"Dominus Muntanus". Mascula/Khenchela's epigraph and the history of a blunder

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1. INTRODUCTION [1]

Towards the end of IV century C.E. Basil of Caesarea explains in a long letter [2], focusing on the issue of baptism validity, whether celebrated by heretics and schismatics, that:

The Pepuzans, then, are obviously heretical. For they have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit by unlawfully and shamelessly attributing the name of Paraclete to Montanus and Priscilla. They are condemned, therefore, either because they make men divine, or because they insult [3] the Holy Spirit by comparing him to men, and are thus liable to eternal condemnation because blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable [4]. What basis to be accepted, then does the baptism have of these who baptize into the Father and the Son and Montanus or Priscilla?

Such an interesting notice, about the occurred identification on the liturgical level between the Cataphrygians prophets and the Paraclet, should be submitted to critics considering both the polemical pattern in which it is included, and the characteristics of the polemic itself. Discussing on the difference between baptism either officiated by heretics, unacceptable for him, or officiated by schismatics (i.e. extra ecclesiam officiators just due to discipline, and not due to doctrinal dissensions), or during illegal meetings, Basil classifies Pepuzans, this term clearly used here as synonymous of Cataphrygians/Montanists, as heretic. The baptismal formula ascribed to them, even if preserving the trinitarian form, substitutes the name of the Spirit with the name of one out of the two prophets. It would be interesting to know from Basil's point of view, and on the basis of his own information, which would have been the criterion to choose the name of the prophet to invoke... Actually the notice, leaving for the present undetermined exactly the core of the issue, could be justified only if the Basil's interlocutors were perfectly informed of the issue, but nothing in the context makes it plausible; therefore we can think that such an indefiniteness depends on Basil himself, straining the information in order to make his polemic more effective [5].

Actually this notice would maybe not mean that much to the XX century students if A. Héron de Villefosse [6] had not published in 1875 the text of an epigraph found in Algeria at Khenchela [7] (the Roman Mascula, in Numidian Province since Septimius Severus'
age), and today lost [8]. This text said, in its transcription also provided with a drawn reproduction [9]:


2. **ANALYSIS: ICONOGRAPHIC ASPECTS**

The epigraph, very likely an altar tablet (cf. *infra*), should be dated to the IV century C.E.: the "constantinian" monogram (surmounted by two crossed candlesticks), alpha and omega, and the two rosettes placed side by side, originally sun symbols [11], are all leading to this dating. If the examination of the letter writing is difficult due to its irregularity, both the "L" with horizontal line going down and the angular "S" should indicate a later period [12].

While decorations seem well centred and aligned, the text appears quite muddled, bad aligned and less deeply carved. This fairly evident difference leads to think that the two parts were realized by two different hands: therefore if, as it will be shown afterwards, the dedication of *Flabius Abus* could give useful elements for its dating, this does not mean that it will coincide to the dating of realization of the support on which it is carved.

3. **ANALYSIS: THE GENTILICIUM *FLABIUS***

The gentilicium Flavius has been progressively used again since the beginning of IV century C.E. (following the "second Flavii" accession, i.e. Constantine's family), and usually indicates high rank personalities. It is interesting that, from an epigraphic point of view, the nomen is in its extended form, instead of the more common abbreviated form [13], as the gentilicium spreads: evident sign of the devote's intention of underlining in this way his own social ascent. This particular allows maybe to date back the incision of the text, put in the late IV century up to now, to the first part of the same century: if the use of nomen had been already very common, the author would have gained less boast. The shift from "V" to "B" is a fairly common vulgarism and it established since III century C.E. [14].

4. **ANALYSIS: THE COGNOMEN *ABUS***

The cognomen Abus/Avus is more interesting, even if not very useful, as it is very rare in the classical age, and difficult to interpret: in an isolated case it is used as reference to the dead's age [15], and probably for the same reason it is reported with the doubtful form by H. Solin among the slavish nomina, in the category of names coming from relative relationships [16]. The only further testimonies lead to three African catholic bishops, two quoted in 484 and one in 525 [17]. A possible interpretation in registry-key is suggested *infra*, 5.

5. **ANALYSIS: *DOMESTICUS***

The title *domesticus*, probably referred to special troops serving the emperor [18]: the imperial *domestici* worked out both military functions, representing the elite of *protectores*
(maybe as detachment of selected cavalry), and secret missions ordered by the prince [19]. Actually, the absence of further elements leaves space for some doubts, as the term has a wider meaning, and can refer to collaborators serving any kind of domus, not necessarily the imperial one. While imperial domestici seem to have a strictly military origin (the title would indicate people with easy access to the emperor, from bodyguards to higher rank officers; they were at a certain time even organized in specialized detachments, scholae), which would have taken afterwards also civil tasks as confidential representatives of the prince [20], more recent studies underline the presence of domestici also in province administrations: they would be once again officers of very high rank, delegated to assignments of trust [21]. A.H. M. Jones [22] dedicates wide space to the role of domestici serving the province authorities, as well. It is meaningful that domestici and cancellarii (who could not marry and do business until they were in charge) were obliged to stay inside the province for fifty days, after ceasing their service, so that people could begin legal actions against them for crimes perpetrated during their official service: this would demonstrate the importance of this assignment [23]. Even more interesting for the actual research could be Jones' remark about the role of the length of service as the unique way to improve in the career of these officers [24]. In this way the cognomen Abus could be explained, it would be intended as an indication of the service length of domesticus Flabius, maybe come back to his motherland after retirement (this could explain the meaning of his ex voto). The last hypothesis to take in consideration is the one of a domesticus linked to a private, even if important [25], domus. Nevertheless, as already noticed about gentilicium Flabius, it seems clear that the dedicating was proud of his social position, and therefore it would be more credible that also in this case he would have reported his task of domesticus, as considered more prestigious.

6. EVOLUTION OF CRITICAL EDITIONS

Being the donimun tam quod reading given by Héron de Villefosse clearly wrong, G. Willmans published the epigraph text in 1881 in the first volume of Inscriptiones Africae Latinae inside Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum VIII [26] with a substantial correction, together with a graphic representation, which was clearer than the previous one, as the background was eliminated and letter characteristics better drawn [27]:

Fla(v)ius a(v)us Domesticus, i(n) nomine patris et filii Doni Muntani, quod promisit complevit.

And afterwards in the same place, the notice was conveyed of a possible different interpretation suggested by G.B. de Rossi [28]:

Flabius Abus domesticus i(n) nomine patris et filii domum [c]un(c)tam quod promisit complevit.

The correction suggested by de Rossi, despite a straining, gave a solution of the odd trinitarian formula, eliminating the third person, which was clearly felt as conflicting [29]; nevertheless this proposal was not taken in great account: it was not always quoted in further studies, it was never discussed in any way [30], but simply ignored.

S. Gsell [31] and P. Monceaux [32] closed the discussion asserting, by following Augustin [33], that the referred Montanus should be intended as the Phrygian prophet, founder of pneumatic movement, which took its name from him, excluding the chance that he was a homonymous martyr. On these bases Gsell, seeing the epigraph at the officer society in
Khenchela and confirmed the report by Héron de Villefosse, was the first proposing to correct the second part as following:

\[i(n) \text{ nomine Patris [et] Fili}i \text{ et do(mi)ni} \text{ Muntani, quod promisit complevit.}\] [34]

Following Monceaux, E. Diehl [35] gave to the issue the arrangement that was then conveyed (not without imprecisions) almost up to nowadays; the German student, trusting the thesis of the renowned French professor, just indicates the interpretation proposed by de Rossi in Additamenta in Supplementum II of CIL, anyway without referring the sense or discussing the plausibility. The only important epigraph variation in Diehl's edition, compared to Monceaux reconstruction, is given by the lack of the sign of line interruption between the second \textit{et} and what follows:

\[\text{Flabius Abus dome/sticus i(n) nomine patris et filii (et) do(mi)ni Muntani, quod promi/sit, complevit.}\]

The same \textit{"et"} is written in square brackets as integration in the 30s' of the last century by H. Leclercq [36], who demonstrates in this way to depend for the text explanation on Monceaux, reporting also the indication of the stone's height appeared for the first time in CIL [37]; nevertheless the reproduction of the epigraph drawn (starting from the CIL's one), referring to the six-year-old reproduction by Leclercq [38], is missing the formula \textit{patris et filii} in the second line, and the \textit{"l" of comp-l-evit} [39].

Also in this case, Additamenta into CIL are indicated with no discussion; is interesting the extremely short examination about the inadmissible interpretation of the presence of \textit{dominus Muntanus} in an orthodox view: in Leclercq's opinion, "the substitution of an individual for the person of the Holy Spirit is a blasphemy, which an individual, and even less a catholic community, would not dare to pronounce" [40].

Therefore, the impossibility of believing that a similar formulation, referred to a human being, could come out from a "catholic" environment (which is clearly to be intended as "orthodox" in this sentence), should be considered as support of the thesis of a Montanist derivation of the formula. I believe that the "impossibility to believe" can not be considered a condivisible method of historical criticism.

P. De Labriolle included already in 1913 the text of this epigraph in his monumental collection of Montanist sources [41], and he commented it in another context as following: «there are no doubts that in the mystic memory of the sect, Montanus' remembrance was so idealized, circled of an aureole, that such impudent expressions were possible, and the hostility of theologians was quickly set off» [42]. Also in this case the fascination of the chance to glimpse in Mascula/Khenchela epigraph a witness of the diffusion of Montanism and its theological evolutions seems to have won over the critical prudence [43]. It is meaningful that De Labriolle shows his dependence from Monceaux, preserving in the text the inclusion of the second \textit{«et»} to link \textit{«fili»} and \textit{«domini»} (with the same lack of the sign of line interruption which will be present in Diehl's work afterwards [44]), and moreover omitting directly the reference to Additamenta of CIL. A kind of vulgar\textit{a} on the inscription seems to be defined, for example confirmed by the use done by F. Grossi Gondi [45], not long time afterwards: only partly used, (Grossi Gondi interrupts the citation at \textit{Muntani}), it is used as example of "heretic" epigraph and it is quite clear that it is used only to give a complete overview [46]. In the same way the inscription of Mascula/Khenchela will be used after a quarter of a century, with paradigmatic value, by C. Cecchelli [47]. Cecchelli, trusting more the hypothesis of a martyr called Montanus (and indicating, still without any
examination, the *Additamenta* of *CIL*), insists on what I will call for my convenience "Gsell/Monceaux hypothesis" to support, following Eusebius, that Montanists were «*invasati dalla mania profetica*» [48].

7. THE LAST INTERPRETATIONS

The epigraph, which also de Labriolle dates back towards the end of IV - beginning of V century [49] C.E., stated as above explained, and read near the notice by Basil [50], seems to support the interpretation under trinity key of the baptismal formulation, which he reports. Nevertheless, given the large geographical and cultural distance between Cesarea (Asian world, Greek language) and Mascula/Khenchela (African world, Latin language), and the absence of any *trait d'union* between the two sources, once more some prudence should be taken into account. On the other hand the traditional interpretation seems to find its basis upon another notice reported by Didymus of Alexandria, just at the end of IV century C.E.; according to it Montanists, at first charged with other Trinitarian deviations [51], would sustain their modalist pretension with an oracle, attributed to Montanus himself:

*I am the Father, and the Son, and the Paraclete.* [52]

Considering that the chronological distance between these sources and the Phrygian's predication could at most lead to consider this trinitarian deviation as coming from the late movement evolution [53], it is necessary to remark that only considering the Mascula/Khenchela epigraph, the other two sources assume such an important meaning: otherwise it would be quite common that some polemists, after denying the inspiration of Montanus and Priscilla from the Holy Spirit, would ascribe to their followers the mistake to follow human beings, instead of Paraclete.

In this case, the binitarian formula should be lead to quite common examples, and everything could be reduced to an ex-voto dedication of a worship building [54]; all references to Cataphrygian movement would fall down, and lacking this element the other above mentioned testimonies would be greatly reduced.

The identification with Phrygian Montanus, proposed by Gsell, and then accepted unanimously by students for almost one century [55] (following the idea of Monceaux, De Labriolle and Diehl), was disputed at the end of the last century, at first by Y. Duval [56] and secondly by W. Tabbernee [57], who lead to exclude this hypothesis, even preserving the interpretation "*domini Muntani*": the title *dominus* [58] would be present enough frequently in the African area, referring to martyr saints, and further two epigraphs of the same origin [59] would make think to a worship building, a *martyrium*, expressly dedicated to a martyr called Montanus in the old Mascula, maybe referring to one of the already known subjects with this name (largely spread in Africa). It could also be a local cult, maybe of Donatist origin, but common also to Catholics [60]: the local dimension could be deducted by the complete overview of the three epigraphs, which seem to recall either a *martyrium* or, lacking the relic room (*loculus*), to a likelier *mensa martyrum* [61].

The mentioned epigraph could also be, in Tabbernee opinion, the result of two separated operations: as a matter of fact, the decoration is quite well centred, while the dedication seems to be written by a different hand, rougher. Tabbernee proposes to interpret the dedication as carved by a pilgrim [62] (*Flavius Avus*) on the existing slab, witnessing his passing by and a granted vote: in this way the scarce skill of the *sgraffito* inscription and

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the missing letters would find an explanation, contrasting with the higher skill of the rest of the decoration.

At the end, due to uncertainties expressed by the first, and even more spread editions, it seems opportune to offer a transcription of Mascula/Khenchela epigraph which considers what accepted until now:

\[
\text{Flabius Abus domesticus, i(n) nomine Patris et Filii <et> [63]} \\
do(mi)ni Muntani, quod promi= \\
sit complevit.
\]

8. CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, already doubted by de Rossi for other reasons, the Mascula epigraph should be nowadays considered excluded by the list of testimonia about Montanism diffusion in Africa [64]; and in the same way its use as clarifier of the sources about the baptismal formula cited by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory the Great must be denied. Nevertheless, either the lacking of other African epigraphic sources, or maybe just the idleness of a centurial interpretive tradition represent the reasons to perpetuate what should be doubtless classified as a mistake. So it is still possible that, in 1996, Ch. Trevett [65] relaunches the interpretation of the Basil's notice in the light of Mascula/Khenchela epigraph [66]. On the other hand, Trevett does not list in the bibliography Duval's work, even if it was published fourteen years earlier: probably sign of how the "Gsell/Monceaux" hypothesis has been going on operating with no critic among students [67]. As further confirmation of this conclusion, the way in which the inscription was used in the very recent (2002) work by C. Micaelli can be analyzed [68]: after using, as tradition, the inscription to "strengthen the accusations reported by Basil of Caesarea and Didymus", and having stated the distance of Tertullian from similar positions, Micaelli re-examines the rhetoric question already formulated by Trevett [69] «which would have been the Tertullian reaction for the positions stated in it?», and concludes: «we believe reasonable to assert that the Carthaginian would have had nothing to share with those supporting similar thesis» [70].

One question is still open, the reason why in a time period longer than one century, such an unbelievable theme has been re-proposing without at least the close examination, which already the corrections by de Rossi (even if not plausible) could have urged: but the risk here is to fall into interpretation of poor historiographical value. Certainly the rarity of information about Cataphrygian predication content causes this kind of mistake: therefore in the continuation of studies about Montanism a higher prudence and accuracy of the epigraphic sources is needed, and for this purpose Tabbernee work is intended to have a lasting influence.

NOTE

(1) I would like to thank prof. Nicola Criniti (History Department - University of Parma), who followed the epigraphical part of the present research with the availability and care which are peculiar to him. Moreover I could benefit in the last years from the encouragement and co-operation of prof. A.M. Morandi (principal of Molinari Institute of Milan), and of the friends Rudi and Maurizio, who I heartily thank. I thank also dr. G. Cifarelli for its contribution to English translation of this study (with some bibliographical up-to-date: see ex.gr. notes 13, 53, 65; passim). — The original Italian version – «Dominus Muntanus». L'epigrafe di
Mascula/Khenchela e la storia di un abbaglio – is published in ACME (Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università degli Studi di Milano), 60.3 (2007), pp. 385-400.


(3) Remark the force of the verb, ‘catubrizontes’, whose root takes back to ‘úbris’ of whom is so proud that overpasses the distance between man and deity, provoking his hate.

(4) Mt 12, 31; Mk 3,29; Lk 12,10.

(5) See also GREGORY THE GREAT, Registrum Epistularum 11, 52, ed. D. NORBERG in Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina (from now on CCSL), 115 A, Turnholti 1982, p. 953, who writes, in a context having many similarities with those ones by Basil: Hi uero haeretici qui in Trinitatis nomine minime baptizantur, sicut sunt Bonosiaci et Cataphrigae, quia et illi Christum Dominum non credunt, et isti sanctum Spiritum peruerso sensu esse quendam prauum hominem Montanum credunt... "But these heretics, who do not baptize in the trinity name, like Bonosiacs and Cataphrygians, because the first do not believe in Christ deity, while the second believe with an absurd interpretation that an evil man, a certain Montanus, is the Holy Spirit" (my translation).


(7) The modern spelling, coming from a transliteration of Arabian, presents variations like "Krenschela" or "Kenchela": in the present study I adopted the francophone spelling, used by the main studies. For further information about this place, offering numerous testimonies of the Donatist presence, see H. LECLERCQ, s.v. Khenchela, in Dictionnaire d’Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie (DACL, from now on), 8.1 (1928), coll. 741-748.

(8) See n. 56.


(10) The most careful reader will note a dissimilarity in the characteristics of epigraph reproductions, which will be analyzed in the present study. In order to do a comparison, my choice was to reproduce faithfully what offered by different editors, in their own ways; I offer what I believe to be a right epigraph transcription at the end of § 7.

(11) About the examination of these aspects, see the synthesis by P. BRUUN, Symboles, signes et monogramme. This synthesis was published in the second volume by H. ZILLIACUS (ed.), Sylloge inscriptionum christianarum veterum Musei Vaticani, 2 voll., Helsinki 1963, pp. 71-166. W. TABBERNEE, Montanist inscriptions and testimonia: epigraphic sources illustrating the history of Montanism, Macon Ga 1997, p. 450 leads back the presence of rosettes to the heavenly bodies of Rev. 1, 16 and 20 (and Rev. 2, 1) where α and ω are circled by candlesticks (which are indicated by both Tabbernee and Y. DUVAL, Loca Sanctorum Africae. Le culte des Martyrs en Afrique du IVe au VIIe siècle, tome 1, Rome 1982, p. 168 as the symbols crossing the constantinian monogram) and stars.


(14) For examples, see H. DESSAU, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (from now on *ILS*), III.2, p. 809.


(20) Remember that in such an important occasion, as the Conference in Carthage in 411 was, the imperial commissioner Marcellinus appeared with a highly numerous *officium*, headed by three *viri devotissimi protectores domestici*, whose title clearly indicates the direct dependence to the emperor: see the introduction by S. LANCEL (ed.), *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411*, I, in *Sources Chrétiennes* (from now on *SCh*) 194, Paris 1972, pp. 53 ff. and the acts of sessions I, 1 (S. LANCEL (ed.), *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411*, II, in *SCh* 195, Paris 1972, p. 560) and III, 1 (S. LANCEL (ed.), *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411*, III, in *SCh* 224, Paris 1975, p. 922). P.S. BARNWELL, *Emperor, Prefects and Kings. The Roman West*, 395-565, London 1992, p. 23, after remembering that Bonifacius was *comes Africæ* at Agostinian times, as well as *comes domesticorum*, writes: "It's also conceivable that Africa, as a particularly important province, might, in times of crises, have been afforded the extra protection of a contingent of troops particularly well connected to the palace".


(25) This is, for example, the opinion of C. BRASCHI, s. v. Domesticus, in E. DE RUGGIERO, *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romane*, 2, Rome 1961 (repr. I ed. Rome 1922), p. 1940 (considering Flabius Abus as an individual who is employed by a person of a higher condition in his *domus*: «un individuo che una persona di condizione superiore occupa al suo servizio nella sua domus»). P. MONCEAUX, *Enquête sur l'épigraphie chrétienne d'Afrique IV*, in *Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres de l'Institut de France*, 12.1 (1908), p. 234 claimed the impossibility of «determining the nature of Flavius Avus functions»: on ne peut donc déterminer la nature des fonctions de Flavius Avus.

(26) *CIL* VIII, 2272: Willmans specifies to have directly seen the epigraph («contuli»); his description does not contain any diacritical sign of line interruption. The dimensions of the *Tabula* indicated in *CIL* (W. 62 cm, L. 96 cm) result different from those indicated by Héron de Villefosse (W. 75 cm, L. 96 cm): even if I don't believe it is meaningful (it could be meaningful just to run through again the dependences among students,
as it will be seen furthermore), I consider more reliable the information of *CIL*, implicitly confirmed also by the "vidit Dessau" in *CIL* VIII, 2272 Add., p. 1677, in Suppl. II (1894).


(28) *CIL* VIII, 2272 Add., p. 950. I ignore on which basis (if not for a blunder based on *CIL* VIII, 2234 Add., p. 950, which immediately comes before 2272) W. Wischmeier, in his review to E. Gibson, *The «Christians for Christians» Inscription of Phrigia. Greek Texts, Translation and Commentary*, Missoula (Montana) 1978 published in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum (JbAC)*, 23 (1980), pp. 166-171 esp. 168, indicated as bibliographic reference for this correction by de Rossi the *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* of 1878, p. 29: I made a research in the *Bullettino* for the years 1876-1880 without finding any clue of the Khenchela/Mascula epigraph.

(29) On the other hand, the explication by Willmans left open the question about the identification of a "Donius" Muntanus, name which is not reported in any other prosopography: Donius would really be an *hapax*; the correction by de Rossi would have removed also this problem. Even translating as "the lord Montanus", R.H. Heine, *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia*, Leuven-Macon GA 1989, pp. 164-165 keeps Doni Muntani, too.

(30) It is accepted by S. Gsell, H. Graillot, *Ruines romaines au nord de l'Aurès*, Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Antiquité (MEFRA), 13 (1893), p. 498, anyway with no comments. This position changed substantially, therefore see n. 31. Wischmeier demonstrates to support de Rossi, too: see n. 28.

(31) S. Gsell, *Notes d'Archéologie Algérienne*, in *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et scientifiques* (BTCH) 20 (1901) pp. 308-313, esp. pp. 310-311 and ff. On this occasion Gsell rejected the correction proposed by de Rossi (see n. 30) as «pas admissible», without further comment; the same hurried reading was given some years afterwards by P. Monceaux, *Enquête sur l'épigraphie chrétienne d'Afrique IV*, in *Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres de l'Institut de France*, 12.1 (1908), p. 234 as «lecture bizarre».

(32) P. Monceaux, *Enquête sur l'épigraphie chrétienne d'Afrique IV*, in *Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres de l'Institut de France*, 12.1 (1908), p. 232 and ff. Referring to the headstone measures he conforms to *CIL* indications (see n. 26), but relates to the corrections proposed by Gsell (see n. 34), anyway including line divisions and indicating exactly the second *et* as loosening: «Flabius Abus domesticus, i(n) nomine Patris et Fili (et) / domi(ni) Muntani, quod pronom/sit complevit». Monceaux includes also an epigraph reproduction, similar to the *CIL*’s one.

(33) Augustine, Epistula 237, 2 ed. Al. Goldbacher in *Corpus Scripturum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (from now on *CSEL*) 57, p. 527: *Quod et illi haeretici faciunt, qui vocantur Cataphryges, dicentes per nescio quos insanos, Montanum scilicet et Priscillam, quos et propios suos prophetas habent, venisse Spiritum sanctum, quem Dominus missurum se esse promisit*. Clearly this passage by Augustine does not justify in an explicit way the equation Montanus/Paraclet, but only the likely inspiration of Phrygian prophets. Nevertheless, as seen at the beginning of the present text, the fact that Basil's and Gregory the Great's quotations have been added to the dossier afterwards, contributed to validate this interpretation. About Augustine's witness, see K. Aland, *Augustin und der Montanismus*, in *IDEM*, *Kirchengeschichtlichen Entwürfe*, Gütersloh 1960, pp. 149-164 (Aland uses Mascula epigraph to confirm Augustine's data too).

(34) According to Gsell, the second *et*, linking *Fili* to *Do(mi)ni Muntani*, would have been fallen during the damaging of the epigraph right margin (see n. 32). It is probably due to an *error hypotetae* that it is the first *et*, and not the second, to be closed into square brackets, even if the other one derives from a conjecture made explicit in footnote.

(35) E. Diehl, *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Vetere* (from now on *ILCV*), 1636.


(37) See n. 26.

(38) H. Leclercq, s.v. Khenchela, in *DACL* 8, 1 (1928) col. 743.
La substitution d’un individu à la personne du Saint-Esprit est une blasphème dont un individu et moins encore une communauté catholique n’eussent été capables: DACL 11.2, col. 2541; see IDEM, as well, s.v. Kenchela, in DACL 8, 1 (1928), col. 744. Leclercq’s remark is directly dependent to the similar ones by Monceaux and Gsell (see nn. 31 and 32). Basing on this remark he excludes the chance of referring to a martyr called Montanus and believes he can agree on the hérétique origin of the epigraph. It is still on the same base that, before Leclercq, P. DE LABRIOLLE has taken sides: La Crise Montaniste, Paris 1913, p. 472; about the examination of his position, see infra.


P. DE LABRIOLLE, La Crise Montaniste, Paris 1913, p. 528: «sans doute, dans la mémoire mystique de la secte, le souvenir de Montan s’était-il idéalisé, auréolé, au point d’accréditer parfois des expressions audacieuses, que se hâta d’exploiter l’hostilité des théologiens».

Leclercq’s remark is directly dependent to the similar ones by Monceaux and Gsell (see nn. 31  and 32). Basing on this remark he excludes the chance of referring to a martyr called Montanus and believes he can agree on the hérétique origin of the epigraph. It is still on the same base that, before Leclercq, P. DE LABRIOLLE has taken sides: La Crise Montaniste, Paris 1913, p. 472; about the examination of his position, see infra.

(54) See ex.gr. Chemorra's epigraph reported by L. RENIER, *Inscriptions romaines de l'Algérie, recueillies et publiées sous les auspices de S. Exc. M. Hippolyte Fortoul*, Paris 1855-1858, vol. 1, nr 1568, where the dedicating persons address to *Deo et Christo*. Other worship buildings (*memoriae*) are in the area dedicated to a *Sanctus Muntanus*: see e.g. G.B. DE ROSSI, *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* 1880, pp. 74-75, where the eminent Roman student identifies the dedicating writing found in a basilica at Henchir-el-Begueur (Numidia, a hundred of kilometers SE of Mascula/Khenchela) *MEMORIA VACTIMONTANI* as *memoria san(n)cti Montani*. In the same context, see the representation (tav. 4, 2) and p. 175 (where de Rossi communicates the approval of his own interpretation by Héron de Villefosse); see CIL VIII, 10665 = ILCV 2078 (*memoria / sâcti / Mo/ntani*), and Y. DUVAL, Loca Sanctorum Africæ. *Le culte des Martyrs en Afrique du IVe au VIIe siècle*, tome 1, Rome 1982, pp. 130-131.


(56) Y. DUVAL, Loca Sanctorum Africæ. *Le culte des Martyrs en Afrique du IVe au VIIe siècle*, tome 1, Rome 1982, pp. 167-169. The measures indicated by Duval, 96x62 cm, correspond to those reported in CIL; unfortunately, not being anymore possible to consult the original epigraph (see ibidem, p. 167: recognition made in 1970), it is by now impossible to verify the rightness of this datum.

(57) W. TABBERNEE, *Montanist inscriptions and testimonia: epigraphic sources illustrating the history of Montanism*, Macon Ga 1997, pp. 445-452. I owe to this work many bibliographic citations, which I have been referring to till now; the epigraph measures indicated by Tabbernee correspond to those originally communicated by de Villefosse: see n. 26.

(58) But, more precisely, «*domnus*»: Duval (see n. 56) proposes this abbreviation (quite frequent when this term is referred to martyrs), then adding that «*on ne connaît pas d'autre exemple de la chute du "m": "doni" pour «domni» serait ici une erreur, plausible dans le contexte de cette inscription peu soignée» (*«no other examples are known about "m" falling: "doni" instead of "domini" seems to be here a mistake, plausible in the context of this not very accurate inscription»). Tabbernee (see n. 57), in agreement with Duval, believes that this variation is typical of the North-African orthography: with regard to this matter, he reports some citations related to other *martyria* in the same context. See s. v. *dominus* and *domni* ILCV III, pp. 227-228, 341-344, 438; 517: the second entry, in its Christian meaning of "saint", is reported by about thirty references.


(62) See § 5.

(63) I prefer to use the angled bracket, due to the fact that being impossible to consult the original and not having photographs, I believe that Gsell's reconstruction, based on the damage of the epigraph right margin, which is not reported in the drawings (see n. 34), has to be accepted with prudence: i.e. I feel not proper to take for granted the second conjunction «et».

(64) About Montanism in Africa, the epigraphic sources commonly used until now by students are actually reduced to what discussed in this article. W. TABBERNEE, *Montanist inscriptions and testimonia: epigraphic sources illustrating the history of Montanism*, Macon Ga 1997 collects some more (about Proconsular Africa pp. 105-123; about Numidia, beyond those treated until now, see pp. 539-544), demonstrating anyway that it is poorly reliable the assignment to the Phrygian movement. Testimonies from Minor Asia and from Italy, still not sufficiently considered by students, seems much more interesting.


(66) CH. TREVETT, *Montanism. Gender, authority and the New Prophecy*, Cambridge 1996, p. 219: "This amazing claim might be dismissed as a calumny were it not for the existence of an interesting inscription in the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum..."


(68) C. MICAELLI, *Tertulliano e il montanismo in Africa*, in M. MARIN, C. MORESCHINI (edd.), *Africa Cristiana*, Brescia 2002, pp. 15-49, esp. pp. 24-25. The examination of Mascula/Khenchela inscription is a very reduced part of Micaelli's work, but twenty years later then Duval's work and five years later then Tabbernee's one, I found meaningful the persistency of «Gsell/Monceaux hypothesis».


(70) C. MICAELLI, *Tertulliano e il montanismo in Africa*, in M. MARIN, C. MORESCHINI (edd.), *Africa Cristiana*, Brescia 2002, p. 26: «quale sarebbe stata la reazione di Tertulliano, di fronte alle posizioni in essa espresse ... crediamo ragionevole affermare che il Cartaginese non avrebbe avuto nulla da spartire con chi avesse sostenuto simili tesi».

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