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Serena Ammirati & Marco Fressura

Towards a typology of ancient bilingual glossaries:
Palaeography, bibliography, and codicology .............................................. 1

Abstract: This paper surveys the Latin-Greek and Greek-Latin bilingual glossaries known through papyrological evidence, both digraphical and non, focusing on their scripts, book formats, and layouts. The systematic comparison between archaeological evidence and western manuscripts bearing similar texts helps to detect conservative and innovative layout strategies. This article mainly focuses on classical and para-literary texts (thematic and non-thematic bilingual glossaries, glossaries of classical authors), without passing under silence the main bilingual Latin-Greek and Greek-Latin Christian texts.

Keywords: ancient bilingual glossaries, layouts, bibliography, codicology, palaeography, classical authors, Christian texts.

Constantinos Balamoshev

The Jews of Oxyrhynchos address the strategos of the nome:
An early fourth-century document....................................................... 27

Abstract: In August 309 the Jews of Oxyrhynchos addressed the strategos of the Oxyrhynchite nome. If the interpretation is correct, the people who filed
the document on behalf of the Jews appear to represent a *koinon*, which is a term also used for professional associations but here seemingly applied to the town's Jewish community as a whole. A scholarly consensus has yet to be reached on whether the Jewish communities could be classified as *collegia* according to Roman law but various pieces of evidence adduced here indicate that this was possible. Another issue that is addressed here is the nature of the document and why it was addressed particularly to the *strategos* of the nome, who is known to have changed duties after Diocletian's administrative reforms. Finally, this papyrus furnishes another important piece of information, as it records a further year in office of Dioskourides alias Ioulianos, a member of a prominent family of councillors and officials, whose origins can be traced back to Alexandria and who are known to us through (at least) three successive well-documented generations. The history of the family's career (as evidenced by the hitherto published material) is offered in a nutshell in the form of an appendix.

**Keywords:** Jews, Jewish community, *koinon*, Oxyrhynchos, fourth century, Beinecke library, Dioskourides alias Ioulianos, *strategos*.

**Anne Boud'hors**  
*The Coptic ostraca of the Theban hermitage MMA 1152. 1. Letters*  
(O. Gurna Górecki 12–68) .................................................. 45

**Abstract:** This article is the first in a series that aims to publish all the Coptic ostraca discovered by Tomasz Górecki during his excavations in the hermitage MMA 1152 (Western Thebes) between 2003 and 2013. Here, I am presenting the edition of private letters. There are altogether sixty-eight such texts, of which eleven have been published elsewhere and fifty-seven are edited here. Even though many of them are very fragmentary, one can recognize various topics common to the letters of this region in the seventh-eighth centuries. They also testify to the relations that existed between the hermitage and the neighbouring sites of the Theban region.  
**Keywords:** Coptic, ostraca, Western Thebes, hermitage MMA 1152, letter, book production, monasticism, clerks, daily life, prayer, charity.

**Åke Engsheden & Andreas Winkler**  
*Three Coptic letters in the Museum Gustavianum* .................................................. 101

**Abstract:** In this paper, three Coptic ostraca, which all most probably originate in the Theban area, are edited. The texts are all epistolary in nature. It is probable that all three stem from a monastic environment; ostensibly no. 1 relates to the Epiphanius Monastery, while no. 2 comes from the dossier belonging to the Monastery of Phoibammon. The latter piece concerns an
argument about the appointment of a shepherd, thus providing another witness to the economic activities of the mentioned institution. No. 3 concerns a delivery of an unnamed commodity kept in sacks.

**Keywords:** Coptic, ostraca, Late Antiquity, Thebes, Monastery of Phoibammon, Monastery of Epiphanius, apa Viktor, cattle husbandry.

Vincent W. J. van Gerven Oei

*A dance for a princess: The legends on a painting in room 5 of the Southwest Annex of the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola* ................. 117

**Abstract:** The article provides a transcription, translation, and analysis of the Old Nubian legends on a painting of a dancing scene in room 5 of the Southwest Annex of the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola. The painting shows two groups of Nubian singing and dancing, and from the legends we understand that the occasion is the birth of a new heir to the royal throne, and that the Virgin Mary is invoked to ease the pangs of labour.

**Keywords:** Old Nubian, epigraphy, wall inscriptions, Dongola, Monastery on Kom H, Nubian iconography, Nubian painting.

Lothar Thüngen


**Abstract:** P. 16976, one of the two papyri which Wilhelm Schubart published in 1945 in the *Festschrift* for Leopold Wenger, is to be dated to ad 457–500. It probably belonged to a small *codex* (which seems to have had no more than 48 pages) with many short legal texts on different subjects. It may have been an *Enchiridium on Actual Legal Questions* Taken from Imperial Constitutions* for jurists. Beside the main text, there may have been a separate booklet providing additional juridical comments in the form of *paragraphai*. While the two parts may have been authored by the same person, a long comment below the main text on the recto is in a different hand. It may therefore have been copied by a later user from the booklet. This is certainly not a marginal *scholion*, as believed from the time of Schubart. The subjects included in the preserved piece are two cases from civil law (*an actio ex stipulatu* against a woman for paying back a credit and getting a title of possession for a provincial estate by the older *longi temporis praescriptio*), a civil process (*prescription of a lawsuit*) and a case from fiscal law (*confiscation*). The last text includes an instruction for the readers.

**Keywords:** juristic papyrology, legal literature, *‘Enchiridium on Actual Legal Questions’, actio ex stipulatu, longi temporis praescriptio*, confiscation, Hermopolis Magna.
Jacques van der Vleit & Klaas A. Worp
*A fifth Nubian funerary stela from the Bankes Collection.*
*An addendum to CIEN 3, 26–29* ................................................................. 251

**Abstract:** The article offers a first edition of a Christian funerary stela from northern Nubia, inscribed in Greek. The monument belongs to a small series of similar stelae from the collection of W. J. Bankes (1786–1855) and may date from about the seventh century. As a likely provenance, Kalabsha (ancient Talmis) is proposed.

**Keywords:** Christian Nubia, Talmis, Greek, funerary inscription, Bankes collection.
Vincent W. J. van Gerven Oei

A DANCE FOR A PRINCESS: THE LEGENDS ON A PAINTING IN ROOM 5 OF THE SOUTHWEST ANNEX OF THE MONASTERY ON KOM H IN DONGOLA

1. THE PAINTING

In her monograph on the wall paintings in the Monastery excavated on Kom H in Dongola, Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka describes a dancing scene on the northern wall of room 5 in the Southwest Annex (inv. no. P 30/SW5N),1 which is of particular interest owing to the presence of

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1 Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka, The Wall Paintings from the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola [=Nubia III, Dongola 3; Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean Monograph Series 3], Warsaw 2011, pp. 233–238 (cat. no. 109). I owe my gratitude to Włodomierz Godlewski, director of the Polish Archaeological Mission in Dongola, for permission to work on these legends, and Adam Łajtar for sharing his transcripts and observations with me. I would also like to thank Grzegorz Ochała, Robin Seignobos, Alexandros Tsakos, Petra Węschenfelder, and Dobrochna Zielińska for their generous comments, insights, and sharing of their research and libraries. Throughout the article, I use the following abbreviation: Browne, Dictionary = G. M. Browne, Old Nubian Dictionary [= Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Subsidia 556], Leuven 1996; Browne, Literary Texts = G. M. Browne, Literary Texts in Old Nubian [= Beiträge zur Sudanforschung, Beihfelt 5], Vienna 1989; I. Khartoum Copt. = J. van der Vliet, Catalogue of the Coptic Inscriptions in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum (I. Khartoum Copt.) [= Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta 121], Leuven − Paris − Dudley, MA 2003; P. Qasr Ibrim III = G. M. Browne, Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim III [= Egypt Exploration Society, Texts from Excavations 12], London 1991; P. Qasr Ibrim IV = G. R. Ruffini, The Bishop, the Eparch and the King: Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim IV [= The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplement 22], Warsaw 2014.
several legends written in Old Nubian, which heretofore have remained untranslated.

The Annex to the Monastery was excavated by a mission of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archeology of the University of Warsaw directed by Stefan Jakobielski. Large-scale excavations of the Southwest Annex started in 1995, when two murals were discovered.\(^2\) The wall paintings in room 5 were discovered during the excavations in 2004.\(^3\)

The northern wall in room 5 hosts several paintings: a Nativity Cycle partially extending into the corner with the eastern wall (cat. no. 107); a Standing Virgin with Child (cat. no. 108); the dance scene (cat. no. 109); and the Archangel Michael protecting a Nubian bishop (cat. no. 110). The first three paintings all date from the same period.\(^4\) The Standing Virgin with Child and the dance scene are painted by the same painter, and Martens-Czarneska suggests that they are related.\(^5\) The same painter also painted the other Virgin Mary’s and a painting of the Archangel Raphael fighting a demon spirit in the form of a rhinoceros. The same painter, or a scribe collaborating with him on the works, also wrote the legends accompanying these paintings.\(^6\)

Martens-Czarneska describes the painting in question (fig. 1) as follows:

The composition comprises three rows of male figures, forming two groups, each clad in a different attire. They could still represent the same ethnic group as all have the same skin tone. The men of one group wear masks densely studded with cowry shells and furnished with open-


\(^{5}\) Ibidem, p. 233.

Fig. 1. The dancing scene on the north wall of room 5 in the Southwest Annex of the monastery on Kom H in Dongola (photo and enhancement D. Zielińska; courtesy PCMA Archive)
nings for eyes and mouth. The masks are reminiscent of an animal’s head with long muzzles and large ears. The men wear loincloths with long tails attached to them. Their feet and legs are bare. The men of the other group are clad in sleeveless *chitonia*, long salwars, skirts and shawls, with sash-decorated turbans on their heads.⁷

According to Martens-Czarnecka, the painting shows ‘two folk traditions current in Christian Nubia’,⁸ the first type of figure with the cowry masks representing a sub-Saharan tradition, whereas those with turbans can be related to a part of Africa dominated by Arab traditions. She suggests that the proximity of the icon of the Standing Virgin Mary with Child, coupled with the stylistic homogeneity between the two paintings, strongly indicates a relation between the two. The nature of this relation, however, remains obscure. As I will show below, a translation of the legends on the painting provides convincing evidence that the paintings are indeed related, and also reveals the nature of this relation.

2. THE LEGENDS

The legends, catalogued as *DBMN* **NT** 1364, are written in black ink, in the so-called Nubian majuscule commonly used for Old Nubian inscriptions from the tenth century onward.⁹ The positioning of the inscriptions strongly suggests that these are lines spoken or chanted by the different dancers depicted in the scene.¹⁰ In the case of inscriptions *A, B, E, F, G,* and *H,* the texts clearly start close to the mouth.

The orientation of the dancers suggests a reading direction that starts in the upper right corner, following an ‘S’ shape to the lower left corner. The rightmost dancer on the middle row and the rightmost dancer on the

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⁸ Ibidem, p. 236.
¹⁰ Łajtar, ‘Wall inscriptions’ (cit. n. 6), p. 348.
lower row are clearly talking to each other (F and G) and the vague presence of legend C suggests that there may be similar communication between the leftmost dancers on the upper and middle row. Furthermore, the final statement I appears to contain two affirmative verb forms, which would mark the conclusion of the sequence of phrases. Legend J is a description of the scene, which is unfortunately only partially, and that with difficulty, readable.

The transcriptions below are based on a photograph and a digitally enhanced image of the painting provided by Dobrochna Zielińska, a tracing published by Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka, a transcript based on autoptic examination by Adam Łajtar, and a partial infrared photograph made by Maciej Wyżgoł.

A. One line to the left of the head of the third dancer in the upper row, written upward slightly bending toward the right. The first alpha is written on the left side of his stick, the rest of the word on its right.

\[\dddot\dddot\dddot\doo\dddot\ddot\dddot\doo\dddot\doo\dddot\doo\ddot\doo\ddot\doo\ddot\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\doo\ddot\doo\d0
C. At least five lines to the left of the first dancer in the middle row, unreadable on the photograph and not decipherable from the tracing.

D. Five lines starting to the left of the left leg of the second dancer in the upper row, continuing to the right of the left arm of the first dancer in the middle row and then seven lines between the second and third dancers in the middle row.

\[† \text{ογρογα} \]
\[\text{[ει]λλο} \]
\[\text{πογρα \ έοννα} \]
4 \[\text{εα' \ κελα \ ειλλο'} \]
\[\text{ται} \]
\[\text{λα \ έον} \]
\[\text{μαεα} \]
8 \[\text{αγδ \ ογ} \]
\[\text{ελ [ο]γ} \]
\[\text{ολ} \]
\[\text{κε} \]
12 \[\text{εον} \]

(He is) the king. You are the queen sister for the prince. Only (?) you are the queen sister for him, making (becoming?) one, two, queen mother.

1. ογρογα: from ογρογ, 'king' (Browne, Dictionary, p. 140), with predicative marker -α marking the nominal predicate. Usage as vocative seems unlikely, because this would make ογρογ the referent of [ει]λλο, 'you', from line 2.
2. [ει]λλο: from the second person singular personal pronoun εип, with the focus marker -λο. Reconstruction based on ειλλο in line 4.
3. πογρα: from the previously unattested noun πογρ, 'prince', with the progressively assimilated dative -ρα < -λα, cf. ταλλα in lines 5–6. The word is related to the Meroitic pqr /pakwarə/, 'prince'. The same root is also found in the toponym πογρογιάλ from the inscription of a daecon Philo from Tamit, with the plural marker -γογ and the genitive -ν (S. Donadoni, ‘Le iscrizioni’, [in:] Tamit (1964). Missione archeologica in Egitto dell’Università di Roma, Rome 1967, p. 67, no. 13 [DBMNT 451]).

3–4. $ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲟⲧⲏⲧ$ : a compound word analogous to $ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ $‘queen mother’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 203), with $ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ < ⲧⲟⲩ-ⲧⲏ$, ‘lord-gen’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 201) and $ⲧⲏ$, ‘daughter’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 20), with the predicative $-\lambda$ marking the nominal predicate. A meaning of ‘princess’ or ‘queen sister’ seems very likely (see the discussion below).

4. $ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ$: perhaps a form of $ⲧⲏⲧ$, ‘limit’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 87), with the predicative $-\lambda$. Its positioning before $ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ$ is curious, maybe suggesting the meaning ‘only’.

$ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ$: from the second person singular personal pronoun $ⲧⲏⲧ$, with the focus marker $-\lambda$.

5–6. $ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ$: from the third person singular personal pronoun $ⲧⲏⲧ$, with the dative $-\lambda$.

8. $ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ$: from $ⲧⲏⲧ$, ‘to do’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 13), with the predicative $-\lambda$.

8–9. $ⲟⲩⲃⲏⲧ$, ‘one’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 132).

9–11. $ⲟⲩⲃⲏⲧ$: from $ⲟⲩⲃ$, ‘two’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 138), with the emphatic (?) suffix $-\lambda-\lambda$; cf. $ⲟⲩⲃ$ in F, l. 1.


E. Three lines starting underneath the rope connecting the two shakers of the third dancer in the middle row, and continuing above the head of the fourth dancer.

$ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ ⲧⲏⲧⲟⲧⲏⲧ ⲧⲏⲧⲟⲧⲏⲧ[---]
ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ ⲧⲏⲧⲟⲧⲏⲧ ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ[---]
ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ[---]

Mother Mary, loosener of labour, …

ⲙⲁⲣⲓ, ‘Mary’.

ⲧⲟⲧⲓⲧⲉ: from ⲧⲟⲧⲓⲧ, ‘labour (of childbirth)’ (Browne, *Dictionary*, p. 193), with the genitive -ⲕ.

ⲡⲟⲧⲛⲧⲁⲩⲣⲓⲟ: noun deriving from ⲡⲟⲧⲛⲧ, ⲡⲧ(ⲅ) ‘to loosen’ (Browne, *Dictionary*, p. 102), with the nominalizer -ⲩⲣ and the predicator -ⲫ, here used to indicate the vocative.

2. ⲡⲧⲛ, ⲟⲧⲛⲧ: word spacing is unclear. ⲟⲧⲛ could be a first preterite of the second/third person singular form of ⲧⲫ, ‘to do,’ but this leaves ⲡⲧⲛ, ⲟⲧⲛⲧ unanalyzable. ⲧⲫ is the nominative of the first person singular personal pronoun, which makes no sense if the following is the second/third person singular verb. An exclamation seems implausible, because of both the phonological complexity of the phrase and the fact that this phrase appears to be uttered by an unmasked dancer (see the discussion below).

F. Three lines starting near the mouth of the fourth dancer on the middle row and continuing downward.


What are you, Mother Mary, what are you? – The daughter of the Church.
Mother Mary – The daughter of the Church.

1. ⲡⲧⲛⲧ: variant of the question word ⲡⲧⲛ (Browne, *Dictionary*, p. 117), with the predicator -ⲧ, ‘what?’ This particular spelling is quite rare, only attested elsewhere in a fragment from the Gospel of Mark found in Qasr Ibrim, Browne, *Literary Texts*, pp. 66–67 (dbmnt 1011), i, ll. 13 and 22: ⲡⲧⲛⲧ.

ⲧⲧⲟⲧⲛⲧ: from ⲧⲧ, ‘to sit, remain’ (Browne, *Dictionary*, p. 8). A usage as copula seems logical considering the rest of the context, which is straightforward in its meaning. The ending -ⲟⲧⲛⲧ may appear less clear, but has a parallel in documentary texts, where the initial rho of the present tense ending -ⲣⲧ has softened to a glide. For example, *P. Qasr Ibrim IV* 91 (dbmnt 2833), l. 1: ⲧⲟⲧⲛⲧ, ‘I give’. The subject is an implied subject ‘you,’ that is Mother Mary.


ⲧⲟⲧⲛ: a shortened form of ⲧⲟⲧⲛⲧ, with the deletion of the final predicator marker before ⲧⲟⲧⲛ, perhaps for metrical reasons.
2. **κκεν:** from κκε, 'church' (Browne, *Dictionary*, p. 93), with the genitive -ⲉ. 

**ⲁⲥα:** from ⲉⲥ, 'daughter', with the predicative -ⲃ marking it as a nominal predicate. κκεν ⲁⲥα is the answer to the question ⲉⲉⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲧα from line 1.

3. **κκα:** cf. κκεν in line 2. For the spelling with a single sigma, cf. κκεⲧⲧⲟⲩⲧα found in the so-called 'Stauros-Text', p. 25, ll. 4–5 (Browne, *Literary Texts*, pp. 22–29 (DBMNT 1391)).

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**G.** Three lines written upward above the head of the fourth dancer on the bottom row.

† ⲉⲣⲏⲧ ⲉⲣⲏ ⲉⲣⲏ ⲉⲧⲣⲏ

I bear, I make Mary bear.

1. **ⲉⲣⲏⲧ:** from ⲉⲣⲏⲧ, ‘to bear, to be pregnant,’ with the first person singular clitic -ⲥ and the predicative marker -ⲃ > -ⲥ; cf. ⲉⲧⲣⲏ in line 3.

1–2. ⲉⲣⲏⲧⲏ | ⲉⲧⲣⲏ: 'Mary,' with the accusative -ⲧⲣⲏ. This is the object of ⲉⲣⲏ ⲉⲣⲏ ⲉⲧⲣⲏ in lines 2–3.

2. **ⲉⲣⲏⲧⲏ:** from ⲉⲣⲏⲧ, with the predicative -ⲃ; cf. ⲉⲣⲏⲧⲏ in B, l. 1.

3. **ⲧⲣⲏ:** from ⲉⲣⲏ, ‘to give’ (Browne, *Dictionary*, p. 93), with the first person singular clitic -ⲥ and the predicative marker -ⲃ > -ⲏ, here used as an applicative with the preceding ⲉⲧⲣⲏⲧⲏ. It is unclear who the 'I' is referring to (see the discussion below).

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**H.** Two brief lines underneath the sticks of the second dancer on the bottom row.

οⲧⲟⲧ οⲧⲟⲧ οⲧⲟⲧ Ⲉⲣⲟⲧ

οⲧⲟⲧ οⲧⲟⲧ οⲧⲟⲧ appears to be an exclamation or an onomatopeia, cf. ⲉⲧⲟⲧⲟⲧⲧα in A, l. 1.
I. At least five lines starting to the right of the head of the first dancer on the bottom row. Their meaning is not fully clear.

\[ \dagger \alpha i k k a \ K e l m \alpha \]
\[ \eta [a r i] k : \ \gamma e r k \]
\[ \text{[2–3], \ ri} \]
\[ \ K k \]

Mary takes (her?) seat. ... she takes.

1. \(\alpha i k k a\): perhaps from \(\alpha i l a\), ‘seat’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 8), with the accusative -\(k\)a. This is the object of \(K e l m \alpha\).

1. \(K e l m \alpha\): from \(k l\), ‘to find, obtain, take’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 56), with the affirmative -\(m\)i, assimilated second/third person singular subject clitic -\(n\), and predicative -\(a\). We expect this type of verb form to come earlier in the sentence than a regular finite verb, which makes \(\eta [a r i] k\) from line 2 a plausible subject of this verb.

2. \(\eta [a r i] k\), ‘Mary’.

2. \(\gamma e r k\): perhaps from \(\gamma e p\), ‘to sleep’ (Browne, Dictionary, p. 199).

4–5. \(K e l m [a]\): reconstructed on the basis of \(K e l m \alpha\) from line 1.

J. Four lines of text written below the third and fourth dancers on the bottom. The text is hardly readable on the photograph and its interpretation is difficult. It appears to contain a description of the whole dancing scene.

\[ \text{[---]} \]
\[ e , k i k [---] \]
\[ \eta r , e n o \ h a r i [e] , o k o u [---] \]
\[ \text{[---]} \]

2. \(k i k\): the first person singular personal pronoun with the accusative -\(k(a)\).

3. \(e n o \ h a r i [e]\): reconstructed based on similar phrases in F, ll. 1 and 2.
3. COMMENTARY

3.1. Linguistic and palaeographical observations

Anne Boud’hors already observed that the slanted uncial used in Coptic manuscripts had remained ‘remarkably stable’ over several centuries. The same observation can be made as regards the Old Nubian texts, nearly all of which are written in the same style.\(^\text{12}\) This makes any palaeographic evaluation of the legends on the painting difficult. Martens-Czarneska suggests that the painting was painted during the second period of decoration of the monastery, between the second half of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,\(^\text{13}\) which is not incompatible with the writing.

The language used in the legends, however, shows several peculiarities as regards vocabulary that are difficult to interpret. First, there are three words which are rare: ḫræk, ‘to bear’, ṭpwn, ‘labour (of childbirth)’, and ḫlr, ‘seat’, all of which are only attested once elsewhere, in the Serra East codex\(^\text{14}\) (see below). Also the spelling m⟨p⟩ for the question word mh is very rare, only appearing once elsewhere, in a Gospel fragment found in Qasr Ibrim. Unfortunately, we are unable to draw any decisive conclusion from these facts as regards to the relative age of the writing, or the provenance of its author. A final clue may be the form mlpl found in F, l. 1. ‘Literary’ Old Nubian would have written the form *hræk, so the weakening of the rhotic to a glide could indicate the relative lateness of the text. Unfortunately, none of the other documents containing this variant have been dated either, and it may well be this is an older form that was later replaced rather than an invention.

Finally, we have been able to determine the meaning of two Old Nubian words that have not been previously attested: mnac, ‘queen sister’, on analogy with mnein, ‘queen mother’; and ppr, ‘prince’, on the basis of the Meroitic word with the same meaning, pqr.

\(^{12}\) Boud’hors, ‘L’onciale penchée en copte’ (cit. n. 9), p. 128.
\(^{13}\) Martens-Czarnecka, The Wall Paintings (cit. n. 1), p. 38.
\(^{14}\) Browne, Literary Texts, pp. 28–45 (dbmnt 1385).
3.2. The role of the Virgin Mary

As to the general interpretation of the scene, Martens-Czarneska already suggested that the dancing scene is related to the depiction on its right side, representing the standing Virgin Mary with Child.\(^\text{15}\) Even though not all of the inscriptions are equally readable or comprehensible, they appear to substantiate this suggestion. Our question is rather about the precise nature of their relation.

The Greek legend above the icon is written in the same hand as the inscriptions on the painting, and identifies the depiction as η άγια Μ Nhậtον η υρ του χυ, ‘The Holy Mary Virgin Mother of Christ’.\(^\text{16}\) Mother Mary is in fact mentioned several times in the inscriptions: E, l. 1: ἐνο ηρητ; F, l. 1: ἐνο ναρηε; F, l. 2: ἐνο ναρηε; and J, l. 3: ἐνο ναρηκ[ε].\(^\text{17}\) These invocations resemble her epithet as found twice in the cathedral in Faras, under a wall painting of the King’s Mother (also called Queen Mother) and the seated Virgin Mary with Christ:\(^\text{18}\) ἐνα ηρηκ παρονεολ, ‘Mother Mary the Virgin’,\(^\text{19}\) and ἂφοι ἐνα ηρηκ, ‘Mary Mother of the Saviour’.\(^\text{20}\)


\(^{16}\) The inscription remains unpublished; my reading from the photo and drawing in Martens-Czarnecka, *The Wall Paintings* (cit. n. 1), fig. 81.

\(^{17}\) ἐνο is attested as an onomastic element or title in several Nubian names. Perhaps in all these cases a translation of ‘mother’ should be proposed: *P. Qasr Ibrim* III 32 (dbmnt 590), l. 18: ἐνοτανκάλο; *P. Qasr Ibrim* III 36 (dbmnt 584), l. 25: ἐνοθαδούκαλ; *P. Qasr Ibrim* III 40 (dbmnt 588), l. 20: ἐνοθονεσκάλο; *P. Qasr Ibrim* III 44 (dbmnt 1028), l. 1: ἐνοθαρηίνη; *P. Qasr Ibrim* IV 75 (dbmnt 2808), l. 9: ἐνο’ ηρικρα. Cf. also the Coptic funerary stela *I. Khartoum Capt. 7* (dbmnt 37), prepared for a certain ταμαλυ ουαρενο, ‘My mother Ouareno’ (ll. 1–2; I thank Grzegorz Ochała for this reference). ἐνο thus appears to follow the same logic as παπο.

\(^{18}\) The figure to the side of the Virgin Mary was initially thought to be St Damiana, but was later identified as the King’s Mother owing to the lack of a legend and iconographical evidence (Dobrochna Zielińska, ‘The iconography of power – the power of iconography: The Nubian royal ideology and its expression in wall painting’, [in:] Julie R. Anderson & D. A. Welsby (eds.), *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond: Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies [= British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan]* 1, Leuven 2014, p. 946, n. 13.

\(^{19}\) Altheim & Stiehl, *Christentum am Roten Meer* I (cit. above, comm. to E, l. 1), pp. 504–505 (dbmnt 1860), l. 1.

\(^{20}\) Ibidem, p. 505 (dbmnt 1861), l. 1.
However, we find neither the epithet ‘Virgin’ or ‘Mother of the Saviour’ in the inscriptions that accompany the painting. In fact, we only find one: κכוכ εⲟⲧⲁ, ‘Daughter of the Church’ (F, l. 2). We hope to elucidate the meaning of this particular phrase, and its relation to the queen sister in the context of the other inscriptions below.

When inspecting those parts of the texts whose meaning we feel confident about, it appears that many of the phrases have to do with fertility or child bearing. There is a repeated appearance of the root ṃⲣⲕ, ‘to bear’: B, l. 1: ṃⲣⲕⲉⲃⲥ, G, l. 1: ṃⲣⲕⲃ, and G, ll. 2–3: ṃⲣⲕⲕⲗⲉⲃⲁ. This is a rare word, otherwise only attested once in the Serra East codex: ṃⲧⲧⲗⲟⲩⲩⲃⲳ ⲁⲧⲧⲟⲩ ⲕⲁⲇⲓ ⲙⲃⲟ ⲑⲩⲣⲕⲕⲉⲃⲁ. ‘Then, the earth bears the ripened ears’ (p. 6, ll. 2–4). The meaning of the verb here is connected with the metaphorical fertility of the earth, whereas the widely attested verb ṧⲟⲩⲣⲱ, ‘to bear’, appears to be more connected with child-bearing. In fact, the latter verb is the one attested in the Old Nubian translation of the epithet Theotokos: ⲧⲱⲭ ⲧⲱⲟⲩⲓⲟⲧ ⲡⲣ ⸌ⲑ⸍· ⲙⲃⲣⲓⲃ ⲑⲓⲏ. ‘Virgin Mary Theotokos’; ⲧⲱⲭ ⲧⲱⲟⲩⲓⲟⲟ ⲧⲣⲓⲃ. ‘Mary Theotokos’. Claude Rilly suggests an etymological relation between the Meroitic erike, ‘engendré’, and Old Nubian ṃⲣⲕ, ‘to bear’, and Ⲝ-ⲗⲁⲁⲧ, ‘birth’. Considering the fact that several royal titles such as ṭⲟⲣⲟ and Ⲫⲣⲱ are etymologically related to Meroitic, it is perhaps the case that ṃⲣⲕ was an archaic word only used in relation to royal birth, the common verb ṧⲟⲩⲣⲱ being reserved for other instances, remarkably including the birth of God.

That in the Nubian tradition Mary Theotokos was associated with fertility can be gathered from the Nubian Miracle of Saint Menas. In the story, an infertile woman gives an egg to a skipper as an offer to the

21 Both verbs are still reflected in modern Nubian languages, ⲧⲣⲟⲩ in Kenzi and Dongolawi, ⲧⲧⲧⲩⲩ in Nobiin. So perhaps the variation is of dialectal nature.
22 P. Qasr Ibrim III 57 (dbmnt 1041), i, l. 1.
24 Rilly, Le méroïtique (cit. n. 16), pp. 122–123.
25 El-Shaﬁe el-Guzuli & van Gerven Oei, The Miracle of Saint Mina (cit. above, comm. to E, l. 1).
Church of Saint Menas, but the skipper eats the egg underway. When Saint Menas confronts him in the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary, the skipper runs to an icon of Mary Theotokos after which he confesses his sins and gives birth to a fowl – a fowl that subsequently brings fertility to the woman and her entire household.

We find another reference to fertility in E, l. 1, where the fragmentary text seems to suggest that Mother Mary ‘loosens,’ or perhaps ‘eases,’ the ‘labour’ of childbirth. The word δογητῆ, ‘labour’, is here clearly readable and, as with ἄρκ, the only other attestation is found in the Serra East codex: δογητοτ[0]γλο[λ]ο τοτ ογινανας, ‘In travails you will bear children’ (p. 23, ll. 1–2),26 which is what God tells Eve as he casts her out of Paradise. δογητ, therefore, appears to carry a negative connotation of pain. It is this pain that the Virgin Mary is called upon to ease.

The childbirth of which woman is Mother Mary then supposed to ease? The lines spoken in D maybe suggest an answer. The inscription features two sentences, framed between the words ὑρῳ, ‘king’ (D, l. 1), and Ῥω, ‘queen mother’ (D, l. 12). The Nubian royal dynasty was matrilineal in the time period in which the painting was painted. This meant that the successor to the king was not his son, but the son of his sister.27 Inscription D twice features the previously unattested noun Ῥωνακ, a compound noun formed from Ῥω, ‘of the lord’, and ἰκ, ‘daughter’. Taking into account the context of the other inscriptions, it would make sense to suggest that the dance is invoking Mother Mary to ease the childbirth of the queen sister in order to bring forth a πογρα, ‘prince’ (D, l. 3) to the throne, thus making her the future queen mother. Thus εἰκά (D, ll. 2 and 4) refers to the actual Ῥωνακ, who, perhaps, has already entered labour.

This connection between Mary Theotokos and queen sister and mother can be witnessed in two paintings in the Faras Cathedral, showing female

26 Browne, Literary Texts, p. 43.
members of the royal family under the protection of the Virgin Mary. First, a painting of what Bożena Rostkowska calls a ‘princesse’, showing the Virgin Mary with Christ standing behind the queen sister with her right hand and the Queen sister’s shoulder. The second is a monumental effigy of Queen Mother Martha and Mary Theotokos in the Faras cathedral, currently exhibited in the Sudan National Museum. The painting, which just like the painting in the Dongola monastery annex is found on the northern wall, shows the Holy Virgin resting her hand in protection on the shoulder of the dark-skinned Martha. As Bożena Mierzejewska suggests, ‘The dress, attributes and regalia of both the queen and the Theotokos mirror the Heavenly order: Mary is the Queen of Heaven and Martha is her representative on Earth’.

3.3. The location of the painting

This brings us to the location of the painting, namely a room in the Southwest Annex to the monastery on Kom H in Dongola. Why would a painting showing a dance that invokes Mother Mary in the context of the queen sister’s pregnancy be present in such a space? Could it be that the queen sister was brought to the monastery annex to receive specific medical care? Or perhaps to keep her away from the dangers and intrigues of the palace? As Giovanni Ruffini suggests, there might have been a ‘hidden presence of some challenge to the principle of matrilineal succession’, because of either the increasing influence of Islam or uncertainties surrounding the succession.

29 Ibidem, p. 199, fig. 2.
Such an interpretation would allow us to establish a parallel between Mother Mary as κόσμος αὐτῆς, ‘Daughter of the Church’ (r, l. 2), and the king’s sister as the ‘daughter of the queen mother’. Both were ‘presented’ to the church. According to the apocryphal Gospel of James, Mary’s parents Joachim and Anna consecrated her to God in the Temple of Jerusalem (Prot. Jas. 4:1; 7:1–8:2). This narrative was most probably known in the Nubian church as well, as a wall painting in the Paulos’ cathedral at Faras depicts St. Anna as the ‘Mother of [Mary] Theotokos’. The care of the Church over the future queen mother thus reflects the care of the Church over the young Mary. Considering the economy of the painting and the importance of the theme with which it deals – the birth of the successor to the royal throne – it would be difficult to imagine how this repetition of the noun αὐτῆς could be purely accidental.

The invocation of Mother Mary thus seems to have at least a double function: to ease the labour pains of the soon-to-be-mother of the future king, and also to provide legitimacy to the matrilineal bloodline. As Dobrochna Zielińska remarks about the iconographical programme in the Faras cathedral, the sequence of Anna – Virgin Mary – queen mother forms an ‘unconventional «succession» line’ that is a purely Nubian invention, created in order to ideologically justify to a matrilineal dynastic system harking back to earlier Kushite dynastic traditions, which assigned an equally important functions to the queen mother and the sister of the king.

Furthermore, both the painting of Mary Theotokos and the queen mother in the Faras cathedral, and the paintings of the Virgin Mary and the dancing scene in room 5 of the Southwest Annex are painted on the north-

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ern wall. Both spaces seem to have been marked as feminine. In personal communication, Adam Łajtar remarks that overall the decoration in the Southwest Annex is dominated by representations of Mary and that several of the paintings have been donated by women. Stefan Jakobielski is reported to have said with regard to the walls in the northern nave of the Faras cathedral that most of graffiti on those walls had been left by women.\(^{37}\)

Until we have a complete edition of the wall inscriptions of both sites we have to remain on the level of speculation, but the combination of the dancing scene evoking the care of the Virgin Mary over childbirth, the relation between the Virgin Mary and the Nubian matrilineal dynastic line, and the domination of Mary representations inside the Southwest Annex suggests that we are perhaps dealing with a certain type of maternity ward, with room 5 reserved for royal guests.

3.4. \textit{The nature of the dance}

The text spoken by the dancers must have had a sung or chanted quality, considering the presence of the two exclamations $\text{ⲁ̄ⲁ̄ⲁ̄ⲟⲩⲁ̄}$ (A, l. 1) and $\text{ⲟ̣ⲩⲟ̣ⲩ ⲝⲟ̣ⲩ}$ (H, ll. 1–2), both uttered by dancers donning masks with cowry shells. These types of exclamations or onomatopoeia are otherwise not attested in Old Nubian texts.

There also seems to be a role division within the group of dancers. It appears that the dancers dressed in chitons with the castanets have the longer texts (C, D, E, F, and I), whereas those with the masks only speak brief sentences (B, G) or exclamations/onomatopoeia (A, H). Especially the phrase uttered in G is difficult to interpret. All dancers with the castanets seem to appeal directly to Mother Mary, whereas the first person speaking in G remains obscure. Does it refer to the dancer himself or to

what he impersonates? Martens-Czarneska suggests that similar cowry shell masks ‘represent various animals associated with an ancestor cult, most often hyenas’. Could it be that the ‘I’ in ḥrā[l] ḫrē, ‘I make Mary bear’ (G, ll. 2–3), the ‘I’ that turns her into kōknə ḫrānən, ‘the bearer or purity’ (B, l. 1), refers to such an ancestral spirit?

Such an interpretation raises the question whether the (religious) attitude of the mask-wearing dancers toward Mother Mary is the same as castanet dancers’, and, moreover, whether it is indeed the case that both groups of dancers are male. Considering the decidedly feminine space in which we find this painting, would it not be likely that at least some of the participants in the ritual were women too? Are the ‘men’ in ‘skirts and shawls’ not simply women? These are questions, however, that cannot be answered presently.

The phrase in G furthermore opens another possibility, namely that the queen sister in question is called by the same name as the Virgin Mary. It would be curious if ḥrānə (G, ll. 1–2) would literally refer to the Virgin Mary, but note that in this case, and in the final sentences in H, the ḫnə is absent. So perhaps the ‘Mary’ here refers not to the religious figure, but to the actual woman expected to give birth. If we then inspect the attested queen mothers called ḥrā in Old Nubian documents, we find that the most frequently attested ḥnən in the extant corpus is ḥrā ENSIONS, ‘Mary Who Has Jesus’, in sources all dating from the latter half of the twelfth century. Although this dating coincides remarkably well with Martens-Czarneska’s dating of the painting based on iconographical and archeological evidence, this remains speculative.


4. CONCLUSION

In this article I have tried to interpret the legends on the painting of the dancers in room 5 of the Southwest Annex of the monastery in Kom H in Dongola in a manner that takes into consideration both the linguistic data as well as the philological, historical, iconographical, and architectural context in which these data are manifested. The full and satisfying interpretation of such inscriptions can only happen on the basis of this context and finally relies only partially on grammatical analysis or dictionary meanings. Their referentiality is intimately tied up with the painting in which they appear, the painting with the paintings on the same wall, in the same room, in the same building, and with all the wall inscriptions that accompany them – paintings and inscriptions that we can then compare with similar spaces elsewhere in Nubia. At the same time, I realize that my reading of the legends has only barely scratched the surface of the meaning these inscriptions may have had in the lives of the people who first wrote and read them.

Nevertheless we may conclude that the painting, together with its legends, bears witness to a gathering of two different Nubian groups, either constituted as groups for this specific occasion or a reflection of broader social or cultic variety, joining together to perform a ritual that marks an important but also precarious moment in communal life, the birth of a new male heir to the royal throne. The Virgin Mary, in her quality as the Mother of God and protector of the queen mother and sister, and perhaps ancestral spirits, are invoked to ease the pangs of labour of the king's sister so that she may give birth to a successor and thus continue the matrilineal bloodline of the Nubian dynasty.

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