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'Proclaiming it to Greeks and Natives, along the rows of the chequer-board': readers and viewers of Greek, Latin and Demotic Acrostich inscriptions

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‘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 word-play 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

[1] In recent years, there have been a number of new studies of acrostich inscriptions, 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 recognising 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.

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 word play 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 recognising that similar techniques of

[2] Mairs (n.1), 281-297; R. Mairs, '*Sopha Grammata*: Greek Acrostichs in Inscriptions from Arachosia, Nubia and Libya', in J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain and M. Szymański (n.1), 279-306.

composition had been used. The Stele of Moschion (sometimes known as his 'Magical Stele', 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 century CE, 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 x 91.5 cm) in Cairo, and the surviving portion of the main body (81 x 86 x 25 cm) in Berlin (JdE 63160 + Berl. 2135). Its dimensions were originally in the region of 122 x 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: Ὀσίριδι Μοσχίων ὑγιασθεὶς τὸν πόδα ἰατρείαις 'To Osiris, Moschion, who had his foot healed by medical treatment.'
>
> E: *Ms* (*?*) *sḏm n-y pȝ nti ḏd nt-iw wȝḥ.f di.t lk šn r.wn.nȝ.w ḫn rd*(*=y*) *tȝ pḫri r.di.f n=y* (*n*) *ḥpry* '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

[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), 117-145; 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.

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 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 additional reference to Osiris and the cure (J: *Msky3n*); and at the foot, a repetition of Osiris's 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 ethno-linguistic audiences in predictably different ways: to Hellenes and natives (A 3 Ἕλλησι καὶ ἐνδαπίοισιν) and to people of Kemy and Ionians (H 13 *r n3 rmt.w n Kmy n3 Wynn*). Unlike other well-known bi- or multi-lingual 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, recognising 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: περίεργος), 'not straightforward' (B 3: κοὐχ ἁπλῆν), something which Moschion has not only built up through hard work (B 7: οὐ παχεῖ λόγωι πλάσας τι—like bricks in a wall?; B 8: καταπονήσας 'labouring over'), but trained himself to do (B 7: γυμνάσας δ' ἑαυτὸν—note the gymnasial reference) 'cunningly' (B 10: πανούργως).

The result is 'well-ordered' (B 3: εὔθετον), in contrast to the intricacies concealed within it. Disorder is channeled 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: *ḥbʿy*). 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 are many squares or compartments (G 6: *ỉtn.w*; I 1: πολύχωρος 'divided into many squares'). The order (F 10: τάξις) created by the horizontal and vertical lines (A 4: σελίς; B 7: κανόνων; F 32: στοιχηδὸν 'in a row') which run across (F 10: διατρέχουσαν) 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 nꜣ-nḫt.f n bꜣk* '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: *ḥr-ib*) to find the 'beginning of the way' (G 1, G 5, G11: *ḥ3.t n t3 mi.t*), then follow the path (G 2: *ir.f myt*; G 5: *thm p3y.f wy*). The movement of the sense of the letters is compared to water moving through the irrigation channels (G 6: *llꜥ* 'wanders'), but an Egyptian twist is added with the use of the Nilotic verbs 'travel north, downstream' (G 6: *ḫty*) and 'travel south, upstream' (G 6: *ḫnt*). The regularity and linearity of the word-square turns 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 ἔχηις νοῦν—of the acrostich). Disorder (G 8, cf. G 9: *shy*) is brought to harmonious completion (F 11: σύμφωνον ἀποτελεσμόν) 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 ḳḥ.w n3 ḏḳ.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 παραστιχίς, literally 'written at the side' (B 9). Like the word square, the text itself makes play on linearity (I 3: στοιχεῖά 'lines'; I 6: στίχων lines; I 9: ὀρθὸν 'straight'), but the reader/viewer is also invited to count up the letters and the lines: equal in number to the Muses (I 6: ἰσαρίθμων 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 denigrates the ignorant person who is confused and does not.[5]

[4] μερίμνης ἀγαθῆς 'good thinking' (B 6); μισθὸν 'reward' (B 13); φρονῆσαι 'comprehend, understand' (B 14); σοφία 'wisdom' (B 14); συνιέντι 'to the one who perceives' (B 20); πινυτόφρονος 'of wise/understanding mind' (C 1); τῶι μηθὲν ἀγνοοῦντι 'he who is no fool' (F 9); εὑρὼν 'finding'; *gm* 'find' (F10; G 10); νοῦς 'mind' (I 7, I 9); *swn* 'knowledge' (J 6);

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 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 δέρκομαι '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 disoriented 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 θαυμάσηις, 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 εὔθετον ὄψιν), the message is revealed (B 10: ἐνεφάνισε; cf. G 12, J 3: *krp*; I 9: σημανεῖ). The Demotic guide, G, next instructs the reader to look in front of themselves (G 2: *nw ḫr-ḥ3.ṯ=k*) on the path.

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 ḥbʿy iw.f ḏd* '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-ḏr.ṯ ḏd.k … ḏd.f*). In the fragmentary Demotic text H, Moschion calls to Osiris (H 6: *ʿš.y*; cf. H 9). The same verb *ʿš* '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

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rḫ 'know' (G 11); *ir ḥ3t* '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); ἁμαρτάνων 'going wrong, erring' (F 9); *šft* 'err' (G 9).

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 address ‘Listen to me, the one who says’ (E: *sḏm n=y pȝ nti ḏd*), 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 ḥrw=y*) when the successful decipherer of the word-square says aloud (*ḏd*), 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 successful and unsuccessful ways of engaging with it is emphasised 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: ἀρχὴν/λαβών; G 1: *tȝy.ṯ=f* (*n*) *ḥȝ.t n tȝ 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’ ἑκάστου). The Demotic guide to the word square refers to ‘knowledge established in the hand’ (G 13: *pȝ swn nti i* (*n*)-*ḏr.ṯ=f*). All these references, I would suggest, indicate that the reading and understanding of the inscription as imagined in

[6] Implied, I think, in G 7*: tš ḏr.ṯ=k*; the word ‘hand’ also appears in G 8, 9, 13, 14.

tactile as well as 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 recognise and appreciate the wordplay. I do not contest this. But there is also an 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.

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

[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

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 which is repeated in a separate column—is an excellent way of capturing a reader's interest and 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 word-play rather than 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 meter, too, would have added to the aural experience. The (Greek) texts include different meters: elegiacs, iambic trimeters, and Sotadics. A similar strategy is used by the authors of

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or Cryptic Writings in the Coffin Texts', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 67 (1981), 173-174; 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', *Greece & Rome* 8 (1939), 129-138, 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.

some of the comparative inscriptions discussed 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 meters—might in fact give the illiterate viewer or listener a higher regard for Moschion's skill than for the literate one.

COMPARANDA

My focus is on the word-play 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: ποικίλως; a term also used by Maximus, *I. Metr*. 168, l. 6), some of these use the same technique of repeating the acrostich in a separate column to make it more immediately recognisable. 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 recognises 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 written composition. He imagines

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

the stele speaking (l. 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 (l. 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 boundary between the Roman empire and its Nubian hinterland, and presents himself, in the opening line, as gazing upon the setting at Kalabsha: μακάριον ὅτ' ἔβην ἠρεμίης τόπον ἐσαθρῆσαι, '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 (l. 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 (l. 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 (l. 22: μ' ἔκλῃζεν τὸ σοφὸν πόημα λέξαι, 'he urged me to speak my clever poem'). He has 'composed a complex song' (l. 6: ποικίλον ἅρμοζον ἀοιδήν), a 'festive dance' which he 'shakes out' (l. 9: ἄνθεμον ἀπετίναξα κῶμον). The performance is vividly described: ῥάβδῳ δέ τις οἷα κατὰ μέλος δέμας δονηθείς,/ἀρμογὴν μέλει συνεργὸν ἐπεκάλουν χαράττειν, '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' (ll. 19-20). The Muses—also name-dropped by Moschion, Faustinus and Sōphytos—sing (ll. 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' (l. 25: γλυκερὴν ἔσπευσεν ἐφ' Ἑλλάδα μοῦσαν ἀεῖσαι), which is to 'charm away the barbaric

speech [NB not song or verse] of the Aithiopian' (l. 24: θέλγων βαρβαρικὴν λέξιν ἀπ' Αἰθιόπων). The poem is full of further references to speaking words aloud, whether oracles (l. 28: μαντικὰ πυθιόων), or simply addressing and naming (l. 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 be viewed by all without flattery' (ll. 33-34). 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 ([εἴκοσι] καὶ δυ̣σὶ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος).

Maximus' other inscription (*I. Metr*. 169), although he begins by singing the praise of Apollo (l. 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 'recognising' the name of the writer (l. 8: ἰ δεῖ (ἀνα)γνῶναι καὶ τοὔνομα τοῦ γράψαντος; l. 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 'Maximos'.

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 (l. 2), and speaks, poetically, of his verses as 'songs' (l. 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 (l. 9: sacra Mamertino sonuerunt praeside sig[na). Stones are spoken of as breathing and greeting (l. 8: spirent cautes ac salutent).

An unusual double, syllabic acrostich (Appendix 5) was left by a man named Catilius son of Nikanor at the temple of Philae, north of Kalabsha, who invites the reader to 'stop and examine' his inscription (l. 2: ἀμπαύσας ἔγμαθε). His Greek verse spells out his name and patronymic, syllable by syllable , in the first syllables of each line (Ka-ti-li- etc.), and in the first and last letters of each line (K…a-t…i, etc.). 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 (l. 5: φησί, ξένε; l. 6: καιρὸν ἔχω φωνεῖν · χαίρετε πολλά, Φίλαι). Witty, oblique reference is also made to the neat lines of the poem itself, and the lines of the acrostichs (l. 1: τὸ εὐτέχνου φωτὸς στίχον; l. 8: ἱστορικὴν σελίδα, a double entendre 'historical/narrative piece' vs 'precise column', both with implications of 'investigation'). A reference to the visitor 'seeing' Nikanor and his family may also have a double meaning, referring to the viewing of the written names (l. 9: ἰδὼν Νικάνορα καὶ γένος). Playful and teasing to the last, Catilius concludes: 'I only have a '-ros' left! For this is the end' (l. 10), a tag destined to make those who have recognised the 'line of a skilful mortal' smile, and leave those who haven't 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 recognising 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

[12] J.N. Adams, 'The Poets of Bu Njem: Language, Culture and the Centurionate', *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999), 109-134.

the empire, such as at the garrison at Kalabsha. At Bu Njem, the verse of Q. Avidius Quintianus refers, in passing, to 'praising aloud' (l. 16: laudem uoce reddere) and 'bearing witness' (l. 18: protestare), but is more remarkable for its vivid imagining of the desert under the heat and light of the sun. Porcius Iasucthan, one of the ancient world's more 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' (l. 27). There is a slight possibility that Avidius' celebration of honest hard work and military muscle here makes a Vergilian allusion.[13] Might this be the product of an exposure to Latin literature in written or oral form? Sōphytos, too, makes an indirect quotation from the Odyssey. These allusions, if they are there, are far from being any direct quotation, 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 versorum relegens adgnosce curantem 'reading the start of the verses, identify him who saw to it' (l. 32).

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding discussion, my focus has been on the audience of these inscriptions, not 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 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.

[13] l. 28 'gemma ut auro cluditur sic castram porta decorat'; *Aen*. 10.134 'qualis gemma micat fuluum quae diuidit aurum'; see ibid., p. 120

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 recognise hidden patterns. Something which the texts of the inscriptions also share is a sense of place: 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 others 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.

Appendix 1: The Stele of Moschion[14]

A Moschion speaks in his own voice and addresses Osiris:

σῆς ἀρετῆς μνήμην, πανυπείροχε κοίραν' Ὄσιρι,

στήλῃι ἀναγράψας σηκοῦ ἐπὶ προπύλοις

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

ἄνθεμα τοῦθ’ Ἕλλησι καὶ ἐνδαπίοισιν ἀμοιβὴν
ἕστακα κηρύσσων πλινθίδος ἐν σελίσιν. 4

By inscribing a memorial to your merit, supreme lord Osiris,
on a stela 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 ἀΰπνοις φροντίσιν εὔδουσαν ἐγείρων
σκύλλεις, ἀνερευνᾶν ἐθέλων, ὡς περίεργον
κοὐχ ἁπλῆν ἔχουσαν κανόνων εὔθετον ὄψιν;
ὁ γὰρ εὐσεβίην καὶ τὸ καλῶς ἔχον προτιμῶν
χαριτήσιον ὧν προέπαθεν ἀνατιθεὶς θεῶι με 5
Μοσχίων μερίμνης ἀγαθῆς ἔδωκε πεῖραν,
οὐ παχεῖ λόγωι πλάσας τι, γυμνάσας δ’ ἑαυτὸν
κἀμὲ καταπονήσας συνέπεισεν ἡσυχάζειν·
κοὐ μόνον παραστιχίδι με τοῖς μαθεῖν θέλουσιν
ἐνεφάνισε, πανούργως ὑποθεὶς δ’ ἔπος τι καινὸν 10
χειραγωγίηι διάφορον, εἰδὼς ὅτι τοὺς μὲν
ἀγκύλην ἔχοντας διάνοιαν ἐπιμελῶς δεῖ
μισθὸν ἀμαθίης λαβόντας ὀψέ ποτε φρονῆσαι,
τοὺς δ’ ἐπὶ σοφίηι κριθέντας ἀνεπίτακτον ἓξειν
παράκλησιν ἵν’ ἐκ κλύδωνος ἠρεμεῖν μ’ ἀφῶσιν. 15
συνιέντι θέλω λέγειν τι, συνιέντι δὲ μηδὲν
μὴ μάτην με κόπτειν, ἑτέροις τόπον δὲ δοῦναι.

ἀνάθημα γὰρ εὐχῆς θεὸς ἡδέως 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 acrostic
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 εὐχωλῆς πινυτόφρονος ἄνθεμα τερπνόν,
δέρκομαι, εὐσεβίη τ’ οὔ με παρετρόχασεν,
ἀνθ’ ὧν τιμήεντα λαχὼν εὔελπιν 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:

Ὀσίριδι Μοσχίων ὑγιασθεὶς τὸν πόδα ἰατρείαις.

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

E The Demotic word square:

Ms (*?*) *sḏm n-y pȝ nti ḏd nt-iw wȝḥ.f di.t lk šn r.wn.nȝ.w ḫn rd*(=*y*) *tȝ pḫri r.di.f n=y* (*n*) *ḫpry*

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

λαβών, ἴχνευε προβλέπων, ἵν’ εὐσύνοπτος ἦι σοι

ἡ παῦλλα τῶν ἐμῶν πόνων καὶ πλινθίδος μέριμνα·

χὠσεί τις ἴδρις πολυπόνου φυτουργίης ὑπάρχων,

ἐντεῦθεν ἐκ πηγῆς ἄγων μελιρύτου τιν’ ὁρμὴν 5

ἄρδευ’ ἐς ὄρχους πολυμερεῖς στοιχηδὸν ἐξελίσσων.

εἰς τέσσαρας μὲν οὖν τιθεὶς πανουργίης ἀριθμοὺς

τὸ σῶμ’ ὅλον μή που λάθηις καὶ συνχέας προσάψηις

σὸν ἀγνόημ᾽ ἁμαρτάνων τῶι μηθὲν ἀγνοοῦντι.

τάξιν γὰρ εὑρὼν ποικίλως διατρέχουσαν ἑξῆς 10

πηγῆς τε πρὸς τέρμ᾽ ἐξ ἴσου σύμφωνον ἀποτελεσμόν,

συνεὶς ἀνάθεμά τ᾽ εὐμενῶς ὡς κοίρανος δέδορκεν

καὶ καρπὸν οἷον ἐκ φρενὸς θείας λαβὼν 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:

ḫpry : t3 hr-ib (*n*) *t3 ḥbʿy p3 nti iw.k* [*t3y.*]*t=f* (*n*) *ḥ3.t* (*n*) *t3 mi.t*

mtw.k tgtg m-s3=f, iw.k ḫr-ḥ3.t=k r di.t ir.f myt iw.f swš.w

pꜣ gy n li r.ir.y iw.y ḏnb r rd=y irm nꜣ mꜣwy tꜣ ḥbʿy

iw.k (*n*)-*ḳd pꜣ nti sy ꜣḥ.w n tꜣy nꜣ ll* (*r*) *nꜣ b nti nꜣ-nḫṯ.f n bꜣk*

iw.k ṯꜣy tꜣ ḥꜣ.t tꜣ mi.t (*m*)-*ḳdy wʿ mw nḏm iw.f thm pꜣy.f wy* 5

iw.k <di.t> llʿ mw ḥʿ=f ḫn tꜣy.s mḏrṯ (*?*), *iw.k ḫty ḫnt nꜣ itn.w*

iw.k <di.t> tš ḏr.ṯ=k n ip.t 4.t n pꜣy.k ir, nꜣ-nfr ir ḥʿt

ḫn tꜣ ḥbʿy ḏr=s r bn-pw.k di.t ḫpr shy ntw.w lg s (*n*)-*ḏr.ṯ=k*

mtw.k ḏd pꜣ sḫt n pꜣy shy, ir.k ḏr.ṯ pꜣ nti-iw bn-pw.f šft

iw.k gm=w iw.w sr iw.w twtw iw.w ꜣft mtw.w ḥtb n ʿš 10

mtw.k rḫ s r tꜣ ḥꜣ.t n tꜣ mi.t, mty.w r nꜣ ḳḥ.w nꜣ ḏḳ.w

mtw pꜣ ʿw pꜣ šp r.di pꜣ nb snby krp r.ir=k ḥr tꜣ ḥbʿy

irm pꜣ swn nti i (*n*)-*ḏr.ṯ=f r nꜣ šʿš.w r.ir pꜣ i.ir sḫ nꜣ šft.w*

iw.s ḥty (*n*)-*ḏr.ṯ=k, mty ḫrw=y mtw.k ḏd, ḫpry 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.dỉ[...

mw(*?*) [...

bn-ỉw gʒ [...

wḏʒ.k snb[*y* ...

wʒḥ.w ḥr pʒy(*.y*) ʿḥʿ [... 5

ʿš*.y n Wsir* [...

pʒy(*.y*) *ntr* - - [...

Wsir Wn-nfr [...

nʒ-nḏm, ʿš *n=f* [...

sp (*?*). 10

ʿʒ *nʒ nti* - - - [...

mʒwy tʒ mỉ.t [...

r nʒ rmt.w-n-Kmy nʒ Wyn[*n* ...

ḏd, ḫpry Wsir pʒ šp ʿʒ [...

Nti mty.w n ỉpy.t r pȝ [... 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 stela (or the chequer-board) speaks to the passer-by:

μή με θαυμάσηις, εἰ πολύχωρος οὖσ᾽ ἄδηλον

ὄμμασιν φέρω φαντασίην· οὐ δύναται γὰρ

στοιχεῖά τις εὖγνωστα τιθεὶς μὴ οὐκ ἀποκρύψαι

χώρην, ἵνα τῶι θέλοντι καὶ πλάνην παράσχηι.

ἵνα δὲ μὴ μακρὴν κεὶς ἄπορον τράπηις ἀταρπόν, 5

ὡς ἂν ἰσαρίθμων Πιερίσιν στίχων κατάσχηις

νοῦν, ἀποκνίσας εὐξύνετον γράμμ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ἑκάστου,

ὅρμησον ἐφ’ ἣν τέθεικε χειραγωγὸν ἀρχήν·

σημανεῖ γάρ, εἰ πύθοιο, κἢν ὀρθὸν ἔχηις νοῦν.

Vertically down, at left, repeating the acrostich:

Μοσχίονος.

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 recognised 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 recognise form 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-ḏr.ṯ ḏd.k, P3y(.y) ntr, ḏd.f, P3y(.y) rmt 3i[...

Snby.f n=k šn, di.f n=k [...

Krp.k ꜥ3 ḥꜥt=k n m3wy [...

Ys nb nti i r šms p3 ntr irm [...

3nṯ.f myt bin n skr r.ir.k [... 5

Nḥm.t=k-f ḫn shn p3 swn <p3> ntr r [...

- P3 i.ir ir t3 ḥbꜥy iw.f ḏd wn ntr p3y.f [...

Vertically down, at right, repeating the acrostich:

Msky3n-

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 εὐχωλῆς πινυτόφρονος ἄνθεμα τερπνόν,

δέρκομαι, εὐσεβίη τ’ οὔ με παρετρόχασεν·

ἀνθ’ ὧν τιμήεντα λαχὼν εὔελπιν 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.

Appendix 2: The Stele of Sōphytos [15]

Συφύτου στήλη

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

Δ δηρόν ἐμῶγ κοκυῶν ἐριθηλέα ἐόντα

Ι ἳς ἄμαχος Μοιρῶν ἐξόλεσεν τριάδος·

Α αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ, τυννὸς κομιδῆι βιότοιό τε πατρῶν

Σ Σώφυτος εὖνις ἐὼν οἰκτρὰ Ναρατιάδης,

Ω ὡς ἀρετὴν Ἑκάτου Μουσέων τ᾽ἤσχηκα σὺν ἐσθλῆι 5

Φ φυρτὴν σωφροσύνηι, θῆμος ἐπεφρασάμην

Υ ὑψώσαιμί κε πῶς μέγαρον πατρώϊον αὔθις·

Τ τεκνοφόρον δὲ λαβὼν ἄλλοθεν ἀργύριον,

Ο οἴκοθεν ἐξέμολον μεμαὼς οὐ πρόσθ᾽ἐπανελθεῖν

Υ ὑψιστον κτᾶσθαι πρὶμ μ᾽ἀγαθῶν ἄφενος· 10

Τ τοὔνεκ᾽ἐπ᾽ἐμπορίηισιν ἰὼν εἰς ἄστεα πολλὰ

Ο ὄλβον ἀλωβήτος εὐρὺν ἐλησάμην.

Υ ὑμηντὸς δὲ πέλων πάτρην ἐτέεσιν ἐσῖγμαι

Ν νηρίθμοις τερπνός τ᾽εὐμενέταις ἐφάνην·

Α ἀμφοτέρους δ᾽οἶκόν τε σεσηπότα πάτριον εἶθαρ 15

Ρ ῥέξας ἐκ καινῆς κρέσσονα συντέλεσα

Α αἶάν τ᾽ἐς τύμβου πεπτωκότος ἄλλον ἔτευξα,

Τ τὴν καὶ ζῶν στήλην ἐν ὁδῶι ἐπέθηκα λάλον.

Ο οὕτως οὖν ζηλωτὰ τάδ᾽ἔργματα συντελέσαντος

Υ υἱέες υἱωνοί 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 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.

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.

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.

Appendix 3: The Inscriptions of Paccius Maximus[16]

I. Metr. 168

[16] Text: É. Bernand, *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, N.J., 1997), 66-68.

μακάριον ὅτ᾽ ἔβην ἠρεμίης τόπον ἐσαθρῆσαι,

ἀέρι τὸ ποθεινὸν ψυχῆς πνεῦμ᾽ ἐπανεῖναι,

ξένα μοι βιοτὴ περὶ φρένα πάντοθεν ἐδονεῖτο,

ἵστορα κακίης ἐμαυτὸν οὐκ ἔχων ἔλεγχον,

μύστην τότε κίκλησκε φύσις πόνον γεωργεῖν·

ὁ σοφὸς τότ᾽ ἐγὼ ποικίλον ἅρμοζον ἀοιδήν,

σεμνὸν ἀπὸ θεῶν κωτίλον ἐπιτυχὼν νόημα.

δῆλον ὅτε θεοῖς ἀρεστὸν ἠργάζετο Μοῦσα,

Ἑλικῶνι χλόης ἄνθεμον ἀπετίναξα κῶμον·

καὶ τότε μέ τις ὕπνου μυχὸς ἠρέθισε φέρεσθαι,

ὀλίγον ἐπίφοβον φαντασίης ὄναρ τραπῆναι·

ὕπνος δέ με λέ<ξ>ας ταχὺν ἀπεκόμισε φί[λην γ]ῆν·

ῥείθροις ἐδόκουν γὰρ ποταμοῦ σῶμα ἀπο[λο]ύειν,

ἱκανοῖς ἀπὸ Νίλου γλυκεροῦ ὕδασι προσ[η]νῶς·

ᾠόμην δὲ σεμνὴν Μουσῶν Καλλιέπειαν

Νύμφαις ἅμα πάσαις μέσ<σ>ην κῶμον ἀείδειν·

Ἑλλάδος τι κἀγὼ βραχὺ λείψανον νομίζων,

γραπτὸν ἀπὸ σοφῆς ἔπνευσα ψυχῆς μου νόημα·

ῥάβδῳ δέ τις οἷα κατὰ μέλος δέμας δονηθείς,

ἁρμογὴν μέλει συνεργὸν ἐπεκάλουν χαράττειν,

ψόγον ἀλλοτρίοις ἤθεσιν ἀπολιπὼν ἄδηλον.

ἀρχὴ δέ μ᾽ ἔκλῃζεν τὸ σοφὸν ποίημα λέξαι·

λαμπρὸς τότε Μάνδουλις ἔβη μέγας ἀπ᾽ Ὀλύμπου,

θέλγων βαρβαρικὴν λέξιν ἀπ᾽ Αἰθιόπων,

καὶ γλυκερὴν ἔσπευσεν ἐφ᾽ Ἑλλάδα μοῦσαν ἀεῖσαι,

λαμπρὰ παρεῖα φέρων καὶ δεξιὸς Ἴσιδι βαίνων,

Ῥωμαίων μεγέθει δόξαν ἀγαλλόμενος,

μαντικὰ πυθιόων ἅτε δὴ θεὸς Οὐλύμποιο·

ὡς βίος ἀνθρώποις προορώμενος ἐξέθεν αὐχεῖ,

ὡς ἦμαρ καὶ νύξ σε σέβει, ὧραι δ᾽ ἅμα πᾶσαι,

καὶ καλέουσί σε Βρεὶθ καὶ Μάνδουλιν συνομαίμους,

ἄστρα θεῶν ἐπίσημα κατ᾽ οὐρανὸν ἀντέλλοντα.

καὶ τάδε σοι στείχοντα χαράσσειν μ᾽ αὐτὸς ἔλεξας

καὶ σοφὰ γράμματα πᾶσιν ἀθωπεύτως ἐσορᾶσθαι.

— — — — — — — — — — — — — —

[εἴκοσι] καὶ δυσὶ 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 my 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. 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 Aithiopians 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. 168

πάντοτέ σε ὑμνήσω, Λ̣ατο[ῦ]<ς γ>όνε, Πύθι<ε> Ἄπολλον,
ἀθανάτων προκαθάγεμα κα<ὶ> χρυσόχελ<υ> Παιάν.
καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ σοῖς προθύροις ἦλθον· <ἐ>π<ί>νευ<σ>ον
κύριε, τὰς προκο̣[πά]ς μ᾽ ἐν στρατιῇ μεγάλα[ς]·
ἰ <γ>άρ μοι δοίης· κἀ<γ>ὼ λ<οι>βαῖς ἀποδώσω
οἷα θεῷ̣ μεγάλῳ καὶ Ἴσιδι τῇ βασιλίσσῃ.
σπείσω πάντοτ᾽ ἐγὼ τοῖς δυσὶ τῶν προκοπῶν.
ἰ δεῖ <ἀνα>γνῶναι καὶ τοὔνομα τοῦ γράψαντος
δὶ<ς> τὰς διακοσίας ψή<φ>ισον ἴκ̣ο<σι> μίαν.
τὸ προσκύνημα τοῦ γράψαντος
καὶ τοῦ ἀναγνόντος σήμερον
παρὰ θεῷ̣ 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 recognises it today

For the god Mandoulis.

Appendix 4: The Inscription of Julius Faustinus[17]

Invicti veneranda ducis per saecula vellent

Victrices Musae, Pallas, crinitus Apollo

Laeta serenifico defundere carmina cael[o],

Intemerata malas hominum set numina fr[u]d[es

Iurgiaque arcanis et perfida pectora curis

Fugere. Hadriani tamen ad pia saecula verti

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]

Inachias sospes diti pede pressit harena[s.

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

Namque inter celsi densata sedilia tem[pli,

Incola quo plebes tectis effunditur at[

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 Mamertinus 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]

κἀμὲ τὸν εὐτέχνου φωτὸς στίχον, ὦ φίλε, βῆμ**α**

τίμιον ἀμπαύσας ἔγμαθε καὶ χάρισα**ι**

λιταῖς ἱστορίαις λιτὸν πόνον, οἷα πέπαιγμα**ι**,

οὐ κενὰ μηνύων, οὗπερ ἔφυν γενέτο**υ**·

τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ πλώσας, φησί, ξένε, χεύματα Νείλ**ου**, 5

καιρὸν ἔχω φωνεῖν· χαίρετε πολλά, Φίλ**αι**·

νικῶμαι πέτραις τε καὶ οὔρεσιν, ὦ καταράκτα**ι**·

κἀγὼ ἔχω τεύχειν ἱστορικὴν σελίδ**α**

νοστήσας, καὶ ἰδὼν Νικάνορα καὶ γένος· ἄλλ**ο**

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

ρος κατάλοιπον ἔχω· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τέλ**ος**. 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 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 Nikanor and his family”. I have a “-ros” left – for this is the end.