

been assaulted by people trying to break in, but so far it has resisted their efforts. The painted tombs are still intact. The third tomb among those specially noticed by Dr. Peters (that with the owls) is, however, no longer accessible; it has been filled with earth thrown in to its mouth from small tombs opened in its immediate neighbourhood. A fellah from Beit Jibrin recently offered for sale to an English lady in Jerusalem a piece of plaster with an animal figure painted upon it. This does *not* belong to the great tomb with the frieze of animals, all of which are intact; it may possibly belong to another which is being concealed, but on this I could get no information. The most curious recent discovery is a cave of the Sandaḥannah type, consisting of three large bell-shaped chambers clustered round a central entrance shaft, with a staircase running down round its sides. In the floor of the central chamber of the three is sunk a square well shaft 41 feet deep; at the bottom is a spring, and about a foot of water.

THE PACHOMIOS INSCRIPTION IN WADY ER-RABĀBI.

By R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A., F.S.A.

THIS inscription was first published in the *Quarterly Statement* for 1890 (p. 70) by Dr. Schick, in the course of a report on some newly-opened tombs near the Aceldama. A reading by M. Papadoculos (? Papadopoulos), with comments by Dr. A. S. Murray, was appended. The



Revue Biblique, *Quarterly Statement* (1900, p. 234 *seq.*), and, more recently, the *Recueil d'Archæologie Orientale* (t. v., p. 166), have since contained attempts at rendering by Père Germer-Durand, myself, and Professor Clermont-Ganneau respectively.

The difficulty of the inscription certainly does not lie in any obscurity of the writing or injury to the rock-surface in which it is cut. Every

letter is perfect, and it is quite certain there never were any more characters than those given in the following transcript:—

**ΕΤΑΦΗΤΙΧΕΚΟΤΙ
ΠΑΧΟΜΙΟΣΛΙΨΗ†**

The loop of the **Φ** is at the top of the upright, the little **†** strokes rather under the right-hand ends of the horizontal bars of the **Τ**'s in the middle and at the end of the first line: the **Υ** is cut thus—**Ц**, but with the horizontal bar rather oblique. In the second line the **Ψ** is sloping, but cannot possibly be anything but **Ψ**; the **Η†** are in ligature, the horizontal bar of the **Η** being oblique.

In my own attempt at interpretation I was reduced to the desperate expedient of treating **ΤΙ** as a word-separator, and regarding the resultant *vekos* as a humiliating epithet. The most that I could ever claim for this reading is that it is not impossible; if I am not wrong, such names as *Fœdus*, *Ima*, *Stercus*, &c., are not unknown to Christian epigraphy.

The other readings, excepting Père Germer-Durand's, fail in the interpretation of the letters following **ΕΤΑΦΗ**. It is quite impossible to combine the **ΙЦ** into **Η**, or to read *τω ΤΙЦ* as by any system of spelling the equivalent of *τη*. This is the flaw in the brilliantly ingenious reading of Professor Clermont-Ganneau. The reading of M. Papadopoulos makes no complete sense, for "Pachomios of Lychisdos [?] was buried on the twentieth" means nothing; that of Dr. Murray assumes a lost beginning to the inscription, which is out of the question.

Père Germer-Durand's *εταφη τ. Ц εκοστι Παχόμιος λ. ψνη* ("P. was buried on the 20th day of — month, in the year 758") takes the **Ц** as a symbol for a month, and **λ** as an initial for "year." As a general rule, however, **Λ** is the abbreviation for "year," not **λ**. This reading is the simplest and most straightforward, and the most in accordance with the actual letters as they are found on the rock-surface. But the insertion of the personal name between the month and the year strikes the reader as being strange and improbable. It is, of course, possible (but unlikely) that the first two words to be cut were—

**ΕΤΑΦΗ
ΠΑΧΟΜΙΟΣ**

and that the date was afterwards filled in at the ends of the lines rather than below, where the rock-surface is rougher. For **λ ψνη**, **λ ιψη** should, of course, be read.

Here, then, we have a short inscription in Greek, absolutely legible and uninjured, and yet five persons who have turned their attention to

it—three of them epigraphists of the standing of Murray, Germer-Durand, and Clermont-Ganneau—have been unable to produce a reading that cannot be criticised. This is surely a remarkable circumstance; but it is, I think, capable of an easy explanation.

I have examined the inscription many times before and since I published my previous remarks upon it, and every time I see it the conviction grows on me that the whole thing is a forgery. The letters have, most certainly, been touched up at some time, for they are perfectly fresh, and show not the slightest sign of water-wear: a remarkable circumstance, as the tomb is always very damp, especially in winter. I am aware that the tomb has not been open more than 12 or 13 years, and that the inscription, being inside the chamber, has not been exposed to the weather for a longer time. But even allowing for this, I cannot help feeling that the inscription is so fresh and so remarkable in itself that it must be looked on with at least grave suspicion.

I forward with this paper a squeeze in justification of the comments I have ventured to make on readings by those who in Greek-Christian epigraphy are my masters.

(The inscription of the Abbess Thecla (*Quarterly Statement*, 1900, p. 238) has been cleaned since I examined it, and I had another look at it the other day—a disagreeable task, by the way, as a most unprepossessing family of fellahin have taken up their abode in the tomb. The little word under the Abbess's name I now make out to be **CECA**. What it means I have no idea; but I am quite convinced that my former reading, **ΘΕCA**, is as impossible as the old **CEBA**.)

THE "BUCKLER" OF HAMZA.

DR. D'ERF WHEELER, the Honorary Secretary of the Fund in Jerusalem, writes that the photograph of the "buckler" of Hamza, the uncle of Muhammad, was taken by the Rev. J. E. Hanauer from a replica in metal which now hangs in the large hall of the Armenian Patriarchate. Mr. Hanauer stated that he remembered the original, which appeared to be of bronze. "It disappeared about 17 years ago, and was said to have been sent to Constantinople. The copy in the Armenian Convent was made about 30 years ago by the Armenian Patriarch himself, who was a very clever man."

According to Dr. Schick (*Beit el-Makdas*, 1st edition, 1887, p. 12), the "buckler" formerly stood on an antique marble altar at the south-west pier of the "Dome of the Rock," and was "a round metal plate about 80 centimètres in diameter,¹ with very beautiful bird and animal forms in circles round it. . . . In the middle, on the reverse side, is a round.

¹ The actual diameter of the replica is 67 cm., or 2 feet 2¼ inches.