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A DIPINTO FROM THE SO-CALLED “CHAPEL OF ST PAUL”
(CAESAREA MARITIMA): A READING AND INTERPRETATION

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A DIPINTO FROM THE SO-CALLED “CHAPEL OF ST PAUL”
(CAESAREA MARITIMA): A READING AND INTERPRETATION*

In her *editio princeps* of epigraphic findings made during the excavation of Building 1 of a late antique (5th–6th centuries AD) urban residential complex in Caesarea Maritima (which is interpreted by J. Patrich and L. Di Segni as a ‘chapel of St Paul’),¹ Leah di Segni includes a dipinto inscribed onto a piece of plaster (no. 7), which she finds herself unable to decipher and interpret.² The recent *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* follows Di Segni in providing a reconstruction of the inscription without suggesting any plausible reading (alongside a relatively unhelpful drawing of the same).³ In what follows, I will suggest a reading of the dipinto and provide a brief commentary on its devotional implications.

In her edition, Di Segni offers only a set of mismatched letters by way of deciphering the dipinto (Fig. 1):⁴

-- ΙΜΟΙΙΑΙΙΙΓΑΔΕΥΠΙ --



Fig. 1. From L. Di Segni, *A Chapel of St. Paul at Caesarea Maritima?*
The Inscriptions, *Liber Annuus* 50, 392

The two presumable *iotas* after the *omicron* may well be parts of a *nu*, and what Di Segni reads as an undotted *alpha* does not in fact look like one (a clear instance of an *alpha* is provided later in the same line, and bears no resemblance to the traces of this letter); rather, the two curved lines are similar to the lower part of *omega*, which in the *ductus* of this monument is typically made up of two un-joined parts, as e.g. in the inscription under the surviving painted image of a *crux gemmata* (see below) (Fig. 2). The next two *iotas* can again usefully be read as another *nu*. With this in mind, the beginning of the line can be read as ΙΜΟΝΩΝ; I suggest that this is part of δα]μόνον.

If we accept this reading, the next word begins with what Di Segni interprets tentatively as two *iotas* (as there are clearly three vertical lines in the drawing this should, in any case, be three); these are followed by the easily readable γαδεν. I have issues with Di Segni’s reading of the next letter, however: the shapes which she suggests interpreting as a *pi* can with equal ease be read as a *tau* followed by another letter beginning with a vertical hasta. This reading would give us the sequence γαδευτ. The two vertical hastas at the beginning of the word can be read as traces of a *phi* and an *upsilon*, the whole word therefore being φγγαδευτῆ[ριον]. These two words together would then produce [δα]μόνον φγγαδευτῆ[ριον]. Below I will argue that this phrase is ideally suited for the context of a chamber with a religious function (‘chapel’)

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¹ The archaeology of the complex is discussed in J. Patrich, *A Chapel of St. Paul at Caesarea Maritima?*, *Liber Annuus* 50 (2000), 363–82.

² “I can make nothing of it” – L. Di Segni, *A Chapel of St. Paul at Caesarea Maritima? The Inscriptions*, *Liber Annuus* 50 (2000), 393.

³ H. Cotton, W. Ameling et al. (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae. Vol. II: Caesarea and the Middle Coast* (Berlin, New York 2010), no. 1161 = *SEG* 50 1472.

⁴ Di Segni, *A Chapel of St. Paul at Caesarea Maritima?*, 393.

fitting as it does into the context of the other inscriptions and images on the plaster; the sequence also has secure early homiletic parallels.

Among the plaster fragments found scattered on the first floor of what was presumably a two-floor hostel (fragments which, as Di Segni and Patrich believe, probably come from the upper-floor ‘chapel’)⁵ also belongs another, larger, piece of plaster with a painted *crux gemmata* (about one meter high) (Fig. 2); there were at least three such crosses in total painted on the walls of what Patrich and Di Segni would see as an upper-floor room. Right below the cross was another inscription, which has also survived in the debris of Building 1: ΛΩΝΚΑΥΧΗΜ. According to Di Segni’s interpretation (which I find entirely convincing), it contains a liturgical invocation to the cross of the type (σταυρός) μαρτύρων / βροτῶν / ἀποστόλων / μοναζόντων καύχημα found in a number of pseudo-Chrysostomic homilies.⁶ The devotional space of the chamber (be it an upper-room chapel or otherwise) was dominated by large images of jeweled crosses embellished with liturgical invocations informed by homiletic diction.



Fig. 2. *Crux gemmata* with the inscription ἀποστόλων (or [ἀγγέλων] καύχημα. From H. Cotton, W. Ameling et al. (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*. Vol. II: *Caesarea and the Middle Coast* (Berlin, New York 2010), 81

The reading [δα]μόνων φυγαδευτή[ριον], which I have suggested for the dipinto, fits squarely into this reconstruction of the devotional and spatial context of Building 1. Indeed, the idea that the cross chases demons away is found in exactly the kind of homiletic texts which provide close parallels to the other extant inscription located below the image of the *crux gemmata*, the [ἀποστόλων (or [ἀγγέλων] καύχημα]. As the μαρτύρων/βροτῶν/ἀποστόλων καύχημα features in a number of pseudo-Chrysostomic homilies, similarly the idea of the cross as a weapon which drives away demons surfaces in them as well. See e.g. *On the exaltation of the venerable cross*:

Πρὸ σταυροῦ Υἱὸς οὐκ ἦν γινωσκόμενος, σήμερον σταυροῦ κηρυττομένου Υἱὸς ὀνομάζεται, καὶ Πατὴρ δι’ Υἱοῦ γνωρίζεται• πρὸ σταυροῦ διάβολος προσεκυνεῖτο, νῦν σταυροῦ κηρυττομένου διάβολος πέπτωκε, καὶ δαίμονες φυγαδεύονται (PG 59.680).

⁵ Ibid. 383.

⁶ Ibid. 388; SEG 50 1469.

Before the Cross, the Son was not known, today, when the Cross is proclaimed, the Son is named, and the Father becomes known through the Son. Before the Cross, the devil was worshiped, now that the Cross is proclaimed, the devil has fallen, and the demons are turned into flight.

Cf. also *On the adoration of the precious cross*:

καὶ ζωοποιὸς **σταυρὸς** τῷ κόσμῳ ἐμφανίζεται, δι’ οὗ **δαίμονες φυγαδεύονται**, καὶ νόσοι δραπετεύουσι, καὶ σκότος ζοφῶδες ἀπελάνεται (PG 52.835).

<...> and the life-giving cross shows itself to the world, through which the demons are turned into flight, and illnesses are fleeing, and the gloomy darkness is being chased away.

A direct verbal parallel is provided in another pseudo-Chrysostomic text, *On ‘Father, if it is Possible’*. In it, the formula δαιμόνων φυγαδευτήριον refers to the chalice (ποτήριον) of Christ’s prayer in the scene of the agony at Gethsemane and also symbolically to the Eucharistic chalice. However, the wider referential frame of the formula enables the expression to be easily compatible with a range of soteriological objects⁷ and, alongside its well-attested application to the cross discussed above, this indicates a degree of flexibility. It would, therefore, be able, relatively naturally, to collocate with the cross:

(sc. διάβολος) οὐκ οἶδεν ὅτι ὄν μέλλει ἰστᾶν σταυρόν, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἐστὶ παστός, ἐκείνῳ δὲ σταυρός· ἐμοὶ μὲν ἐστὶ θάλαμος, ἐκείνῳ δὲ θάνατος. Ὡ ποτήριον, διαβόλου κεντητήριον, **δαιμόνων φυγαδευτήριον** (PG 61.754).

(Devil) did not know that the cross which he was going to set up will be my chamber, for him, however, it will be a cross. For me it is a mansion, for him, however, it is death. O chalice, sharp weapon against the devil, the one that makes demons flee!

It would come as a natural suggestion that the inscription with the short formula δαιμόνων φυγαδευτήριον (hardly much longer than the surviving two-word phrase) was located under another dipinto image of a *crux gemmata*; it extolls the cross in the same liturgically inspired diction as the other inscription proclaiming the cross as a ‘praise’ of certain Christian individuals (e.g. apostles).

The homiletic origin⁸ of the expression δαιμόνων φυγαδευτήριον in reference to the cross (as well as that of the [ἀποστό]λων καύχημ[α]) may also highlight another aspect of the inscription and how it could be contextualized. The above passages from the three homilies which provide the closest and most relevant parallels all share a surprising stylistic unity: they are hymn-like praises of the cross featuring repetitions, word play, anaphoral structures, *Partizipstil*, as well as other properties of what has been often described as the late antique hymnic style.⁹ Indeed, quite often these passages form long litanies which clearly stand out stylistically and even rhythmically in the text of the homilies: they are, effectively, hymnic exaltations of the cross, the liturgical chalice and similar objects. It is significant to note that the inscription under the

⁷ The formula δαιμόνων φυγαδευτήριον has a wider referential frame in early Christian Greek writings and is not used only to speak of the cross. It can be applied to psalms, as e.g. in Basil of Caesarea’s *Homily on Psalms* (PG 29.212), or to David as their author in (ps.)-Asterius of Amasea’s *Homily 24 on Psalms* (M. Richard, *Asterii sophistae commentariorum in Psalmos quae supersunt*, Symbolae Osloenses fasc. suppl. 16 (Oslo 1956), 212); mystical fire in ps-Macarius’ 25th *Spiritual Homily* (H. Dörries, E. Klostermann, M. Krüger (eds.), *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (Berlin 1964), 164); Christ’s eucharistic blood in Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Catechesis* (P. Paris, A. Piedagnel (eds.), *Cyrille de Jérusalem. Catéchèses mystagogiques*, SC 126 (Paris 1966), 175); the latter usage probably goes back to the tradition of liturgical theology evidenced in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.25. The application of the formula to the cross is therefore a specific type of a wider strand of early Christian diction which is, however, clearly discernible.

⁸ A number of theories regarding the authorship of the relevant homilies have been put forward: Severianus of Gabala and Proclus have been suggested, amongst others; see the relevant entries in J. A. de Aldama, *Repertorium pseudochrysostomicum* (Paris 1965). While discussion of the possible authors continues and new identifications are being suggested, the issue of authorship is not fundamentally important for my discussion of the inscription, as its authors and audiences may well have thought the phrases to come from Chrysostom already in the 5th and 6th centuries, if they were at all concerned about the origin of a generic liturgical language they encountered in the inscriptions.

⁹ On the hymnic style in late antique Greek diction, see the classic discussion in E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig 1913), 143–76; see also R. M. Berg, *Proclus’ Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary* (Leiden 2001), 13–17; M. Hopman-Govers, *Le Jeu Des Épithètes Dans Les Hymnes Orphiques, Kernos* 14 (2001), 35–50.

cross, the [ἀποστό]λων (or [ἀγγέ]λων) καύχημ[α], would similarly evoke pseudo-Chrysostomic phrases like μαρτύρων/βροτῶν/ἀποστόλων καύχημα, which form long hymnic litanies within the homilies.¹⁰ This stylistic quality may account for some of them being included, at the early stages of tradition, into narrative accounts as extended hymn-like passages, as e.g. the hymn to the cross which concludes the text of the early *Discourse of the Saviour* and which survives in a Nubian translation.¹¹ The prayerful hymn-like character of these passages (which could, in their turn, have been influenced by the diction of actual liturgical invocations) was apparently easily recognized by both writers of narrative texts such as the *Discourse of the Saviour* who embedded them as hymnic addresses into their characters' speeches,¹² and by the authors of inscriptional texts, who would recall the phrases like δαιμόνων φυγαδευτήριον and βροτῶν/μαρτύρων/ἀποστόλων καύχημα from the liturgical-sounding passages when producing liturgical dipinti. In this capacity, as hymn-like prayerful invocations offered up in spaces of private, or at least, domestic devotion (as Building 1 is thought to have been),¹³ the pseudo-Chrysostomic passages informing the vocabulary of the invocations to the cross are reminiscent of e.g. the so-called 'prayer of Manasses', a devotional text of dubious liturgical standing (*SEG* 57 1387),¹⁴ which was inscribed in a similar archaeological context in roughly the same period in Hierapolis.¹⁵ Both Greek inscriptions share the context of private urban devotion, coming as they do from residential complexes in late antique (5th–6th centuries AD) cities.

This parallel may provide further evidence for the religious character of the space from which the inscriptions found in Building 1 come (regardless of whether it was indeed an upper-floor chapel). Arguably, in the case of this 5th–6th cc. AD residential complex in Caesarea Maritima, we are dealing with a space allocated for religious use within a wider context of extra-ecclesial devotion.¹⁶

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¹⁰ E.g. the homily *On venerable cross* (*PG* 50.815–20; *CPG* 4525) features a lengthy praise to the cross made up of short, rhythmically similar, colons; in it, the cross is addressed as μαρτύρων καύχημα. The homily is an early piece already in circulation by 420-ies: see S. J. Voicu, Note su un'omelia pseudocrisostomica per il natale (*CPG* 5068; *BHG* 1920q), *Orpheus* 13.2 (1992), 354–63. It was extremely popular in the Christian East and West: the homily was known to Augustine and translated into Syriac and Nubian. This gives a good idea of the wide popularity of this kind of liturgically-sounding litany of praises to the cross.

¹¹ The text is extensively discussed in G. M. Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus: An Old Nubian Version of Ps.-Chrysostom, In Venerabilem Crucem Sermo* (Roma 1984).

¹² Prayers and hymns embedded in the gospel narratives – D. M. Crump, *Jesus the Intercessor: Prayer and Christology in Luke-Acts* (Tübingen 1992); K. P. De Long, *Surprised by God: Praise Responses in the Narrative of Luke-Acts* (Berlin 2009); among the prayers in early martyrdom accounts the most famous and widely discussed is the prayer of Polycarp – B. Dehandschutter, *Polycarpiana: Studies on Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (Leuven 2007), 67–78; P. Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford 2013), 234–7.

¹³ Patrich, *A Chapel of St. Paul at Caesarea Maritima?*, 372.

¹⁴ The 'prayer of Manasses' originating in the Septuagint (2 *Chronicles* 33.11–13; 2 *Kings* 21) entered Christian liturgical thinking quite early on: a version of it is included in the 4th century *Apostolic Constitutions*: see M. Metzger, *Les constitutions apostoliques*, SC 329 (Paris 1985), 126; P. W. van der Horst, J. H. Newman, *Early Jewish Prayers in Greek* (Berlin 2008), 145–80. It never became a fully standard Christian liturgical prayer: H. E. Ryle, *Prayer of Manasses*, in R. H. Charles (ed.), *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol.1 (Oxford 1912), 612–24; V. Ryssel, *Das Gebet Manasses*, in E. Kautzsch (ed.), *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen 1900), 1:165–71; R. Leicht, *A Newly Discovered Hebrew Version of the Apocryphal "Prayer of Manasseh"*, *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3.4 (1996), 359–73.

¹⁵ See the commentary in *SEG* 57 1378. *Ed. pr.* is T. Ritti, *L'iscrizione dipinta con la Preghiera di Manasse a Hierapolis di Frigia (Turchia)*, *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* (Serie III) 78 (2005/2006), 395–433. See also R. Cacciti, *E ora piego le ginocchia del cuore: l'epigrafe dipinta della preghiera di Manasse a Gerapoli di Frigia*, *Acme* 60.3 (2007), 71–83; A. Mastrocinque, *La Preghiera Di Manasse in un'iscrizione di Hierapolis Di Frigia*, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 164 (2008), 256–8.

¹⁶ On the intricate relationships of public and private in late antique devotion (with special emphasis on material evidence and archaeology) see A. Z. Ruggiu, *Spazio privato e spazio pubblico nella città romana* (Rome 1995); specifically on early Christian developments see K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2008).