

Two cemeteries in Lower Nubia were selected, not too distant from each other: Arminna ²⁴ on the east bank, and Toshka ²⁵ on the west bank of the Nile, about 250 km to the south of Aswan (between Kasr Ibrim and Abu Simbel). Representatives of the Cracow Academy did not join this expedition (the participation of K. Hadaček had been planned but on that occasion he only reached Gizeh).

The cemeteries yielded rich archaeological and anthropological materials from the Middle Kingdom (C-Group), the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom (late C-Group), Meroitic Period and the Christian era. Some vessels from this campaign were directed to Cracow as a result of a second partition (1913).

The pottery from Arminna E (Cemetery 211) in the Cracow's collection represents a set type of Egyptian vessels (XVIIIth Dynasty) and constitutes only a very small group (four objects from graves 11. h. 11, 14. g. 1, 17. g. 4, 17. g. 5 situated in the eastern part of the terrain under investigations) ²⁶.

The Toshka W ceramics (Cemetery 209) are associated with C-Group of the Middle Kingdom, and consists of 13 objects ²⁷. The Cracow collection is formed by two basic groups — Nubian pottery („die rein nubische Tonware”, according to H. Junker): eight relics from graves C 16, C 24, C 40, C 98, C 109, C 123, C 175 (one find was loose); and pottery imitating Egyptian patterns („die ägyptisierende Tonware”, according to H. Junker): five relics from graves C 6, C 19, C 64, C 122 (one loose find), from various parts of the cemetery.

²⁴ H. Junker, *Ermenne. Bericht über die Grabungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien auf den Friedhöfen von Ermenne (Nubien) im Winter 1911/1912*, Wien—Leipzig 1925.

²⁵ H. Junker, *Toschke. Bericht über die Grabungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien auf dem Friedhof von Toschke (Nubien) im Winter 1911/12*, Wien—Leipzig 1926.

²⁶ Cf. J. Śliwa, *Ceramika egipska i nubijska w zbiorach Muzeum Archeologicznego w Krakowie: I. Ermenne Wsch. i Toschke Zach.* [in:] *Materiały Archeologiczne*, Kraków (in print).

²⁷ Cf. J. Śliwa, *op. cit.* (as above).

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JONAH ON AN EARLY CHRISTIAN SARCOPHAGUS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN CRAĆOW

During the first phase of an Early Christian sarcophagi sculpture, covering the last 30 years of the 3rd century A. D., themes associated with the so-called Biblical salvation symbolic enjoyed a peculiar popularity. Scenes from this repertory were indirectly taken from the books of the Old Testament. The main inspiration probably came from the text of contemporary prayers. These often contained a complete list of persons who, due to their total faith in God's providence, managed in a miraculous manner to avoid danger or even death ¹. Scenes such as the Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace, Daniel in the Lion's Den, the Sacrifice of Abraham, and the unusual adventures of Jonah, all were supposed to convince Christians that God watches over them, and that a strong faith would save their souls from everlasting condemnation. These episodes from the Old Testament may also be said to offer „political” allusion to the situation in which the new religion found itself after the year 260 A. D. In this very year the emperor Gallienus issued an edict of toleration, which followed the persecutions under the reign of Decius and Valerianus. Christians accepted this edict as an expression of God's providence. Freedom of worship gave rise to an increase in the number of faithful, and also had a strong influence in the development of art. Renewed persecutions under the emperor Probus (276—282 A. D.) could not diminish this fervour, nor could the edicts issued against Christians

¹ The texts of the prayers are provided by P. Styger, *Die Altchristliche Grabeskunst*, München 1927, pp. 21—25.

in 303 and 304 A. D. by Diocletian and Galerius. The rising role of Christianity was soon assured by the so-called edict of Milan in 313 A. D., which placed Christianity on an equal plane with other religions. Only 70 years later did it become the official state religion of the Empire.

Among the Old Testament scenes cited above, the most popular was that of the story of Jonah. The height of this popularity fell on the turn of the 3rd and the 4th centuries. Later the figure of Jonah appears not so often, probably due to the increasing role of the New Testament scenes, particularly those illustrating episodes from the life of Christ. The figure of Jonah is still evident on sarcophagi and catacomb paintings², but also on mosaics, lamps, glassware, ivory reliefs, in the illustrated codices, and rarely in stone round sculpture³.

The popularity of this motive stems from two sources. The first is its religious and doctrinal character. In the Old Testament Jonah represented the promise of Jewish freedom from Babylonian captivity; while in the New Testament (Mat. 12, 40) he comes to represent a symbol of Christ's resurrection, and hence the salvation of Man. The second source is more specifically artistic. The many unusual adventures which the prophet encountered, adventures spiced by great amounts of fantasy and fable, lent themselves perfectly to depiction in fine arts. The picture of a sea monster, called *ketos* in Greek, which artists employed in order to suit Christian needs, is an adaptation of imaginative monsters and dragons which appeared in Greek mythology. Numerous examples of these monsters may be found, among others, in Pompeian wall-paintings connected with Andromede and Hesione. The origins may be traced back to Greek vase-painting⁴. The type of *ketos* —

² The number of representations of Jonah in painting and sarcophagi sculpture exceed 250.

³ A unique representation of Jonah in composition and style, are sculptures showing the prophet in the jaws of the monster, originating from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. See P. du Bourget, *L'art paleochretien*, Paris 1970, pp. 107—109.

⁴ The Duris cup in the Vatican Museum portrays the monster with open jaws, in which a man appears unharmed. See E. Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen*, III, München 1923, fig. 467. M. Lawrence

with a snake-shaped torso, a rapacious head and paws ended with sharp talons — originated also under the influence of fantastic sea-monsters accompanying Okeanos and Amphitrite which appeared on many pagan sarcophagi in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A. D.⁵

Three kinds of composition may be distinguished in scenes featuring Jonah on sarcophagi. The largest contains all elements of the story, that is in succession: the throwing of Jonah overboard, his being swallowed by a large monster, Jonah's escape from the monster's within, and his repose under a plant near the seaside, plant from the cucurbits family, to be precise. The number of full story scenes is small, because it required a whole side of the sarcophagus in order to be represented⁶. Early Christian sarcophagi sculpture sought to present as many themes as possible. Compositions consisting of illustrations of the beginning and end of the story are more often encountered — the throwing of Jonah overboard and his escape on land. However, the most common composition shows only the fortunate conclusion — Jonah sleeping under the plant, and before him the head and upper part of the monster's torso. The prophet is naked with crossed legs; one of his hands is under his head while the second rests stretched out by his side. The position of the body is normally half-laying with the back resting against a rock. The form of representing a sleeping figure was drawn from earlier pagan sarcophagi decorated with scenes from the lives of Endymion or Adonis⁷.

The fragment of sarcophagus kept in Cracow's National Museum is of the shortened single-scene, similar to that described

in her article, *Ships, Monsters and Jonah*, AJA 66, 1962, pp. 280—296, writes more extensively on these relationships.

⁵ C. Robert, G. Rodenwaldt, F. Matz, *Die Antiken Sarkophagreliefs*, Bd. VI — *Die Meerwesen*, Berlin 1939, passim.

⁶ F. W. Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, I, Wiesbaden 1967, no. 35 — sarcophagus in Vatican Museo Pio Cristiano G. Wilpert, *I sarcophagi cristiani antichi*, I, Roma 1929, pl. 59, 3 — sarcophagus in Ny Carlsberg Collection in Copenhagen.

⁷ A. Graber, *Christian Iconography. A Study of Its Origins*, Princeton 1968, p. 32, laid emphasis upon the fact that sleeping children on pagan sarcophagi, apart from Endymion, also served as patterns for the representation of the laying Jonah.

above⁸ (pl. II). The fragment comes from the central part of the sarcophagus, what may be ascertained by the encasement of the figural composition by two vertical bordering lines. The border touch upon S-shaped strigilles which cover the remaining part of the sarcophagus case. The scene is divided vertically into two parts. In the upper part, marked off by a semi-circle which joins both borders, the bust of the deceased is pictured. The head has not been preserved; the left hand holds a rolled scroll on which two straight fingers of the right hand rest. The figure is dressed in a tunic rippled at the chest. On the tunic is a mantle falling almost vertically from the right shoulder. The mantle is then folded in an arc under the right hand and over the left forearm. Underneath the representation of the deceased, one sees the figure of Jonad half-laying on a rock, under a branch from which grows one large leaf and three large legumes. The prophet is naked; his torso is seen en face, and his legs are crossed. The left hand is resting on his head, while the right, bent at the elbow, rests upon the ground. In front of Jonah is a fantastic monster with a large head and a long twisted neck. The jaws are open showing large teeth, and the nose ends in a sharp point. The left paw ending in sharp talons, is resting on the leg of Jonah.

The method of executing prophet's hair — a mass on top of the head marked by numerous drill-holes — is found on sarcophagi dating from the end of the 3rd to the beginning of the 4th centuries⁹. The rock on which Jonah lies occurs frequently in this form in the same period¹⁰. However, the most convincing evidence which points to this period is the form of the rippled tunic which the deceased person is wearing. Identical formations of ripples may be noticed on objects dating from the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries¹¹. What's more, the form of the ripples and their location on the right breast is typical for figures of women, what seems to indicate that the sarcophagus belongs to a Christian

⁸ Inv. No. MNK XI-1220, height 0,55 m, width 0,68 m. Yellowish densely granulated marble. Purchased by Władysław Czarnecki in Rome in 1893.

⁹ Deichmann, *op. cit.*, nos. 603; 985.

¹⁰ Deichmann, *op. cit.*, no. 316.

¹¹ Deichmann, *op. cit.*, nos. 396; 640; 795; 985.

woman. The scroll — rotulus — which the woman holds in her hand symbolized the Gospel in the Early Christian art, and appears many times on sarcophagi. The two straightened fingers of the right hand symbolizes a blessing gesture (*benedictio latina*), while the fact that the figure is placed in a tondo — clipeus —, symbolizes her apotheosis.

One other fact ought to be considered in dating our object. This is the border located under the S-shaped strigilles. A lightly convex plinth separated from a horizontal roll by a narrow line appears on numerous sarcophagi made at the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries¹².

In conclusion from the above evidence, it appears clear that the object preserved in Cracow, unknown in archaeological literature, presenting the scene of Jonah and a fragmentary portrait of the deceased, is a typical product of Christian art from the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 4th century A.D.

¹² Deichmann, *op. cit.*, nos. 67; 220; 562.

