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Three Bilingual Greek-Old Nubian Psalms from Dongola (DP 2–4)

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The three bilingual Greek–Old Nubian psalms published in this paper have been preserved to us in form of ink inscriptions on the walls of the annexes abutting the monastery on Kom H in Dongola from the west, the capital of the Nubian Christian Kingdom of Makuria. DP 2 (no. 1) is found in the Southwest Annex, DP 3 (no. 2) and DP 4 (no. 3) in the Northwest Annex.

The Northwest Annex was excavated by the mission of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology between 1990 and 2000. It was a multiphase building, which came into existence perhaps already towards the end of the 6th century and expanded through rebuilding and incorporating earlier structures until the 13th–14th century. During the second half of its existence, which is the period that interests us here, the northern part of the NW Annex (rooms 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7) was a kind of commemorative church related to the tombs located underneath. The southern part (rooms 25, 27, 29, 31, 24, 22, and 23) was also arranged as a liturgical space with commemorative character, however, not related to the dead but rather to the living. The essential element of this southern part is room 29, which functionally corresponds to the apse of a church as indicated by the altar near the east wall and the painted decoration. This includes, at the top of the east wall, Jesus Christ in benediction and beneath a large figure of an archangel protecting a Nubian royal figure, surrounded by the Apostolic College. Next to the apostles on the right-hand side of the Archangel there is an inscription in Greek containing a prayer for the Church from the intercession part of an anaphora (unpublished). Room 29 is bordered on the south by room 31, which functionally corresponds to a lateral chapel of a church. Also this room contained a representation of an

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1 For a description of the Northwest Annex and its building history, see Jakobielski 2001: 141–168; for a different view, see Godlewski 2013: 84–91.
2 Łajtar and Van der Vliet 2017; Godlewski 2018a.
3 Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 195, fig. 95, top left (cat. no. 46). Martens-Czarnecka identifies the archangel as Gabriel.
archangel on the east wall, this time protecting a bishop\(^4\). Two further bishops under the protection of an archangel were represented on the south wall of the room\(^5\). The two rooms 29 and 31 were built and decorated (at least partly) by Georgios, Bishop of Dongola between 1063 and 1113, before his episcopal ordination\(^6\). DP 2 and 3 are located respectively in these two rooms, which means that their date of production must be later than 1063. However, they probably do not belong to the original decoration of the rooms but were added to it later, perhaps in the 12\(^{th}\) century.

The Southwest Annex, excavated by the Polish Mission between 1996 and 2006, was considerably smaller than the Northwest one and more homogeneous in its structure. It probably was constructed in the 11\(^{th}/12\(^{th}\) century and functioned, through several phases marked by the rebuilding of its interior, until the 14\(^{th}\) century. In the latest phase of its use it consisted of six small rooms, which together formed a liturgical space as suggested by the internal equipment and the painted decoration. The central element of this space was room 6, which was provided with an altar near the east wall. The room had a richly painted decoration, which included a huge figure of an archangel, most probably Michael, on the east wall\(^7\); the slaughter of innocents on the south wall\(^8\) and unidentified narrative scenes\(^9\) next to an ascetic\(^10\) and another archangel\(^11\) on the north wall. The function of the Southwest Annex is not entirely clear. Some elements, such as the numerous representations of Virgin Mary, donated, at least in part, by women\(^12\). The scene of a ritual dance before the icon of Mary with Child accompanied by Old Nubian invocations of Mary as the one who assures a safe birth to a sister of the king on the north wall of room 5\(^13\) and a visitor inscription requesting form Mary the birth of

\(^4\) Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 197–199 (cat. no. 53). Martens-Czarnecka identifies the archangel as Raphael and the bishop as Georgios.

\(^5\) Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 217, fig. 113 (cat. no. 54). The author identifies the archangel as Michael.

\(^6\) This is indicated by an inscription situated between the figure of Jesus in benediction and the representation of Archangel Michael protecting a Makurian king, which mentions Georgios as *archpresbyteros* and *archistylites*. For Georgios and his career, see Łajtar 2002.

\(^7\) Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 191, fig. 91 top left (cat. no. 119).

\(^8\) Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 145 (cat. no. 114). The painting no longer exists. It was damaged in result of the wall collapsing shortly after being excavated.

\(^9\) Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 121–125, figs. 49–50 (cat. no. 118). The author identifies the scenes as illustrations of the story of Tobias. This identification, however, is uncertain.

\(^10\) Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 133, fig. 56 right (cat. no. 117). The ascetic has his hair knotted on top of his head and apparently tied to a wall.

\(^11\) Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 193–195, fig. 95 top right (cat. no. 116). The author identifies the archangel as Gabriel.

\(^12\) Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 168–179 (cat. nos. 86, 94 97, 98, 104, 107, 108). For female donors, see Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 221–225, fig. 120; see also Łajtar and Van Gerven Oei 2018: 78.

\(^13\) For the paintings, see Martens-Czarnecka 2011: 172, fig. 81 (cat. no. 108) [the icon of
a legitimate son\textsuperscript{14} suggest that it may have been connected with womanhood and birth, with a special connection to the royal house.

In 2006, Gerald M. Browne posthumously published an edition of Psalm 129:2–8 in Old Nubian, found in room 2 of the Northwest Annex of the monastery on Kom H in Dongola\textsuperscript{15}. As this edition has not yet received a siglum, we propose DP 1, with the three psalms in this publication being referred to as DP 2, 3, and 4.

1. Ps. 29.2–13 (DP 2)

The inscription is found on a piece of plaster, 40.5 cm wide and 30 cm high, discovered in the filling of room 6 of the Southwest Annex of the monastery on Kom H\textsuperscript{16}. The piece originally belonged to north end of the east wall of the room in question, where a gap in the plaster with a shape corresponding more or less to the shape of our piece is visible. The first line of the inscription was ca. 225 cm above floor level. On the left-hand side, where even lacunae of 5–6 letters are observable in the majority of lines, the inscription probably reached the northwest corner of the room. On the right-hand side it was delimited by the edge of the wing of a large painted representation of Archangel Michael, though the script crossed over the border of the painting in lines 3 and 4. At the bottom the inscription is badly damaged, and its extent in this direction cannot be established with certainty\textsuperscript{17}. It probably ended with the present line 16 containing the Old Nubian translation of the last verse of the psalm and, possibly, a signature of the scribe. At present the inscription measures 35 cm in width and 19 cm in height. Height of letters varies between 0.5 cm (ⲉ in kē at the beginning of line 1) and 1.0 cm (t towards the end of line 7). The inscription was executed with black ink, which disappeared on certain places thus making the decipherment of the text very difficult. The transcript as printed below was prepared by means of a magnifying glass and the beforehand identification of the text. The script may be designated as Nubian-type majuscules. The hand is trained and skilful, even if not very nice. Starting with line 9

\textsuperscript{14} Łajtar and Van Gerven Oei 2018.

\textsuperscript{15} Browne 2006, reproduced in Łajtar and Van der Vliet 2017: 22, no. II.

\textsuperscript{16} The find was made during the 2004/5 season of excavations. It was reported in Jakobielski, 2010: 81, with fig. 19 (the inscribed piece of plaster immediately after the discovery).

\textsuperscript{17} It should be noted that another inscription, possibly the dedication of the painting of the archangel (unpublished), starts at the level of 195 cm above the floor, i.e. ca. 10 cm beneath line 16 of the inscription here discussed.
the scribe used another writing tool than in lines 1-8 as demonstrated by the thickness of the strokes. The change of the writing tool corresponds with the letters [ⲭⲡⲑ], the numerical cryptogram for ṯⲙⲓⲭⲁⲏⲗ, added over the beginning of line 9. Perhaps the scribe invoked the name of the Archangel as a good omen for his work with a new tool. Nomina sacra are used by the scribe according to common rules with exception of θ(εό)ν in line 10, which is deprived of the dash. A dash is also lacking above the cryptogram for Μιχαήλ added above the beginning of line 10, unless the ink faded completely in this place. Vowels in the initial position are marked, albeit irregularly, with a superslinear dot. Dots also occur above the second element of vowel clusters to mark them as syllables. καί is regularly abbreviated as ζ.

Above the inscription with Ps. 29.2–13, traces of another ink inscription are visible. The inscription contained at least nine lines. It probably was also edited in Greek and Old Nubian. No continuous transcript is possible.

The psalm is semi-bilingual, meaning that verse lines are rendered alternatingly in Greek and Old Nubian. To facilitate a better understanding of the structure of the text, we provide here the division of the text between Greek and Old Nubian, based on the Septuagint edition, which can be established with certainty up to verse 11. Old Nubian verses have been underlined:

2. Ὑψώσω σε, κύριε, ὅτι ὑπέλαβές με καὶ οὐκ ἡφρανας τοὺς ἐγθρούς μου ἐπ' ἐμὲ. 3. κύριε ὁ θεός μου, ἐκέκραξα πρὸς σέ, καὶ ιάσω με· 4. κύριε, ἀντίγαγες ἐξ ἀδου τὴν ψυχήν μου, ἐσωσάς με ἀπὸ τῶν καταβαινόντων εἰς λάκκον. 5. ψάλατε τῷ κυρίῳ, οἱ ὅσιοι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐξομολογήσετε τῇ μνήμῃ τῆς ἁγιωσύνης αὐτοῦ· 6. ὅτι ὀργὴ ἐν τῷ θυμῷ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ θελήματι αὐτοῦ: τὸ εσπέρας αὐλισθήσεται κλαυθμός καὶ εἰς τὸ πρῶι ἀγαλλίασις. 7. εὐώ δὲ εἶπα ἐν τῇ εὐθηνίᾳ μου: οὐ μὴ σαλευθῶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. 8. κύριε, ἐν τῷ θελήματί σου παρέσχες τῷ κάλλι μου δύναμιν ἀπέστρεψας δὲ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου, καὶ ἐγενήθη βοηθός μου.

Diplomatic transcript

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1 [ ...]εκέστητιη[ ...]ἐκεχ[ ...]ιπλογ'κ Дмитр[i ...]ε[ ...]αλαγ [ ...]
2 [ ...]καὶ[ ...]ιφο[ ...]ἐκ[ ...]ραζ[ ca. 11 ]⌘α[ ...]γος
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Three Bilingual Greek-Old Nubian Psalms from Dongola (DP 2–4)
Line commentary with grammatical analysis of the Old Nubian

1. ἀλλὰς[ἦς]: First person singular pronoun ἂς followed by dative -ας and allative -γάς. Focus marker -/apis is reconstructed to fill out the line. Translates Gr. ἐπ᾿ἐμέ. Most probably preceded by a translation of καὶ οὐκ ἡμέρανας.


γόλα: γόλ “Lord” (OND 201) with predicate maker -α as vocative. Translates Gr. κύριε.

3. [ἀγωνή][ῆς]: ἀγωνῆ “to take” (OND 54) with past 1 -ο, 2/3 singular subject clitic -η, and predicate marker -α. Translates Gr. ἀνήγαγες.

ἀέ[κα]: ἀε “heart, soul” (OND 7) with accusative -κα. ἄς [ἀέ]κα translates Gr. τὴν ψυχήν μου.

ἐμενέλα: ὑμεντε “Hell, underworld” (OND 57) with dative -ας. Translates Gr. εξ ᾅδου.

4. ἡλες]: ἡλ “to sing (psalms)” (OND 185). Translates Gr. ψάλατε.

γόλακα: γόλ “Lord” with accusative -κα. Translates Gr. τῷ κυρίῳ.

τωτ̣ο̣ῖς̣: τῆς.

ⲧⲁⲣⲛ︥: Third person singular pronoun ταρ with genitive -η. This form is mainly limited to Psalm translations (see Commentary). The two characters preceding ταρ̣ are unclear.

αλα: Previously unattested noun ἂ “wrath” vel sim. with dative -ας. ταρ̣ ἂ自由贸易 translates Gr. ἐν τῷ θυμῷ αὐτοῦ.
6  [κυματ]ταλω: κυματ “wrath, anger” (OND 93) with predicate marker -α and focus marker -λω. Translates Gr. ὀργή. Note that in the ON translation, this is treated as a nominal predicate.

ω: conjunction on “and” (OND 126). Translates Gr. καί.

ταλω: postposition ταλω “under” (OND 164). ταρι ταλω translates Gr. ἐν τῷ θελήματι αὐτοῦ. It appears that translation of θελήματι was erroneously omitted by the scribe while copying the text.

αυτω: αυτ “to live” (OND 23) with nominalizer -τ, predicate marker -α, and focus marker -λω. Translates Gr. ζωή. αυτ has otherwise only been attested as a translation of σώτηρ “Savior” (OND 23). The cognate αυτ also means both “life” and “Savior.”

αυλιοθεται: αυλιοθεται.

7  τα: particle only attested twice in P.QI I 4, in both cases in a translation of a Greek perfect tense. Also in this case, the particle appears before a verbal form, εἰς, translating an aorist, εἶπα. Browne suggests that it derives from the verb ταρ “to come”18, but this new attestation suggests that it is a particle marking perfective aspect.

εἰς: εἰ “to say” (OND 68) with past 2 -ει and 1sg subject clitic and predicate marker -ε. τα εἰς translates Gr. εἶπα.

εφτιλα: εφτ “wealth” (OND 82) with dative -λα. ω[ν] εφτιλα translates ἐν τῇ εὐθηνίᾳ μου.

8  θελήματι: θελήματι.


ειρι: second singular pronoun ειρ with genitive -ι. Cf. 5 ταρι.

κοφκα: κοφ “face” (OND 100) with accusative -κα. ειρι κοφκα translates Gr. τὸ πρόσωπον σου.

μαλε γ]τρικονιο: μαλε (OND 109) + γριτ (OND 31), together meaning “to turn”, followed by subordinate clause marker -κο, 2/3sg subject suffix -ι, and locative -νο (with progressive assimilation). Translates Gr. ἀπέστρεψας. Note that the Old Nubian form should be interpreted as a conditional.

18 Plumley & Browne 1988: 54
"to be troubled" (*OND* 143) with reconstructive inchoative auxiliary *ⲡ*, past 2 -ⲥ, 2/3sg subject clitic -ⲛ, and predicate marker -ⲥ.

10


ⲧⲓⲥⲛⲁ: "blood" (*OND* 46) with genitive -ⲛⲁ. It appears that that ⲧⲏⲩⲕⲇⲉⲣ-ⲧⲓⲥⲛⲁ, rendering Gr. ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου should be interpreted attributively to [ⲡⲧⲏⲩⲕⲇⲉⲣ] ⲧⲏⲩⲕⲇⲉⲣ.

12

ἐξομολογήσαται: ἐξομολογήσεται. ὡς: ἢ.

The inscription is located on the north wall of room 29 of the Northwest Annex, in the west part of the wall, between the painting of an angel and a door connecting room 29 with the neighbouring room 27. Its beginning – not preserved but reconstructable – was 77 cm away from the northwest corner of the room and 147 cm above the room’s floor. The inscription had the shape of an elongated rectangle, the right-hand side of which is now lost as a result of the damage to the plaster. The maximum preserved width of the text (l. 12) is 44 cm, and its height amounts to 12.5 cm. The inscription has been executed

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19 Martens-Czarnecka 2011: cat. no. 56. This is a sketch rather than a real painting considering its small dimensions and monochromatic (red) style.

20 The find was made during the 1997 season of excavations. It was reported in Jakobielski 1998: 163.
with black ink, which has faded considerably, especially in the upper left-hand part where no traces of script are visible. In other parts, the visibility varies from minimal to decent, the best being in the lower left-hand corner and towards the centre of lines 7–9. Generally the decipherment was possible only thanks to the initial identification of the text and the use of a magnifying glass. The height of letters varies between 0.6cm (ⲁ) and 1.8cm (ⲣ). The script is a Nubian type of majuscule, considerably inclined to the right. The scribe used nomina sacra according to common rules. Interestingly, he didn’t record θεού(ς) in l. 6 used with reference to pagan gods was not recorded by him as a nomen sacrum. Vowels in initial position were marked by him, albeit irregularly, with a supralinear dot or a short stroke. A dot is also found above γ, which begins the second element of a compound (l. 6: γυρέως). Dots or short strokes occur above the second element of vowel clusters, undoubtedly to mark it as a syllable. There is one example of ɪ provided with the trema (l. 5: ίσιωθι). καί is regularly recorded as a siglum resembling the Latin S.

The psalm is fully bilingual, with complete verses in both Greek and Old Nubian, starting with Greek and ending in Old Nubian. Based on lines 4–5, 5–6, and 9–10, where the Greek text is interrupted, it appears that in the right margin the lacuna in the upper lines is around 40 characters, reducing to around 30 characters in the lower lines. The versification is different from the Septuagint version, breaks are indicated with a vertical bar:

7. αἰσχυνθήτωσαν πάντες οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τοῖς γλυπτοῖς οἱ ἐγκαυχώμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν· | προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ, πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ. 8. ἤκουσεν καὶ εὐφράνθη Σιών, | καὶ ἠγαλλιάσαντο αἱ θυγατέρες τῆς Ιουδαίας ἕνεκεν τῶν κριμάτων σου, κύριε· | 9. ὅτι σὺ εἶ κύριος ὁ ὕψιστος ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, σφόδρα ὑπερυψώθης ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς θεούς. | 10. οἱ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν κύριον, μισεῖτε πονηρόν· φυλάσσει κύριος τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ὁσίων αὐτοῦ, ἐκ χειρὸς ἁμαρτωλῶν ρύσεται αὐτούς. | 11. φῶς ἀνέτειλεν τῷ δικαίῳ καὶ τοῖς εὐθέσι τῇ καρδίᾳ εὐφροσύνη. | 12. εὐφράνθητε, δίκαιοι, ἐπὶ τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ ἐξομολογεῖσθε τῇ μνήμῃ τῆς ἁγιωσύνης αὐτοῦ.

**Diplomatic transcript**

1 _CONTEXT: οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τοῖς γλυπτοῖς οἱ ἐγκαυχώμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν· 
2  | ΔΟΚΑΙ, ΕΛΩΝΑΙ ὁ ἐπὶ τωµεν ΕΙΔΟΥΣΑΙ 
3  ΑΓΓΟΥ ΘΗΣ ΑΓΓΟΥ ΘΗΣ // ΔΟΥΚΩΣ
κελλοὶ αἰώνιοι οὐχ ἔγιναν ἡ πνεύματα // ἡ ἡγ[ή, ἡ ἡγακάτῳ αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἐγινότε[  
κε // ἀγαθοδοξάσαι ἱσχύσας διδάσκαλον γοῦλα εἰρήν ἀμέλειαν // οτί[  
ἃπεργότας ἤπει παντᾶς τοὺς θεοὺς // . . . ἄρῳ ἀθοῦ ἀθοῦ ἀθοῦ δοξά[  
κοσόλ τὰ λίν τὴν ἑωρασίαν ἱεροθείαν.[ . θρόνιοι // οἱ ἀγάπων τοὺς κύριος[  
κο[σ]κέκτικα // φη[ . . . ]οι κύριος τὰς ἀλήθειας τῶν ὀρκῳδότων ἐκ ἑιροτ [  
ἀστρολογ[.  

Reading text

1 [† αἰσχυνθήτωσαν πάντες οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τῆς γυλεπτῆς οἱ ἐγκαυχώμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις[ // . . . ἀστρολογ[.  
2 [αὐτῶν // - - - ] . ἄλογα, ἔλογον ἐν τῇ ἐξειροτῇ[γ- - - //  
3 αὐτοῦ, π[α]γγελη[τας (οἱ) ἡγ[ελ][ο][ι] αὐτοῦ, ἥκουσεν (καί) ἡφαράπη Σιων. // . ἄργ[ . . - - - ]  
4 κελλός αἰώνιοι οὐχ ἔγιναν // (καί) ἡγ[ελ][α]λάσατο αὐτὸν ἀι[θυγατέρες τῆς Ἰουδαί[ας τῶν κρίματων σου],  
5 κ(ύριος δίκαιος ὁ ὑψίστος ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, σφόδρα]  
6 ὅτι σὺ εἶ κύριος ὁ ὑψίστος ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς θεούς // . . . ἄρωμα λογοκόλογο λόγο[.  
7 ἐσοκλ τὰ λίν τὴν ἑωρασίαν ἱεροθείαν[ο]γείαν // οἱ ἀγαπόντες τὸν κύριον, μη[σεῖτε πονηρόν // - - - ]  
8 κο[σ]κέκτικα // φουνάσαι κ(ύριος)ς τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ὀσίων αὐτο[ὺς, ἐκ χειρὸς ἀμαρτολῶν[ν ρύσεται αὐτοὺς. // - - - ]  
9 ταρην τεσσαράκοντας ἄδηλογα εἰς πλατωνίαν ἀγιορείαν[ . . ] τελκά //  
10 φῶς ἀνέτειλεν τῷ δικαίῳ (καὶ) τῷ καιρῷ εὐφράνθη, δί(καιοι, ἐπὶ τῷ κ(υρίῳ) ἐξομολογεῖσθαι τῇ μνήμῃ τῆς ἁγιωσύνης αὐτοῦ // - - - ]  
11 τῇ καρδίᾳ εὐφράνθην // πικτά πλατωνίαν ἀδήλας ἄδικος // . . . εὐφράνθη ἐκ(καὶ) ἐξομολογεῖσθαι τῇ μνήμῃ τῆς ἁγιωσύνης αὐτοῦ // - - - ]  
12 ἀνέτειλεν τῷ δικαίῳ (καὶ) τῷ καιρῷ εὐφράνθη, δί(καιοι, ἐπὶ τῷ κ(υρίῳ) ἐξομολογεῖσθαι τῇ μνήμῃ τῆς ἁγιωσύνης αὐτοῦ // - - - ]
Line commentary with grammatical analysis of the Old Nubian

1 τῆς γυλεπτῆς: τοῖς γλυπτοῖς. γυλε instead of γυλ is due to epenthesi facilitating the pronunciation of the consonant cluster and metathesis. Epenthesis in syllable-initial consonant clusters is a feature frequently encountered in Greek loans to Old Nubian, e.g. St 1.8 έταγροσων and St 11.3 χριστιάνος. The spelling γυλεπτης thus suggests the scribe may have been a native speaker of Nubian.

2 ἅλογα: Unknown noun?
,ἐλογον: Unknown noun ending in -έλ, with plural marker -γογ and genitive -η.
Possibly a translation of Gr. τοῖς γλυπτοῖς.
ον: on “and” (OND 126). Probably connects the two coordinated phrases οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τοῖς γλυπτοῖς and οἱ ἐγκαυχώμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν.

tεν: third person plural pronoun with genitive -η.
ειδίγωντογγ-: unattested noun ειδίωτ “idol,” probably consisting of root ειδ with nominalizer ττ, followed by plural marker -σωνγ. τεν ειδίγωντογγ- translates Gr. ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν. The ending cannot be reconstructed. We expect the translation of Gr. οἱ ἐγκαυχώμενοι to follow in the lacuna.

3 αύτο��: αὐτῷ.
ηφράνη: εὐφράνθη.

dογκ]: Form of the verb ἀνδροκ “to worship” (OND 52). Translates Gr. προσκυνήσατε.

4 κελλα: “all” (OND 88). Translates Gr. πάντες. Perhaps we should reconstruct ταρη αγγελοσγογκα vel sim. at the end of the previous line.

cικων: Sion. Note the absence of an accusative case, as in the Greek.
σγαγρά: σγαγρ “to hear” (OND 136) with predicate marker -α.
πεκσικα: πεκ “to rejoice” (OND 153) with past 2 -ικ, 2/3sg subject clitic -η, and predicate marker -α. σγαγρα οι πεκικα translates Gr. ἠκουσα και εὐφράνθη. Note that the presence of conjunction ηι in this serial verb construction is quite rare, and most probably an attempt to imitate the Greek.

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5 ἀγαθογάμασι: unattested variant of ἄγαθος “to exult” (OND 6) with past 1 -οῦ, 3pl subject clitic -αν, predicate marker -α, and command marker -σω. The form here has a jussive meaning21. Translates Gr. ἣγαλλιάσαντο.

ιογαδαι: ιογαδα “Judea” with genitive -ν.

δειγγαχ: δε “daughter” (OND 20) with plural -γον and determiner -ς. Subject of ἀγαθογάμασι. ιογαδαι δειγγαχ translates Gr. αἱ θυγατέρες τῆς Ἰουδαίας.

γολα: γολ “Lord” (OND 201) with predicate marker -α used as vocative. Translates Gr. κύριε.

εἱρη: second singular personal pronoun ειρ with genitive -ι.

αμαλαφι: αμ “judgment” (OND 19) with locative -αφ and postposition -αι “through, because”. εἱρη αμαλαφι translates Gr. ἐνεκέν τῶν κριμάτων σου.

6 υπερψωθα: υπερψωθής.

. . δογα: Unknown.

εολογ: εολ “Lord”.

δογγαλο δογ: perhaps a scribal error for δαλογα δογα used in P.QI II 12.ii.7 as translation for υψιστος.

7 εοσολ: Unclear whether this is the entire form, or whether it starts on the previous line. Verbal noun ending in past 1 -ολ. Probably translates Gr. υπερψωθής.

ταλλα τρε: ταλ “God” (OND 171). Browne suggests with regard to SC 21.4 ταλλα τρε that it means “in the manner of God”22. This interpretation seems to be impossible here, where ταλλα τρε ομφαλογογυλα[ο]γασεα translates Gr. ύπερ πάντας τούς θεούς. Rather, it appears that ταλλα τρε should be interpreted as the dual ταλλα τρε-α, cf. P.QI I 5.ii.3 οιδε τρε- “pair of feet.” As the gods implied here and in SC are the pagan gods, this raises the fascinating prospect that the Old Nubian speakers identified the Greek plural θεούς with two specific or a pair of gods, perhaps belonging to the pantheon of the religion that preceded the arrival of Christianity.

ομφαλογγυλα[ο]σεα: ομφαλ “all” (OND 118) with plural -γογ, determiner -α, locative -λ[ο], and comparative marker -γασεα. The quantifier ομφαλ
always governs a noun phrase marked with predicate marker -α, in this case τῇδε τρε.
ἀγαπῶντες: ἀγαπῶντες.
μησεῖτε: μησεῖτε.

8 κρ[ε]κτα: κοκτ “evil” (OND 100) with accusative -κα.
κοςκτ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν κύριον, μισεῖτε πονηρόν.

9 ταρβί: third person singular pronoun ταρ with genitive -η.
εἰςιν: εἰς “holy” (OND 200) with genitive -η.
Note that Gr. has ὡς ὄνων, whereas εἰςιν is singular.

Object of verb in the lacuna at end of line 8. ταρβί εἰςιν κρ[ε]κταγογ κα translates Gr. τάς ψυχὰς τῶν ὡς ὄνων αὐτοῦ, but the lacuna seems to provide insufficient space to contain the entire Old Nubian translation of οἱ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν κύριον, μισεῖτε πονηρόν φυλάσσει κύριος.

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10 εὐφροσύνης: εὐφροσύνη.
πετμ: πετ “light” (OND 151) with determinant -α.
Subject of πλασιμια.

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Translates Gr. φῶς.

πλασιμια: πλα “to shine” (OND 152), with intentional -αι, affirmative -ν, present tense -η (with progressive assimilation), and predicate marker -α.
Translates Gr. ἀνέπτειλε, which is aorist, whereas the Old Nubian suggests a future tense.
The inscription is found on the south wall of room 31 of the Northwest Annex, in the west part of the wall. The upper left-hand corner of the inscription’s frame (see below) is 70 cm away from the southwest corner of the room and approximately 198 cm above the floor (not preserved). The inscription is surrounded by a rectangular frame, 49.5 cm wide and 13.5 cm high. It has been executed with black ink, which has faded considerably, especially in the upper left-hand corner, towards the end of line 2, and in the last two lines. An additional, smaller frame has been inserted inside this frame delimiting

23 The find was made during the 1997 season of excavations. It was reported in Jakobielski 1998: 163.
5 brief lines of 4–5 characters in the right side of the frame along lines 2–6. In our transcription, this insert has been delimited from the main text of the Psalm by a vertical bar. The text of the insert does not align properly with the lines of the main text, and could have been a later addition in unused space. Furthermore, there is some damage to the plaster due to termites and mechanical reasons. All this makes the decipherment of the inscription a difficult task, possible only thanks to the initial identification of the text and the use of a magnifying glass. The height of letters varies between 0.5cm (ο) and 1.2cm (σ). The script is a majuscule of the Nubian type, considerably inclined to the right. Nomina sacra are used according to common rules (but note that κ(ύριο)ς in line 8 is deprived of a dash unless it faded completely). Vowels in the initial position are marked, albeit irregularly, with a dot or a short stroke above them. Dots or short strokes are found alone on the second element of the consonant clusters (to mark them as syllables). Iota at the beginning of a word is provided with trema thrice and in another context (l. 10: γιώνῃ) once. και is regularly abbreviated as σ.

The inscription contains the complete text of psalm 127 followed by a sort of colophon. The latter consists of a rather unusual exultation of the Holy Trinity, information about the writer, and an additional element, which is difficult to determine because of the damage of this part of the inscription. What is clear is that this element contained the verbal form ταροΰᾱ, “he/she praised”, repeated three times, mentioned a person with the name ῥαριᾱ-, the names of three most popular archangels (Michael, Gabriel, Raphael) in a row, and the name of John. A signature of the writer (Ἰω[ά]ν̣ου) is found also at the end of line 7, after verse 3 of the psalm. The psalm is fully bilingual, with complete verses in both Greek and Old Nubian. As with DP 3, the versification is different from the Septuagint version, breaks are indicated with a vertical bar:

1. Μακάριοι πάντες οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον οἱ πορευόμενοι ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ. | 2. τοὺς πόνους τῶν καρπῶν σου φάγεσαι: μακάριος εἶ, καὶ καλῶς σου ἔσται. | 3. ἡ γυνὴ σου ὡς ἄμπελος εὐθηνοῦσα ἐν τοῖς κλίτεσι τῆς οἰκίας σου· οἱ υἱοὶ σου ὡς νεόφυτα ἐλαιῶν κύκλῳ τῆς τραπέζης σου. | 4. ἰδοὺ οὕτως εὐλογηθήσεται ἄνθρωπος ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον. | 5. εὐλογήσαι σε κύριος ἐκ Σιων, καὶ ἰδοὺ τὰ ἀγαθὰ Ἰερουσαλήμ πᾶσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς σου· καὶ ἰδοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν υἱῶν σου. εἰρήνη ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ.
Diplomatic transcript

1 ἡμαριόνα[ ... ca. 7] ὑπογράψει[ ... κ]ῶνοπόρα[ ... ca. 13] Ἰαο[ ... ἦςατο] ἀλδά
2 ἀγέλλαγιον τενίδαια[ ... ἵππος] ἑνδειγμιοφόρια[ ... ca. 12] ἑω // ...
3 τούτοιονο[ ... ἦτο] καρπ[ ... ἴσλοφ] καλοεμμεται[ ... ἀπικο] ὅ
4 ... ὁ[ ... ἣ] ἄ[ ... κ]απταδείγματα ἰδιόκρατας[ ... ἔγγαι] ἀλή
5 αἰσθητοευθεία[ ... ἐνεκιστικηθείσαι] ἵππο[ ... ἔσιοὺ ἡμ[
6 κύκλωστραπεζησσο] // εἰρήνετταλλάλακτολάλα // ἐπιπλασφειριὸ]( ... ἀλή
7 εἰρήνειοδειρίῳ τοῦρλ ἰεσιστόντοτούρ[ ... ] ...  κούλλαδεκκραμειρεί[ ... ἢ[ ... ἤ]
8 [... ἔσιοῦ] ἐγιστικοψαλτησταλοσφοβουγιαστο] [ ... κ] // εἰρ[ ... κρα[ ... ἄι]
9 ταρογοτακαμάκαιττοτογκελεβταρογάμο] [ ... ] // καθαριώτ[ ...  ἐ[ ... ἐκτά
10 ... ] ἐκταφαλαληθηναστ[ ... ὑ] // ὁταλδιφαιρεφσαλα[ ...]
11 γεντού[ ... ] καλιαφρονυκρεμαιαλδαιαταστικκευτικα[ ... ἐκ] [ ... ἢ[ ... ἐ]
12 παρακιαοναστ[ ... ] ὑν[ ... ἐκτ[ ... ] ἐκταρογεβσαϊογκαισαδ[ ... ] [ ... ἲ[ ... βρα[ ... ]
13 ταρο[ ... ] ταρ[ ... ] ἱσλοιν[ ... ] ... ] ... ἐ[ ... ] ἐρογύ[ ... ] // ἐκογκη[ ... βρα[ ... ]
14 [ ... ] τρανσαδε ... ὅσαρδ ... 

Reading text

1 μακάριοι πάντες οἱ φοβούμενοι[ ...] τὸν [ ... κ[(ύριο)ν] οἱ πορευόμενοι ἐν[ ...] ταῖς[ ...] ὁδοῖ[ ...] [κύριο)ν] οἱ πορευ[ ...] οἱ πορε[ ...] (ὑμενοι ἐν[ ...] ται][ ... ὑ[ ...] τοῦ] ... [κύριο]ν οἱ πορε[ ...] οἱ πορε[ ...] (ὑμενοι ἐν[ ...] ται][ ... ὑ[ ...] τοῦ]
2 ἀγέλλαγιον τενίδαια[ ... ἵππος] σολ εγυρλογχλ η αν δουριε[ ...] αν τα[ ...] θαμ[ ...] η[ ...] τα[ ...] ἱω[ ...] τοῦ]
3 τούς πόνους[ ...] τῶν[ ...] καρπ[ ...] καθαρικει[ ...] μακαρὸς εἰ, [(καί)] καλ[ ...] κει ἐστι[ ...] // ἀπικο[ ...] ὅ
4 ... ὁ[ ...] ἄ[ ...] καπταδείγματα ἰδιόκρατας[ ... ἔγγαι] ἀλή...
303

5 ὡς ἄμπελος εὐθηνός σου ἐν ταις κλίτεσι τῆς οἰκίας σου οἱ γυναικείοι σου ἐγείρονται εἰς ἀμήν.

6 κύκλῳ τῆς τραπέζης σου // εἰρήν ἐττῆ δεδακτοις κοινωνοῖς, εἰσπανηθῶν εἰρθεῖν ἄμην.

7 ὡς νεόφυτος ἑλιόν | ⲏⲉ ⲉⲣⲛ ⲉⲧⲧⲥⲉ ⲉⲇⲇⲁ ⲉⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ ⲉⲡⲡⲕⲏⲥ ⲉⲣⲛ | ἀμήν.

8 ταρουγοτάκαμα εἰτογ γοᾶκ εὐβα ταρουγια τὸ[.δ] ικα κακά εἶμι // (καὶ) εἰ[δ]οις τὰ ἁγαθὰ ἑρευνής ὅλομ πᾶσας τὰς

9 ἐρonomies τῆς ζωῆς σου (καὶ) έιδοις τῶν ισραήλ. // ὁ φοβόμενοι τὸν κύριον ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον.

10 εὐλογήσαι σε κύριος ἐκ σιω. // ὅλος ὁ κράτες κράτους


12 [ι]δοὺ οὕτως εὐλογηθήσεται ἄνθρωπος ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον. εὐλογήσαι σε κύριος ἐκ σιω. // ὁ φοβόμενος τὸν κύριον ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον.

13 [κ]αι εἰδοὶς τὰ ἀγαθὰ Ιερουσαλήμ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας σου. (και) ἴδους υἱοὺς τῶν υἱῶν σου. 

14 \[και\] εἰδοὶς τὰ ἀγαθὰ Ιερουσαλήμ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας σου. (και) ἴδους υἱοὺς τῶν υἱῶν σου. 

Line commentary with grammatical analysis of the Old Nubian

1 άδδα: perhaps related to άδσ, with unknown meaning (OND 4). The only other attestation is a documentary text, P.QI III 36.ii.3–4 ἐγείρετε ἕτεν άδδόλλῳ.

2 ἀρεναγογε: previously unattested spelling of άρενα “blessed” (OND 3) with predicate plural marker -αγογε, here used as vocative. Translates Gr. μακάριοι.

3 ἀρεναγογε: “all” (OND 189) with predicate plural marker -αγογε, here used as vocative. Translates Gr. πάντες.

4 γοα: γοα “Lord” (OND 201). Note the absence of accusative case, which suggests it is incorporated into the predicate εὐγογογα.

5 εὐγογογα: εὐγο “to fear” (OND 59) with present tense -λ, plural -γογα, and determiner -λ. γοα εὐγογογα translates Gr. οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον.

6 οα: on “and” (OND 126). Note the absence of Gr. και; the Greek text uses an asyndeton οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον οἱ πορευόμενοι.

7 δουραγογα: δούπρ “to go” (OND 191). The epenthetic -ι is unexpected in this
form, and perhaps inserted analogously to the noun ὀφρι “cause.” This is followed by past 1 -ἀ, plural -γος, and reconstructed determiner -λ, cf. 2 εγγυγγυγλα.

ταρπ ἀφριγγυγλα: Translates Gr. ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ. Only the locative marker -α is legible. The text in the lacuna has been reconstructed on the basis of ρ.ρ.ι.ι 12.ι.18 εἱρι ἀφριγγυγλα for τὴν ὁδόν σου (see OND 36).

3

μακάριος is probably not a corruption for μακάριος but an otherwise unattested variant μακάριος. For this view speaks the dot over omikron, which probably marks the word accent.

καλώς σε: καλός σοι.

ἀργογ: Possibly a noun or adjective translating the beginning of the verse.

The consonant cluster πης suggests a word of non-Nubian origin, perhaps a Greek loanword?

4

. . . . . δι[ ]η[ ]κ [ ]γ[ ]κο: The final κο, co appears to be a verbal form, perhaps ending in the command marker -co. The sequence κο suggests καπ “to eat” (OND 84), which would fit with Gr. φάγεσαι. The reading, however, remains obscure.

πανκαί: Looks like a plural form of the unattested abstract noun πανκαττ. It is unclear how this noun would combine with subsequent εγδανη.

εγδανη: εγ “to rejoice” (OND 59) with intentional -λ, predicate marker -α, and jussive singular -ή. Translates Gr. μακάριος εἰ.

ειδο: possible second person singular pronoun ειρ with superessive -ι, haplography for expected ειδο. Translates Gr. σοι.

κεκαεδολ: Possibly a verbal form, translating Gr. καλως.

αγτακαμι: αγ “to do” (OND 13) with passive -τακ, predicate marker -α, and jussive singular -ή. Translates Gr. ἔσται.

5

ἐν ταῖς κλίτες: ἐν τοῖς κλίτες (female article for the male one).

ἔλαντ: ἐλαϊών.

6

εἱρι: second person singular pronoun ειρ with genitive -ι. εττα: ἐττ α “woman, wife” (OND 80) with determiner -α. εἱρι ἐττα translates Gr. ἥ γυνη σοι.

δελλατ: unknown noun, perhaps a translation of Gr. ἄμπελος.
κογλα: κογλ “be like” (OND 101) with present tense -λ, inchoative auxilia-
ry ἀλ and predicate marker -α. Translates Gr. ὡς.
.επιμενο: unknown verb ἐπι is followed by predicate marker -α, singular
jussive -μη, and command marker -αω.
ειριω: second person singular pronoun with locative ειρι and focus marker
-λω. Unclear what it translates in the Greek.

7
gογλα: gογ “house” (OND 201) with dative -λα. ειρι gογλα translates Gr. τῆς
οἰκίας σου.
τογφ: τογφ, plural of τοτ “son, child” (OND 180) with determiner -λ. ειρι
τογφ translates Gr. οἱ υἱοί σου.
.η: the initial letter is unclear but is probably a pronominal form with genitive
-ν, perhaps ηη, cf. 9 ηηκα.
καια: καια “olive tree” (OND 155) with genitive -ν. καια translates Gr.
ελαιῶν.
τογκτογτο[γ] . . . : τογκ “to (im)plant” (OND 181). Browne suggests a ver-
bal root τογκ, but the kappa is present in the other two attestations too. -τ
is probably a nominalizer, followed by plural marker -αυ. The remaining
morphology is unclear. Translates Gr. νεόφυτα.
κογλα: cf. 6 κογλα.
εκραμ: εκ “to be near” (OND 64) with transitive marker -ρ, predicate marker
-λ, and singular jussive -μη.
ηκαφε: ηκαφ “table” (OND 109) with accusative -κ. ειρι ηκαφε translates
Gr. τῆς τραπέζης σου. Note how the Greek nominal construction κύκλῳ
τῆς τραπέζης σου is rendered with the verb εκραμ in Old Nubian.
Ἰω[ά]γου: Ιωάννου. This must be a signature of the writer put after the end of
a logical part of the inscription. A similar phenomenon is found in an ink
inscription in a niche in the east wall of room 7 of the Northwest Annex
containing a set of four consecutive prayers of the Liturgy of the Presanct-
tified24. There, the signature of the writer, accidentally also John, is found
at the end of line 17, after the second prayer, and line 29, after the fourth
prayer.

8
οῦτος: οὐτως.
Σιω: Σιων.

24 Lajtar and Van der Vliet 2017: 49–59, no. XXXVb.
ⲉⲓⲩⲓ: unattested spelling of exclamation ωρη “behold” (OND 81). Translates Gr. ἰδοῦ.

, κραμά: Expected would be a translation of Gr. οὗτος. The ending -ronym is perhaps affirmative -μα followed by predicate marker -α.

` XM': This looks like the cryptogram for Archangel Raphael. One compares [ XPAR = ΜΗΧΑΛΑ] inserted over line 10 of DP 2, probably to mark the use of a new pen. What function would have had the name of Raphael here is unclear.

ος: Unclear.

9

ταρογούτακμα: ταρογού “to bless, praise” (OND 167) with passive -τακ, past 1 -αμα, 2/3 sg subject clitic -α, and predicate marker -α. Note that the common ending would be -ονα instead of -αμα. Translates Gr. εὐλογηθήσεται.

ειτογ: ειτ “man” (OND 80).

gονκ: gον “Lord” with accusative -κ.

gοβλ: unattested spelling εγού “to fear” with present tense -λ and assimilated determiner, cf. 2 gον εγογκγουλ. ειτογ gονκ ειοβλ translates Gr. ἀνθρώπος ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον. The usage of bēta for the phonemic value /w/ is very rare and appears imported from Coptic orthography. The only other attestation is in a dipinto found in the Faras Cathedral25.

ταρογομι: ταρογού “to bless, praise” with predicate marker -α and jussive -ης. Translates Gr. εὐλογήσαι.


ηακα: second person singular pronoun ειρ with accusative -α. The spelling ηακα has been attested elsewhere (see OND 73).

εκια: εκα Sion with dative -α. Regular dative is -λα, but the lambda is dropped after proper names.

9


10

ιδους: ιδοις.

εί[ιρήνην: ειρήνη.

των: τόν.

---

 galô: ἐὰν “to see” (OND 195) with plurational marker -σ, with present tense -π, and predicate marker -α. The two letters preceding π are very unclear, but the plurational is expected considering the plural number of 11 γεικτογ[γογ]κ. If so, the subsequent epenthetic iota is expected as well. The form translates Gr. ἴδοις, but is different from 11 γαλδαμ. 

ιρογςληιν: ιρογςληιν “Jerusalem,” followed by genitive -ν.


ην: genitive of second person singular pronoun επ. Cf. P.QII 24.11 ην. ἄφεν: ἄφε “life” (OND 23) with genitive -ν. ογκρε: ογκούρ “day” (OND 135) with plural -ι + predicate marker -α, resulting in -ε.

μώραμα: μώρα “all” (OND 118) with locative -νω. ην ἄφεν ογκρε μώραμα translates Gr. πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς σου.

γαλδαμ: γαλ “to see” with plurational marker -σ, predicate marker -α, and jussive singular -μα. Cf. 9 τρογκαμ. Translates Gr. ἱδοις.

tοτκα: τοτ “son” (OND 180) with accusative -κα.

ακτκα: ακτ “daughter” (OND 20) with accusative -κα. The asyndeton τοτκα ακτκα “sons and daughters” supposedly translates Gr. υἱοὺς τῶν υἱῶν σου, or is perhaps an otherwise unattested variant reading.

[τ]οκονα: τοκον τοι “peace” (OND 178).


12 παα: πα “father“ (OND 144) with predicate marker -α.

εια: εικ “holy” (OND 200) with predicate marker -α and haplography of the sigma.

εα: εια “son” (OND 196) with predicate marker -α.

εε[ε]α: εικ “holy” with predicate marker -α. Cf. 12 εια, which has a single sigma.

εε[ε]α: εεκ “spirit” with predicate marker -α.

εεκα: εεκ “holy” with predicate marker -α. παα, εικα on εα εεκα on εε[ε]α is the invocation of the Trinity. All members are marked with the predicate marker, here functioning as vocative. Moreover, all members are qualified as “holy,” whereas in the many other attestations of the Trinity in Old Nubian, only the Spirit is qualified as holy.
The verb **ταρούγεω** (tauroýou) “to praise” with 2/3sg imperative subject clitic -ε and command marker -σα. If the subject here is the Trinity, note that it is treated as a singular subject, rather than plural.

**άιων**: first person singular pronoun ἂι.

**καισα: personal name Εσαία = Isaiah.**

**μεσδο[γ]: μεσδο “servant” (OND 114).** άιων καισα μεσδο[γ] is obviously an information about the writer of the inscription. If taken literally it means “I, Isaiah, a servant”. This stands in clear contradiction with the signature Ἰω[ά]ν̣ου found at the end of line 7. Because of that we are inclined to think that άιων καισα μέσδο[γ] should rather be interpreted as “I, servant of (the church of) Isaiah”, with genitival -ν of the putative καισαν dropped, as is frequently the case in Old Nubian. With this interpretation the writer would have presented himself first with his proper name (end of line 7) and than with his Church title (line 12). In this context, μεσδο, “servant”, probably means “deacon”. This meaning of μεσδο is attested in visitors’ inscriptions in the upper church at Bagbanarti. Old Testament figures enjoyed a cult in Christian Nubia and were sometimes patrons of churches. A Church of Job is on record in two visitors’ inscriptions in the upper church at Bagbanarti. Two Old Nubian inventories of churches found in Qasr Ibrim – *P.QI* IV 78.6 and 79.re.7 – mention a Church of Three Youths in Mosmosi. A Church (or Churches) of Three Youths is (are) on record also in the inscriptions in the upper church at Bagbanarti.

Perhaps the beginning of the name Raphael. If so, it is probably part of another Church title of the writer: he was someone in a Church of Raphael. Several churches of Raphael are known in the Dongola area including the Church B.V on the citadel of Dongola and the lower and upper churches at Bagbanarti.

**13**

The verb **ταρούχα** (tauroúka) “to praise” with predicate marker -κ. The verb appears to be repeated three times: ταρούχα [ταρούχα] ταρ[ουχα].

**μαριαννο: proper name μαρίαν with locative -νο.** The same name has been attested in *P.QI* III 41.8 πάπο μαρίαν-. Another possibility is to read μαριαννο[γ]. We do not know who is referred to here. Does the writer...
(John, deacon of a Church of Isaiah) mention another man or is μαριαμο an element of another title of the writer?

Mark: variant spelling of μαριω “servant” with genitive -να.

Michael: variant of the proper name μιχαήλ “Michael.” The final -να has been reanalyzed as a determiner and dropped before the genitive -να. -να is probably a conjunction.

Gabriel: proper name γαβριηλ “Gabriel,” reconstructed based on 13 μιχαὴλ. Raphael: proper name ραφαηλ “Raphael,” reconstructed based on 13 μιχαὴλ. The conjunction following the genitive is unusual; something like μιχαηλ γαβριηλ ραφαηλκενλο would be more expected. 13 μιχαηλ γαβριηλ ραφαηλκενλο perhaps refers to the Church in which this inscription is found, possibly the Church of Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. This would agree with Martens-Czarnecka’s supposition that the painted decoration of the “church” in the south part of the Northwest Annex (see above) contained representations of all three archangels.

John: proper name ιωανη “John” with conjunction -δε. We find ourselves in impossibility to state whom this name refers to. The rest of the line is illegible.

The text is undecipherable except for the final ἀμήν, which shows that the language of the composition was Greek rather than Old Nubian. ἀμήν suggests a prayer. If it is a prayer, one can tentatively reconstruct ήμις in the penultimate line as the object of the request. This should be preceded by a verb of request and an invocation of Divinity.

4. General Commentary

4.1 Function

The question of the function of the inscriptions discussed in this paper is closely related to the question of the function of the rooms on the walls of which they are written. As was already noted above, all three inscriptions are found in liturgical spaces, whereby DP 2 and 3 occur in main liturgical chapels corresponding with church apses, and DP 4 in what seems to be an ancillary chapel. It is worth stressing that DP 2 stood on the east, ideologically the most important wall of the chapel, in the close proximity of the altar. The location of the inscriptions suggests their connection with liturgy. It is
improbable that this connection was of practical nature. We hardly imagine a person, a priest, a deacon, or a lector, standing in front of the wall and reciting or singing a psalm read from an inscription. Apart from the fact that such a person would have looked rather ridiculously to the gathering, DP 2 and 4 are located too high above the floor level to be accessible for an average-height person standing on it. The presence of the inscriptions in liturgical spaces should rather be interpreted in symbolic terms. They indicate that psalms, the three written on the walls and others too, were performed during liturgical celebrations held in these very spaces.

The famous, frequently quoted and commented phrase in Saint Paul’s letter to the Colossians shows that the singing of psalms was an immanent part of God’s worship from the beginnings of the Christian Church. The Church of Nubia obviously stuck to this tradition as demonstrated by textual finds. A bilingual, Greek-Coptic typicon found in Qasr Ibrim provides for the performance of a psalm, most probably in full, before the reading from a Pauline epistle and a gospel, and a fragmentary Old Nubian lectionary from the same site (P.QI 11) gives the text of Ps. 31 as the song for the fifth Sunday of Lent. Fragments of bilingual, Greek-Old Nubian psalters are known from the Qasr Ibrim cathedral and the so-called Throne Hall in Dongola, which was, at least to a degree, a liturgical space as well. Psalms are frequently quoted in inscriptions left by visitors in cult places, which indicates that they were memorised, probably through frequent listening to their singing performances. The particular, bilingual or semi-bilingual recording of psalms attested in the inscriptions here discussed and in some other sources is probably connected with these singing performances. One can imaging that they were performed antiphonically by two choirs, of which one sung in Greek and the other one in Old Nubian. The veracity of this hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that bilingual and semi-bilingual version are attested in Nubian only for the poetical books of the Old Testament, i.e., psalms and odes.

31 Col. 3.16: ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικείτω ἐν υἱῶν πλουσίως, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν χάριτι ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ, “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts”.

32 Hagen and Ochała 2014.

33 Generally on lectionaries of the Church in Nubia, see Ochała 2013; 2015.

34 P.QI 12 (Ps. 26.8–14 + 90.1–5); P.QI 12 + P.QI 13 (Ps. 61.10–13 + 83.2–13 + 86.1–7 + 46.2–6); P.QI 13 (Ps. 95.6–13).

35 Browne 1987: 76–81 (Ps. 103.15–31).

36 Thus, for example, in visitors graffiti in the upper church at Baganarti and the newly discovered North Church within the monastery on Kom H in Dongola.
4.2 Dating

The Old Nubian text has several features that appear to be particular to the Old Nubian translations of the poetic books of the Bible, in particular the book of Psalms. The most significant of these features is the so-called “expanded genitive”. These are expanded forms of the genitive of the personal pronouns ⲉⲣ “you (sg.)”, ⲧⲣ “he/she/it”, ⲧⲩⲣ “they”, respectively Ⲩⲣ̄, ⲧⲛ̣̄, ⲧⲉⲣⲛ̄. We find the following attestations: DP 2.5 ⲧⲛ̣̄; DP 2.6 ⲧⲛ̣̄; DP 2.9 ⲧⲛ̣̄; DP 3.5 ⲧⲛ̣̄; DP 3.9 ⲧⲛ̣̄; DP 3.12 ⲧⲛ̣̄; DP 4.6 ⲧⲛ̣̄; DP 4.7 ⲧⲛ̣̄ (3x); DP 4.11 ⲧⲛ̣̄. The same type of form has also been attested in DP 1 (Ps. 129) and Dong 1 (Ps. 103), both found in Dongola as well: DP 1.5 ⲧⲛ̣̄; Dong 1.ii.2 ⲧⲛ̣̄; Dong 1.ii.3 ⲧⲛ̣̄; Dong 1.ii.13 ⲧⲛ̣̄; Dong 1.ii.18–19 ⲧⲛ̣̄; Dong 1.ii.23 ⲧⲛ̣̄.

Moreover, the same forms have been attested in other Psalm translations on parchment: \textit{PQI} I 2 (Ps. 61); \textit{PQI} I 3 (Ps. 83); \textit{PQI} II 12 (Ps. 26, 90); \textit{PQI} II 13 (Ps. 86, 46). All of these have been found in Qasr Ibrim: \textit{PQI} I 2.1.20 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 2.1.24 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 2.1.27 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 2.1.28 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 2.1.3 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 2.1.9 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 2.1.10 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 2.1.20 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 3.1.5 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 3.1.15 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 3.1.24 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} I 3.1.10 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 12.1.5 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 12.1.7 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 12.1.18 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 12.1.3 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 12.1.20 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 12.1.23 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 12.1.25 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 13.1.4 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 13.1.12 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 13.1.28 ⲧⲛ̣̄; \textit{PQI} II 13.1.25 ⲧⲛ̣̄.

The Greek-Old Nubian version of Psalm 149–150 found on a wooden plank from Qasr Ibrim, published by Giovanni Ruffini, contains no such form\textsuperscript{37}, and neither does the inscription containing part of the Greek-Old Nubian version of Psalm 33 from the church in Naqa El-Oqba\textsuperscript{38}.

We have no attestation of these forms in any other Biblical translation in Old Nubian, or in any other documentary text, except in a graffito found in the Southwest Annex of the Monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola, which contains the phrase ⲧⲛ̣̄ ⲙⲉⲇⳝⲟⲩ “your servant”\textsuperscript{39}.

The presence of the expanded genitive is not the only characteristic shared by the Psalm translations. Except DP 1 they are all bilingual Greek–Old Nubian, and overall they appear to adhere to Greek word order at a considerably more consistent level than other Biblical translations. Old Nubian is an SOV language, which means the main verb usually occurs at the end of the clause. The Psalm translations, however, often have the verb preceding

\textsuperscript{37} Ruffini 2009.
\textsuperscript{38} gr 2.5–9 in Griffith: 1913 (58–59).
\textsuperscript{39} Łajtar and Van Gerven Oei 2018.
the object, closely following the Greek. This leads to highly artificial, and assumably sometimes unnatural word order in Old Nubian. For example:

- DP 2.7 ⲉⲇ ⲩⲁ ⲉⲗⲁ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲗⲁ – ὑμεῖς δὲ εἶπα ἐν τῇ εὐθηνίᾳ μου.
- DP 3.5 ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲥⲉ ⱉⲛ Ⲝⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲧⲧⲱⲥ ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲥ – καὶ ἰδοὺ ὑπελθόν τοῦ ἡμερήσιοῦ αὐτοῦ.
- DP 3.9 ⲁⲧⲧⲱⲥ ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲥ ⲁⲧⲧⲱⲥ ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲥ – ὑμεῖς δὲ ἔλεγα ἐν τῇ εὐθηνίᾳ μου.
- DP 4.2 ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲥ ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲥ ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲥ ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲥ – καὶ ἰδοὺ ὑπελθόν τοῦ ἡμερήσιοῦ αὐτοῦ.

Similar close parallelisms can be found in the other Psalm translations. We cite a few instances:

- P.QI I 2.18–20 έκλειψεν ὑμῖν ὑπεράκοντα ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς σοῦ πόλεως. καὶ ἠκολούθησαν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς σοῦ πόλεως ὅτι σὺ ἀποδώσεις ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ.
- P.QI II 12.18–20 ὑπελθήσεις καὶ ἐκκαθάρισέ τας ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς σοῦ πόλεως. καὶ ἠκολούθησαν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς σοῦ πόλεως ὅτι σὺ ἀποδώσεις ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ.

Especially in present tense declarative sentences, this leftward movement of the verb is facilitated by the presence of the affirmative suffix -ⲙ on the main verb (underlined):
• **DP 3.10** πίτα ράλαμα ἐκατοτετράδες ἀθλαὶ περι [ - - - ] — φῶς ἁντετελεῖ τῷ δικαίῳ καὶ τοῖς εὐθέσι τῇ καρδίᾳ (εὐφροσύνη).

• **P.QI II 12.i.29–ii.1** πεσαλάμιες γαλακτοχορία ἐφτασερογογκα ἄφηλογον ἀκτῆς (οὐ εὐφραε κολκα — πιστεύω τοῦ ἱδεΐν τὰ ἀγαθὰ κυρίου ἐν γῇ ζώντων. ὑπόμεινον τὸν κύριον.

• **P.QI II 12.ii.10–12** πεσαλάμιες γολκα ἀν ταλανναμα ον ἀπο τω δομεια — ἐρεῖ τῷ κυρίῳ· ἀντιλήπτωρ μου εἶ καὶ καταφυγή μου.

• **P.QI II 13.i.8–10** ομηρίνα γολκα εἰκών ὑφλογογκα ἰακώβιν ἄνερ ὑψηλοσχοιαί — ἀγαπᾶ κύριος τὰς πύλας Σιὼν ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ σκηνώματα Ἰακώβ.

• **Dong 1.i.17** ταδιο ράλαμα κελλω γαρμιτογ παρρησιγογ — ἐν αὐτῇ διελεύσονται πάντα τὰ θηρία τοῦ δρυμῶν.

Another stylistic feature is the development, or incorporation from the spoken language, of postponed genitives, such as **Dong 1.i.17** γαρμιτογ παρρησιγ of τὰ θηρία τοῦ δρυμῶν.

Old Nubian literacy first developed in Nobadia and then spread to Makuria. This can be deduced first from the script in which Old Nubian is written, which can be traced back to 7th- and 8th-c. Coptic manuscripts from the White Monastery in Panoplis, as well as the presence of Meroitic letters. Claude Rilly thus suggests that the Old Nubian script was developed in the “multicultural” and “multilingual” environment of Nobadia around 550 CE.

Based on linguistic analysis, as well as through comparative work with Latin, Greek, and Syriac sources, Van Gerven Oei and Tsakos have argued that **SC**, Pseudo-Chrysostomus’s sermon *In venerabilem crucem sermo*, represents the oldest layer of translations from Greek to Old Nubian. This text doesn’t show any evidence for the presence of the expanded genitives, or the other features of the Psalm translations discussed above. These features therefore appear to postdate the first wave of Greek–Old Nubian translation, and can therefore not be considered an “archaism”, as Browne suggested. Rather than an archaism, they appear to be an innovation based on the long form of the personal pronoun, which until today has been retained by Nobiin.

This innovation is particular to the phase of Old Nubian textual production in which Psalms were translated from Greek.

The fact that the expanded genitives were found on the walls of the
Northwest Annex to the monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola, both in Psalm translations and on graffiti, may give us a relatively secure dating on the production of these texts. DP 1 was most likely executed in the context of the entombment of Bishop Georgios, who died in 1113, which gives us a *terminus post quem*\(^{45}\). For Dong 1, Browne cites a *terminus ante quem* of the 13th c\(^{46}\). This gives a possible date of the emergence of these Psalm translations somewhere around the turn of the 12th c.

We therefore want to suggest that the Old Nubian Psalm translations, all of which share the same stylistic elements, belong to a single phase or perhaps even school of translation, emerging from Old Dongola around the turn of the 12th c. The emergence of this “Makuritan” translation school may be connected to the broader historical developments centred around Old Dongola in the middle of the 11th c., with the union between the ruling families of Makuria and Alwa, and the appearance of a new type of horned crown, clearly distinct from the preceding Byzantine-style crows worn by Nubian kings\(^{47}\). The development of a new translation style, artificially archaic and strongly modelled on the Greek original, in stark contrast with the “looser” translations of previous centuries produced in Nobadia, may have gone hand in hand with an assertion of the newly acquired power of the Makuritan throne.

**Abbreviations**

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<td>DP 1</td>
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<td>Dong 1</td>
<td>Browne 1987.</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>El-Guzuuli and Van Gerven Oei 2012.</td>
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<td>OND</td>
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<td>PQI I</td>
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<td>SC</td>
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<td>St</td>
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\(^{45}\) Lajtar and Van der Vliet 2017: 22  
\(^{46}\) Lajtar and Van der Vliet 2017: 22  
\(^{47}\) Godlewski 2008: 273.
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