

‘PROCLAIMING IT TO GREEKS AND NATIVES, ALONG THE ROWS OF THE CHEQUER-BOARD’: READERS AND VIEWERS OF ACROSTICH INSCRIPTIONS IN GREEK, DEMOTIC AND LATIN

INTRODUCTION

Hellenistic and Roman acrostich inscriptions are usually full of verbal and visual clues, which point the reader in the direction of the ‘hidden message’ contained in the vertical lines of the text.¹ The authors of such inscriptions want their audiences to appreciate the skill that has gone into their composition. There are several complementary ways in which the presence of an acrostich might be signalled to the reader or viewer and their attention directed towards it. These include direct verbal statements, or more subtle allusions, within the text of the inscription. But, even without having read its text, the viewer of an inscription containing a ‘hidden message’ is often immediately aware that some kind of wordplay is at work. Acrostichs, palindromes and various kinds of word square are all graphically striking, or their appearance may be enhanced to make them more so. Regular spacing, the repetition of the acrostich in a separate column and the use of painted or incised grids are all ways in which the layout of the text on the stone can invite the viewer to play a word game. In some cases, as I will argue in this paper, acrostich makers envisaged—even intended—the participants in this game to include the illiterate as well as the literate.

In the following discussion, I shall principally be concerned with the so-called ‘Stele of Moschion’, a stone slab with inscribed text in Demotic Egyptian and Greek, presented in the form of word squares, acrostichs and ‘unformatted’ text. I will introduce a number of other examples of acrostich inscriptions in Greek and Latin from Egypt, Libya and Arachosia. The metatextual references within these inscriptions to their own form and process of composition have been discussed elsewhere.² Their dominant theme is the word puzzle itself and the process of composing and recognizing it. My emphasis here will instead be on the sensory aspects of experiencing and appreciating an inscription of this sort. Although a number of the inscriptions considered here appeal very directly to an educated readership—one which the author considers himself or aspires to be on a par with—in-text references and their physical format hint also that other ways of experiencing them were anticipated and intended by their makers. These inscriptions were made to be viewed, spoken, heard and even touched as well as read, an experience undeniably enhanced by, but not necessarily dependent upon, literacy.

¹ In recent years, there has been a number of new studies on acrostich inscriptions, and on those involving wordplay more generally: see the articles in J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain and M. Szymański (edd.), *The Muse at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry* (Berlin, 2012), in particular V. Garulli, ‘Greek acrostic verse inscriptions’, 246–78; and R. Mairs, ‘Acrostich inscriptions at Kalabsha (Roman Talmis): cultural identities and literary games’, *Chronique d’Égypte* 86 (2011), 281–97, on the inscriptions from Lower Nubia discussed below.

² Mairs (n. 1), 281–97; R. Mairs, ‘*Sopha grammata*: Greek acrostichs in inscriptions from Arachosia, Nubia and Libya’, in Kwapisz, Petrain and Szymański (n. 1), 279–306.

Audiences, I will argue, were intended to engage with these inscriptions and their acrostichs on all of these different levels. In-text references would have been accessible to the literate but also to those who had literate companions who might ‘perform’ the riddle by reading it aloud and explaining the text. In many acrostich inscriptions—including the Greek epitaph of Sōphytos from Kandahar (Afghanistan) and several examples from Egypt and Libya—the viewer of the text as object or *objet d’art* is as important an intended audience as the reader.

MOSCHION

The bilingual Greek-Demotic Stele of Moschion illustrates well the diverse audiences to which inscriptions containing wordplay were designed to speak. Even a literate person faced with this inscription would most likely have been able to read only one language and be reduced to viewing the other, while still recognizing that similar techniques of composition had been used. The Stele of Moschion (sometimes known as his ‘Magical Stele’; see Appendix 1) was originally set up at Sakha/Xois in the north-central Nile Delta. It is to be dated most probably to the late second to early third centuries C.E., although a late Ptolemaic or early Roman date has been proposed on the basis of the Demotic hand.³ Its fragments are now housed in two separate collections: the lunette (30.5 × 91.5 cm) in Cairo, and the surviving portion of the main body (81 × 86 × 25 cm) in Berlin (JdE 63160 + Berl. 2135). Its dimensions were originally in the region of 122 × 91.5 cm. It is frustrating that Moschion does not give a patronymic, otherwise we might be able to identify him—evidently a man of sufficient means to commission the inscription—in the papyri. The text of the stele is a thanks-offering to Osiris for the healing of Moschion’s foot-ailment, but presents an opportunity for a much more elaborate display of skill and piety than the simple dedication ‘hidden’ within the text:

D: Ὁσίριδι Μοσχίων ὑγιασθεῖς τὸν πόδα ἰατρείαις ‘To Osiris, Moschion, who had his foot healed by medical treatment.’

E: Ms (?) *sdm n-y p3 nti dd nt-ἰw w3h.f di.t lk šn r.wn.n3.w hn rd(=y) t3 phri r.di.f n=y (n) hpyr* ‘Moschion (?): Listen to me, the one who says: “Since he has caused to cease the pain which was in my foot by the medicine which he has given me as a miracle.”’

The Greek texts in the lunette, the upper part of the stele, contain an address by Moschion to Osiris (A), an address by the stele to the reader/viewer (B), and Osiris’ acceptance of Moschion’s dedication (C). The bulk of the lower part of the stele is occupied by two word squares, one in each script, ‘concealing’ the dedicatory phrases above, spelled out from the centre to the edges of the square by possible multiple routes (E, Demotic; D, Greek). Below this, but not replicating the symmetry of the upper

³ Text and discussion: S.P. Vleeming, *Some Coins of Artaxerxes and Other Short Texts in the Demotic Script Found on Various Objects and Gathered from Many Publications* (Leuven, 2001), no. 205, 99–209; W. Brunsch, ‘Die bilingue Stele des Moschion (Berlin Inv. Nr. 2135 + Cairo J. d’E Nr. 63160)’, *Enchoria. Zeitschrift für Demotistik und Koptologie* 9 (1979), 5–32; E. Bresciani, ‘I testi demotici della stele «enigmistica» di Moschione e il bilinguismo culturale nell’Egitto greco-romano’, *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 3 (1980), 117–45; É. Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l’Égypte gréco-romaine. Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des Grecs en Égypte* (Paris, 1969), no. 108. The full Greek and Demotic text, with translation, is given in the appendix to this article.

portions, come texts where Moschion walks the reader/viewer through the word square, to find the message (G, Demotic; F, Greek); a fragmentary Demotic passage, apparently praising Osiris for Moschion's cure (H); a Greek acrostich in which the stele further guides the reader (I: Μοσχίωνος); a Demotic acrostich, with a similar sense to the Greek but with an additional reference to Osiris and the cure (J: *Mskv3n*); and, at the foot, a repetition of Osiris' words from the lunette (K = C).

Moschion's stele speaks in multiple voices and presents itself to multiple audiences, sometimes saying slightly different things. Demotic and Greek portions are each balanced by equivalents in the other language, involving fairly close but not verbatim translation. More explicitly, Moschion imagines his dedication proclaiming itself (A 4: κηρύσσων) to members of two communities. This is pitched to the two ethnolinguistic audiences in predictably different ways: to Hellenes and natives (A 3 Ἑλλησι καὶ ἔνδοποισίω) and to people of Kemy and Ionians (H 13 *r n3 rmt.w n Kmy n3 Wynn*). Unlike other well-known bilingual or multilingual inscriptions from Graeco-Roman Egypt—such as the Ptolemaic priestly decrees of Canopus and Memphis (the Rosetta Stone)—the languages are not arranged in a hierarchy from top to bottom. They are essentially complementary: the directions of the two scripts (Demotic R-L, Greek L-R) mean that both are read from the middle of the stone towards the outer edge, and thus neither may be assumed to hold priority in the view of the author or reader.

The stele also adopts and speaks as different personae: Moschion himself, Osiris graciously accepting the offering, and the stele describing Moschion's composition. All three voices make frequent and detailed reference to viewing and reading the texts, recognizing hidden messages, and uttering and listening to speech. Tactile elements are also present: the person who interacts with the stone is imagined tracing lines with their hand. The image is also, in some sense, of the stele as a closed door, against which the person who does not know the trick to opening it knocks in vain.

Moschion, of course, puts emphasis on his skill and hard work in putting together the texts and images, and the monumentality of the finished piece (A 1: μνήμη 'monument'; A 2: στήλη 'stele'). The persona of the Stele speaks of it as 'elaborate' (B 2: περιεργος), 'not straightforward' (B 3: κοῦχ ἀπλήν), something which Moschion has not only built up through hard work (B 7: οὐ παχεῖ λόγῳι πλάσας τι—like bricks in a wall?; B 8: καταπονήσας 'labouring over'), but also trained himself to do (B 7: γυμνάσας δ' ἑαυτὸν—note the gymnasial reference) 'cunningly' (B 10: πανούργως).

The result is 'well-ordered' (B 3: εὖθετον), in contrast to the intricacies concealed within it. Disorder is channelled and controlled. The pieces which have been skilfully put together have a pleasing aspect, and the instructions on finding the hidden message also use visual cues and imagine the investigator's eye moving across the inscription. Linearity is key, as is visibility: the alignment of the letters on the stone is reinforced with an incised grid. The word square is referred to in the Demotic as a 'gaming board' (G 1, G 3, G 8, G 12: *hbʿy*). In the Greek, the term used is πλινθίς 'square' or 'block', to be rendered in this case as 'chequer-board' (A 4, F 1, F 3). Within the board there are many squares or compartments (G 6: *in.w*; I 1: πολύχωρος 'divided into many squares'). The order (F 10: τάξις) created by the horizontal and the vertical lines (A 4: σελίς; B 7: κανόνων; F 32: στοιχηδόν 'in a row') which run across (F 10: διατρέχουσας) the stele is compared, in texts F and G, to irrigation channels flowing across rows of fruit-trees in an orchard from a central spring (F 6), just as the message 'flows' outwards in different directions from its beginning in the central letter (F 1: μέσην μέσης τῆς πλινθίδος τὴν χειραγωγὸν ἀρχὴν 'taking your start in the middle of the middle of the chequerboard') towards the edges of the square. Moschion is

the labourer in the field (G 4: *nti n3-nht.fn b3k* ‘skilled in work’; F 3: τῶν ἐμῶν πόνων; F 4: πολυπόνου), creating the channels and directing the water along them. The parallel Demotic text, G, presents this in a similar way to the Greek, retaining the irrigation metaphor. The reader must start in the middle (G 1: *hr-ib*) to find the ‘beginning of the way’ (G 1, G 5, G11: *h3.t n t3 mi.t*), then follow the path (G 2: *ir:f myt*; G 5: *thm p3y.fwy*). The movement of the sense of the letters is compared to water moving through the irrigation channels (G 6: *ll* ‘wanders’), but an Egyptian twist is added with the use of the Nilotic verbs ‘travel north, downstream’ (G 6: *hty*) and ‘travel south, upstream’ (G 6: *hnt*). The regularity and the linearity of the word square turn disorder into order, and the reader/viewer must be careful to keep their mind straight on the path and not go astray (I 9: ὀρθὸν ἔχης νοῦν—of the acrostich). Disorder (G 8; cf. G 9: *shy*) is brought to harmonious completion (F 11: σύμφωνον ἀποτελεσμένον) as the sense of the words is spread out, gathered together and brought to the ends and corners of the square (G 10: *iw.k gm=w iw.w sr iw.w twtw iw.w 3ft*; G 11: *r n3 kh.w n3 dk.w*).

The acrostich in both scripts is repeated in a column before the beginning of the text. In the lunette, the acrostich is described as a *παροστιχίς*, literally ‘written at the side’ (B 9). Like the word square, the text itself makes play on linearity (I 3: *στοιχεῖα* ‘lines’; I 6: *στίχων* ‘lines’; I 9: ὀρθόν ‘straight’), but the reader/viewer is also invited to count up the letters and the lines: equal in number to the Muses (I 6: *ισαρίθμων Πιερίσιν*—i.e. nine), or in the Demotic *mty.w n ipy.t* ‘correct in number’ (H 15), followed by an unfortunate lacuna.

Those who wish to find out (B 9: τοῖς μαθεῖν θέλουσιν; G 2: *tgtg m-s3=f* ‘strive after it’) the ‘hidden’ messages are given copious—perhaps excessive—guidance, both in the layout of the texts themselves and in Moschion’s and the Stele’s instructions. The puzzle is presented as a piece of trickery—F 7: *πανουργία*. The texts flatter the clever person who understands,⁴ and denigrate the ignorant person who is confused and does not.⁵

The impressive appearance of the stele—its layout, grid pattern, variety of script and text unit—speaks for itself, but the texts too contain references to the stone and its texts being viewed, and to information being concealed and revealed. Osiris looks gladly and benevolently on the inscription and its maker: the first two lines of Greek texts C and K, Osiris’ direct speech, begin with the first-person present *δέσκομαι* ‘I gaze’ (C 1–2), and Osiris states that Moschion’s piety has not gone unnoticed. These lines themselves refer back to, and confirm, the closing line of the Stele’s introduction, in which the god is said to have gazed with pleasure on the dedication (B 18: ἡδέως δέδορκεν; cf. F 12). The Greek acrostich text I begins by addressing a disorientated reader: ‘Do not wonder at me if, with my many squares, unclear/is the appearance I bring to your eyes’ (I 1–4: μή με θαυμάσις, εἰ πολύχωρος οὖς ἄδηλον/ὄμμασιν φέρω φαντασίην). The message may be hidden (I 3: *ἀποκρύψαι*), but in the word square’s ‘well-ordered appearance of lines’ (B 3: *κανόνων εὐθετον ὄψιν*) the message is revealed (B 10: *ἐνεφάνισε*; cf. G 12, J 3: *ktp*; I 9: *σημανεῖ*). The Demotic guide, G, next instructs the reader to look in front of themselves (G 2: *nw hr-h3.3=f*) on the path.

⁴ *μερίμνης ἀγαθῆς* ‘good thinking’ (B 6); *μισθόν* ‘reward’ (B 13); *φρονήσαι* ‘comprehend, understand’ (B 14); *σοφία* ‘wisdom’ (B 14); *συνιέντι* ‘to the one who perceives’ (B 20); *πινυτόφρονος* ‘of wise/understanding mind’ (C 1); *τοῖ μηθὲν ἀγνοοῦντι* ‘he who is no fool’ (F 9); *εὐρών* ‘finding’; *gm* ‘find’ (F 10; G 10); *νοῦς* ‘mind’ (I 7, I 9); *swn* ‘knowledge’ (J 6); *rh* ‘know’ (G 11); *ir h3t* ‘reflect, consider’ (G 7); *πυνθάνομαι* ‘learn’ (I 9); *m3wy* ‘thought’ (J 3).

⁵ *ἀμαθία* ‘stupidity’ (B 13); *λανθάνω* ‘escape notice’ (F 8); *συγχέω* ‘pour together, mingle, confound’ (F 8); *ἀγνόημα* ‘ignorance, oversight’ (F 9); *ἀμαρτάνων* ‘going wrong, erring’ (F 9); *3ft* ‘err’ (G 9).

The texts of the inscription are in dialogue with each other—frequently addressing one another in the second person—and with the reader. Moschion speaks to his audience in the closing line of the Demotic acrostich: *p3 i.ir ir t3 hb5y iw.f dd* ‘the one who has made the board says ...’ (J 7). In the opening line of this same portion, Moschion and Osiris appear to address one another (J 1: *m-dr.t ddk ... dd.f*). In the fragmentary Demotic text H, Moschion calls to Osiris (H 6: *š.y*; cf. H 9). The same verb *š* ‘say aloud, read’ is used in G 10 of the reader coming to the edges of the word square, speaking the hidden message. Some emphasis is placed on the verbal communication of the message of the text and its individual elements (B 7: *παχεῖ λόγῳ* ‘weighty word’; B 10: *ἔπος*). Moschion, with his skill in composition, has persuaded the text itself to keep its silence (B 12: *ἡσυχάζειν*): it desires to speak only to a man of understanding (B 16: *συνιέντι θέλω λέγειν τι*), to whom it will eventually speak clearly (F 14: *σαφῶς ἐρεῖς*), and the one who does not understand can only mutely strike it in vain (B 16–17). The Demotic places slightly more emphasis—whether through design or convenience—on speaking than does the Greek. The message in the Demotic word square begins with the address ‘Listen to me, the one who says’ (E: *sdm n=y p3 nti dd*), followed by Moschion’s direct speech about his cure. Demotic text G refers back to this, saying that its ‘voice’ will be proven correct (*mty hrw=y*), when the successful decipherer of the word square says aloud (*dd*), in triumph, ‘A miracle of Osiris!’, the words contained in the message (G 14).

As I have already noted, the way in which the stele speaks clearly to the man of understanding is contrasted with the blunt desperation of the man who does not understand, striking it in vain. As well as the metaphorical aspect to such terms, the material, physical, tactile aspect of the inscription and the successful and unsuccessful ways of engaging with it are emphasized throughout. The reader is imagined as tracing the lines of text with their fingers.⁶ The incised lines of the letters and grid (which may also have been painted) would, of course, have communicated the rhythm and regularity of the word square as effectively to one tracing their fingertips across it as to one looking at it. The reader grasps the beginning of the message (F 1-2: *ἀρχήν/λαβών*; G 1: *t3y.t=f (n) h3.t n t3 mi.t*) and the passage through the text is described three times using the term *χειραγωγία* or *χειραγωγός*, literally ‘leading by the hand’ (F 1; B 11; I 8). The reader/feeler snips off each ‘easy to grasp’ letter (I 7: *ἀποκνίσας εὐξύνετον γράμμ’ ἀφ’ ἐκάστου*). The Demotic guide to the word square refers to ‘knowledge established in the hand’ (G 13: *p3 swn nti i (n)-dr.t=f*). All these references, I would suggest, indicate that the reading and the understanding of the inscription are imagined in tactile as well as in visual and oral/aural terms, and that the man who does not understand may equally be imagined hitting the stele with his hands in frustration at its silence.⁷

THE FORMAT OF THE TEXT: READING, VIEWING AND UNDERSTANDING

The primary intended audience of the Stele of Moschion is composed of literates, whom the composer considers of an appropriate level of learning and sophistication to recognize and appreciate the wordplay. I do not contest this. But there is also an

⁶ Implied, I think, in G 7: *tš dr.t=k*; the word ‘hand’ also appears in G 8, 9, 13, 14.

⁷ I am reminded of this passage every time I see a person tapping in vain at the touch screen of a recalcitrant iPad.

important visual aspect to the inscription which may have led to it being appreciated, to a much more limited extent, by those who could not fully read the inscription or have it read to them, and which certainly formed an important part of the impression these inscriptions gave to literates.

Moschion's bilingual stele, with its layout and wordplay, certainly presents an impressive aspect to both reader and viewer. The neat concentric diamonds of the word squares are attention-grabbing. The difference in scripts, and also their asymmetrical balance, too, is striking. The Demotic script does not lend itself particularly readily to being broken down into equally sized chunks of sound or meaning and set within an even grid in this way. This may suggest that the composer was thinking alphabetically—starting from the notion of a Greek word square and applying this model to the Demotic—but there are Egyptian hieroglyphic precedents. These include the 'Crossword Stele' of Paser (c.1150 B.C.E.), now in the British Museum, which contains three different hymns to the goddess Mut, to be read horizontally, vertically and around the side of the text.⁸ Paser's word square stood within a grid, originally painted in blue.

Although it gives an appearance of order and regularity, and is aided by what Butz refers to as the 'modular capacity of the Greek writing system', a grid format, ironically, actually impedes readability: 'Faced with a gridded field of letterforms, sometimes with, sometimes without punctuation, stoikhedon above all other forms of Greek inscription must usually be sounded out to become comprehensible, thus retaining orality as a strong component.'⁹ As well as presenting potential challenges to a literate reader/viewer—forced to spell out the words in their head or aloud, in the manner of modern phonics techniques used in teaching students to read—which can be overcome by speaking the words aloud, the text also directly states that it is to be spoken, and presents its various portions as the 'speech' or dialogue of Moschion, Osiris and the stele itself.

It might therefore be the case that an inscription such as this could actually be more impressive to a viewer and a listener than to a reader, despite its double entendres and in-jokes. The literary quality of the texts themselves has certainly been contested.¹⁰ An acrostich—especially one that is repeated in a separate column—is an excellent way of capturing a reader's interest and of forcing the composer's cleverness on their attention. It might also—intentionally or unintentionally—be distracting in some way, directing the reader's first impressions towards the clever wordplay rather than towards the perhaps not-very-good poem. A listener, however, may have sensed that it was being pitched 'over his head' without having the ability to evaluate its literary shortcomings (if any). The variation in metre, too, would have added to the aural experience. The (Greek) texts include different metres: elegiacs, iambic trimeters and Sotadics. A similar strategy is used by the authors of some of the comparative inscriptions discussed

⁸ See R.B. Parkinson, *Cracking Codes: The Rosetta Stone and Decipherment* (Berkeley, 1999); H.M. Stewart, 'A crossword hymn to Mut', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 57 (1971), 87–104; S. Noegel and K. Szpakowska, "'Word play" in the Ramesside dream manual', *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 35 (2006), 193–212; R.O. Faulkner, 'Abnormal or cryptic writings in the coffin texts', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 67 (1981), 173–4; J. Zandee, *An Ancient Egyptian Crossword Puzzle: An Inscription of Neb-wenenef from Thebes* (Leiden, 1966).

⁹ P.A. Butz, *The Art of the Hekatompedon Inscription and the Birth of the Stoikhedon Style* (Leiden, 2010), 42.

¹⁰ R.P. Austin, 'Across and down', *G&R* 8 (1939), 129–38, at 132: 'His high opinion of himself will scarcely communicate itself to students of his verses; for they are often bombastic and obscure'; see also below on comparanda.

below.¹¹ The presence of two languages in two scripts also raises the possibility that some reading the inscription or having it read to them may simultaneously have been aware of other readers and listeners appreciating the text in the other language. This impression—of the regular but incomprehensible word-pictures and riddling (to some incomprehensible) verses in a combination of metres—might in fact give to the illiterate viewer or listener a higher regard for Moschion's skill than to the literate one.

COMPARANDA

My focus is on the wordplay and letter-play of the different texts on the Stele of Moschion, and I do not intend to provide a full discussion of comparanda. I shall instead consider other references to the sensory aspects of appreciating (more specifically) an acrostich inscription in a number of Greek and Latin exemplars from Egypt, Libya and Arachosia. Although presented less elaborately (F 36: ποικίλω; a term also used by Maximus, *I. Metr.* 168, line 6), some of these use the same technique of repeating the acrostich in a separate column to make it more immediately recognizable. This is the case, for example, with the funerary stele of Sōphytos (Old Kandahar, ancient Alexandria in Arachosia, c. second century B.C.E.), where 'through the son of Naratos' appears in a column set to the left of the main inscription, which is itself clearly laid out, although not on a grid. Unlike some others, Sōphytos' verse does not contain any in-jokes for the discerning reader who recognizes the acrostich, or any instructions as to how to do so, but, tellingly, his one reference to the text of the inscription itself is to oral performance rather than to written composition. He imagines the stele speaking (line 18: it is λάλον, 'loquacious'), with the emphasis on its communication to its reader, not the process by which he wrote it.

A soldier in Roman service named Paccius Maximus left two acrostich inscriptions at the temple of Kalabsha in the frontier region between Egypt and Nubia (*I. Metr.* 168 and 169: Appendix 3). In the longest of these, Maximus describes a dream or vision (line 11: φαντασίης ὄναρ) he has had—this verse is therefore full of visual imagery quite apart from any reference to the visual aspect of the inscription itself. Maximus also goes to some effort to set a poetic scene of this temple on the Nile at the boundary between the Roman empire and its Nubian hinterland, and presents himself, in the opening line, as gazing upon the setting at Kalabsha: μακάριον ὄτ' ἔβην ἡρεμίας τόπον ἔσαθρήσαι, 'When I had come to gaze on this blessed place of peace'. Like Moschion, he uses a gardening analogy for the composition of his poem (line 5: πόνον γεωργεῖν).

Orality is more obviously at play, and the poet's song is accompanied by rhythmic movement. Maximus presents his verse as a 'song and dance number', which he has composed and performed, before setting it down in written form (line 18: γραπτὸν ἀπὸ σοφῆς ἔπνευσα ψυχῆς μου νόημα, 'I set down in written form the idea which my wise soul had inspired in me'), upon another's urging (line 22: μ' ἔκληζεν τὸ σοφὸν πόημα λέξει, 'he urged me to speak my clever poem'). He has 'composed a complex song' (line 6: ποικίλον ἤρμοζον ἀοιδίην), a 'festive dance' which he 'shakes out' (line 9: ἀνθεμον ἀπετίναξα κόμον). The performance is vividly described:

¹¹ *I. Metr.* 168: Sotadics, pentameters and hexameters; *I. Metr.* 169: hexameters and pentameters, concluding in five lines of prose.

ράβδω δέ τις οἶα κατὰ μέλος δέμας δονηθεῖς, | ἄρμογὴν μέλει συνεργὸν ἐπεκάλουν
 χαράττει, ‘Just as one moving his body in time to music beaten by a staff | I summoned
 rhythm as a partner for the inscription of my song’ (lines 19–20). The Muses—also
 name-dropped by Moschion, Faustinus and Sōphytos—sing (lines 8, 15–16), and the
 appearance of these specifically Greek patrons of the arts is no coincidence. Maximus
 is encouraged by the local god of the temple, Mandoulis, to ‘sing in sweet Greek
 verse’ (line 25: γλυκερὴν ἔσπευσεν ἔφ’ Ἑλλάδα μουσαν ἀεῖσαι), which is to
 ‘charm away the barbaric speech [NB not song or verse] of the Aethiopian’ (line 24:
 θέλων βαρβαρικὴν λέξιν ἀπ’ Αἰθιόπων). The poem is full of further references to
 speaking words aloud, whether oracles (line 28: μαντικὰ πυθίωων) or simply
 addressing and naming (line 31: καλέουσί σε).

The performance at an end, Maximus concludes with its enshrinement in stone, on
 the god’s command: τάδε σοι στείχοντα χαράσσειν μ’ αὐτὸς ἔλεξας | καὶ σοφὰ
 γράμματα πᾶσιν ἀθωπεύτως ἐσορᾶσθαι ‘you yourself told me to inscribe these clever
 words | in order that they may be viewed by all without flattery’ (lines 33–4). The
 imagined audience switches from seeing and hearing the dancing and singing, to
 viewing and reading the inscription which describes and transcribes it. The spoken
 word is made manifest in the written. The reader’s final instruction is to give their
 attention to the twenty-two first letters, which make up the acrostich ([εἷκοσι] καὶ
 δυσὶ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος).

Maximus’ other inscription (*I. Metr.* 169), although he begins by singing the praise
 of Apollo (line 1: σε ὑμνήσω), is more explicitly phrased as a riddle, a written puzzle
 rather than a recital seen and heard and only then set in stone. The inscription speaks of
 ‘recognizing’ the name of the writer (line 8: ἰ δεῖ (ἀνα)γνῶνα καὶ τοῦνομα τοῦ
 γράψαντος; line 11: τοῦ ἀναγνόντος). The acrostich in this case gives only the name
 Paccius, and Maximus is to be counted up, not read. ‘To find out the name of the
 one who wrote this’, the reader is told to ‘Count two times two hundred and twenty-
 one’. This is the sum of the numerical values of the Greek letters in the name
 ‘Maximus’.

Two other acrostich inscriptions from the same region are less obsessively focussed
 on the performance of the words or visual impact of the text itself. Also from Kalabsha,
 a Latin inscription by a man named Julius Faustinus (Appendix 4) contains the typical
 references to Apollo and the Muses (line 2), and speaks, poetically, of his verses as
 ‘songs’ (line 3: *carmina*). But Faustinus too is aware of the fact that stones can
 ‘speak’, and in a very literal sense. He refers to the Roman prefect Mamertinus hearing
 one of the Colossi of Memnon emit its well-known sound at sunrise (line 9: *sacra*
Mamertino sonuerunt praeside sig[na]). Stones are spoken of as breathing and greeting
 (line 8: *spirent cautes ac salutent*).

An unusual double, syllabic acrostich (Appendix 5) was left by a man named Catilius
 son of Nicanor at the temple of Philae, north of Kalabsha, who invites the reader to ‘stop
 and examine’ his inscription (line 2: ἀμπαύσας ἐγμάθε). His Greek verse spells out his
 name and patronymic, syllable by syllable, in the first syllables of each line (Ka-ti-li-
 and so on), and in the first and last letters of each line (K...a-t...i, and so on). The
 viewer is helped in his task of piecing together the double message by the fact that
 the letters are aligned neatly on the stone. The verse is thought of as spoken aloud,
 and contains two levels of direct speech (line 5: φησί, ξένε; line 6: καιρὸν ἔχω
 φωνεῖν· χαίρετε πολλά, Φίλια). Witty oblique reference is also made to the neat
 lines of the poem itself, and the lines of the acrostichs (line 1: τὸ εὐτέχνου φωτὸς
 στίχων; line 8: ἱστορικὴν σελίδα, a double entendre ‘historical/narrative piece’ vs

'precise column', both with implications of 'investigation'). A reference to the visitor 'seeing' Nicanor and his family may also have a double meaning, referring to the viewing of the written names (line 9: ἰδὼν Νικάνορα καὶ γένος). Playful and teasing to the last, Catilius concludes: 'I only have a "-ros" left! For this is the end' (line 10), a tag destined to make those who have recognized the 'line of a skilful mortal' smile, and leave those who have not bemused.

Two other Latin acrostich inscriptions from the Roman garrison at Bu Njem, in Libya, are less skilful and less consciously audio-visual, but also indicate how a text might be used to paint a picture, how a reader/viewer might be guided towards recognizing an acrostich, and how oral performance or aural experience might be translated into written form.¹² The Roman army is a possible linking factor in all these acrostich inscriptions: the mobility of troops may have led to the emulation of impressive word-play inscriptions seen elsewhere in the empire, such as at the garrison at Kalabsha. At Bu Njem, the verse of Q. Avidius Quintianus refers, in passing, to 'praising aloud' (line 16: *laudem uoce reddere*) and 'bearing witness' (line 18: *protestare*), but is more remarkable for its vivid imagining of the desert under the heat and the light of the sun. Porcius Iasuchan, one of the ancient world's minor poets, celebrates at length the labours of the garrison in working to reconstruct a monumental gate, which then adorns the camp like a 'jewel set in gold' (line 27). There is a slight possibility that Avidius' celebration of honest hard work and military muscle here makes a Virgilian allusion.¹³ Might this be the product of an exposure to Latin literature in written or oral form? Söphytos, too, makes an indirect quotation from the *Odyssey*. These allusions, if they are there, are far from being any direct quotations, and might derive from literary phrases which had passed into common currency: 'stories told around the camp fire' at the desert camp. Typically military and workmanlike, Avidius then tells the reader: *capita uersorum relegens adgnosce curantem*, 'reading the start of the verses, identify him who saw to it' (line 32).

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding discussion, my focus has been on the audience of these inscriptions, not on their authors. I have omitted discussion of authorship, because I do not think it can be established from the actual evidence whether the people named in the inscriptions also composed them. It is also because I think that the more important point is that the named person claims authorship, speaks directly to their audience and desires their readers/viewers to think of them as author and give them credit for their skill. Most of the inscriptions share some common features and techniques of composition, in addition to their first-person voice. There is supplementary narration from the point of view of the inscription itself. A divine as well as a human audience is envisaged, and the making of the inscription is also an act of piety. The text is also divinely inspired, and there may be references to the Muses. There is considerable emphasis on the labour and skill of composition. There is constant reference to the skill required to recognize hidden patterns. Something that the texts of the inscriptions also share is a sense of place:

¹² J.N. Adams, 'The poets of Bu Njem: language, culture and the centurionate', *JRS* 89 (1999), 109–34.

¹³ line 28 *gemma ut auro cluditur sic castram porta decorat*; Verg. *Aen.* 10.134 *qualis gemma micat fuluum quae diuidit aurum*; see Adams (n. 12), 120.

the location and placement of the stone are described, with regard to landmarks such as monuments, buildings and roads.

The audience the makers of the inscriptions anticipate—and whom they expect to give fullest credit for their skill—are by definition literate and educated. I do not think that one can necessarily argue for an illiterate audience being high in the priorities of the authors, but there is a very important visual aspect to their presentation, and their visual impression is referred to in the text itself. Viewing was very much part of the reading experience. Moschion refers the reader back to the image and walks them through it spatially. First visual impressions will have been very important. In addition, Moschion and the authors of the other inscriptions imagine their text being spoken aloud, perhaps to listeners who could not read them for themselves. Moschion also imagines touch as part of the experience of understanding the inscription—tracing letters with one's fingers—but also of failing to understand—striking the stone in vain.

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APPENDIX 1

*The Stele of Moschion*¹⁴

A. Moschion speaks in his own voice and addresses Osiris:

σῆς ἀρετῆς μνήμην, πανυπέροχε κοίραν· Ὅσιρι,
στήλην ἀναγράψας σηκοῦ ἐπὶ προπύλοις
ἄνθεμα τοῦθ' Ἑλλησι καὶ ἔνδαπίοισιν ἀμοιβὴν
ἔστακα κηρύσσωσαν πλινθίδος ἐν σελίσιν.

4

By inscribing a memorial to your merit, supreme lord Osiris,
on a stele set up against the entrance to your sacred enclosure
I set up this dedication as recompense, proclaiming it to Greeks
and natives along the rows of the chequer-board.

B. The stele (or the chequer-board) speaks to the passer-by:

τί με τὴν ἀύπνοις φροντίσιν εὐδουσαν ἐγείρων
σκύλλεις, ἀνερευνᾶν ἐθέλων, ὡς περιέργον
κοῦχ ἀπλήν ἔχουσαν κανόνων εὐθετον ὄψιν;
ὁ γὰρ εὐσεβίην καὶ τὸ καλῶς ἔχον προτιμῶν
χαριτήσιον ὦν προέπαθεν ἀνατιθεὶς θεῶι με
Μοσχίων μερίμνης ἀγαθῆς ἔδωκε πείραν,
οὐ παχεῖ λόγῳ πλάσας τι, γυμνάσας δ' ἑαυτὸν
κάμῃ καταπονήσας συνέπεισεν ἡσυχάζειν·
κοῦ μόνον παραστιχίδι με τοῖς μαθεῖν θέλουσιν
ἐνεφάνισε, πανούργως ὑποθεῖς δ' ἔπος τι καινὸν
χειραγωγίη διάφορον, εἰδὼς ὅτι τοὺς μὲν
ἀγκύλην ἔχοντας διάνοιαν ἐπιμελῶς δεῖ
μισθὸν ἀμαθίης λαβόντας ὄψε ποτε φρονήσαι,
τοὺς δ' ἐπὶ σοφίῃ κριθέντας ἀνεπίτακτον ἔξειν

5

10

¹⁴ Text and translation: Vleeming (n. 3), whose translation of the Greek was supplied by F.W. Walbank and D.J. Thompson.

παράκλησιν ἴν' ἐκ κλύδωνος ἡρεμεῖν μ' ἀφῶσιν. 15
 συνιέντι θέλω λέγειν τι, συνιέντι δὲ μηδὲν
 μὴ μᾶτην με κόπτειν, ἑτέροις τόπον δὲ δοῦναι.
 ἀνάθημα γὰρ εὐχῆς θεὸς ἠδέως δέδορκεν.

Why, rousing me as I sleep with thoughts that take away sleep,
 do you trouble me, seeking to interrogate me as presenting
 a well-ordered appearance of lines which is complex and not straightforward?
 For valuing piety and right behaviour,
 and setting me up as a thanks-offering to the god for what he suffered before,
 Moschion has provided a test of good thinking;
 not putting something together with weight words, but training himself
 and labouring over me he persuaded me to guard my silence;
 and not only to those who wish to learn in an acrostich
 did he reveal me, but cunningly suggesting some new word,
 different in where it led, knowing that those
 whose intention is bent must needs anxiously
 reap the rewards of their stupidity and come late to understanding,
 whereas those judged to possess wisdom will receive an irresistible
 summons to leave me in peace saved from the rough waves.
 I wish to say something to the man of understanding, but to him who understands
 nothing:
 do not strike me in vain, but cede a place to others.
 For gladly has god gazed on the object set up in fulfilment of a vow.

C. Osiris addresses Moschion:

δέρκομαι εὐχολῆς πινυτόφρονος ἄνθεμα τερπνόν,
 δέρκομαι, εὐσεβίη τ' οὐ με παρετρόχασεν,
 ἀνθ' ὧν τιμήντα λαχὼν εὐελπιν ἔπαινον
 ἐκ φρενὸς ἡμετέρης γηθόσυνος κόμισαι. 4

I look upon the delightful dedication of an ingenious offering,
 I look upon it, and its piety has not passed me by.
 In return take pleasure in receiving praise that you hoped for
 from my heart as is your due.

D. The Greek word square:

Ὅσιριδι Μοσχίων ὑγιασθεῖς τὸν πόδα ἰατρείας.

To Osiris Moschion, who had his foot healed by medical treatment.

E. The Demotic word square:

Ms (?) sdm n-y p3 ntī dd nt-īw w3h.f di.t lk šn r.wn.n3.w hn rd(=y) B phri r.di.f n=y (n) hpry

Mos (?): Listen to me, the one who says: 'Since he has caused to cease the pain which was in my foot by the medicine which he has given me as a miracle.'

F. Moschion's explanations for the reader:

μέσην μέσης τῆς πλινθίδος τὴν χειραγωγὸν ἀρχὴν
 λαβὼν, ἔχνευε προβλέπων, ἴν' εὐσύνοπτος ἦι σοι
 ἢ παῦλλα τῶν ἐμῶν πόνων καὶ πλινθίδος μέρμινα:
 χάσει τις ἴδρις πολυπόνου φυτουργίης ὑπάρχων,
 ἔντεῦθεν ἐκ πηγῆς ἄγων μελιρύτου τιν' ὀρμητῆ

ἄρδεν' ἐς ὄρχους πολυμερεῖς στοιχηδὸν ἐξελίσσω.
 εἰς τέσσαρας μὲν οὖν τιθεὶς πανουργίης ἀριθμοῦς
 τὸ σῶμ' ὅλον μὴ που λάθης καὶ συνχέας προσάψης
 σὸν ἀγνόμη' ἀμαρτάνων τῷ μηθὲν ἀγνοοῦντι.
 τάξι γὰρ εὐρῶν ποικίλως διατρέχουσαν ἐξῆς
 πιγῆς τε πρὸς τέρμ' ἐξ ἴσου σύμφωνον ἀποτελεσμόν,
 συνεὶς ἀνάθεμά τ' εὐμενῶς ὡς κοίρανος δέδορκεν
 καὶ καρπὸν οἶον ἐκ φρενὸς θείας λαβῶν κομίζω,
 σαφῶς ἐρεῖς πεισθεὶς ἐμοὶ θ[— — — — —].

Taking your start to guide you in the middle of the middle of the chequer-board,
 track it down looking ahead, so that there may be seen at once by you
 the result of my labours and thought for the chequer-board.
 And just like someone well versed in the laborious task of gardening,
 drawing some impulse from a sweet-flowing spring,
 pour this water along the many varied rows of fruit, moving with speed row
 by row.
 Therefore, dividing into four numbers
 the whole form of the puzzle, take care not to make a mistake anywhere and in
 confusion share
 your ignorance mistakenly with him who is no fool at all.
 For discovering the order that runs throughout in many forms
 towards the term of its source, in regular fashion to its harmonious completion,
 observing how kindly the lord has looked on the dedication
 and what recompense I receive from his divine spirit,
 you will speak clearly, persuaded by me [...]

G. Moschion's explanations for the reader:

hpry : *t3 hr-ib (n) t3 hb5y p3 nti iw.k [t3y.]f=f (n) h3.t (n) t3 mi.t*
mtw.k tgtg m-s3=f, iw.k hr-h3.f=k r di.t ir.f myt iw.f sws.w
p3 gy n li r.ir.y iw.y dnb r rd=y irm n3 m3wy t3 hb5y
iw.k (n)-kd p3 nti sy 3h.w n t3y n3 ll (r) n3 b nti n3-nht.f n b3k
iw.k t3y t3 h3.t t3 mi.t (m)-kdy w^c mw ndm iw.f thm p3y.f wy 5
iw.k <di.t> ll^c mw h^c=f hn t3y.s mdr.t (?), iw.k hty hnt n3 itm.w
iw.k <di.t> t3 dr.f=k n ip.t 4.t n p3y.k ir, n3-nfr ir h^ct
hn t3 hb5y dr=s r bn-pw.k di.t hpr shy mtw.w lg s (n)-dr.f=k
mtw.k dd p3 sht n p3y shy, ir.k dr.f p3 nti-iw bn-pw.f sft
iw.k gm=w iw.w sr iw.w twtw iw.w 3ft mtw.w htb n c3 10
mtw.k rh s r t3 h3.t n t3 mi.t, mty.w r n3 kh.w n3 dk.w
mtw p3 c^w p3 sp r.di p3 nb snby krp r.ir=k hr t3 hb5y
irm p3 swn nti i (n)-dr.f=f r n3 s^cs.w r.ir p3 i.ir sh n3 sft.w
iw.s hty (n)-dr.f=k, mty hrw=y mtw.k dd, hpry n Wsir.

A miracle. The middle of the board is what you will [take] as the beginning of the
 way,
 and you will strive after it while looking in front of you in order to make it the
 road which boasts of
 the cessation which I have made of being crooked of my foot, with the
 thought[s of the] bo[ard],
 while you are like the one who irrigates fields, from vine to bush, who is expert in
 work,
 while you take the beginning of the way like a sweet water which summons its course,
 while you <let> water wander on its own within its (the board's) maze(?), while
 you go up and down the squares(?),
 while you <let> your hand determine four numbers in your doing. It is good to
 reflect

within the entire board, without your having created disorder so that it is stopped
 in your hand,
 (and) that you name the hindrance of this disorder, in order that you applaud(?)
 the one who has not stumbled.
 You will find them spread, collected, square, however closed(?) in reading,
 and you will know about the beginning of the way: they have agreed with the
 corners and the confines(?),
 and the size of the gift the Master of healing has given will be revealed to you on
 the board,
 with the knowledge which is established in his hand concerning the glorifications,
 which the one who has written the compositions has made:
 it will of necessity be in your hand, (that) my declaration is correct, when you say, 'A
 miracle of Osiris!'

H. In praise of Osiris:

r.di[...
mw(?) [...
bn-iw gʒ [...
wḏʒ.k snb[y ...
wʒh.w hr pʒy(y) ḥʿ [... 5
 ḥʿy n *Wsir* [...
pʒy(y) ntr - - [...
Wsir Wn-nfr [...
nʒ-ndm, ḥʿ n=f [...
sp (?). 10
 ḥʿ nʒ *nti* - - - [...
mʒwy tʒ mi.t [...
r nʒ rmt.w-n-Kmy nʒ Wyn[n ...
dd, ḥpry Wsir pʒ šp ḥʿ [...
Nti mty.w n ipy.t r pʒ [... 15

which gave [...
 water(?) [...
 not will another [...
 you are sound, cure [...
 they have added to my time of life [...
 I have called to Osiris [...
 my god - - - [...
 Osiris Onnophris [...
 sweet, call to him [...
 Case(?).
 The manner of those who - - - - [...
 thought of the way [...
 the Egyptians and Greek[s ...
 saying: a miracle of Osiris, the great gift [...
 which are correct in number to the [...

I. The stele (or the chequer-board) speaks to the passer-by:

μή με θαυμάσις, εἰ πολύχωρος οὖς ἄδηλον
 ὄμμασιν φέρω φαντασίην· οὐ δύναται γὰρ
 στοιχειᾶ τις εὐγνωστα τιθεῖς μὴ οὐκ ἀποκρύψαι
 χώρην, ἵνα τῷ θέλοντι καὶ πλάνην παράσχη.
 ἵνα δὲ μὴ μακρὴν κείς ἄπορον τράπηις ἀταρπὸν,
 ὡς ἂν ἰσαριθμῶν Πιερῖσιν στίχων κατάσχης
 νοῦν, ἀποκνίσας εὐξύνετον γράμμ' ἄφ' ἐκάστου, 5

ὄρμησον ἐφ' ἣν τέθεικε χειραγωγὸν ἀρχήν·
σημανεῖ γάρ, εἰ πύθοιο, κῆν ὀρθὸν ἔχης νοῦν.

Vertically down, at left, repeating the acrostich:
Μοσχίουος

Do not wonder at me if, with my many squares, unclear
is the appearance I bring to your eyes; for it is not possible
for someone setting up lines that are easily recognized not to hide the place,
so that he may also provide a possibility of error for him who wants it.
But so that you may not pursue a long and difficult path to that place,
as though you were keeping in mind lines equal in number to the Muses,
nibbling off a letter easy to recognize from each,
set out towards the start which he put in place to guide you;
for the solution will appear, if you would learn and keep your mind straight.

J. In praise of Osiris:

M-dr.t dd.k, P3y(y) ntr, dd.f, P3y(y) rmt 3i[...]
Snby.f n = k šn, di.f n = k [...]
Krp.k ʕ hʕt = k n m3wy [...]
Ys nb nti i r šms p3 ntr irm [...]
3nt.f myt bin n skr r.ir.k [...]
Nhm.t = k-f hn shn p3 swn <p3> ntr r [...]
- P3 i.ir ir t3 hbʕy iw.f dd wn ntr p3y.f [...]

5

Vertically down, at right, repeating the acrostich:
Mskʕ3n-

When you have said, 'My god', he has said, 'My man - - - [...]
He has cured for you illness, he has given you [...]
You have revealed the manner of your heart in thoughts [...]
All - - - which has been made to serve the god with [...]
He has delivered from the evil road, which you have sailed [...]
He has saved you by provision of the knowledge of <the> god [...]
The one who has made the board says, 'There is a god, his [...]

K. (= C.) Osiris to Moschion:

δέρκομαι εὐχολῆς πινυτόφορος ἄνθεμα τερπνόν,
δέρκομαι, εὐσεβίη τ' οὐ με παρετρόχασεν·
ἀνθ' ὧν τιμήντα λαχὼν εὐελπιν ἔπαινον
ἐκ φρενὸς ἡμετέρης γηθόσυνος κόμισσαι.

4

I look upon the delightful dedication of an ingenious offering,
I look upon it, and its piety has not passed me by.
In return take pleasure in receiving praise that you hoped for
from my heart as is your due.

APPENDIX 2

*The Stele of Sōphytos*¹⁵

Σωφύτου στήλη

Δ δηρὸν ἐμῶν κοκυῶν ἐριθιλέα δάματα' ἐόντα
 Ἰ ἴς ἄμαχος Μοιρῶν ἐξόλεσεν τριάδος·
 Α αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ, τυννὸς κοιμίδῃ βιότοιό τε πατρῶν
 Σ Σώφυτος εὖνις ἐὼν οἰκτρὰ Ναρατιάδης,
 Ω ὡς ἀρετὴν Ἐκάτου Μουσέων τ' ἤσχηκα σὺν ἐσθλῇ 5
 Φ φυρτὴν σωφροσύνη, θῆμος ἐπεφρασάμην
 Ὑ ὑψόσαιμι κε πῶς μέγαρον πατρῶιον αὐθις·
 Τ τεκνοφόρον δὲ λαβὼν ἄλλοθεν ἀργύριον,
 Ο οἴκοθεν ἐξέμολον μεμιάως οὐ πρόσθ' ἐπανελθεῖν
 Ὑ ὑψιστον κτᾶσθαι πρὶμ μ' ἀγαθῶν ἄφενος· 10
 Τ τούνεκ' ἐπ' ἐμπορίησιν ἰὼν εἰς ἄστεα πολλὰ
 Ο ὄλβον ἀλωβήτως εὐρὺν ἐληισάμην.
 Ὑ ὑμνητὸς δὲ πέλων πάτρην ἐτέεσιν ἐστίγμαι
 Ν νηρίθμοις τερπνός τ' εὐμενέταις ἐφάνην·
 Α ἀμφοτέρους δ' οἰκόν τε σεσηπτότα πάτριον εἶθαρ 15
 Ρ ρέξας ἐκ καινῆς κρέσσονα συντέλεσα
 Α αἰάν τ' ἐς τύμβου πεπτωκότος ἄλλον ἔτευξα,
 Τ τὴν καὶ ζῶν στήλην ἐν ὁδῷ ἐπέθηκα λάλον.
 Ο οὕτως οὖν ζηλωτὰ τάδ' ἔργματα συντελέσαντος
 Ὑ υἱέες υἰωνοὶ τ' οἶκον ἔχοιεν ἐμοῦ. 20

Stele of Sōphytos:

The house of my ancestors had flourished for a long time,
 when the irresistible strength of the three Fates destroyed it.
 But I, Sōphytos son of Naratos, while still a child,
 was deprived of the wealth of my ancestors.
 I cultivated the excellence of the Archer [Apollo] and the Muses
 together with noble 5
 wisdom. Then I devised a plan
 to restore my ancestral house.
 Gathering from various places fruitful money,
 I left home, intending not to return before
 I had acquired great wealth. 10
 For this reason I went to many cities as a merchant
 and blamelessly gained great wealth.
 Full of praise, I returned to my fatherland
 after countless years and became a source of joy to my friends.
 At once my ancestral house, which had decayed, I restored to
 an even greater state. 15
 I also prepared a new tomb to replace
 the one that had fallen into ruin,
 and I placed a stele that would speak of my life by the roadside.
 The deeds I have done are worthy of emulation.
 May my sons and grandsons preserve my house. 20

¹⁵ Text: P. Bernard, G.-J. Pinault and G. Rougemont, 'Deux nouvelles inscriptions grecques de l'Asie Centrale', *Journal des Savants* 2 (2004), 227–356. Translation: D.B. Nagle and S.M. Burstein, *Readings in Greek History: Sources and Interpretations* (Oxford, 2006), 285.

APPENDIX 3

*The Inscriptions of Paccius Maximus*¹⁶

I. Metr. 168

μακάριον ὅτ' ἔβην ἡρεμίας τόπον ἑσαθρήσαι, ἄερί τὸ ποθεινὸν ψυχῆς πνεύμ' ἐπανεῖναι, ξένα μοι βιοτὴ περὶ φρένα πάντοθεν ἔδονεῖτο, ἴστορα κακίης ἑμαυτὸν οὐκ ἔχων ἔλεγχον, μύστιν τότε κίκλησκε φύσις πόνον γεωργεῖν·	5
ὁ σοφὸς τὸτ' ἐγὼ ποικίλον ἤρμοζον ἀοιδῆν, σεμνὸν ἀπὸ θεῶν κοτίλον ἐπιτυχῶν νόημα. δῆλον ὅτε θεοῖς ἀρεστὸν ἠργάζετο Μούσα, Ἑλικῶνι χλόης ἀνθεμον ἀπετίναξα κῶμον· καὶ τότε μέ τις ὕπνου μυχὸς ἠρέθισε φέρεσθαι, ὀλίγον ἐπίφοβον φαντασίης ὄναρ τραπήναι· ὑπνος δέ με λέ<ξ>ας ταχύν ἀπεκόμισε φί[λην γ]ῆν· ρείθροις ἐδόκουν γὰρ ποταμοῦ σῶμα ἀπο[λο]ύειν, ἱκανοῖς ἀπὸ Νίλου γλυκεροῦ ὕδασι προσ[η]νῶς· φύμην δὲ σεμνήν Μουσῶν Καλλιέπειαν	10 15
Νύμφαις ἅμα πάσαις μέσ<σ>ην κῶμον ἀεΐδειν· Ἑλλάδος τι κἀγὼ βραχὺ λείψανον νομίζων, γραπτὸν ἀπὸ σοφῆς ἔπνευσα ψυχῆς μου νόημα· ῥάβδῳ δέ τις οἶα κατὰ μέλος δέμας δονηθεῖς, ἀρμογὴν μέλει συνεργὸν ἐπεκάλουν χαράττειν, ψόγον ἀλλοτρίοις ἤθεσιν ἀπολιπῶν ἄδηλον. ἀρχὴ δέ μ' ἔκληξεν τὸ σοφὸν ποίημα λέξαι· λαμπρὸς τότε Μάνδουλις ἔβη μέγας ἀπ' Ὀλύμπου, θέलगων βαρβαρικὴν λέξιν ἀπ' Αἰθιόπων, καὶ γλυκερὴν ἔσπευσεν ἐφ' Ἑλλάδα μούσαν ἀεΐσαι, λαμπρὰ παρεῖα φέρων καὶ δεξιὸς Ἴσιδι βαίνων, Ῥωμαίων μεγέθει δόξαν ἀγαλλόμενος, μαντικὰ πυθιῶν ἄτε δὴ θεὸς Οὐλύμποιο· ὡς βίος ἀνθρώποις προορώμενος ἐξέθεν ἀνχεῖ, ὡς ἡμαρ καὶ νύξ σε σέβει, ὦραι δ' ἅμα πάσαι, καὶ καλέουσι σε Βρεῖθ καὶ Μάνδουλιν συνομαίμους, ἄστρα θεῶν ἐπίσημα κατ' οὐρανὸν ἀντέλλοντα. καὶ τάδε σοι στείχοντα χαράσσειν μ' αὐτὸς ἔλεξας καὶ σοφὰ γράμματα πᾶσιν ἀθωπεύτως ἐσορᾶσθαι.	20 25 30 35

[εἰκοσι] καὶ δυσι τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος.	

When I had come to gaze on this blessed place of peace, and to let wander free in the air the inspiration desired by my soul, a way of life strange to me stirred my mind from all sides. As I could not convict myself of any evil, my nature urged me to cultivate mystic toil. In my wisdom I then composed a complex song, having received from the gods a holy and expressive idea. When it was clear that the Muse had accomplished something pleasing to the gods, I shook out my festival song, like the flower of a green shoot on Helicon. Then a cave enticed me to enter and sleep, although I was a little afraid to yield to a dream of fantasy. Sleep picked me up and swiftly bore me away to a dear land. I seemed to be gently washing my body in the flowing streams of a river with the bountiful waters of the sweet Nile. I imagined that Calliope, a holy member of the Muses, sang together with all the nymphs a sacred song.

¹⁶ Text: É. Bernard, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des Grecs en Égypte* (Paris, 1969), nos 168 and 169. Translation after S.M. Burstein, *Ancient African Civilizations: Kush and Axum* (Princeton, NJ, 1997), 66–8.

Thinking there still remained a bit of Greece, I set down in written form the idea which my wise soul had inspired in me. Just as one moving his body in time to music beaten by a staff, I summoned rhythm as a partner for the inscription of my song, leaving those of a critical bent little reason for blame. The leader urged me to speak my clever poem. Then great Mandoulis, glorious, came down from Olympus. He charmed away the barbaric speech of the Aethiopians and urged me to sing in sweet Greek verse. He came with brilliant cheeks on the right hand of Isis, exulting in his greatness and the glory of the Romans, and uttering Pythian oracles like an Olympian god. You declared how because of you men can look forward to a livelihood, how day and night and all the seasons revere you and call you Breith and Mandoulis, fraternal gods, stars who rise as a sign of the gods in heaven. And you yourself told me to inscribe these clever words, in order that they be viewed by all without flattery. [...] trusting in the first twenty-two letters.

I. Metr. 169

πάντοτέ σε ὑμνήσω, Λατο[ῦ] <ς γ>όνε, Πύθι<ε> Ἄπολλον,
 ἀθανάτων προκαθάγεμα κα<ί> χρυσόχελ<υ> Παιάν.
 καὶ γάρ ἐγὼ παρὰ σοῖς προθύροις ἦλθον· <έ>π<ί>νευ<σ>ον
 κύριε, τὰς προκο[π]ὰς μ' ἐν στρατῇ μεγάλα[ς].
 ἰ <γ>άρ μοι δοίης· κά<γ>ὼ λ<οι>βαῖς ἀποδώσω 5
 οἶα θεῶ μεγάλῳ καὶ Ἴσιδι τῇ βασιλίσση.
 σπείσω πάντοτ' ἐγὼ τοῖς δυσὶ τῶν προκοπῶν.
 ἰ δεῖ <άνα>γνῶναι καὶ τοῦνομα τοῦ γράψαντος
 δι<ς> τὰς διακοσίας ψή<φ>ισον ἴκρ<σι> μίαν.
 τὸ προσκύνημα τοῦ γράψαντος 10
 καὶ τοῦ ἀναγνόντος σήμερον
 παρὰ θεῶ Μάνδουλι.

At all times I celebrate you, son of Leto, Pythian Apollo,
 Guide of the immortals and Paean of the golden lyre.
 For I have come before your gates. Give me,
 Lord, great successes in the army.
 For if you give me them, I will give you libations,
 Such as those due to a great god and to Isis the queen.
 I will always make libations to both for these successes.
 To find out the name of the one who wrote this,
 Count two times two hundred and twenty-one.
 Act of dedication for the one who wrote it
 And for the one who recognizes it today
 For the god Mandoulis.

APPENDIX 4

*The Inscription of Julius Faustinus*¹⁷

Inuicti ueneranda ducis per saecula uellent
 Victrices Musae, Pallas, crinitus Apollo
 Laeta serenifico defundere carmina cael[o],
 Intemerata malas hominum set numina fr[u]d[es]
 Iurgiaeque arcanis et perfida pectora curis 5
 Fugere. Hadriani tamen ad pia saecula uerti
 Ausa peroccultas remeant rimata latebras
 Vt spirent cautes ac tempora prisca salute[nt];
 Sacra Mamertino sonuerunt praeside sig[na].
 Tum superum manifesta fides stetit: inclutu[s] – [X] 10
 Inachias sospes diti pede pressit harena[s].
 Namque inter celsi densata sedilia tem[pli],
 Incola quo plebes tectis effunditur at[que]
 Munera caeli[colum] ...

The victorious Muses, Pallas and Apollo would have wished to pour down happy verses from a clear sky during the august era of the invincible emperor, but the undefiled deities fled from the wicked deceits of men and their quarrels and their hearts perfidious with secret preoccupations. Yet, they dared to turn back at the conscientious era of Hadrian, and they return searching out hidden recesses so that stones may breathe and greet the [revived] olden days; the sacred statue gave voice while Mamertino was prefect. The manifest proof of the reliability of the gods was established; the noble < >, arrived safely, pressed with enriching foot the sands protected by Isis. For amid the thronged benches of the lofty temple, into which the neighbouring mob poured from its (crowded?) dwellings, the gifts of the gods ...

APPENDIX 5

*The Inscription of Catilius*¹⁸

κάμῃ τὸν εὐτέχνου φωτὸς στίχον, ὃ φίλε, βῆμα
 τίμιον ἀμπαύσας ἔγμαθε καὶ χάρισα
 λιταῖς ἱστορίαις λιτὸν πόνον, οἷα πέπαιγμα,
 οὐ κενὰ μηνύων, οὐπερ ἔφην γενέτου·
 τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ πλώσας, φησί, ξένε, χεῦματα Νείλου, 5
 καιρὸν ἔχω φωνεῖν· χαίρετε πολλά, Φίλοι·
 νικῶμαι πέτρας τε καὶ οὐρεσιν, ὃ καταράκται·
 κἀγὼ ἔχω τεύχειν ἱστορικὴν σελίδα
 νοστήσας, καὶ ἰδὼν Νικάνορα καὶ γένος· ἄλλο
 ρος κατάλοιπον ἔχω· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τέλος. 10

Stopping your worthy step, friend, examine me—the line of a skilful mortal—and grant simple stories the favour of a simple effort, so as to learn how I was playfully made, without revealing

¹⁷ CIL 3.77 = CLE 271. Text and translation: E. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria: A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions* (Atlanta, GA, 1995), no. 26.

¹⁸ *IPhilae* 143. The translation is my own.

in vain who is my creator. 'After sailing the streams of the fair Nile—he [*sc.* the poet] says—stranger, this is the time for me to cry: Many greetings, Philae! O cataracts, I yield to stones and to mountains. I too have to craft an historical piece, having returned after having seen Nicanor and his family.' I have a '-ros' left—for this is the end.