

## A Family Quarrel in Early Byzantine Beroea

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In the framework of a comprehensive study on the legal and social essence of the Greek term *θρεπτός* and its cognates, I have come upon an intriguing inscription from Macedonian Beroea, first published by D. Feissel<sup>1</sup> and recently republished by L. Gounaropoulou and M.B. Hatzopoulos.<sup>2</sup> The inscription was also briefly discussed by F. Papazoglou in her review of Feissel's corpus.<sup>3</sup>

The inscription is engraved on a thin, nearly square plaque of grey marble 0.42 m high, 0.44 m wide and 0.055 m thick, in carelessly carved letters 0.012 m high. The exact circumstances of its discovery are unknown; the stone is now kept in the Collection of Byzantine Antiquities in Beroea [inv. 20 (530)].<sup>4</sup> The lower left-hand corner of the plaque, as well as its bottom part, are broken off. The lettering of the inscription indicates a date in the fourth or fifth century AD. Numerous lapicidal errors, erasures, corrections and additions to the originally cut text, together with the damage suffered by the surface of the stone, impede the decipherment and the comprehension of this unusually rich text. Here is the reading published by Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos in their new corpus of Beroean inscriptions:

[Αὐρη]λία Ἀριανῆ [δούλη τοῦ Θεοῦ] ΦϜϜ. <I> ζῶ-  
σα καὶ παροῦσα καὶ παροῦσα τὸν γλυκύτατόν  
μου ἄνδρα Ὑ Ἀρεστίδην τὸν κέ Οὐαλ[- - ]  
βेत्रαυὼν Ὑ καὶ τὴν γλυκυτό[α]την μου θυγατέ-  
5 ρα Ἀγροτέρην καὶ τὸ γλυκύτατόν μ[ο]ν θρεπτάριν,  
ὃ ἐγὼ ἀνέθρεψα ὑπὸ τὰς ἐμὰς μάλας, Γερόντιν. Ἰδοῦσα

<sup>1</sup> *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Macédoine du IIIe au VIe siècle, BCH Supplément VIII*, Paris 1983, no. 62, photo.

<sup>2</sup> *Ἐπιγραφές Κάτω Μακεδονίας I: Ἐπιγραφές Βεροίας*, Athens 1998, no. 445, photo.

<sup>3</sup> *Živa Antika* 35, 1985, 152-3.

<sup>4</sup> I have not seen the stone itself, only a photograph of it.

- ὄτι [...]ΕWCE Γερόντι[ν] ἔπι(η) ἐποίησα τοῦτο τὸ  
 κοιμητήριον ἐκ τῶν ἰδείων μόχθων, ἐπὶ τὰ  
 10 παιδάρι]α ποιήσασα καὶ μηδὲ ἐνὸς τῶν θυγατέ-  
 ρων μου μὴ θελουσῶν συνκαταθέσθαι τῆς ΔΑ  
 [...]ΕC. Τοῦτο οὖν μαρτύρομε τὸ ἀγιώτατον  
 [...]ον τῆς ἀγίας καὶ καθολικῆς) ἐκκλησί-  
 [ας...], μετὰ τὴν ἐ' μὴν τελευτήν, καὶ κη-  
 15 [δευμένης ἐμοῦ τῆς προγεγραμμένης  
 [...]ίου, εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κοιμητήριον ἢ τις]  
 [τολμήσῃ τῶν θυγατέρων μου ἢ ἕτερός τις,  
 [δώσει τῇ ἀγί]α ἐκκλησίᾳ τῇ κατὰ Βέροϊαν  
 [προστίμου χ]ρυσοῦ λίτρας πέντε καὶ  
 [τῇ πόλει -----].

On the right margin of the text, vertically between lines 10 and 4: Γερωντί[φ]υ].<sup>5</sup>

1 ΑΡΙΑΝ[.....]ΙΘΥΝ[.]ΤΑ Feissel. In addition to the damage suffered by the stone at the beginning and in the middle part of line 1, all the letters following Θ were erased and a correction introduced, making most of the proposed readings highly uncertain. I would suggest that the possibility of reading the owner's name as Ἀριάγνη not be excluded. This name is attested once in Beroea and once in the sanctuary of the Indigenous Mother of Gods in Lefkopetra near Beroea.<sup>6</sup> The damaged part of the first line, following the owner's personal name, perhaps contained her patronymic and the word θυγάτηρ, rather than the phrase [δούλη το]ῦ Θ(εο)ῦ proposed by Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos,<sup>7</sup> especially since the text on the stone is probably an excerpt from a testament (cf. the commentary on line 2) requiring this type of information.

2 κα[....]υσα Feissel; κη[δεύο]υσα Papazoglou. The phrase ζῶσα καὶ παροῦ[σα καὶ παροῦ]υσα (with a corrected dittography) is the opening line of testamentary dispositions regulating the construction and the use of a family

<sup>5</sup> Feissel reads here ΕΞΙΝΤΙ[- -] and interprets this as the date — the fifth indiction.

<sup>6</sup> Ἐπιγραφές Κάτω Μακεδονίας 1, no. 49; Ph.M. Petsas-M.B. Hatzopoulos-L. Gounaropoulou-P. Paschidis, *Inscriptions du sanctuaire de la Mère des Dieux Autochtone de Leukopetra (Macédoine) (Meletemata 28)*, Athens 2000, no. 151; cf. A. Tataki, *Ancient Beroea. Prosopography and Society (Meletemata 8)*, Athens 1988, PB nos. 220-221.

<sup>7</sup> I fail to see the horizontal bar over the second letter in the proposed reading Θ(εο)ῦ.

sepulchral complex. Its owner intended it to be used as the final resting place of the deceased members of her family<sup>8</sup> (her husband Arestides, her daughter Agroteri(o)n and her foster-child Geronti(o)n<sup>9</sup>) and herself.

3 τ[ό]ν Feissel. The husband's *signum* was partly erased, perhaps inadvertently.\* Feissel proposes the supplement Οὐάλλ[ε]ντα], while Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos prefer Οὐάλλ[έ]ριον]. The latter proposal accords better with the traces of the letters and the space available on the stone. Οὐάλλ[ε]ριανόν] is also possible.

4 ZETIANWN<sup>10</sup> Feissel.

6 ἐγὼ Feissel; ΜΑΛΛΑC Feissel, μάμας (= Lat. *mammās*) Papazoglou. The phrase ὃ (sc. τὸ θρεπτάριον) ἐγὼ ἀνέθρεψα ὑπ[ὸ] τὰς ἐμὰς μάλας, understood and interpreted correctly by Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos, seems to be unique in Greek epigraphy. It states a fact related to the foster-child's upbringing and simultaneously reflects the emotional attachment of the foster-parent to the foster-child, quite understandable now that we see she had nursed the child by herself, "under her armpits".<sup>11</sup> Γερό(ν)τιον Feissel: the last five letters of this name were cut above the following word ἰδοῦσα. Feissel, Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos consider the name Geronti(o)n to be female, while Papazoglou leaves the question open, although she seems disposed to regard it as male.<sup>12</sup> The name contains the diminutive suffix -ιον used in the formation of names of both genders but more common in female names.<sup>13</sup> In view of my interpretation of lines 14-15 below, where I supply τῆς προγεγραμμένης [Γεροντ]λου, I am inclined to agree with Feissel, Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos in considering the name

<sup>8</sup> Note the epithet γλυκύτατος frequently used of deceased persons in pagan inscriptions, as remarked already by F. Papazoglou in her review.

<sup>9</sup> I will discuss Geronti(o)n's legal status in the above-mentioned study under preparation.

<sup>10</sup> On the use of ο instead of ω in this word, cf. E. Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit* I, Berlin/Leipzig 1923, 98-9.

<sup>11</sup> Compare what Synesius has to say about some Libyan women (*Ep.* 4): μήνιμα Ἐφροδίτης, ὡς εἰκάσαι, κατέχει τὴν χώραν· δυστυχοῦσι γὰρ ὅπερ αἱ Λήμιαι. Καὶ γὰρ ὑπερμαζώσι καὶ ἀσυμμέτρως ἔχουσι τῶν στέρνων, ὥστε τὰ βρέφη μὴ διὰ μάλης ἀλλὰ διὰ τῶν ὤμων σπᾶν τῆς θηλῆς ἀναβεβλημένης.

<sup>12</sup> She thinks Geronti(o)n could have been a boy adopted into a family consisting solely of daughters (op. cit. 152).

<sup>13</sup> On names of women on record in Macedonian inscriptions, including the ones ending in -(ο)ν, cf. A. Tatakis, *Tyche* 8, 1993, 189-196 (= *SEG* 43, 358). Also O. Masson, *MH* 47, 1990, 129-138 (= *SEG* 40, 1678).

Γερόντι(ο)ν as the diminutive form of the rare female name Γεροντία attested chiefly in the western part of the Roman Empire.<sup>14</sup>

7 [...]WCE[...IT[...]ET Feissel; Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos propose supplying here the verb ἀποσώζω (i.e., its form ἀπέσωσε) in the apparently unattested meaning “complete, finish”, supporting their proposal with a Modern Greek parallel ἀποσώνω, “finish up, finish off; make up (a deficiency)”. I think the traces on the stone point rather to the supplement ὄτι [ἐβ]ίωσε Γ[ε]ρόντιν] ἔτη). The phrase ἐβίωσε ἔτη, followed by a number, is quite common in epitaphs,<sup>15</sup> so that we expect a number after ἔτη). It is possible that this number was ε', left out accidentally because the following word started with an epsilon as well (ἐποίησα). Seeing Geronti(o)n pass away at a tender age of five (?), Aria(g)ne decided to build a family-tomb. Up to this point, I am in agreement with the previous editors' interpretation of the text.

9 [π]αιδά[ρι]α Feissel.

10-11 TECΔA/[...]EÇ Feissel; I supply here the word δαλπάν)ες and translate the phrase καὶ μηδὲ ἐνὸς τῶν θυγατέρων μου μὴ θελουσῶν συγκαταθέσθαι τῆς δαλπάν)ες as “but not even one of my daughters wished to contribute to the costs”. Unless we suppose that the masculine εἷς in μηδεῖς<sup>16</sup> was not felt as exclusively masculine any more, so that the pronoun was applicable to both genders, its appearance next to the feminine noun and participle (θυγατέρων, θελουσῶν) is embarrassing. I was able to find two parallels in papyri and ostraka for this use: 1) ἕνα instead of μίαν in ἀγω(γῆν) ἕνα<sup>17</sup>; 2) ἕνα instead of μίαν in the phrase εἷς ἕναν γυνῶσιν.<sup>18</sup> As far as the verb συγκατατίθημι is concerned, when used with a noun in the

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Onomasticon Provinciarum Europae Latinarum (OPEL)* II, Vienna 1999, s.v.; *CIL* VI 19037; 38422.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *IG* XII 7, 124: ἐ[π]τὰ δὲ καὶ τριάκοντα ἔ[τ]η σ]εμνῶς ἐβίωσα; *SEG* 14, 165; *IG* XI 4, 1299: ἔτη δὲ ἐβίωσεν ἐξήκοντα καὶ ἕν; E. Breccia, *Iscrizioni greche e latine*, Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte. Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée d'Alexandrie, Cairo 1911, nos. 362 (ἐβίωσε[ν ἐτῶν] ιη'), 375 (ἐβίωσεν ἔτη κε'); *SEG* 18, 696: ἐβίω(σεν) ἔτη μζ'; *POslo* III, 199; *PHaun* II, 42.

<sup>16</sup> Note that Aria(g)ne is using the emphatic form μηδὲ εἷς.

<sup>17</sup> U. Wilcken, *Griechische Ostraka aus Ägypten und Nubien*, Leipzig/Berlin 1899, no. 707.4, Ptolemaic period. In no. 705.3 of the same collection we find the correct form ἀγω(γῆν) μίαν; cf. Maysen, op. cit., 312. This is possibly the oldest example of the indeclinable ἕνα.

<sup>18</sup> *POxy* 1862.50, seventh century AD. Cf. F.Th. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* II, Milano 1981, 184.

dative case (here τῆς δαπάνης = ταῖς δαπάναις) it means “to put down the same vote or opinion, agree entirely with; agree with, assent, conform to” (cf. *LSJ*, s.v.),<sup>19</sup> while used with a noun in the accusative case it means “to deposit together or at the same time (in a tomb)”. The meaning here is obviously that the daughters did not assent to the costs of the tomb, i.e. refused to pay their share. This sentence is the crucial one for the correct understanding of the whole inscription. I do not share the previous editors’ conviction that the second half of the whole inscription (in particular lines 15-16) contains a prohibition of other burials in the tomb without the consent of the owner’s daughters.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, as the new reading καὶ μηδὲ ἐνὸς τῶν θυγατέρων μου μὴ θελουσῶν συνκαταθέσθαι τῆς δαπάνης reveals, the living daughters themselves were denied burial in the tomb on account of their refusal to contribute to the costs of its construction! This inscription is the result of a serious altercation in a family: the death of a beloved foster-child prompted a lady to build a family tomb for her late husband, daughter and foster-child. Although she originally intended the tomb to be used by the living children as well (cf. lines 8-9: ἐπὶ τὰ παιδάρια ποιήσασα), her daughters proved reluctant to contribute to the building-costs and she accordingly excluded them from the list of persons entitled to a place in the tomb.

11-12 τὸ(ν) ἀγιώτατον / [κλήρ]ον Feissel; ἀγίας Feissel; ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΗΕ on the stone. Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos abstain from proposing a supplement for the beginning of line 12. Feissel’s proposal τὸ(ν) ἀγιώτατον [κλήρ]ον, although suitable as far as its meaning is concerned, still implies a mistake on the stone-cutter’s part (τὸ instead of τὸν); moreover, it seems short for the lacuna on the stone which requires at least five letters. Therefore, albeit hesitatingly, I propose to read τοῦτο οὖν μαρτύρομε τὸ ἀγιώτατον / [δίκαι]ον τῆς ἀγία[σ]ς καὶ καθολικῆς < > ἐκκλησί[ας]... The term τὸ (ἀγιώτατον) δίκαιον appears in several papyri from the sixth century,<sup>21</sup> where it designates a corporate body governing a church or a monastery and managing its property. In *PCairMasp* I no. 67101 it is addressed as τὸ

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *IG* V 2, 269-270; *IPergamon* II, 268-269; *MAMA* VI, 264: ἐπεσκεύασαν ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ τῶν συνκαταθεμένων; Gounaropoulou-Hatzopoulos, op. cit. no. 49; *SEG* 39, 340; *PLond* V, 1708; *SB* XVIII, 13176.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the commentary of Gounaropoulou and Hatzopoulos: χωρὶς τὴν θέληση τῶν ὀπίων (sc. θυγατέρων) κανεῖς δὲν θά ἔχει τὸ δικαίωμα νὰ ἐνταφιασθεῖ σ’ αὐτόν. By placing the phrase τῶν θυγατέρων μὴ θελουσῶν between commas, Feissel suggests the same interpretation.

<sup>21</sup> *PCairMasp* I no. 67101; *PCairMasp* III no. 67298; *PGoergRoss* III no. 48; *PSI* VIII no. 933; *PFlor* 73 = *PStrassb* V no. 471 bis; *CPR* IX no. 32.

δίκαιον τὸ ἀγιώτατον τῶν τριῶν ἀγίων τῆς λαμπρᾶς Ἀντινοέων by a herdsman leasing a part of the church's landed property. In *PCairMasp* III no. 67298 τὸ δίκαιον τῆς ἀγιωτάτης ἐκκλησίας τῆς Τεντυριτῶν πόλεως, represented by Abramaios, *presbyteros* and *oikonomos* of the Church, concludes an ἐμφυτευτικὴ ὁμολογία with a certain Senouthes. At the end of the document all the members of the *dikaion* expressed agreement to the contract and appended their signatures. We see that the body was made up of six members, a *presbyteros*, four *diakonoi* and an *archidiaconos*. It seems to me that it would not be inappropriate for Aria(g)ne to call upon the *dikaion* of the Beroian Church to ensure that after her death no one but the persons appearing in her last will and testament should be allowed into the tomb she had built. Anyway, I leave the last word to those more versed in early Church history.

13 [ὡς] μετὰ Feissel. Before μετὰ an *epsilon* can be faintly discerned on the photograph on the stone, perhaps the last letter of ὡστ'ε.

15 [.....]ΙϞΟΥ Feissel.

The concluding part of the inscription (in particular lines 13-15), remains in my opinion misunderstood. Its first half (?ὡστ'ε μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν τελευτήν) obviously refers to Aria(g)ne herself, while the damaged beginning of line 15 possibly contained the name of a second, already mentioned female person (cf. τῆς προγεγραμμένης in line 14). The editors have so far considered the second part of the phrase, starting with καί and ending in [.....]ίου, as relating to Aria(g)ne and her burial as well, and this conjecture hindered them from finding a suitable supplement for the lost beginning of line 15. I propose to identify this second person as Geronti(o)n<sup>22</sup> and to supply [Γερουτ]ίου. Furthermore, it seems more likely that the missing verb in lines 13-14 was κήδομαι rather than κηδεύομαι — in contrast to κηδεύομαι, κήδομαι requires an object in the genitive case. Therefore, I supply καὶ κη/δομένης: Geronti(o)n was the last person to be buried in the tomb during Aria(g)ne's lifetime, and Aria(g)ne's intention was to close the tomb permanently after her own death. I translate: “after my death, since I am now [taking care of (= burying)] the above-mentioned [Geront]i(o)n...”.

15-16 τι[ς] Feissel; μου ἕτερός τις Feissel, omitting the disjunctive ἢ.

As already noted, the previous editors have understood the phrase read and supplied by them as ἢ τι[ς] / [τολήσ]η τῶν θυγατέρων μου ἢ ἕτερός τις as being equivalent in meaning to εἶ τις ἕτερος τῶν θυγατέρων μου

<sup>22</sup> I do not think that the second person was the daughter Agroteri(o)n, since she seems to have passed away some time before Aria(g)ne ever conceived the idea of building a family tomb.

[τολήμη].<sup>23</sup> In fact, we have here an example of adjectival use of the indefinite pronoun *τις*, *τι* meaning “any, some”.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, in place of [τολήμη] requiring a complementary verb (*ἀνοῖξει*, *βαλεῖν τινα* vel sim.), I propose to supply [*βιάσεται/βιάσετε*].<sup>25</sup> I translate “if someone forces his way into this tomb, whether a daughter of mine or someone else ...”

Finally, this is the new reading of the Early Byzantine inscription from Bereoa:

[Αὐ]ρηλία Ἀρια[.....]ΥΘΥ[.....]ζω-  
σα καὶ παροῦ[σα καὶ παροῦ]σα, τὸν γλυκύτατόν  
μου ἄνδρα ὕ Ἀρεστίδην τὸν κέ Οὐαλέριον,  
βετρανών, ὕ καὶ τὴν γλυκυτότατην μου θυγατέ-  
5 ρα Ἀγροτέρην, καὶ τὸ γλυκύτατόν μοι θρεπτάρην,  
ὃ ἐγὼ ἀνέθρεψα ὑπὸ τὰς ἐμὰς μάλας, Γερόντιν. Ἰδοῦσα  
ὅτι ἐβ[ί]ωσσε Γερόντιν] ἔτ(η) <ε΄>, ἐποίησα τοῦτο τὸ  
κοιμητήριον ἐκ τῶν ιδείων μόχθων, ἐπὶ τὰ  
παιδάρια ποιήσασα, καὶ μηδὲ ἐνὸς τῶν θυγατέ-  
10 ρων μου μὴ θελουσῶν συνκαταθέσθαι τῆς δα-  
[πάν]ξ. Τοῦτο οὖν μαρτύρομε τὸ ἀγιώτατον  
[δίκαι]ον τῆς ἀγία[σ]ς καὶ καθολικῆ[ς] ἐκκλησί-  
[ας, ὡστ]ε μετὰ τὴν ἐ μὴν τελευταίην, καὶ κη-  
δομένης ἐμοῦ τῆς προγεγραμμένης  
15 [Γεροντ]ίου, εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κοιμητήριον ἢ τίς]  
[βιάσεται], ἢ τῶν θυγατέρων μου ἢ ἕτερός τις,  
δῶσει τῇ ἀγί]α ἐκκλησί]α τῇ κατὰ Βέροϊαν  
[προστίμου χρ]υσοῦ λίτρας πέντε καὶ  
[τῇ πόλει -----].

I, Aurelia Aria[...], alive and present, (bury) my sweetest husband Arestides, also called Val[erios], a veteran, my sweetest daughter Agroteri(o)n and my sweetest foster-daughter, whom I brought up under my arms, Geronti(o)n. Seeing Geronti(o)n pass away at the age of [five?], I made this tomb out of my own toils. I made it for my (other) children as well, but not even one of my daughters wished to contribute to the costs. Therefore, I call upon the holiest [council?] of the Holy and Catholic Church (to ensure) that after my death, since I am now [taking care] of the above-mentioned [Geront]i(o)n,

<sup>23</sup> This second phrase positively sounds like poor Greek to me!

<sup>24</sup> Attestations in *LSJ* s.v.; Mayser, *Grammatik* (above n. 10), 80; F. Blass-A. Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*<sup>14</sup>, Göttingen 1976, 250.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *MAMA* VI 83.



should someone force his way into this tomb, whether a daughter of mine or someone else, he [should pay to the Holy Church of Beroia a [fine] of five pounds of gold and [to the city - - -].

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