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Mummies for export? The Repatriation of a corpse from Alexandria to Ancyra in the Roman Imperial Period

An inscription on a sarcophagus of the mid- or late second century AD found at Ancyra (modern Ankara, Turkey) indicates that it contained the repatriated body of an Ancyran who died in Alexandria. While absolute proof is lacking, it seems likely that his body had been mummified to allow for its return. As such, this sarcophagus and its inscription provide a rare reference to a mummy being sent out of Egypt for burial elsewhere.

SARCOPHAGI are rare in the archaeological inventory for Ancyra, the metropolis of Roman Galatia, but one of the three or so that have been found there bears a text indicating that it had once contained the repatriated cadaver of a local man who died in Alexandria. The sarcophagus itself is now displayed in the grounds of the Roman Baths Museum at Ankara (Inv. No. 113.578.99), but there is no certain information concerning its precise findspot.¹ However, it is made from the local marbleised limestone, indicating that it was made and thus also presumably found locally. That aside, the overall form of the sarcophagus conforms to a common second century AD type found in other parts of Asia Minor. It has a plain chest with a central *tabula ansata* on the front, and a gabled lid carved to represent a tiled roof with *tegulae* and *imbrices*. The scars at the corners of the lid and at either end of the ridge reveal that *acroteria* formerly existed at these points. The inscription on the sarcophagus is in three parts: two lines run along the chest above the *tabula ansata*; nine are within the *tabula ansata*; and one runs from the left to the right of this. This division of the inscription into these three discrete parts inscribed in and around the *tabula ansata* reveals that the sarcophagus was bought 'off-the-peg', and was not custom-made for the deceased.

The inscription on the sarcophagus reads:

Π Αἴλιον Κ[--]λλον πάση [ἀρ]ετῇ κεκοσμημένον καὶ ἀρχόμε[ν]ον πρώτη[ς] ἡλικίᾳ καταξί-
ω/θέντα/ οὐ μόνον τῆς ἐνθάδε βουλῆς ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πατρίδι ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἄλλαις πόλεσι διὰ
τὴν ἀναστροφὴν αὐτοῦ (leaf) οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ Π Αἰ Κυ/ρίων καὶ Πούδης ἐκτίμ/σαν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ
τῆς Ἀλεξαν/δρείας/καὶ τὴν λάρνακα ἀπέθοντο (tabula ansata) καταξίωθέντες διαδοξῆς.

In free translation (with expansions where necessary):²

'P(ublius) Aelius C(--)illus, ruled by all excellence, and who had just begun the prime of his life (and who was) deemed worthy not only (for membership) of the *boule* (i.e. council) here in his own fatherland (i.e. Ancyra) but also in other cities because of his conduct, his brothers P(ublius) Ae(lius) Cyrion and (Publius Aelius) Poude(n)s, being worthy of his inheritance, brought him from Alexandria and placed away his coffin.'

A deep vertical cut, representing a later attempt at breaking up this sarcophagus for the reuse of its material elsewhere, has resulted in the loss of the second and third letters from the *cognomen* of the deceased. Thus it could have been Cyrillus, Cocillus, or Camillus. However, as the *editio princeps* noted, the last two are as yet unparalleled at Ancyra, while Cyrillus is a relatively common name there with four other recorded instances, making it the more likely restoration.³

The shared *praenomina* and *nomina* of the deceased and his brothers reveals that they were members of an Ancyran family that had won Roman citizenship under the emperor Publius Aelius Hadrianus (AD 117–138). The repeated use by all three brothers of the

¹ The sarcophagus was first reported in S. Mitchell, 'RECAM Notes and Studies No. 1: Inscriptions of Ancyra', *Anatolian Studies* 27 (1977), 81–2, with pl. vi.a; cf. also D. H. French, *Roman, Late Roman and Byzantine Inscriptions of Ankara: A Selection* (Ankara, 2003), 183–4, no. 71.

² I am grateful to my colleague J. Morin, Department of Archaeology, Bilkent University, for his translation of the text. It is more exact than, and so differs slightly from, that given in French, *Roman, Late Roman and Byzantine Inscriptions of Ankara*, 184.

³ Mitchell, *Anatolian Studies* 27, 81.

emperor's praenomen suggests that they belonged at the most to the second generation of citizenship.

It seems clear that the family Publius Aelius C[yr]illus belonged to was both very wealthy, and politically and socially influential. This is demonstrated by the fact that, in addition to being a member of the Ancyran *boule*, he belonged to the *boule* of at least two other *poleis*. The family thus had powerful connections outside Ancyra, and, what is more, must have possessed a substantial amount of land to satisfy the necessary property (and financial) requirements for one of its own to belong to three or more municipal councils. Moreover, it can reasonably be assumed that C[yr]illus was over 30 at the time of his death, for this was the minimum age—or so it would seem—for an Ancyran to be elected to the governing body of his own community.⁴ However, given that no wife or children are named in the inscription, he was probably unmarried at the time of his death, and so it is likely that he was not much older than 30 ('the prime of his life') when that came to pass. This supposition finds some support in the fact that, despite the family's manifest wealth and political and social influence, C[yr]illus never held one of the senior civic offices available at Ancyra, or at the other unnamed places referred to in the inscription.⁵

The inscription clearly specifies that C[yr]illus died in 'Alexandria', and the lack of a locative qualifier implies that this must almost certainly be Alexandria in Egypt. His precise connection with that place must remain a matter of conjecture, but some form of 'trade' link between Egypt and at least southern Galatia has been demonstrated through archaeology. For example, a distinctive type of red slipware pottery made at Sagalassos, 200 km south of Ancyra, has been found at Alexandria, while Egyptian pottery along with fish-bones characteristic of Nilotic species have been found at Sagalassos.⁶ In addition, a pair of statue bases that were set up at Ancyra in 180 AD by one Apollonius, a priest of Serapis and joint citizen of both Ancyra and Alexandria,⁷ points to more direct contacts between the two centres. It should also be noted that at least five late second and third century AD coin-types issued at Ancyra bear the image of the same god.⁸

A question of particular interest raised by this inscription is the method by which the body of Publius Aelius C[yr]illus was 'brought' from Alexandria to Ancyra. His cadaver must have returned home in an entire state, given that it was placed in a sarcophagus rather than an ossuary for its formal deposition. More pertinently, the process of natural decay that sets in shortly after death means that his body must have been subjected to some form of preservative treatment for such repatriation to take place. The speed at which this process of putrefaction takes place varies according to a number of factors, most obviously the ambient temperature, but in general terms an untreated body in a mild climate will begin to putrefy within 36 hours or so. This process of decomposition with the accompanying

⁴ Assuming that the provincial law of Galatia matched that of Bithynia-Pontus, as indeed seems to have been the case, and where membership of the *boule* was certainly restricted to men over 30 other than in exceptional cases: cf. Pliny, *Epistulae*, 10.79 and 80; see also S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods*, I: *The Celts and the Impact of Roman Rule* (Oxford, 1993), 89.

⁵ For a list of the available civic offices at Ancyra, see J. Bennett, 'The Political and Physical Topography of Early Graeco-Roman Ancyra', *Anatolica* 32 (2006), 198–200.

⁶ J. Poblome, 'Production and Distribution of Sagalassos Red Slip Ware: A Dialogue with the Roman Economy', in M. Herfort-Koch, U. Mandel, and U. Schädler (eds), *Hellenistische und kaiserzeitliche Keramik des östlichen Mittelmeeres* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996) 75–103; J. Poblome and M. Waelkens, 'Sagalassos and Alexandria: Exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean', in C. Abadie-Reynal (ed.), *Les céramiques en Anatolie aux époques hellénistique et romaine* (Paris, 2003), 179–91; W. van Neer, B. de Cupere, and M. Waelkens, 'Remains of Local and Imported Fish at the Ancient Site of Sagalassos (Burdur prov., Turkey)', in M. Waelkens and J. Poblome (eds), *Sagalassos, IV: Report on the Survey and Excavation Campaigns of 1994 and 1995* (Leuven, 1997) 571–86. The 'trade' between Galatia and Egypt was most probably directed through the harbour city (and now resort town) of Side in Lycia-Pamphylia.

⁷ E. Bosch, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Ankara in Altertum* (Ankara, 1967), 245–53, nos. 184 and 185.

⁸ See M. Arslan, 'The Coinage of Ancyra in the Roman Period', in C. Lightfoot (ed.), *Recent Turkish Coin Hoards and Numismatic Studies* (Oxford, 1991), 8 (Lucius Verus, no. 16), 14 (Gallienus, no. 44), 27 (Julia Domna, no. C.29), 31 (Caracalla, no. 14) and 32 (Salonina, no. 1); cf. also *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum*, XX: *Galatia, Cappadocia and Syria* (London, 1899), 16 (no. 46, also of Salonina).

emanation of repulsive fluids and odours means that the long-distance transport of entire bodies for burial in places other than where death occurred requires some form of proactive preservation process. The usual method adopted for this is embalming, which in the strictest sense involves treating the body tissue with 'balms', substances that repel bacterial and insect attack, thus impeding putrefaction. However, it is also common practice to purge the body beforehand (sometimes through evisceration). Competent embalming helps reduce the discharge of putrefaction fluids and odours, making it possible to transport a corpse in a suitable container to another place, although the sealing of a cadaver within an airtight casket is required to eliminate the seepage of all such noxious emissions.

With modern embalming methods (usually accomplished in part by injecting preservative fluids into the arterial system) the long-distance repatriation of an entire cadaver is a fairly straightforward practice. However, these highly specialised preservative techniques were lacking in the Roman period. Thus—at least as far as the literary and epigraphic record is concerned—the long-distance repatriation of cadavers seems to have been exceptionally rare at that time. Indeed, the practice was generally reserved for transporting the mortal remains of those emperors absent from Rome at the time of their death, although instances are known of the repatriation of the bodies of lesser personages.⁹ In none of these historically and epigraphically reported cases of the Roman period, however, is the embalming process specified, with the single exception of Poppaea Sabina, the second wife of the emperor Nero, whose body was 'not consumed by fire according to Roman usage, but after the custom of foreign princes was stuffed full with aromatic spices, and then consigned to the sepulchre of the Julii'.¹⁰ That a method of embalming using antimicrobial substances was indeed known and practiced in the Roman period has been confirmed by two discoveries. In the first case, the preserved body of an eight year old girl found in 1964 at Grottarossa near Rome was embalmed (without evisceration) using cypress and juniper oils.¹¹ Similarly, analysis of the preserved soft tissues of a late-Roman female cadaver found in Greece revealed that she had been embalmed with a mixture of myrrh and various resins and lipids.¹² Embalming without desiccation, however, does not entirely prevent the seepage of putrefaction fluids: hence the precaution taken by those who embalmed the Greek lady of placing her body within a sealed lead coffin.

By contrast, the Egyptian mummification process, with its combination of a purging of the internal organs (usually through evisceration and craniotomy), desiccation of the body tissue through the use of natron, and surface treatment with resins and the like, does produce a cadaver that can be transported whole over long distances without putrefaction liquids and odours issuing forth. Moreover, papyrological evidence and mummy-labels demonstrate that, during the Roman period, mummies were transported over significant distances within Egypt itself.¹³

Given that our deceased Ancyran died in Alexandria and that his body was subsequently 'brought back' to his hometown, it is most probable that it was returned in a mummified state. Mummification continued in Egypt well into the later Graeco-Roman period, even though the archaeological evidence reveals that the care and efficiency associated with the

⁹ The supra-regional transport of cadavers (including those of emperors) in the Roman period is discussed in L. Cracco-Ruggini, 'Les morts qui voyagent: Le repatriement, l'exil, la glorification', in F. Hinard (ed.), *La mort au quotidien dans le monde romain* (Paris, 1995), 117–34.

¹⁰ Tacitus, *Annales*, 16.6.

¹¹ A. Ascenzi and P. Bianco, 'The Roman Mummy of Grottarossa', in A. Cockburn, E. Cockburn, and T. A. Reyman (eds), *Mummies, Disease, and Ancient Cultures* (2nd rev. edn; Cambridge, 1988), 263–6.

¹² C. Papageorgopoulou, N. I. Xirotiris, P. X. Iten, M. R. Baumgartner, M. Schmid, and F. Rühli, 'Indications of Embalming in Roman Greece by Physical, Chemical and Histological Analysis', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 30.1 (2009), 35–42.

¹³ On the matter of transporting mummies within Egypt, see H.-J. Drexhage, 'Einige Bemerkungen zum Mumientransport und den Bestattungskosten im römischen Aegypten', *Laverna: Beiträge zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte der Alten Welt* 5 (1994) 167–75; see also B. Boyaval, 'Le transport des momies et ses problèmes', in Hinard (ed.), *La mort*, 109–15.

practice in earlier times had dramatically declined by then, presumably in response to the extension of the practice of mummification to a wider range of social classes.¹⁴ Thus, while there is nothing in the text on this sarcophagus to confirm that the body it contained had indeed been mummified, it does seem highly probable that this was the case.

JULIAN BENNETT

The trampled foe: Two new examples of a rare amuletic form*

Two unpublished faience amulet fragments from the University of Pennsylvania Museum, which depict foreign enemies trampled underfoot, are discussed.

FROM the Egyptian collection of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology come two partially preserved, faience figurines or amulets, accession numbers 29-84-512 and 29-84-530. Each of the fragments depicts a pair of striding, anthropomorphic feet that stand atop the backs of two smaller enemy figures, which lie bound and prone upon a rectangular base. The two figurines are preserved only up to the striding ankles. The pieces were excavated by Henry Fischer for the Eckley B. Coxe Expedition to Memphis (Mit Rahina) in 1916¹ and 1919,² respectively. The figures derive from a stratum dated to c.700 BC, located atop the destroyed Nineteenth Dynasty palace of Merneptah.³ The pieces were discovered along with numerous amulets and amulet moulds, in a locus identified by the excavators as a faience workshop.⁴

Object no. 29-84-512 (fig. 1)⁵ was moulded in a distinctive, light blue faience; a substantial orange patina now covers most of the inner edges of the incised decoration. The horizontal placement of the prone enemies on the base is staggered, corresponding to the position of the striding feet, which trample them. The striding feet are bare. The head of the enemy on the right rests 8 mm behind the front edge of the base, with the feet nearly abutting the base's rear edge.⁶ The head of the enemy on the left rests 0.6 mm behind the front edge of the base, with feet approximately 3.4 mm from the rear edge. The tip of the toes on the striding figure's right foot reach the top of the corresponding enemy's buttocks; the toes of the extended left foot reach the back of the head of the enemy on the left. The enemies' knees bend upward slightly with the toes of the feet pressed flush to the base, such that the smaller figures' feet appear to bend slightly forward, toward the shins. The enemies' arms are bound at the elbow; the binding appears as a raised band across the lower back, above the buttocks. The forearms and hands are held back and to the sides, alongside the upper thighs. The enemies' heads are rendered crudely, with a minimum of detail. Hairline, nose, and chin have been indicated with simple incised lines; the eyes appear as raised orbs. Due to the cursory nature of the decoration, the enemies' nationality cannot be determined with complete certainty. However, the elongated facial features, with the chin stretched forward,

¹⁴ F. Dunand and R. Lichtenberg, *Mummies and Death in Egypt* (Ithaca, 2006), 72–93. Note how at the Roman period cemetery at Douch in the Kharga Oasis, a mere 15% of those inhumed there had been fully eviscerated, although somewhat surprisingly about 60% had been subjected to nasal craniotomy.

* I extend my thanks to Dr. David P. Silverman, curator in charge of the University of Pennsylvania Museum's Egyptian collection, for permission to publish these two pieces; and to the collection's keeper, Dr. Jennifer Wegner, whose invitation to assist in the updating of the artifact records led to my happening upon the objects in question.

¹ June 13, field n. M-6321.

² December 6, field n. M-10738.

³ University Museum Archives, Egypt, Mit Rahineh, Fischer expedition diaries, 31/4, Dec. 6, 1919 (unpaginated), upper middle stratum; identified in *ibid.*, 31/2, June 13, 1916, p. 148, as 'the last meter of debris above the Merneptah level'.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 31/4, Dec. 6, 1919 (un-paginated).

⁵ Length: 3.39 cm; width: 1.59 cm; preserved height: 1.66 cm. The base of the figurine is rather warped and uneven, measuring 4.4 mm at its thickest point.

⁶ Less than 0.5 mm.