself on the possible date of the handwriting; as to the prosopographical aspect, only one man is mentioned, a certain Abraham from Tbak; to my knowledge, this man does not appear elsewhere (cf. W.C. Till, loc. cit., 50-53 s.v. Abraham. For the village name TBAK cf. M. Drew-Bear, *Le nome Hermopolite*, 270 s.n. Tβακε; this village is attested during the period of the 7th - 9th/10th century.

³ For an alternative approach cf. O.Bawit 57.6n. where Crum's alternative translation, 'reckoned as 6 days', is interpreted to the effect that deliveries of ταριχτα (= pickled meat) extended over a period of 6 days, of which the Sunday was the last one.

indiction year, dates to Phamenoth 19 (= 15.iii) and Phamenoth 20 (16.iii) should also come from one of the years 612, 657, 702 or 747.

Finally, I should like to note that in a personal communication A. Boud'hors kindly referred me to O.Crum VC 111 as producing, perhaps, another case of an alternation $\lambda\lambda\text{KON}$ in the Coptic part vs. $\lambda\acute{\alpha}\eta$ in the Greek part of the same text; this situation happens to occur already in O. Bawit 55.4 (ed.: $\lambda\lambda[\Gamma]$), 56.4, 58.3, 59.4, 60.4, 62.4 (in all these cases $\lambda\lambda\Gamma/$ is printed, though the photos of O.Bawit 55, 58 and also Cledat's handcopy of 62 show that $\lambda\alpha\eta$ is to be preferred). It is also found in various ostraka published in CPR XX, cf. my remarks in the *Proceedings of the 7th [2000] International Congress of Coptic Studies* [forthcoming in 2002?], fn. 9, and those made by H. Förster in his forthcoming *Lexikon der Griechischen Wörter in Koptischen Documentarischen Texten* [Vienna, 2002?] s.v. $\lambda\lambda\text{KON}$. The dots in Crum's reading $\lambda\alpha\kappa$ in O.Crum VC 111.5 betray a certain amount of editorial uncertainty; given the often remarkably close palaeographical resemblance between forms of the letters κ and η in written texts from Byzantine Egypt it is at least conceivable that one should read here $\lambda\acute{\alpha}\eta$.

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