

Paweł Nowakowski

‘AND THERE, UNWORTHY AS I WAS, I WROTE THE NAMES OF MY PARENTS’: THE FAMILY IDENTITY OF SUPPLICANTS IN PILGRIMS’ GRAFFITI AND DEDICATORY INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE LATE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE EAST*

INTRODUCTION

The title quotation, a well-known literary testimony to the widespread practice of inscribing graffiti with names of supplicants in pilgrim sanctuaries, is taken from the report of the so-called Pilgrim of Piacenza, describing his late-sixth-century pilgrimage to the Holy Land.¹ The passage refers to his visit to biblical Cana, where our anonymous pilgrim reclined on a couch, believed to have been the one on which Jesus had rested, and on this object he certainly wrote... ‘something’. The point is that we actually do not know what exactly he wrote there and how he identified his parents. Nowhere in

* The present paper was written within the frame of the *Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity* Project, run from the University of Oxford under the supervision of Bryan Ward-Perkins and funded by an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council under Grant Agreement Number 340540. Throughout the text inscriptions are cited according to the abbreviations adopted in the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (SEG), sometimes slightly modified.

¹ *Itineraria et alia geographica*, P. GEYER (ed.) [= CCSL CLXXV], Turnhout 1965, pp. 129–174. For English translations, see: *Of the Holy Places Visited by Antoninus Martyr*, A. STEWART (ed.), London 1887; *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, J. WILKINSON (ed.), Warminster 2002.

his work does he specify their names.² We do not even know what his own name was.³ Yet another question is whether he used some kind of ink or rather scratched the words, and if he authored the graffito himself or en-

² On the visit to Cana, as portrayed in the two recensions, see respectively: *Itineraria et alia geographica* (cit. n. 1), p. 130 [V 161]: *Deinde milia tria uenimus in Cana, ubi ad nuptias fuit Dominus, et accumsimus in ipso accubitu, ubi ego indignus nomina parentum meorum scripsi*, and p. 157 [V 196]: *Deinde milia III uenimus in Chana, ubi Dominus fuit ad nuptias, et accubimus in ipso accubitu. Vbi ego indignus parentum meorum nomina scripsi*. It is, however, possible that the names of our pilgrim's parents were originally included or were at least expected to have been included by scribes. The first recension has a lacuna after the phrase *parentum meorum scripsi*. Geyer supposes that it contained a description of the six water pots which Jesus used to turn the water into wine, and which are later referred to by the author of the report. But it is also possible that the names of the pilgrim's parents were given here. We do not know if there is any coincidence between the character of the holy place (a nuptial chamber) and the fact that our pilgrim chose it to house a graffito on behalf of a married couple.

³ All we know about the pilgrim is that he travelled from and back to Placentia (modern Piacenza) in north Italy, and that in some manuscripts he is called Antoninus. This is, however, probably the result of the confusion of the pilgrim with the martyr Antoninus venerated in that city. The journey can be dated to the period between 551 and 614, i.e. between the earthquake which destroyed Berytus, mentioned in his work, and the sack of Jerusalem by the Persians, of which he has no knowledge. Although criticised for many reasons, his report is, for example, the primary evidence for the dating of the Mosaic Map of Madaba. In 1885 Charles Diehl published a paper, in which he argued that a stone found by Pierre Paris at Elateia in Phocis was the very couch mentioned by the pilgrim (see Ch. DIEHL, 'La pierre de Cana', *BCH* 9 [1885], pp. 28–42). The stone is a large marble slab, measuring: H. 0.33 m; W. 2.33 m; L. 0.64 m. It bears two inscriptions. The one on the narrow side reads: + οὗτός ἐστιν | ὁ λίθος | ἀπὸ Κανᾶ τῆς Γαλιλέας ὅπου | τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον | ἐποίησεν ὁ Κ(ύριος) | ἡμῶν Ἰ(ησοῦς) Χ(ριστός) + / 'This is the stone of Cana of Galilee, where our Lord, Jesus Christ, turned the water into wine'. The other inscription was very fragmentarily preserved, but Diehl argued that he could read and restore it as follows: [+ μνήσθητι, Κύριε, τοῦ πατρὸς] καὶ τῆς μητρός μου Ἀντωνίνου + / '[Remember, O Lord, the father] and mother of mine, Antoninos!'. Diehl believed that the stone was brought to Constantinople at the beginning of the Arab invasion, together with other relics from Jerusalem, and that it was taken to Elateia by Otho, duke of Athens, or Guido Pallavicini, after the establishment of the Latin Empire in 1204 (see also A. L. FROTHINGHAM, Jr., 'Archaeological news', *AJA* 1 [1885], pp. 227–228). The stone is now in the church Agios Eleftherios in Athens. In newer literature the stone is discussed in M. GUARDUCCI, *Epigrafi greca*, vol. 4: *Epigrafi sacre pagane e cristiane*, Rome 1978, pp. 350–354, and D. MAZZOLENI, 'Iscrizioni nei luoghi di pellegrinaggio', [in:] E. DASSMANN & J. ENGEMANN (eds.), *XII CIAC (Bonn 1991)*, Münster 1995, pp. 304–305. It seems that the stone is actually a base for a marble cross, presumably with a cavity where a very small fragment of a rock from Galilee, the actual relic, was kept. The links of the base with Antoninus are very implausible. See also *SEG* 46, 529.

trusted the carving/writing to the staff of the sanctuary.

The custom of leaving one's mark in holy places is, of course, known not only through our pilgrim's report but is independently attested by a great number of graffiti themselves that can be found in virtually any early Christian sanctuary.⁴ Walls, rocks, and elements of architecture (columns, chan-

⁴ In the present paper I discuss specifically Christian graffiti from the late antique period, but the practice itself originated much earlier, and formulas used in pagan Greek graffiti are sometimes the same. For an exemplary discussion of the pagan practice of scratching and painting visitors' inscriptions in holy places, see the chapter 'Visitors' inscriptions: some general observations' in: A. ŁAJTAR, *Deir el-Bahari in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. A Study of an Egyptian Temple Based on Greek Sources* [= *JJurP Supplement IV*], Warsaw 2006, pp. 87–94. A good example is a dipinto from the south wall of the passage leading to Hatshepsut's chapel (Łajtar's no. 96, pp. 179–180), dating to AD 117, which records a prayer on behalf of the visitor's parents, very relevant to the topic of the present paper: [τ]ὸ [προσκύνημα | - - - | - - -] καὶ τῶν [- - - καὶ τῶν] | γονέων [αὐτοῦ καὶ - - - αὐ] τοῦ παρ[ὰ τῷ κυρίῳ - - - καὶ τοῖς | σ]υννάοις [θεοῖς - - -]. | (ἔτους) α' (?) Ἀδριαν[ο]ῦ [- - - | - - -] ΝΑ[- - - | - - -] ΝΟΝ[- - -] / 'Proskynema of [- - -] and of [- - -] and of his parents and of his [- - -] before the lord [- - -] and the gods worshipped together with him in the same temple. Year 1 (?) of Hadrian [- - -]' (trans. A. Łajtar). The co-existence of pagan, Jewish, and Christian graffiti in one location, and the transition of formulas is also perfectly illustrated by the rich collection from the island of Syros (discussed below). Furthermore, new intriguing evidence for pagan visitors' graffiti has been recently provided by the explorers of Cretan caves, editing the epigraphic finds in the context of environmental studies with a speleological discussion of the locations: N. LITINAS, *Inscriptions of the Cave 'Latsida ston Keramo'. Inscriptiones Creticae 'Latsidae Kerami' Antri. I. Cret. LKA* [= *Tyche. Supplementband VIII*], with a speleological presentation by K. FOTEINAKIS and K. PARAGAMIAN, Vienna 2014 (see pp. 10–13, for a list of caves with cultic graffiti in Greece, Asia Minor, the Black Sea region, the Near East, Bactria, Egypt and Libya, and Italy); Y. Z. TZIFOPOULOS, 'Eleuthernaean pilgrims inside the Melidoni Cave (Tallaeum Antrum)', [in:] O. PALAGIA, H. R. GOETTE (eds.), *Sailing to Classical Greece: Papers on Greek Art, Archaeology and Epigraphy Presented to Petros Themelis*, Oxford – Oakville 2011, pp. 79–84; Y. Z. TZIFOPOULOS & N. LITINAS, 'Graffiti in the Melidoni Cave in Crete, Greece', [in:] W. B. WHITE (ed.), *Proceedings of the 15th International Congress of Speleology, Kerrville, Texas, July 19–26, 2009*, vol. 1: *Symposia*, part 1, Huntsville, AL 2009, pp. 142–146. For c. 170 Jewish cultic graffiti (all in Greek, except for one Latin text), found in the so-called Elijah's cave on Mount Carmel, and dating to the first–third century AD; see: A. OVADIAH & R. PIERRI, 'Elijah's cave on Mount Carmel and its inscriptions', [in:] L. CHRUPCALA (ed.), *Christ is here! Studies in Biblical and Christian Archaeology in Memory of Michele Piccirillo*, OFM [= *SBF Collectio Maior LII*], Milan 2012, pp. 29–76; A. OVADIAH & R. PIERRI, 'Elijah's cave on Mount Carmel and its inscriptions. Part III', *Liber Annuus* 62 (2012), pp. 203–282; T. ILAN & O. PINKPANK, 'Appendix: Elijah's Cave (Haifa)', [in:] T. ILAN, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, vol. 2: *Palestine 200–650* [= *Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism CXXI*], Tübingen 2012, pp. 499–584. Cf. the comments in: *BE* (2015), pp. 704–706.

cel screens, etc.) are covered by hundreds if not thousands of graffiti with prayers, and names of people eager to visit saintly places or commemorative shrines associated with biblical stories. The habit continued into the medieval and modern periods. Consequently, at many sites we come across late antique names accompanied by those of renaissance or even twentieth-century visitors. These texts, poorly carved/scratched/painted and even worse spelt, are not infrequently the only heirloom of people who possessed only the basic knowledge of writing.⁵

Studying those extremely concise, and often scarcely legible, texts can be, however, a rewarding task. This is because the post-seventh-century decline in funerary epigraphy is mainly manifested in a significant decrease in the number of private epitaphs, needless to say: a valuable source for onomastic studies.⁶ Can one substitute them with supplicants' graffiti? Possibly yes. The dossier of pilgrims' invocations, though still fragmentarily published, is in fact a rich repository of personal names from areas and periods lacking large collections of epitaphs, monumental inscriptions with lists of citizens, and other documentary sources (as, for example, those from papyri). Furthermore, through this kind of evidence we can get a glimpse of the patterns of identification used in an informal, daily life, context (opposed to the formal patterns, used in documents and other legal texts). It would be really interesting to have a systematic study of how these people identified themselves

⁵ For an overview of works on Christian cultic graffiti in pilgrim shrines, see e.g.: L. DI SEGNI, 'Expressions of prayer in late antique inscriptions in the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia', [in:] B. BITTON-ASHKELONY & D. KRUEGER (eds.), *Prayer and Worship in Eastern Christianities, 5th to 11th Centuries*, London – New York 2017, pp. 63–88; S. DESTEPHEN, 'L'épigraphie et la géographie du pèlerinage chrétien: L'exemple du Sinaï aux IV^e–VI^e siècles', [in:] S. DEMOUGIN & M. NAVARRO CABALLERO (eds.), *Se déplacer dans l'Empire romain. Approches épigraphiques. XVIII^e rencontre franco-italienne d'épigraphie du monde romain. Bordeaux 7–8 octobre 2011* [= *Scripta antiqua* 59], Paris – Bordeaux 2014, pp. 145–156 (cf. *BE* [2014], 525); A. M. YASIN, 'Prayers on site: the materiality of devotional graffiti and the production of early Christian sacred space', [in:] A. EASTMOND (ed.), *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, Cambridge 2015, pp. 36–60; W. ECK, 'Graffiti an Pilgerorten im spätrömischen Reich', [in:] E. DASSMANN & J. ENGEMANN (eds.), *XII CIAC (Bonn 1991)*, vol. 1, Münster 1995, pp. 206–222; MAZZOLENI, 'Iscrizioni nei luoghi di pellegrinaggio' (cit. n. 3), pp. 301–309.

⁶ C. MANGO, 'Epigraphy', [in:] E. JEFFREYS *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford 2008, p. 144. Mango notes that the curve of the number of Greek epitaphs for common people collapses after c. 610.

and their family members without the help of professional scribes (if they executed their graffiti themselves without the aid of local clergy), or how clerics, lacking legal training, approached, and possibly influenced, the form of these peculiar written records of visitors.

There are, of course, some drawbacks of this evidence, which might be biased, for example, by Christian humility, making some people conceal their actual names and social background, and which certainly present serious problems with dating (normally it is virtually impossible to date a graffito to a specific century). But in many cases the choice is between these sources and nothing.

In the present paper I will explore the contents of a number of pilgrim graffiti from several representative sites, supplemented by finds from lesser locations, in order to compare the practice as it is described by our pilgrim ('writing the names of one's parents') with actual evidence for marking one's kinship, praying for one's family, etc., in this sort of inscriptions. I will also compare the evidence of graffiti with that of regular donor inscriptions (in the form of carvings on stone and floor mosaics). This is justified as the parallels are very close and will help us better understand the context of pilgrims' invocations. They show that in their graffiti pilgrims often used the same formulas they were familiar with at home.

The main assumption behind this venture is that the Pilgrim of Piacenza used some designation of kinship when he named his parents in the inscribed prayer, and that so did other people – the authors of the graffiti studied. It is, however, not impossible that prayers on behalf of family members who stayed at home looked exactly the same as those authored/commissioned by actual pilgrims (i.e. they were short invocations followed by the personal name of the supplicant, e.g. Κύριε, βοήθει...). If it really was so, we will never be able to distinguish actual visitors from people they cared for.

The eastern Mediterranean was densely covered by late antique and early Byzantine pilgrim shrines,⁷ and one can easily choose from a wide range of

⁷ For general descriptions of the Christian pilgrimage movement, see: B. CASEAU-CHEVALIER et al. (eds.), *Pèlerinages et lieux saints dans l'antiquité et le moyen âge. Mélanges offerts à Pierre Maraval* [= *Monographies. Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance XXIII*], Paris 2006; G. BRANDS, 'Pilgerfahrt und Wallfahrtsstätten im spätantiken Orient',

such places. What follows is, of course, a selection dictated by the amount of epigraphic evidence recording members of pilgrims' households and *extended families*. Three sites, the port of Grammata on the island of Syros, Basilica A at Rusafa, and Mizpe Shivta in the Negev Desert, appear to provide us with the most useful evidence. At the same time, the renowned Ephesian pilgrimage centres: the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers,⁸ the Church of John the Apostle,⁹ and the Church of Mary,¹⁰ were a bit disappointing, and I found vir-

[in:] S. GRALLA (ed.), *Oriens Christianus. Geschichte und Gegenwart des nahöstlichen Christentums*, Münster 2003, pp. 15–41; A.-M. TALBOT, 'Pilgrimage to healing shrines: The evidence of miracle accounts', *DOP* 56 (2002), pp. 153–173; C. BAKIRTZIS, 'Pilgrimage to Thessalonike', *DOP* 56 (2002), pp. 175–192.

⁸ The Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers lies to the east of the city. It took its name from a legend about seven Christians who were saved from mid-third-century persecutions by falling into an age-long sleep at the site. It was originally believed to have been a fifth-/seventh-century establishment visited by pilgrims in the middle Byzantine period, but its origins were recently re-dated to the third century, see N. ZIMMERMANN, 'Das Sieben-Schläfer-Zömeterium in Ephesos. Neue Forschungen zu Baugeschichte und Ausstattung eines ungewöhnlichen Bestattungskomplexes', *Öjh* 80 (2011), pp. 365–407; cf. F. D'ANDRIA, 'The sanctuary of St Philip in Hierapolis and the tombs of saints in Anatolian cities', [in:] J. R. BRANDT, E. HAGELBERG, G. BJØRNSTAD & S. AHRENS, *Life and Death in Asia Minor in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Times: Studies in Archeology and Bioarcheology*, Oxford – Philadelphia 2017, pp. 5–7. Nonetheless, the graffiti from this site are still considered to be of a middle Byzantine date. For the texts, see *IvE*, nos. 4235–4284.

⁹ The Ephesian Church of John the Evangelist is situated on the Ayasoluk hill, near the modern town of Selçuk, about 3 km to the north east of Ephesos. Inscriptions from the site must postdate a major reconstruction by Justinian in the first half of the sixth century. For a summary of research work and the classic chronology of the site, see A. THIEL, *Die Johaneskirche in Ephesos* [= *Spätantike, frühes Christentum, Byzanz. Reihe B: Studien und Perspektiven* XVI], Wiesbaden 2005 (especially pp. 99–110). For a reassessment of the archaeological evidence and a new chronology, see N. KARYDIS, 'The evolution of the Church of St. John at Ephesos during the early Byzantine period', *Öjh* 84 (2015), pp. 97–128, and D. FEISSEL, 'Fabius Titianus, proconsul d'Asie sous Constantin, et les origines du culte de l'Apôtre Jean à Éphèse', [in:] M. L. CALDELLI & G. L. GREGORI (eds.), *Epigrafi e ordine senatorio 30 anni dopo*, Rome 2014, pp. 159–166, with further comments in D. FEISSEL, 'L'épigraphie d'Orient, témoin des mutations de l'empire constantinien', [in:] V. N. FIOCCHI, O. BRANDT & G. CASTIGLIA (eds.), *XVI CIAC (Roma 2013): Costantino e i Costantinidi. L'innovazione Costantiniana, le sue radici e i suoi sviluppi*, vol. 2, Vatican City 2016, p. 1228.

¹⁰ The Church of Mary was built in the fifth century in the south porch of the temple of Hadrian Olympios, and became the episcopal church of Ephesos in the late fifth / early sixth century; see A. DEGASPARI, *Die Marienkirche in Ephesos. Die Bauskulptur aus frühchristlicher*

tually no relevant evidence among the published graffiti from the so-called grotto of Paul the Apostle in Ephesos. One must, however remember that less than 5% of the estimated overall number of graffiti from the latter site have been published, and future epigraphic exploration of the grotto may bring us exciting new finds.¹¹

SITE 1: THE PORT OF GRAMMATA ON THE ISLAND OF SYROS

The place called Grammata or τῶν Γραμμάτων is a natural port sited on the north-western coast of the island of Syros. Near and in the port itself there are several rocks covered with dozens of graffiti with invocations: pagan (55 texts, with references to, for example, the gods Serapis and Asklepios), Jewish, and Christian (more than 65 texts, mostly invocations of God as the Lord/Κύριος and Saint Phokas).¹²

The site was first explored by Klonas Stephanos, physician and amateur archaeologist, in 1869 and again in the winter of 1873/1874, on behalf of the Athenian Archaeological Society (Ἡ ἐν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικὴ Εταιρεία). Stephanos

und byzantinischer Zeit, Vienna 2013; S. KARWIESE, ‘Die Marienkirche und das dritte ökumenische Konzil’, [in:] R. PILLINGER *et al.* (eds.), *Efeso paleocristiana e bizantina*, Vienna 1999, pp. 81–85; A. KÜLZER, ‘Ephesos im siebten Jahrhundert: Notizen zur Stadtgeschichte’, *Porphyra* 20 (2013), p. 10. For the texts, see *IvE*, nos. 4145–4150.

¹¹ An Ephesian sanctuary called by modern archaeologists the cave/grotto of Paul the Apostle lies on the northern slope of Bülbüldağ (ancient Mount Koressos). The walls of this cave sanctuary are covered with about 300 graffiti, added over the centuries by pilgrims visiting the site, none datable with any confidence. For reports of the recent research works and a description of earlier exploration, see: R. PILLINGER, ‘Neue Entdeckungen in der sogenannten Paulusgrotte von Ephesos’, *MiChA* 6 (2000), pp. 16–29 (offering the text of c. 15 graffiti and dipinti); EADEM, ‘Vielschichtige Neuigkeiten in der sog. Paulusgrotte von Ephesos (dritter vorläufiger Bericht, zu den Jahren 2003 und 2004)’, *MiChA* 11 (2005), pp. 56–62. For a study of the paintings in the cave, see: R. PILLINGER *et al.*, ‘Die Wandmalereien in der sogenannten Paulusgrotte von Ephesos: Studien zur Ausführungstechnik und Erhaltungsproblematik, Restaurierung und Konservierung’, *AnzWien* 143/1 (2008), pp. 71–116; R. PILLINGER, ‘Thekla in der Paulusgrotte von Ephesos’, [in:] J. BARRIER *et al.* (eds.), *Thekla: Paul’s Disciple and Saint in the East and West*, Leuven 2017, pp. 205–218.

¹² For a recent edition, see G. KIOURTZIAN, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes des Cyclades : de la fin du III^e au VIII^e siècle après J.-C.*, Paris 2000, pp. 135–200. The account of the history of research on the site, which follows in the next paragraph, is based on Kiourtzian’s description. The reader should consult his book for detailed references.

noted that graffiti were incised on five greyish-white marble rock-faces, two of them (A and B) were at the site of the port itself, while three (Γ, Δ, and Ε) were in its immediate area. It seems that Face B was once a part of a quarry and the graffiti were engraved when the complex had been abandoned. The rock-faces, located beyond the port, are much smaller. We owe later surveys to Charles Bayet who revisited the island before 1876, and Andreas Phrangidis, a physician from Syros and amateur of antiquities. By the early twentieth century the site had gained a reputation as a place of special interest for epigraphists and in 1903 Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen, one of the editors of the twelfth volume of the *Inscriptiones Graecae*, arrived on the island to verify the readings of earlier editors. Sadly, the inscribed rock-faces were badly weathered or had been damaged by people occasionally visiting the site, so he was forced to rely for the most part on Stephanos' copies. The most complete edition and thorough commentary were offered by Georges Kiourtzian in 2000, in his corpus of Christian inscriptions from the Cyclades. He visited the site in the autumn of 1987 and then in May of 1988, 1989, and 1992, spending more time reading and photographing the graffiti than his predecessors. This resulted in reliable readings of previously known texts and the discovery of new invocations.¹³ Kiourtzian, like earlier editors, dated most of the Christian inscriptions to the late antique period (fifth–seventh centuries), based on the contents and the lettering. He supposes that the port was rarely visited, or even abandoned, between the seventh and tenth centuries, mostly because of the Arab raids on the Cyclades, but also due to changes in trade routes.

SITE 2: BASILICA A AT RUSAFΑ

The Syrian city of Rusafa is known as the principal place of the cult of Saint Sergios. So-called Basilica A (formerly termed the 'Basilica of the Cross'¹⁴) is

¹³ Between Hiller von Gaertringen and Kiourtzian, the port of Grammata was also explored by local amateurs of antiquities, including the early twentieth-century director of the High School in Ermoupoli (Syros), Evangelidis, publishing his finds in the *Κυκλαδικόν ημερολόγιον*.

¹⁴ Early surveyors identified the principal site of the cult of Sergios in Rusafa as the Tetraconch Church located close to the North Gate, near one of the major roads of the city. The present-day view is that relics of Sergios were venerated first in a brick church, remnants

sited in the southeast part of the city. It is the biggest of Rusafa's four major ecclesiastical structures.¹⁵ Remarkably, Rusafa, with its relics of Sergios, was 'a place of convergence' as Elisabeth Key Fowden names it.¹⁶ Its political role is even more strongly emphasised by Irfan Shahîd, who points out that the city was a major centre on the political map of the Ghassanids/Jafnids' domain.¹⁷ As a prosperous commercial city, a watering point, and junction of caravan routes, it attracted people of various ethnic origin. As a result, Sergios was equally eagerly venerated there by Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Persians.

of which were unearthed beneath Basilica B, and later in Basilica A. The latter shrine was originally identified as dedicated to the Holy Cross, based on a fragmentary inscription found in its apse. It is, however, more plausible, according to Gunnar Brands, that a different foundation was named after the Cross and the basilica had a different holy patron (Sergios?). See: Th. ULBERT, 'Eine neuentdeckte Inschrift aus Resafa (Syrien)', *AA* (1977), pp. 563–569, and G. BRANDS (ed.), *Die Bauornamentik von Resafa-Sergiupolis. Studien zur spätantiken Architektur und Bauausstattung in Syrien und Nordmesopotamien* [= *Resafa VI*], Mainz 2002, pp. 114–117, followed by *SEG* 52, 1588bis, for a re-interpretation of the find; for an English translation and comments, see E. KEY-FOWDEN, *The Barbarian Plain: St. Sergius between Rome and Iran*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1999, pp. 82–83. For Basilica A, see also Th. ULBERT (ed.), *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiupolis* [= *Resafa II*], Mainz 1986.

¹⁵ For a convenient overview of the architectural history of churches in Rusafa, see: M. GUSSONE & D. SACK, 'Resafa/Syrien. Städtebauliche Entwicklung zwischen Kultort und Herrschaftssitz', [in:] E. RIZOS (ed.), *New Cities in Late Antiquity. Documents and Archaeology* [= *Bibliothèque de l'antiquité tardive XXXV*], Turnhout 2017, pp. 117–136, and D. SACK, 'St Sergios in Resafa: Worshipped by Christians and Muslims alike', [in:] M. BLÖMER *et al.* (eds.), *Religious Identities in the Levant from Alexander to Muhammed: Continuity and Change*, Turnhout 2015, pp. 271–282. For the results of newer research on the city and its buildings, see also: Th. ULBERT *et alii* (eds.), *Forschungen in Resafa-Sergiupolis* [= *Resafa VII*], Berlin – Boston 2016 (focused on the north necropolis, the so-called 'al-Mundir's building', and Basilica C); D. SACK *et al.*, 'Resafa-Sergiupolis / Ruṣāfat Hišām, Syrien. Pilgerstadt und Kalifenresidenz. Neue Ansätze, Ergebnisse und Perspektiven', *Z. Orient-Archäol.* 3 (2010), pp. 102–129 (summarised and communicated to a wider audience in D. SACK & M. GUSSONE, 'Resafa – Pilgerstadt und Kalifenresidenz am Rand der Wüste', *Spektrum der Wissenschaften. Spezial* 2 [2011], pp. 58–65); G. BRANDS, 'Old and new order. City and territorium of Ruṣāfa in Late Antiquity and early Islam', [in:] A. BORRUT *et al.* (eds.), *Le Proche-Orient de Justinien aux Abbassides : Peuplement et dynamiques spatiales. Actes du colloque «Continuités de l'occupation entre les périodes byzantine et abbasside au Proche-Orient, VII^e–IX^e siècles», Paris, 18–20 octobre 2007* [= *Bibliothèque de l'antiquité tardive XIX*], Turnhout 2011, pp. 59–76.

¹⁶ KEY-FOWDEN, *The Barbarian Plain* (cit. n. 14), p. 67.

¹⁷ I. SHAHÎD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 2, part 1: *Toponymy, Monuments, Historical Geography, and Frontier Studies*, Washington, D.C. 2002, pp. 115–132 & 136–142.

In the early Umayyad period Basilica A became part of a Muslim-Christian complex dedicated to the joint veneration of Saint Sergios by followers of the two religions. Through a large peristyle courtyard annexed to its north wall (which had become a common space) the basilica was connected to the so-called 'Great Mosque' (= the 'Friday Mosque') built by the caliph Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik (724–743). Unstable underground conditions prove that the building must have been erected so close to the reliquary chamber for a purpose: apparently, the caliph aimed at fostering the cult of Sergios among tribes which had adopted Islam, to achieve their better integration with those which persisted in the Christian faith.¹⁸ From the courtyard, pilgrims could freely enter both the mosque and the passageway leading to the reliquary chamber (*martyrion*) in the basilica, a small room at the east end of the north aisle where the relics of Sergios lay, safely enclosed in a large stone sarcophagus probably under a baldachin. The walls of the passageway were covered with plaster densely inscribed with pilgrims' graffiti containing the names of supplicants, the Trisagion prayer, and invocations of Saint Sergios. The graffiti are in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic. The Greek ones were published by Cornelia Römer, and the Arabic by Raif Georges Khoury in 1986, both in Ulbert's study on the basilica.¹⁹ As far as I know, the Syriac graffiti have not been published yet. The graffiti must date to the period before the abandonment of Rusafa in 1269.

SITE 3: MIZPE SHIVTA IN THE NEGEV DESERT

Mizpe Shivta is the toponym given to a ruined monastery in south Palestine, after the nearby modern town of Shivta. It lies near the cities of Nessana and Sobata, important stops on the pilgrim route to Mount Sinai. The ruins comprise a number of buildings protected by a wall and towers, and some

¹⁸ For the common Muslim and Christian veneration of Sergios in Rusafa, see: SACK, 'St Sergios in Resafa' (cit. n. 15), pp. 277–279; E. KEY-FOWDEN, 'Christian monasteries and Umayyad residences in late antique Syria', [in:] J.-M. BLÁZQUEZ & A. GONZÁLEZ BLANCO (eds.), *Sacralidad y arqueología: homenaje al Prof. Thilo Ulbert al cumplir 65 años*, Murcia 2004, pp. 565–581, at pp. 576–580.

¹⁹ C. RÖMER, 'Die griechischen Graffiti', [in:] ULBERT (ed.), *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes* (cit. n. 14), pp. 171–177; R. G. KHOURY, 'Die arabischen Inschriften', [in:] ULBERT (ed.), *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes* (cit. n. 14), pp. 171–177 & 179–180; cf. SEG 37, 1460.

rock-cut chambers, probably used as stables and/or living rooms, or as hermit cells. It is almost certain that the site accommodated a monastery and a guest-house for pilgrims.²⁰

In 2006 Pau Figueras revisited the site and conducted an epigraphic survey, recording unusually long invocations of the God of Saint George, scratched on a layer of white plaster over the arched entrance to a rock-cut chamber. The text was in cursive script (thus almost certainly written by a person trained in professional writing). Figueras noted that walls in other, inaccessible, rooms were covered by similar inscriptions. Based on this find Figueras suggested that Mizpe Shivta was the site of the pilgrim hostel of Saint George (*xenodochium sancti Georgii*) visited by the Pilgrim of Piacenza,²¹ whereas hitherto that *xenodochium* was thought to have been located at Nessana. Although the location of the cult of George at Nessana is only suggested by a fragmentary papyrus from the site with his martyrdom,²² and the graffiti at Mizpe Shivta do attest to cultic activity, Figueras’ interpretation did not win the approval of Denis Feissel.²³

IDENTIFICATION BY OIKOS, AND ‘EXTENDED FAMILY’

When one tries to get a glimpse of family identity markers, as used by the authors of pilgrim graffiti, one notices that the evidence for them is actually scarce. Even the use of patronyms, inserted immediately after the personal name of the supplicant, becomes less and less popular in this period. But be-

²⁰ The site has been known to European travellers since at least the 1870s, but it was identified as a monastery no earlier than in 1914/1915 by Charles Leonard Woolley and Thomas Edward Lawrence. A systematic survey by Ya’aqov Baumgarten on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority followed only in the 1980s. For a description of the site and the text of its graffiti, see P. FIGUERAS, ‘The location of *xenodochium Sancti Georgii* in the light of two inscriptions in Mizpe Shivta’, *Aram* 18–19 (2006–2007), pp. 509–526.

²¹ See *Itineraria et alia geographica* (cit. n. 1), pp. 146–147 (V 182): where the term is actually spelt *xenodochius*, whilst different manuscripts give variants: *senodocios* and *senodochium* and the other recension: *synodochium* (p. 170 [V 212]). Variant spellings with *s* and *x* are quite common in Latin, cf. the names *Sixtus* and *Xystus*, used interchangeably.

²² For this *passio*, see L. CASSON & E. L. HETTICH (eds.), *Excavations at Nessana*, vol. 2: *Literary Papyri*, Princeton 1950, pp. 123–142.

²³ See *BE* (2008), 568; cf. *SEG* 57, 1853–1856.

cause the use of patronyms has little to do with prayers for one's own family, as described by the Pilgrim of Piacenza, I am not going to develop on this issue.²⁴ A popular way to stress one's family allegiance was the standardised prayer for one's *household*/οἶκος. References to *oikoi* are ubiquitous in graffiti from Syros (and everywhere beyond). For example, in no. 101, where an unnamed supplicant placed his *oikos* even before himself, saying: βοήθῃ το οἶκῳ μου κὲ μοὶ το γράψαντι / 'Help my household and me who wrote it!'.²⁵ In Ephesos, in the Cave of Paul, we come across a very similar prayer, probably authored by a married couple: Κύριε, βοήθῃ τῷ δούλῳ Ἀφρω<δι>σίῳ | κὲ ... | κὲ παντῷ (sic!) τῷ οἶκῳ αὐτῶν / 'Lord, help your servant Aphrodisios and [- - -] and their whole household!'.²⁶ The prayer on behalf of one's *oikos* was clearly borrowed by Christians from the phrasing of pagan graffiti and dipinti, where it is very often seen. Here we can refer, for example, to a first- or second-century dipinto from Deir el-Bahari authored by one Sarapion, son of Apollonides: [τὸ] προσκύνημα Σαραπί[ωνος] Ἀπολλωνίδου (...) καὶ

²⁴ The alleged presence of metronyms in the evidence deserves brief mention. In graffito no. 2 from Rusafa, Cornelia Römer restores the text as Μαροῦσα Ἰωάννα[ς] and translates it 'Marusa, Tochter der Johanna'. But this interpretation is highly implausible. We probably have here two female names in the nominative form, mentioned next to each other, e.g.: Μαροῦσα, Ἰωά<v>να [- - -] / 'Marousa, Ioanna'. The same is probably the case for an unpublished epitaph from Beyözü in Helenopontus (northeast Asia Minor), which I am now editing with the permission of the Euchaita/Avkat Expedition. It reads θέσις Ἰω|άννου, Ῥωμ|άνας which should be understood 'Tomb of Ioannes, (and) Romana' rather than 'Tomb of Ioannes, son of Romana'. This is because in late antique inscriptions metronyms are extremely rare and even patronyms fall into disuse. When they do appear, they are usually introduced by the term νίος and θυγάτηρ. Below I briefly discuss the case of Zana, daughter of Nonna (Ζάνα θυγάτηρ Νόνας) from the Lower Herodion, where the presence of the metronym is strange but is accepted by Leah Di Segni (see below, note 35). In addition, Maurice Sartre argued for the occurrence of a metronym in an epitaph from Bostra: Μαρ|θείνη | Ἑλένης / 'Martheine, daughter of Helen' (*IGLS* 13/1, no. 9344), considering, however, also other possibilities, e.g. that the name Helen is of the owner of a female slave, Martheine.

²⁵ KIOURTZIAN, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes des Cyclades* (cit. n. 12), no. 101. As is documented in three invocations from Syros (nos. 97, 98, 114), the reference to one's household could be made by the specific, though a little puzzling, expression πανυκί = πανοικῷ (?), immediately following the names of supplicants. The following invocation (no. 97): Κύριε, βοήθει Λεοντίου πανυκί should probably be translated as: 'Lord, help Leontios with all his household!'.
²⁶ PILLINGER, 'Neue Entdeckungen' (cit. n. 11), p. 20.

παντὸς οἴκου παρ[ὰ] τῷ [κυρίῳ | Ἀμ]ενώθῃ (...) / ‘Proskynema of Sarapion son of Apollonides (...) and of his whole household before the Lord Amenotthes (...)’ (trans. A. Łajtar).²⁷

Prayers aimed at ensuring the prosperity of one’s household are, however, very general and, let it be said, vague expressions of family allegiance, so we should explore whether there is anything more detailed. Probably the best texts to offer us a good case study are in this respect the invocations of the God of Saint George from Mizpe Shivta. The two published invocations read as follows:

A + Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ θε(ε)ς τοῦ ἀ[γίου] Γεωργίου ἐλέησον
τὸν δοῦλόν [σο]υ Παῦλος Λειτουργίου (?) τὸν ἀπὸ κώμης Χοσευφ[α - ?]
καὶ τὴν γυνήκαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν θυγατήραν αὐτοῦ Νόν[να]ν [- -] καὶ)
Ν[- - ?]
4 καὶ) τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ Νῖλ[ον] καὶ) Χονας (?) καὶ) Φῖδον καὶ)
Ζοαδο καὶ) Ζαραλος
καὶ) Απδελος καὶ) Μαρζοβας (?) καὶ) Λοῖς καὶ) Στέφανον τὸν ἀ(πὸ)
Χολφινως (?)·

B Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ θε(ε)ς τοῦ ἀγίου[υ Γ]εωργίου [- -] δοῦλον (?)
Κωιμου συ κ[- -] καὶ) Α[- -]
[- -] Παύλου (?)ιου εμ(?)
4 [- -]α[- - -]ωλου[- - -]

A 2. κώμη Χοσευφ[α?] = modern Khirbet Kuseifa / Ḥorvat Kuseife (?) situated c. 60 km in bird’s flight to the northeast of Mizpe Shivta *SEG*

Oh Lord, God of Saint George, have mercy upon your servant Paulos, (son) of Leitisinos (?), from the village of Choseuph[a] (?), and upon his wife and his daughter, Nonna [- - -], and his servants (?) Neilos and Chonas (?) and Phedon and Zoado and Zaralos (?) and Apdelos and Marzobas and Lois and Stephanos from the village of Cholphins (?) !

Oh Lord, God of Saint George [- - -] servant Koimos [- - -] and Α[- - -] Paulos (?) [- - -]!

²⁷ ŁAJTAR, *Deir el-Bahari* (cit. n. 4), pp. 381–382, no. 313.

The inclusion of ethnics (ἀπὸ κώμης Χοσευφ[α] / ‘from the village of Choseuph[a]’; ἀπὸ Χολφινῶς / ‘from (the village of) Cholphinos’) strongly suggests that these graffiti were authored by people of foreign origin, only temporarily housed at the site. The second text, especially in its later part, is fragmentarily preserved. Although we can confidently assume that its structure was similar to that of the first invocation, the names of the supplicants are nearly entirely lost. Hence, it will be of little use for the present discussion. The first invocation is authored by a certain Paulos, son of Leitisinos (an interesting transcription of the name Licinius, instead of the regular form Λικίν(ν)ιος, see TM10164). This Paulos is the only person of the whole group likely to have visited the presumed hostel at Mizpe Shivta. Having identified himself by his patronym, he specifies the name of his home village, Choseupha (which might be modern Khirbet Kuseifa), and then introduces individual members of his household (*oikos*): his wife, his daughter Nonna, possibly one more child whose name is lost, and probably his servants.²⁸ Several issues here deserve a closer look.

Firstly, the personal name of Paulos’ wife is omitted, whilst the names of his children (apparently daughters) are thoroughly enumerated. This is probably because the identity of that woman, being his only legal consort, did not need to be further specified, while a collective reference to his children could have been too vague (was Paulos anxious lest the God or St. George would ‘forget’ one of them, or did he wish to stress his good fortune by stating the exact number of children?). The case, however, underscores how a wife could be identified within specific contents by the name of her husband alone. This was not, of course, a Christian invention. Similarly described wives appear in pagan cultic graffiti and dipinti. For example, dipinto no. 155 from the pas-

²⁸ For an example of a pagan dipinto containing a similarly extensive prayer on behalf of one’s family and neighbours, see ŁAJTAR, *Deir el-Bahari* (cit. n. 4), pp. 210–211, no. 124: τὸ προσκύνημα Ἀθηνόδορος Φθ<ο>μών(θ)(ου) | [ὦ]δε παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ | Πετεμενώφιος κ[α]ὶ παρὰ Ἀμενώθες θεοῦ | μ[ε]γίστου | καὶ Ψενεριεύ[ς] ἀ]δελφὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ Σε[ν]μουθίς | μητρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ Φθουμών[θ]ου ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ καὶ γη[τ]ρὸν αὐτοῦ Παράτος καὶ | χθεις (...) / ‘Proskynema of Athenodoros son of Phthomonthes here before the Lord Petemenophis and before Amenothēs, the great god, and also of Psenerieus his brother and of Senmouthis his mother and of Phthomonthes his father and of his neighbours Paras and [- -]chtheis (...)’ (trans. A. Łajtar). The text dates to AD 86/87.

sage between the courtyard and chapel of Amun in Deir el-Bahari records a prayer on behalf of one Plenis and his family: τὸ προσκύνημα | Πλῆνις Βησαρίωνος | σὺν τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ | καὶ τέκνοις (...) / ‘Proskynema of Plenis son of Besarion together with his wife and children (...)’ (trans. A. Łajtar).²⁹

Secondly, the prevalence of non-Greek names among the servants is interesting,³⁰ compared with the purely Greek and Roman names bore by Paulos, his father Licinius, and his daughter Nonna. Stephanos from the village of Cholphins, mentioned at the end of Paulos’ request, is seemingly a befriended local landowner, living in a nearby settlement, or less likely a brother of Paulos, rather than yet another servant.

To sum up, the saint is invoked here on behalf of the entire household, one could say: a *domus*, with its master, his spouse, his children and finally servants. Apart from the patronym used by Paulos to specify his identity, there is, however, no reference to any earlier generations of his family, as if he did not feel obliged to pray also for their salvation or repose. It is in fact difficult to find evidence for any references to parents, or ancestors in a wider sense (of course excluding patronyms), in the published graffiti from

²⁹ ŁAJTAR, *Deir el-Bahari* (cit. n. 4), pp. 235–236, no. 155.

³⁰ Based on names alone, one should not judge the ethnic identity of the people mentioned; furthermore we cannot say whether the names were read and identified correctly. None of them appears in H. WUTHNOW, *Die semitischen Menschnennamen in griechischen Inschriften und Papyri des vorderen Orients*, Leipzig 1930, or in the rich list of names discussed in A. AL-JALLAD, ‘Graeco-Arabica I: The south Levant’, [in:] A. AL-JALLAD (ed.), *Arabic in Context. Celebrating 400 Years of Arabic at Leiden University*, Leiden 2017, pp. 99–186. As for Ζαράλος, Wuthnow mentions a similar form Ζαρυλ (p. 49). O. MASSON, *Onomastica Graeca selecta*, vol. 1, Paris 1990, p. 10, discusses a Greek Cypriote name Ζοάλιος. Ζοαδο: Al-Jallad (pp. 140–142) discusses similar forms: Ζαεδος, Ζοεδαθος, Απδελος; this seems to be a variant of Αβδηλος = צבד, see Wuthnow, p. 8 (sometimes misspelt Αδβηλος, p. 12). Wuthnow notes also the name Απτ in an eighth-century text (p. 25) which he sees as basically another variant of צבד. For Αβδελλα, see p. 7. Trismegistos does not record the spelling Απδελος but Άβδελ, see TM26891, or Άβδηλα, see TM20962. Μαρζοβας: the transcription does not appear in Wuthnow’s lexicon, but this may be a composite name: Wuthnow records the names Ζοβαδος and Ζοβαιδος which are both transcriptions of צבד, and Ζωβαιος = צב (pp. 50–51). Χονας: Wuthnow (p. 121) notes the name Χονεις = צנח. For Λοϊς = Λῶις, see TM10235. Φῖδον = Greek Φειδων, see TM3201. Νῖλος = Νεῖλος is basically a Greek name which originated as one of slaves’ names deriving from the name of the river of Nile, see MASSON, *Onomastica* (cit. *supra*), p. 151; *ibidem* vol. 3, Geneva 2000, p. 190; and TM4240.

these sites. Only graffito no. 14 from Rusafa contains very vague remarks on the supplicant's ancestral background:

Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων μνήσθε[τι - - -]
 Σεργίου καὶ τῶν πα[τ]έρων αὐτοῦ καὶ θυγ[ατρὸς - - -]
 καὶ τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτοῦ Α.....α καὶ . [- - -]
 4 καὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς

O Lord, God of the Powers, remember [- - -] Sergios and his ancestors, and (his) daughter [- - -] and his sister A[- - -] and [- - -] and her husband!

The name of the principal supplicant was probably specified in the lacuna at the end of line 1. What is, however, more important, in line 2 we can see that this man prayed for the repose of his ancestors (πατέρες, literally 'fathers'). Such an expression is, nonetheless, different from the recording of his parents' names by the Piacenza Pilgrim. The supplicant's ancestors, and not strictly his mother and father, are evoked here collectively, not by their personal names.

The author of our graffito prayed also for his daughter, and for the well-being of his sisters' family: his sister herself, whom he mentions in the first place, and this time by name (though the name is lost), and her husband. Whether the husband's name was also specified in the prayer, we cannot say on the basis of the present edition. The fact that the woman appears here before her husband, the formal head of her *oikos*, is significant, and certainly reveals the gradation of family links, important to the author of this text. Apparently, the blood-relationship was more significant to him than the relation by marriage and even than social conventions.

In terms of religious mentality the case shows that our supplicant felt the need to pray not only for his own *oikos*, but also for his blood relatives, especially people with whom he was connected through his parents. Even though he probably lived on his own with his nuclear family, he still identified himself as a member of a larger family group, which he was supposed to remember whilst on his pilgrimage.

A less spectacular, but still important case of the memory of one's siblings, is a graffito from Ephesos, from the Cemetery of the Seven Sleepers. A man prayed there:

- Κ(ύρι)ε, βοήθι θ(όν) σὼ(ν) δ-
 οὔλον [Κ]ειφᾶν Ἀπολό(ν) κὲ Τελονηα
 ...ιαδεο κὲ τὸν ἀ[δ]ελφ[ὸ]ν αὐτ[ο]ῦ
 4 Γ[εόρ]γιο(ν) τοῦ α-
 οὔτοῦ. ἀμήν

Lord, help your servant Keiphass Apollonios (?), and Telonia [- -] and his brother Georgios! Amen.

It is possible that the readings (especially those of the names) offered by Josef Keil and subsequent editors are not entirely correct; the inscription badly needs a new edition together with high quality photographs. The occurrence of a *brother/ἀδελφός* in lines 4–5 is, however, plausible.

Such ‘extended families’³¹ and their complicated relations are much better represented in late antique dedicatory inscriptions on stone and in mosaic. An interesting case of dedicatory mosaics from the north church at the Lower Herodion near Jerusalem was described in 1990 by Leah Di Segni and recently revisited in her paper in the proceedings of the conference *Prayer and Worship in Eastern Christianities*.³² The church was apparently a private sanctuary, owned by a ‘clan’ or an ‘extended family’ (as Di Segni terms them) that came from a common father and preserved his memory. The inscription from a panel, set in the main carpet mosaic, at the east end of the nave reads as follows:

Κ(ύρι)ε Ὑ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστὸ)ς κὲ ἅγιε Μηχαήλ, πρόσδεξε τὴν καρπο-
 φωρίαν τὸν δούλον σου τὸν τέκνον Ἰουλέσα· Σα-
 φρίκα καὶ Ἀναήλ ἀδελφῶν κὲ τ(ο)ὺς αὐτῶν κὲ Σαλα-

³¹ For a recent re-assessment of the structure and roles of ‘extended families’ in Late Antiquity, see: G. NATHAN, ‘Extended family in the experiences of Ausonius and Libanius’, [in:] S. R. HÜBNER & G. NATHAN (eds.), *Mediterranean Families in Antiquity: Households, Extended Families, and Domestic Space*, Chichester 2016, pp. 241–257.

³² L. DI SEGNI, ‘The Greek inscriptions in the northern and eastern churches at Herodion’, [in:] G.-C. BOTTINI *et al.* (eds.), *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land: New Discoveries. Essays in Honour of Virgilio C. Corbo*, Jerusalem 1990, pp. 177–190. See also: DI SEGNI, ‘Expressions of prayer’ (cit. n. 5), p. 66; A. M. MADDEN (ed.), *Corpus of Byzantine Church Mosaic Pavements from Israel and the Palestinian Territories*, Leuven – Walpole, MA 2014, pp. 74–76, no. 94; SEG 37, 1489; 40, 1470.

- 4 εἶναι κὲ τῶν τέκνων αὐτοῦ κὲ Ἀβραὰμ κὲ τῶν τέκνων αὐτοῦ κὲ Ζάνας κὲ Νώνας κὲ Ζάνας θυγατρὸς Νόνας

O Lord Jesus Christ and Saint Michael, receive the offering of your servants, the children of Ioulesas: the siblings Saphrika and Anael, and their (households), and Salaeos and his children, and Abraham and his children, and Zana and Nona and Zana daughter of Nona. (trans. Leah Di Segni)

Di Segni supposes these people to have been members of 'a very homogenous group' and 'a kind of a small tribe', probably Semitic, but not necessarily Jewish. The two protagonists, Saphrika and her brother Anael, identify themselves specifically by their father's name as the children of Ioulesas.³³ The reference to the father is not made here in the form of a common patronym: his name appears even before the names of the dedicants themselves. Additionally, Saphrika and Anael stress their mutual affinity by the term ἀδελφοί/'siblings'. Then the members of their *oikoi* are mentioned, all of them collectively termed οἱ αὐτῶν that is 'those who (are) theirs'.³⁴ Other people listed in the inscription are, as argued by Di Segni, 'chiefs of families' belonging to the same clan. She points out that the last three names – Zana, Nona, and Zana the daughter – might record 'a husbandless family (...) a little dynasty of grandmother, mother, and daughter'.³⁵

³³ The actual division of letters in the names of Ioulesas and Saphrika has been disputed. Michael Avi-Yonah, based on a photograph, originally divided the names τῶν τέκνων Ἰουλέσας: Ἀ|φρίκα instead of τῶν τέκνων Ἰουλέσα: Σα|φρίκα which is a reading later suggested by Di Segni, and which I follow here. Di Segni understands the name Σαφρίκα as a female name, and a variant of Σαπρίκα which appears in other mosaics from the same church and is attested in Syria and Egypt. For further comments on this issue, see See also: *CIIP* IV/2, no. 3326, DI SEGNI, 'Expressions of prayer' (cit. n. 5), p. 66; *SEG* 37, 1489.

³⁴ Note that the expression τοὺς αὐτῶν / 'those who (are) theirs' refers equally to Saphrika and to her brother Anael, which implies that she was the head of her own *oikos* or at least presented herself as such.

³⁵ Quotations after DI SEGNI, 'The Greek inscriptions' (cit. n. 32), p. 181. The presence of matrilinear genealogy has been reportedly noticed in Nabataean, Dadanitic, Hasaitic, and Sabaic inscriptions. It is, however, a disputed issue if really, and to which extent, it was used in those epigraphic cultures. For a closer overview, see: J. NORRIS, 'A woman's Hismaic inscription from the Wādi Ramm desert', *AAE* 28 (2017), pp. 90–109, at p. 98; H. A. AL-FASSI, *Women in pre-Islamic Arabia: Nabataea*, Oxford 2007, pp. 60–62; A. V. KOROTAYEV, 'Were there any truly matrilineal lineages in the Arabian Peninsula?', *Proceedings of the Seminar for Ara-*

FATHERS, MOTHERS, AND OTHER RELATIVES

A characteristic feature of the above text is, therefore, a common father. Shared fathers appear to have been significant markers of one’s family identity not only in the Hellenised Semitic milieu of Palestine. A votive inscription from Lamos in Cilicia (southeast Asia Minor)³⁶ records a vow made by four brothers to Saint Konon. The brothers commemorated this religious act by the following formula:

εὐζάμενοι οἱ τέσσα-
ρες ἀδελφοὶ υἱοὶ Ἀ-
ρουαρα τὴν εὐχὴν
4 ἀπέδωκεν τῷ ἀ<γί>ῳ
+ Κόνωνει +

Four brothers, sons of Arvaras (?), having sworn a vow to Saint Konon, fulfilled it.

Nowhere in this text does its authors reveal their personal names. It is only their father’s (non-Greek) name³⁷ and the term ἀδελφοί/‘brothers’ that binds them together, forms their social identity, and defines their mutual relationship. The formula resembles pagan dedications from north Syria, for example the one discussed by Ted Kaizer, dated AD 145 and made by five brothers, ‘Palmyrenes who live in Nazala’, to the ‘great God of Nazala’, probably the god Elagabal worshipped in Emesa.³⁸

bian Studies 25 (1995), pp. 83–98; J. RYCKMANS, ‘A three generations’ matrilineal genealogy in a Hasaeen inscription: matrilineal ancestry in pre-Islamic Arabia’, [in:] H. A. KHALIFA & M. RICE (eds.), *Bahrain through the Ages: The Archaeology*, London 1986, pp. 407–417.

³⁶ E. L. HICKS, ‘Inscriptions from western Cilicia’, *JHS* 12 (1891), pp. 225–273, at p. 261, no. 38

³⁷ WUTHNOW, *Die semitischen Menschennamen* (cit. n. 30), pp. 26 & 167, does not mention this transcription, cf. p. 167 for comments on: Arwad, Ἀρουαδος, Ἀρουαδη: 777. For that name, see also *IGLS* 15/2, no. 316: Ἀρου<α>δος (south Syria). On p. 167 Wuthnow mentions also the name Arwah = Ἀρουαος, e.g. *IGLS* 13/2, no. 9871 (territory of Bostra). See also AL-JALLAD, ‘Graeco-Arabica I’ (cit. n. 30), pp. 140 & 171.

³⁸ See T. KAIZER, ‘Familiar strangers: gods and worshippers away from home in the Roman Near East’, [in:] BLÖMER *et al.* (eds.), *Religious Identities* (cit. n. 15), pp. 19–32, at p. 21 n. 12.

Brotherhood is termed in a very specific way also in a very short graffito from the Church of Mary in Ephesos, a sanctuary built in the south porch of the temple of Zeus Olimpios, which at the end of the fifth century became the new cathedral of that city. This text, first published under no. 49 by Josef Keil in *Die Forschungen in Ephesos* and then republished under no. 4149 in the Ephesian volumes of the series *Die Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* reads:

κύρα Αὐριλία +
 Σοτηρία κ(ύρο)ν Αὐρ-
 ῖλιν Χρήστιον
 4 τὸν ὁμόπατριν

Lady Aurelia (or: Kyra Aurelia) + Soteria (on behalf of) lord Aurelios Chrestios (or: Kyros Aurelios Chrestios), by the same father (homopatris).

One must note that the term ὁμοπάτριος used by the supplicant to describe her relationship with the beneficiary of her prayer is not common in inscriptions.³⁹ But on the other hand, the term is frequent in Greek documentary papyri, though it gradually disappears from the papyrological evidence after the mid-third century AD, and its occurrence in a sixth-/seventh-century or even later graffito is puzzling. Sadly, we have nothing but a drawing to verify Keil's reading, and thus the question of the occurrence of this term in the present inscription must remain open.

An equally doubtful case of one's identification only through the name of the father is suggested by Cornelia Römer in her edition of the Greek graffito no. 13 from Rusafa: ἡ Στεφάνου which she translates 'die Tochter des Stephanos' = 'the (daughter) of Stephanos'. However, as a matter of fact the phrase looks more like the male name Stephanos with the *prothetic iota* commonly used in front of consonant clusters containing *sigma*: Ἡστέφανου

³⁹ The term appears in a fourth-century-BC sacred law from Tinos (*IG XII Suppl.*, no. 303); in the phrase ὁμοπάτηρ καὶ ὁμομάτηρ it is used in a seventh- or sixth-century-BC law from Gortyn on Crete (*IC IV*, no. 21). It is also present in the royal Arsacid titulature: ἡ ὁμοπάτρια αὐτοῦ ἀδελφὴ καὶ γυνή but this is on parchments, not inscriptions, from Avroman in Media (*I. Estremo Oriente*, no. 454).

= Ἰστεφάνου.⁴⁰ Alternatively, even if we accept the presumed occurrence of the definite article, there are several other possible interpretations, for example ἡ (εὐχὴ) Στεφάνου / ‘the (prayer) of Stephanos’ or ἡ (ἐπιγραφὴ) Στεφάνου / ‘the (inscription/writing) of Stephanos’.

As for women, and specifically mothers, they are rarely mentioned in pilgrim graffiti. Their status is also very different from that of fathers. Even when they appear with their children and without their husbands, their names are usually placed after the names of their sons, who are presented as the principal supplicants. Graffito no. 84, featured in the rich collection from the port of Grammata, records the prayer of a certain Georgios, who invoked the help of God for himself and his mother:

Κ(ύρι)ε βόθη τοῦ δού-
λου σου Γεωργίου
κα(ὶ) τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ
4 Γεωργία

O Lord, help your servant Georgios and his mother, Georgia!

This is actually the only graffito from Syros with a female name (and let me remind readers that more than 150 are published). It is very unlikely that Georgia herself visited the site.⁴¹ The supplicants, mentioned in the Christian inscriptions of Grammata, are mostly seafarers: sailors and ship-owners (ναῦται and ναύκληροι) and our case might be very similar to that of the pilgrim of Piacenza: a loving son must have had it in mind to mention his

⁴⁰ For examples from the epigraphic evidence, see K. DIETERICH, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der griechischen Sprache von der hellenistischen Zeit bis zum 10. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, Leipzig 1898, p. 34; cf. C. BRIXHE, *Essai sur le grec anatolien au début de notre ère* [= *Travaux et mémoires. Études anciennes* I], Nancy 1984, p. 61. For papyri, see: F. T. GIGNAC, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, vol. 1: *Phonology*, Milan 1976, p. 312.

⁴¹ But on some sites we encounter graffiti carved specifically by female pilgrims. Leah Di Segni mentions the case of the rock-cut inscriptions and graffiti from the monastery of Theoktistos in Wadi Mukallik near Jerusalem where, she says, ‘women, who were not permitted to enter monasteries, would present their requests (...), and some of them left their names and invocations on the rock’. See DI SEGNI, ‘Expressions of prayer’ (cit. n. 5), p. 64.

mother whilst visiting a holy place. Why he makes no mention of his father is a different problem.

We can compare this graffito with an invocation carved on a column in the Church of John the Evangelist in Ephesos, which flanks an elaborately carved cross (c. 0.45 m high) standing on an orb and three steps, closely resembling depictions of the *crux potens* on coins issued by Heraclius (610–641) and later emperors:⁴²

Θεολόγε, βοεί-
 θι τοῦ σοῦ δοῦ-
 λου Σισι-
 4 νήου
 κὲ τίς μ-
 ιτρὸς αὐτοῦ

O Theologian, help your servant Sisinnios and his mother!

The texts are almost identical. Significantly, however, the personal name of Sisinnios' mother was not included in his prayer. Sisinnios was seemingly apt to describe his mother just as a husband would describe his wife, that is as a person so closely and unambiguously bound to him, and so easily identifiable by his own identity, that her personal name was not needed. And again, as in previous cases, the same pattern of identification of mothers (by the name of a son, the principal supplicant), is present also in pagan graffiti and dipinti. A good parallel is dipinto no. 313 from Deir el-Bahari (dating to the first or second century): [τὸ] προσκύνημα Σαραπί[ωνος Ἀπολ-]λωνίδου καὶ τῆς μητρὸς αὐ[τοῦ καὶ | ...]ων ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ (...) / 'Proskynema of Sarapion son of Apollonides and of his mother [and of - -] on his brother (...)'⁴³ (trans. A. Łajtar).

⁴² IvE, no. 4314. For a photograph of this inscription, see I. TOTH, 'Reflections on a period of transformation in early Byzantine epigraphic culture', [in:] Ch. STAVRAKOS, *Inscriptions in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine History and History of Art. Proceedings of the International Symposium "Inscriptions: Their Contribution to the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine History and History of Art"* (Ioannina, June 26–27, 2015), Wiesbaden 2016, pp. 17–40, at p. 40, fig. 5.

⁴³ ŁAJTAR, *Deir el-Bahari* (cit. n. 4), pp. 381–382, no. 313.

This does not mean, of course, that shared mothers could never become identity markers, as was the case of fathers we have just discussed. But in order to explore that identity pattern we must again reach for a dedicatory inscription carved on stone. A limestone block found at Goslu near Perta in Lycaonia (central Asia Minor) is inscribed with a list of people who contributed to an offering.⁴⁴ Poor syntax and abbreviations make the translation and interpretation conjectural, but it seems that the offering was made for the memory and repose of two deceased mothers by two groups of siblings:

- [+ ὕ]περ εὐχῆ[ς κὲ] σεμν[οτάτ]-
 [η]ς μνήμης Ἀρμένις πρε(σβύτερος) Μεν-
 [ε]ας πρε(σβύτερος) Σουλος κὲ Ἀρμένις π-
 4 ρε(σβύτερος) κὲ Ἰουστός κὲ Μόμις κὲ τῇ-
 ς μητρὸς αὐτῶν Ἀννας. Μεν-
 νεας κὲ Ἀρμένις κὲ Ἀλέξαν-
 δρος κὲ Ἀρμένις ὁ κτίσας τὸ
 8 μαρτύριον κὲ τῇ<ς> συνβίῳ αὐτ-
 ῆς Πρόκλης κὲ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτ-
 [ῶ]ν Ὡαλεντήλλης

+ As a vow and for the pious memory. Armenis the elder (or: presbyter), Meneas the elder (or: presbyter), Soulos, and Armenis the elder (or: presbyter), and Ioustos, and Momis (made a vow for the memory?) of their mother Anna. Menneas, and Armenis, and Alexandros, and Armenis, who had built the martyr shrine and his wife Prokle (?) (made a vow for the memory?) of their mother Valentilla.

⁴⁴ For the text, see: H. GRÉGOIRE, ‘Inscriptions historiques byzantines’, *Byzantion* 4 (1927–1928), pp. 437–468, at pp. 460–462, and *MAMA* I, no. 323, and for comments: S. DESTEPHEN, ‘Martyrs locaux et cultes civiques en Asie Mineure’, [in:] J. C. CAILLET *et al.* (eds.), *Des dieux civiques aux saints patrons (IV^e–VII^e siècle)*, Paris 2015, p. 93; F. R. TROMBLEY, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370–529*, vol. 2, Leiden *et al.* 1994, p. 103. We cannot precisely date this object, but as its final lines may contain a reference to regnal years of an emperor, the inscription is likely to come from the period after 537 when dating by regnal year became compulsory in official documents and widespread elsewhere; see: D. FEISSEL, ‘La réforme chronologique de 537 et son application dans l’épigraphie grecque : années de règne et dates consulaires de Justinien à Heraclius’, *Ktema* 18 (1993), pp. 171–188 (reprinted in: D. FEISSEL, *Documents, droit, diplomatie de l’Empire romain tardif* [= *Bilans de recherche* 7], Paris 2010, pp. 503–524). Henri Grégoire argued specifically for the eighth year of the reign of the emperor Heraclius (AD 618), and his idea seemed convincing to Frank Trombley.

Neither of the groups mention any father (whether shared or not; therefore, we cannot say whether they are children of the same man by two different women or just two unrelated families), but it is their descent from a specific mother which in each case binds them together. Of course, this maternal dimension of their identity had no legal implications and was probably adopted as a natural consequence of the aim of their offering.

An equally hard task is to find in pilgrims' prayers any references to more distant family members: other than parents, children or siblings. Graffito no. 136 from Syros might contain a request for the salvation of a son-in-law or brother-in-law, γαμβρός: Κ(ύρι)ε σῶσ(ον) τὸν δοῦλόν σ[ου] | NH.I.ΘΑΝ.. INA. γαμβ|ροῦ Νικολ[άου (?) - - -] / 'Lord, save your servant [- - -] and (his) son-in-law Nikolaos [- - -]!'. Even more speculatively, a misspelt form of the designations πενθερός/*father-in-law* may appear in a poorly spelt graffito from Rusafa (no. 31): ερα εκ...|θηρος.

CONCLUSIONS

The scarcity of exact and clear references to family background, similar to those I presented here, shows that the practice of 'inscribing the names of one's parents', and thus shaping one's identity as a member of an extended family community, was not common in the late antique, Greek-writing East. Interestingly, the references to one's ancestors or siblings and their families, when they do appear, can be found much more frequently in invocations of people bearing non-Greek names, and in places like Rusafa in northeast Syria and Mizpe Shivta in the Negev Desert, that is in regions inhabited by Hellenised tribes, mostly of Semitic background. However, to judge ethnic origin or cultural affiliation only on the basis of a name, is an extremely disputable and misleading way of reasoning. A view expressed by Robert Parker in his recently edited volume on personal names in ancient Anatolia that the study of onomastics allows 'assigning unlocated individuals to a plausible place of origin' and that 'in many parts of the ancient world the only answer to the question "who are these people?" comes from their

names’ seems to be a bit too optimistic.⁴⁵ So may be the idea that the names of the authors of these peculiar, ‘extended’, invocations can tell us anything certain about their origin.

AFTERWORD

In the above paper I focused on the Eastern Christian pilgrim sanctuaries. This was mainly due to the geographical context of Cana sited in the Holy Land. However, as we could infer from the evidence presented, these shrines were visited primarily by people of local origin. We must not forget that the Piacenza Pilgrim was a different sort of traveller. He was a ‘man of the West’, and could, therefore, bring to the East his own scribal habits, unfamiliar to the Eastern populations. And it is indeed that even a basic survey of Latin Christian graffiti from the West produces a strikingly different image of pilgrims’ attitude towards their family than that we could see above.

Here I would like to draw the reader’s attention to two collections of visitors’ graffiti and dipinti from the suburban cemeteries of Rome, both located on the via Appia: the cemetery of Callistus, and the so-called *triclia* (a hall designed for holding funerary banquets) beneath the present-day Church of Saint Sebastianus (San Sebastiano fuori le mura / ancient Basilica Apostolorum). The inscriptions from these sites are published respectively in the fourth and fifth volume of the series *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae* (ICVR).⁴⁶ Especially the graffiti from the *triclia*, addressed to the Apostles Peter and Paul, offer us ample evidence (approximately 640 texts from the later third and early fourth centuries) for complex invocations on behalf of large groups of people,⁴⁷ and particular family members, including suppli-

⁴⁵ R. PARKER, ‘Introduction’, in: R. PARKER (ed.), *Personal Names in Ancient Anatolia*, Oxford 2013, p. 1.

⁴⁶ The graffiti from the *triclia* were also thoroughly discussed in A. E. FELLE, ‘Alle origini del fenomeno devozionale cristiano in Occidente: le inscriptiones parietariae ad memoriam apostolorum’, [in:] P. DE SANTIS & A. COSCARELLA (eds.), *Martiri, santi, patroni: per una archeologia della devozione. X CNAC (Arcavacata di Rende [Cosenza] 2010)*, Cosenza 2012, pp. 477–502. For a general description of the site, see A. M. NIEDDU, *La Basilica Apostolorum sulla via Appia e l’area cimiteriale circostante*, Vatican City 2009 (especially the introductory chapters).

⁴⁷ ICVR V 12912, 12930, 12976, 12978, 12995, 13092, 13094.

cants' parents. For example, we can see among them prayers on behalf of *parentes* (ICVR V 12917), prayers 'with parents' (*cum*) | [*p*]are[*nti*]bus: ICVR V 12930), and a request for one's parents' happy sojourn in heaven (*Petre et Paule in mentem* [*nos abeat*]|is ... *pare[nt]es nostri i[n deo*): ICVR V 12976). Furthermore, we find there invocations specifically on behalf of fathers (καί | μου πατ|ρός: ICVR V 12927; *Pe<t>re et Paule im mentem habe|te ... et Victorinum patrem*: 13094), a brother (*Petre et Pa[u]le*) | *in minte ha[b]ete*) | [- - -] *m ed frat[rem]* | [*eius*] *Hilar[ium*: ICVR V 12957), and friends and/or 'extended families', Latin *sui* (*cum suis amicis*: ICVR V 13024; *sui*: ICVR V 13092). Similarly, in the Cemetery of Callistus where Pope Sixtus II (martyred in Rome in 258), Saint Balbina, and the so-called 'holy spirits' (*spirita sancta*) are invoked, albeit on a smaller scale, we have requests for help for one's parent and brothers (*petite et pro parente, fratribus eius*: ICVR IV 9523), and just for one's brothers (*et omnes fratres nostros*: ICVR IV 9522). The latter example may, however, also refer to all the fellow Christians rather than people of common ancestry.

In the light of this evidence it is tempting to suggest that the Piacenza Pilgrim, and the graffito he executed on the couch in Cana, exemplify the Western epigraphic habit, and the Western ways of expressing one's family identity, 'intruding' into the East, where apparently different patterns were dominant.

Paweł Nowakowski
University of Oxford
Faculty of History
41-47 George St
Oxford OX1 2BE
United Kingdom
pawel.nowakowski@history.ox.ac.uk

'AND THERE, UNWORTHY AS I WAS, I WROTE THE NAMES OF MY PARENTS': THE FAMILY IDENTITY OF SUPPLICANTS IN PILGRIMS' GRAFFITI AND DEDICATORY INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE LATE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE EAST

Abstract

The present paper discusses the patterns of self-representation used by pilgrims to Eastern pilgrimage shrines, based on the evidence of late antique and early medieval graffiti, and dedicatory inscriptions, in particular the way the pilgrims stressed their family relationships. First the practice of executing graffiti on behalf of absent family members is analysed, as documented by the Pilgrim of Piacenza. There follows a survey of Greek graffiti from several major sites: the port of Grammata on the island of Syros, Rusafa, Mizpe Shivta, and Ephesos, which reveal a number of formulae of prayers on behalf of one's household (*oikos*), extended family, and individual family members: fathers, mothers, and other relatives. The paper includes a short Appendix with remarks on differences between pilgrim graffiti in the East and those known from Roman suburban cemeteries.

Keywords: graffiti, dedicatory inscriptions, pilgrimage, pilgrims, women, Piacenza Pilgrim, names, onomastics, Syros, Ephesos, Tinos, Rusafa, Mizpe Shivta, Rome

„I TAM JA, NIEGODNY, NAPISAŁEM IMIONA MOICH RODZICÓW”: RODZINA JAKO MARKER TOŻSAMOŚCI W GRAFFITI PIELGRZYMÓW I W INSKRYPCJACH DEDYKACYJNYCH Z PÓŻNOANTYCZNEGO I BIZANTYŃSKIEGO WSCHODU

Abstrakt

Artykuł omawia wzorce autoprezentacji wykorzystywane przez pielgrzymów odwiedzających wschodnie sanktuaria pielgrzymkowe, na podstawie późnoantycznych i wczesnośredniowiecznych graffiti i inskrypcji. W szczególności omawiane są sposoby, w które pielgrzymi podkreślali swoje związki rodzinne. Jako pierwsza omawiana jest praktyka wykonywania graffiti w imieniu nieobecnych członków rodziny, tak jak ją stosuje Pielgrzym z Piacenzy. Następnie przeprowadzona jest analiza graffiti z kilku głównych stanowisk: portu Grammata na wyspie Syros, Rusafa, Mizpe Shivta i Efezu, które ujawniają różne formuły modlitw w imieniu ojców, matek i innych krewnych. Artykuł zawiera krótki apendyks z uwagami na temat różnic między graffiti pielgrzymów z sanktuariów wschodnich a tymi z cmentarzy Rzymu.

Słowa kluczowe: graffiti, inskrypcje dedykacyjne, pielgrzymowanie, pielgrzymi, kobiety, Pielgrzym z Piacenzy, imiona, onomastyka, Syros, Efez, Tinos, Rusafa, Mizpe Shivta, Rzym