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A PRIEST OF ARSINOE *AKRAIA* AT CAPE ZEPHYRION? A REASSESSMENT OF THE PTOLEMAIC DEDICATION *I.PTOLEMAIC I 35*

JULIEN DECHEVEZ

ABSTRACT · This contribution investigates a statue base from Alexandria, recently re-edited as no. 35 of the *Corpus of Ptolemaic Inscriptions*, which was dedicated by a priest whose title is fragmentary. By proposing a new restitution for the priestly title, I suggest that the priesthood served by the donor might be related to the cult that Arsinoe II received in her sanctuary at Cape Zephyrion near Alexandria. This connection provides insight into the history of the sanctuary and the cult practices established at this significant site of worship for the Queen.

KEYWORDS · Arsinoe II, Ptolemy, Alexandria, Divinization, Priesthood, Cape Zephyrion.

ONE of the earliest examples of statues erected in honor of the Ptolemies in Alexandria was dedicated by a priest named Simon (*I.Ptolemaic I 35*).¹ The elegant script suggests a date during the mid-third century, perhaps between 270 and 222 B.C.² The plaque on which the dedication was inscribed, now broken at the top and bottom right, was originally intended to be inserted into the statue base. The unclear origin of the inscription prevents us from reaching any conclusions about the location where this base was placed. The statue is now lost, but the dedication of the monument, preserved on a white marble plaque, suggests that it represented one of the early Ptolemaic kings.³ Given the absence of the title *basileus* before the king's name, some commentators concluded that it could more precisely refer to the king's son.⁴ As for the queen mentioned, although she could be the king's wife, perhaps depicted alongside him, she could alternatively be his mother, since the ending of the name Berenike

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¹ Most specimens are dated to the second and first centuries B.C. On statue bases offered to the Ptolemies in Alexandria, see SAVVOPOULOS 2018, 126; DECHEVEZ 2022, 101.

² Note the diverging strokes of the *sigma*, the *alpha* with straight crossbars, the mid-line position of the *omicron* and the absence of *apices* for the *epsilon*. The script is very similar to that of *I.Ptolemaic I 15*, also from Alexandria, and dated between 246 and 222 B.C.

³ See the discussion in *I.Ptolemaic I 35*, p. 93, whose editors consider the possibility of an otherwise unattested association between Ptolemy III and Berenike *Phernophoros*. Conversely, É. Bernand suggested an identification with Ptolemy II or IV (*I.Alexandrie ptol.* 37, p. 109).

⁴ *I.Ptolemaic I 35* states (p. 93): «the absence of the title βασιλεύς at the beginning of the inscription should indicate that the honorand or dedicatee was the son of a reigning king». Cf. *IG IX 1², 1, 56 b* (Thermos, 240–221 B.C.): Πτολεμαῖον βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου Μακεδónα. However, in our case, the filiation likely needs to be included as well, but there is not enough space for it in the lacuna.

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