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TEXTUAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES  
ON A NEW FUNERARY INSCRIPTION FROM CYRENE

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The interior walls of Tomb S147 in the necropolis of Cyrene are covered with an impressive amount of funerary inscriptions; as most of them are traced in charcoal, the tomb has been nick-named ‘Carboncini Tomb’<sup>2</sup>. Although the vast majority of these inscriptions are yet unpublished<sup>3</sup>, to one of special interest has recently been devoted a thorough *editio princeps* by Angela Cinalli<sup>4</sup>, who has provided an archeological overview of the site, useful paleographical remarks on the inscription, and both a photograph and a drawing of the text; Cinalli has also surveyed the content of the inscription, collecting the relevant *loci similes* in order to emphasise the connection they all share with a pseudo-Epicharmean epigram. However, Cinalli’s critical text and the interpretation she suggests can be improved in two or three points.

Cinalli publishes and translates the inscription as follows:

νεκρὸς ἡμὶ κόπρος,  
κόπρος δ’ ἔβη γῆ(ν)  
δ’ ἐστὶ θεὸς ἢ τι  
θέον γῆ, κα[ὶ] θεὸς δ’ ἐστὶ  
5 νεκρὸς. [χαῖρ]ε Φιλησώ Ἰλ-  
αρίωνος Lz  
[- - -]

“Dead I am dirt, the dirt went in the soil. Earth is god or somewhat divine, then the dead is god.  
Farewell Philesos daughter of Hilarion, aged seven [ - - -].”

The inscription is written on the wall of the fifth *loculus* of Gallery B. As this gallery dates from the late Hellenistic times, the same chronology probably applies to the inscription too. The beginning of the text is complete, whereas the traces under line 6 make it likely that the inscription originally continued below. No obvious metrical scheme can be recognised. In line 4, θέον should be read as θεῖον. In line 5, Cinalli puts forward both [χαῖρ]ε and [ύγίαιν]ε, the latter being paralleled in other inscriptions from the ‘Carboncini Tomb’, but she makes it clear that [ύγίαιν]ε is too long for the lacuna, and hence she opts for [χαῖρ]ε.

According to Cinalli, γῆ(ν) at the end of line 2 is an accusative of motion governed by ἔβη (a gnomic aorist?), and the clause would end with γῆ(ν) itself. This raises two serious problems. To begin with, δ(έ) at the beginning of the sentence starting at line 3 is nothing but impossible as pertains to word order; one expects the particle δέ to occupy the second position or further in a sentence (see LSJ s.v. B). Secondly, βάλνω with an accusative of motion is a distinctively poetic construction<sup>5</sup>; by way of example, βάλνω + γῆν only appears in two choral passages in Euripides’ *Phoenissae* (lines 295 and 681). A poetic nuance of this

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Luigi Battezzato and Georg Petzl for their valuable advice. Nonetheless, I am solely responsible for any remaining infelicities. This is a by-product of my work on an edition and commentary of the pseudo-Epicharmean fragments (to appear as part of the *Studia Comica* series), to which I refer the reader for a detailed discussion of broader issues of content and interpretation.

<sup>2</sup> Tomb S147 was discovered in 2006 “during surveys in the southern necropolis of the Archeological Mission in Cyrenaica carried out by The University ‘G. D’Annunzio’ of Chieti” (the quotation is from A. Cinalli, *Painted and Charcoal Inscriptions from the Territory of Cyrene: Evidence from the Underworld*, in R. Benefield – P. Keegan (eds.), *Inscriptions in the Private Sphere in the Greco-Roman World*, Leiden–Boston 2016, 199).

<sup>3</sup> Only to a handful of them is devoted a preliminary discussion by Cinalli (n. 2) 199–206.

<sup>4</sup> A. Cinalli, *Pseudo-Epicharmean Verses in a New Inscription from the Necropolis of Cyrene (Tomb S147)*, in F. Camia – L. Del Monaco – M. Nocita (a c. di), *Munus Laetitiae. Studi miscellanei offerti a Maria Letizia Lazzarini*. Volume I, Roma 2018, 77–92 (freely available at <http://www.editricesapienza.it/node/7774>). A quick presentation of the inscription is already in Cinalli (n. 2) 202–204.

<sup>5</sup> See F. Favi, *Fliaci. Testimonianze e frammenti*, Heidelberg 2017, 354.

kind is out of place in a prose text such as the Cyrenean inscription, nor is there any trace of elevated diction in its *loci similes*, though they are written in either hexametrical or elegiac couplets (see below).

As line 2 cannot stand as printed by Cinalli, I suggest the following text and interpretation for lines 1 to 5<sup>a</sup>:

νεκρὸς ἡμὶ κόπρος·  
κόπρος δὲ ⟨γ⟩ῆ· Γῆ  
δ' ἐστὶ θεός· ἢ τι  
θέου Γῆ, κα[ὶ] θεὸς δ' ἐστὶ  
5 νεκρός.

2 κόπρος δὲ ⟨γ⟩ῆ· Γῆ scripsi : ΚΟΠΡΟΣΔΕΒΗΓΗ

“I, a corpse, am dirt. But dirt is earth. But Earth is god. If Earth is something divine, then a corpse is god too.”

Firstly, νεκρός in lines 1 and 5 is a substantive (‘corpse’); the dead is a young girl (lines 5–6 “Philesó daughter of Hilarion”), and hence we would rather expect νεκρά instead of νεκρός if this passage really were to say “dead I am dirt”.

Near the end of line 2, I suggest to emend BH to γῆ and make it the end of the second clause (κόπρος δὲ γῆ); the third clause thus begins with γῆ (the last word of line 2), and δ(έ) in line 3 is in second position as required by word order rules (γῆ | δ' ἐστὶ θεός). I cannot suggest any clearcut explanation for the faulty reading BH. A paleographical lapsus seems unlikely, and an irrational corruption process should probably be taken into account. Be that as it may, the emendation γῆ is necessary here. The train of thought clearly runs through a sequence of identifications (‘A is B; but B is C; but C is D; if C is D, then A is D too’), and Cinalli herself is aware that, should one accept the text she prints in the second clause, there would be an awkward shift from this pattern (see further the *loci similes* below). The emendation BH > γῆ helps to get rid of this inconvenience, and a nice chiasmus results in lines 2 to 4 (γῆ ... θεός ... τι θεόν γῆ).

I also suggest to take ἢ in line 4 not as a disjunctive conjunction (“or”), but as a conditional particle (“if”). Indeed, ἢ here may well be an instance of the alternative form of the conditional particle εἶ<sup>6</sup>; this ἢ (sometimes written ῆ by modern editors) is variously attested (until as late as the Hellenistic period) in Cypriote, Cretan, and Lesbian inscriptions with either a conditional (as in this case) or temporal value<sup>7</sup>. As an alternative to this interpretation, one might opt for emending ἢ into its lay variant εἶ, but I do not consider this necessary. Be that as it may, a conditional clause in this point of the text is well paralleled in the *loci similes* (see below especially nos. 1 εἶ θεός ἐσθ' ἢ γῆ, 2 εἶ δ' ἢ γῆ θεός ἐστι, 3 *sein est terra dea*, and 5 εἶ δ' ἢ γῆ θεός ἐστ'). Finally, for δ(έ) in line 5 see LSJ s.v. δέ II. *in apodosis* 1 *after hypothetical clause*.

The solutions just put forward are made all the more likely as nearly the same wording of the new Cyrenean inscription is to be found in five parallel texts; see especially nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5:

1) *GVI* vol. I no. 1126 [Eretria, III–II century BC], lines 2–3 εἶ θεός ἐσθ' ἢ γῆ, καὶ γὰρ θεός εἶμι δικαίως | ἐκ γῆς γὰρ βλαστῶν γενόμεν νεκρός, ἐγ δὲ νεκροῦ γῆ.

<sup>6</sup> Both forms apparently belong to a pronominal stem \*e-/o- of which εἶ is the locative (\*e- + suffix -i) and ἢ the instrumental (\*e- + suffix -e) case. See P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, Paris 1968, s.v. εἶ and more recently C. de Lamberterie, in A. Blanc – C. de Lamberterie – J.-L. Perpillou, *Chronique d'étymologie grecque* 11, *RPh* 80 (2006) 349.

<sup>7</sup> See O. Masson, *Les inscriptions chypriotes syllabiques*, Paris 1983, 241 and M. Egetmeyer, *Le dialecte grec ancien de Chypre*. Volume I: *Grammaire*, Berlin–New York 2010, § 574; M. Bile, *Le dialecte crétois ancien*, Paris 1988, 258 n. 24 and 262; A. Dale – A. Ellis-Evans, A Cypriot Curser in Mytilene, *ZPE* 179 (2011) 189–198 (but I do not subscribe to these scholars' opinion that the Lesbian *defixio* in which ἢ appears must have been written by a Cypriote Greek: as ἢ is an inherited form from a stage of the Greek language which is common to all Greek dialects, ἢ cannot be distinctive of a specific variety of Greek, rare as it may be to find in the surviving texts; as regards the reference they make to *SEG XXI* 1093 as providing two further examples of conditional ἢ, see instead the discussion of L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions*. Volume II, Berlin–New York 1996, 671).

- 2) *GVI* vol. I no. 1941 [Thisbe, II–III century AD], lines 5–6 ἐνθάδ' ἐγὼ κεῖμαι νεκρὰ κόνις· εἰ δὲ κόνις, γῆ· | εἰ δ' ἢ γῆ θεός ἐστι, ἐγὼ θεός, οὐκέτι νεκρά.
- 3) *CLE* vol. I no. 1532 [Rome, II–III century AD], lines 2–3 *mortua heic ego sum et sum cinis, is cinis terrast, | sein est terra dea, ego sum dea, mortua non sum.*
- 4) *CLE* vol. I no. 974 [Rome, I century AD], lines 3–4 *mortua hic sita sum. | cinis sum, cinis terra est, terra dea est, ergo ego mortua non sum.*
- 5) [Epich.] fr. 297 K.–A. [= Σ (bT) Hom. *Il.* 22.414] εἰμὶ νεκρός, νεκρός δὲ κόπρος, γῆ δ' ἢ κόπρος ἐστίν· | εἰ δ' ἢ γῆ θεός<sup>8</sup> ἐστ', οὐ νεκρός, ἀλλὰ θεός.

Although the wording of no. 1 is less straightforward than in the other passages, the argumentative pattern which via a sequence of identifications ultimately leads to equate the dead with god, is one and the same throughout all the *loci similes*. This bulk of evidence strongly supports the suggestions I put forward above (emending BH into γῆ, conditional ἢ). Nos. 2, 3, and 4 also back up the repetition and juxtaposition of γῆ I postulate at the end of line 2.

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<sup>8</sup> I print here a different text from K.–A. A discussion of this and of the epigram itself is to be found in my forthcoming edition of the pseudo-Epicharmean fragments (see n. 1 above).