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FOUNDED BY  
RAPHAEL TAUBENSCHLAG

EDITED BY  
TOMASZ DERDA  
ADAM ŁAJTAR  
JAKUB URBANIK

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ΠΑΡΔΔΟΣ



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INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY  
DEPARTMENT OF PAPHYROLOGY



UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW  
FACULTY OF LAW AND ADMINISTRATION  
CHAIR OF ROMAN LAW AND THE LAW OF ANTIQUITY



THE RAPHAEL TAUBENSCHLAG  
FOUNDATION

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**Keywords:** declaration of birth, *lex Papia Poppaea*, public display of documents, exedra.

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**Keywords:** Coptic, ostraca, Western Thebes, MMA 1152, administration, taxes, guaranties, accounts.

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**Keywords:** labour contracts, *παραμοναί*, loans, *προχρεία*, liturgical work, chirographs, copies, *αντίγραφον*, *ἕσον*, notaries (High Empire), *ταβελλίων* (Late Antiquity).

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**Keywords:** Christian Nubia, onomastics, ghost names, Greek, Coptic, Old Nubian.

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**Keywords:** Syene/Aswan, Elephantine, Deir Anba Hadra, bishops, Late Antiquity, early Islamic period, funerary inscriptions, credit loan, inscribed terracotta lamps, Christian Nubia, Adulis.

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language. It is a *paraphrasis* combining two series of lessons on the Digest, an index, and a *paragraphai* lecture. They are dated between spring of 534 and March of 536 and were taught by an unknown law teacher (in either Beirut or Constantinople). Afterwards, they were used by Stephanus for his *paragraphai* on the digest. The latter seems to have taught between March 536 and a short time after 542. The unknown law teacher was probably one of the eight addressees of Justinian's constitution *Omnem*, who taught at two law schools. Four of those *antecessores* have already been excluded by other authors. The others have left either no or too few texts. Therefore, the attribution to one of these *antecessores* is impossible, perhaps except for Anatolius, who taught in Beirut.

**Keywords:** Roman law, juristic papyrology, literary papyri, *Digesta Iustiniani*, law teaching in Greek, contract law, *paraphrasis*.

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**Abstract:** First edition of two funerary stelae from the Monastery on Kom H, Dongola, inscribed in Sahidic Coptic. Both stelae show interesting textual features and bear absolute dates that assign them to the third quarter of the eighth century.

**Keywords:** Christian Nubia, Dongola, Makuria, Sahidic Coptic, funerary epigraphy, monasticism.

Jacques van der Vliet

## TWO DATED COPTIC EPITAPHS FROM DONGOLA

DURING THE 2018 CAMPAIGN of the Polish Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw at the site of the monastery on Kom H at Dongola, a fully preserved sandstone funerary stela came to light, inscribed in Coptic. Its textual formulary and exact date justify its separate publication. A second Coptic stela, discovered at the site of Kom H already in 2015, is much less well preserved, but bears a date close to that of the other stela and is therefore published simultaneously.<sup>1</sup> In addition to bearing absolute dates that assign them to the third quarter of the eighth century, both epitaphs offer textual peculiarities that witness the considerable degree of local variation prevalent in the funerary epigraphy of the Christian Nile Valley, including early-medieval Makuria. As the number of Coptic funerary monuments found at Dongola is relatively insignificant, certainly compared to other Makurian sites, such as Ghazali,<sup>2</sup> these two stelae are a welcome addition to the repertoire. The reverse of the first stela bears a secondary text, which includes an interesting variant of the much discussed Greek phrase *XPICTOY MAPIA ΓENNA*.

<sup>1</sup> I thank Włodzimierz Godlewski, the director of the mission, for his permission to publish both stelae here and for the photos that accompany this article.

<sup>2</sup> See the statistics in G. OCHAŁA, 'Multilingualism in medieval Nubia: Qualitative and quantitative approaches', *Dotawo* 1 (2014), pp. 1–50, esp. 37–40; IDEM, 'Multilingualism in Christian Nubia: A case study of the monastery of Ghazali (Wadi Abu Dom, Sudan)', [in:] *PapCongr* XXVII, pp. 1265–1283, esp. 1275–1278, with fig. 2.



**1. Epitaph of a monk Michaelinkouda**  
**verso: apotropaic inscriptions**

Inventory no. Hdd.18.322, discovered in 2018 in the upper layer of debris in room W.I, in north building 4 of the monastery on Kom H.

A rectangular sandstone stela, almost intact, but for some surface damage and a missing lower left corner (without loss of text), measuring 30 × 19 × 6.5 cm. The recto is inscribed with fifteen lines of Sahidic text contained within an epigraphic field marked off by a single line (double in top) that leaves narrow outer margins (lacking at the right). The script is a rather carefully incised and well ruled upright uncial, clearly legible, but somewhat stiff and inelegant. The letters preserve traces of the original inlaid colour. Some odd writings (e.g. in l. 12) suggest that the mason copied a model that he did not well understand in all details.

The verso, which is much more worn, bears a secondary text of a different nature, consisting of five lines of crudely incised and badly ruled uncials of uneven size. The hand is clearly different from the one that inscribed the recto. As far as the language can be ascertained, this secondary text is in Greek.

4 April 758

- † ʒITḾ POYƐZ-  
 CAʒNE ḾN ΠTΩΩ  
 ḾΠENCΩTHP I(HCOY)C  
 4 ΠƐXP(ICTO)C ΠETƐ-  
 OYNTĀC *vac.* TEZOY-  
 CIA ḾMAȚ ḾḾETO-  
 NĒ ḾḾ NEṬḾOOCṬ  
 8 NTACḾITON ḾMOQ  
 ḾBI MIΧΔHΛIN-  
 KOCḶΔA ΠMONAX(OC)  
 ʒḾ COY ΨIC ḾΠEBOT  
 12 ΠAPMOYTE IHCΔI(KTIOHOC) IΔ  
 ΔIOKΛI(TIΔHOY) ḶOC *vac.* ΠHOYTE

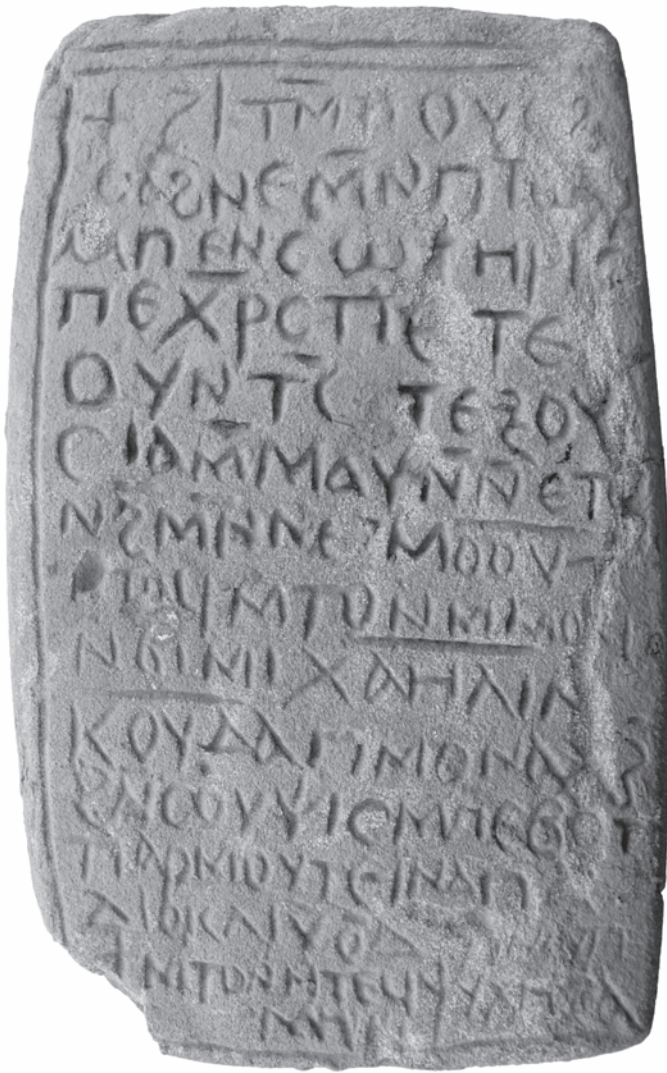


Fig. 1. Epitaph of a monk Michaelinkouda  
(photo W. Godlewski; courtesy of PCMA)

† ΜΤΟΝ ΝΤΕΦΥΧΗ ΖΑ-  
*vac.* ΜΗΝ *vac.*

3. ι(ησογ)ς: ις stone || 4. περ(ιςτο)ς: πε̅ρς stone || 4-5. πετελογν̅τ̅ς: read πετελογν̅τ̅ || 10. πμοναχ(ος): πμοναχ̅ς stone || 12. ηνδι(κτιονος) ια: ηνδπα stone (see comm.) || 13. διοκλη(τιανογ): διοκλη(τιανογ), but see comm.

† *By the order and dispensation of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has authority over the living and the dead, Michaelinkouda, the monk, went to rest on the ninth of the month Parmoute of the eleventh indiction, (in the year) since Diocletian 474.*

*O God, grant rest to his soul. Amen.*

1-2. The opening formula ϣϣⲓⲛ ϣⲟⲩⲉⲗⲓⲥⲁⲗⲁⲛⲉ ⲓⲛ ⲡⲓⲧⲱⲩ is apparently a free Coptic rendering of the Greek *νεύσει και κελεύσει / βουλήσει*, which is fairly common at this position in Nubian epitaphs; see *I. Khartoum Greek* 1, ll. 1-2, with comm. This is the first attestation of its present Coptic version, even though the closely related opening formula ϣϣⲓⲛ ⲧⲕⲉⲗⲉⲗⲥⲓⲥ ⲙⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ, ‘by the command of God’, was popular in Ghazali. For the use of the word ⲧⲱⲩ, to express the idea of divine dispensation, one may compare the Ghazali stela *I. Khartoum Copt.* 77, l. 11, with comm., and two bishops stelae from Sai Island, published in A. Tsakos, ‘Medieval funerary inscriptions from Sai Island’, *Cahiers de recherches de l’Institut de papyrologie et d’égyptologie de Lille* 29 (2011), pp. 297-330, nos. 5, ll. 7 and 8, and 6, l. 8.

4-5. ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲟⲩⲛⲧⲥ for ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲟⲩⲛⲧⲩ, probably under the influence of the following feminine noun.

4-7. The epithet ‘who has authority over the living and the dead’ is an as yet unattested variant of the fairly widespread liturgical formula ‘who has authority over life and death’, which ultimately derives from Wisdom 16:13a (Sahidic: ⲧⲱⲕ ⲉⲁⲣ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲗⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲙⲡⲱⲛⲉ ⲙⲛ ⲡⲙⲟⲩ, ed. P. de Lagarde, *Aegyptiaca*, Göttingen 1883, p. 98); for its occurrence in Nubian funerary epigraphy, see *I. Khartoum Greek* 26, ll. 3-5, with comm. (Greek); *I. Khartoum Copt.* 27, ll. 2-4, with n. 404 (Coptic). Note that in Nubian Coptic epigraphy the epithet was formerly known only from Sai Island (see, in addition to *I. Khartoum Copt.* 27 and *I. Cambridge Egypt* 115, Tsakos, ‘Medieval funerary inscriptions from Sai Island’ [cit. supra], nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 15, 36, and 37), where it takes the form ‘who has authority to kill and to make alive (ⲉⲙⲟⲩⲟⲩⲧ ⲁⲗⲱ ⲉⲧⲁⲛⲉⲟ)’ or, alternatively, ‘who has authority to make alive and to kill’, replacing the nouns ‘life and death’ of the liturgical (and biblical) model with active verbs. Here yet another variant is found, which replaces ‘life and death’ with ‘the living and the dead’. For a similar Greek epithet of God, ‘being lord over the living and the dead’, in epitaphs mostly from (northern) Nobadia, see *I. Khartoum Greek*, p. 26.

In the stone’s ⲛⲉⲧⲓⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ, l. 7, the damaged first *tau* seems oddly shaped, almost resembling a *z*; I am unable to account for the long superlinear stroke.

9-10. The Nubian name Michaelinkouda is marked as a linguistically non-Greek/Coptic element by long strokes above.

12. The stone clearly reads ⲓⲛⲁⲡⲁ, which makes no sense. As the Diocletian year 474 (AD 757/8) was an eleventh indiction year, it must be assumed that the

mason misread a group  $\text{ⲙⲗⲓ ⲓⲁ}$ . Both here and in line 13 ( $\Delta\text{ⲓⲐⲖⲕⲗⲓ}$ ), our second *iota* is most likely to be interpreted as the mason's inexpert rendering of an abbreviation stroke (reading  $\text{ⲙⲗⲓ}$  and  $\Delta\text{ⲓⲐⲖⲕⲗ}$ , respectively). For indiction dates in Nubian sources, see G. Ochała, *Chronological Systems of Christian Nubia* [= *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplement* 16], Warsaw 2011, pp. 99–135.

This carefully executed epitaph of a monk with the popular Nubian name Michaelinkouda shows an unusual opening formula that reflects Nubian Greek models (ll. 1–4) and an interesting variant of the epithet that asserts Christ's authority over life and death (ll. 4–7, after Wisdom 16:13a). Compared to the Dongola stela of Bishop Joseph, which is less than a century older and still partly in Greek,<sup>3</sup> it attests to the rapid development of a local Coptic funerary formulary on Makurian soil.

verso

Ⲳ(ⲏⲏⲟⲟⲩ)ⲥ, Ⲙⲓ(ⲕⲁⲏ)ⲗ.  
 ⲁ Ⲱ  
 Ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ,  
 4 γέννα  
 Ⲫ(ⲣⲓⲥⲧⲟ)ⲩ̅.

1. Ⲳ(ⲏⲏⲟⲟⲩ)ⲥ: ⲓⲥ stone | Ⲙⲓ(ⲕⲁⲏ)ⲗ: ⲙⲗⲓ stone || 5. Ⲫ(ⲣⲓⲥⲧⲟ)ⲩ̅: ⲕⲲ stone

*Jesus, Michael.*

*Alpha – Omega*

*Mary, mother of Christ.*

1. It is unclear whether the long stroke above the group  $\text{ⲙⲗⲓ}$  is a remnant of a line demarcating the epigraphic field (otherwise invisible on this face of the stone) or the marker of the abbreviation, as seems more likely.

3–5. Apparently, this is a variant of the phrase  $\text{ⲪⲒⲒⲒⲒⲐⲟⲩ}$  (or  $\text{ⲪⲒⲒⲒⲐⲟⲩ}$ )  $\text{ⲘⲈⲒⲒⲈ ⲒⲈⲒⲒⲒⲈ}$ , seen by several scholars as the model for the much debated symbol  $\text{ⲪⲘⲒ}$ , reading  $\text{ⲒⲈⲒⲒⲒⲈ}$  as a verbal form ( $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\acute{\alpha}$ ) and correcting the genitive

<sup>3</sup> S. JAKOBIELSKI & J. VAN DER VLIET, 'From Aswan to Dongola: The epitaph of Bishop Joseph (died AD 668)', [in:] A. ŁAJTAR & J. VAN DER VLIET (eds.), *Nubian Voices: Studies in Christian Nubian Culture* [= *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplement* 15], Warsaw 2011, pp. 15–35.

$\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$  (or the nominative  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ ) into an accusative ('Mary bore Christ'). For a rightly critical appraisal of this position, by Tomasz Derda, see *P. Naqlun* I, pp. 179–184; cf. Anna Di Bitonto Kasser, 'Una nuova attestazione di  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon \mu\alpha\rho\iota\alpha \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\nu\alpha$ ,' *Aegyptus* 78 (1998), pp. 123–129, who discusses other attestations of a genitive  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ , and A. Tsakos, 'The cryptogram *MXT* as a variant of the cryptogram *XMT*: On text and image in Christian Nubia,' [in:] A. Łajtar, G. Ochała, & J. van der Vliet (eds.), *Nubian Voices II: New Texts and Studies on Christian Nubian Culture* [= *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplement* 27], Warsaw 2015, pp. 245–262, who takes Nubian variants into account. Also given the unparalleled order of the constituents, I prefer not to correct the case markings as found in the present inscription and opt for an interpretation cautiously put forward by Tomasz Derda, taking  $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\nu\alpha$  as a rare word for 'mother' (see *P. Naqlun* I, pp. 181–182, with n. 13; it must be added, though, that the modern Greek examples of  $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\nu\alpha$ , 'mother', adduced by Derda all appear to occur in negative contexts).

The inscription on the verso, executed in a much rougher and more informal hand than the recto, is suggestive of a later reuse of the stone. The graffito-like text consists mainly of names and symbols that may be indicative of an apotropaic function. The phrase  $\text{Μαρία, γέννα Χ(ριστο)ϰ}$  (ll. 3–5), if that is the correct interpretation, with its unprecedented order of the constituents, may prove to be of interest for the still ongoing debate on the resolution of the symbol *XMT*, a debate that is obviously beyond the scope of the present publication.

## 2. EPITAPH OF A CLERIC

Two fragments of a single stela in light-brown terracotta, bearing inventory nos. Hdd.2015.001 (a) and (b). Fragment (a) was discovered in 2015 in debris above the walking level south of the monastery church of Kom H; fragment (b), in the dismantlement of the southern partition wall of the same church.

Fragment (a) preserves part of the left margin of the original stela and measures 16 × 8 × 2.5 cm; fragment (b) is part of the lower margin and measures 13 × 14 × 2.5 cm. Although they do not physically connect, the two fragments nowhere overlap and are clearly incised by the same scribe, who writes a beautiful, just slightly sloping round uncial with, in



Fig. 2. Inscriptions on the back of the epitaph of Michaelinkouda  
(photo W. Godlewski; courtesy of PCMA)

particular, an elegant *upsilon*. It can therefore be assumed that both belong to the same stela and, if our reconstruction of the text is correct, share our much damaged ll. 8–9 (where | marks the hypothetical transition between the fragments).

The stela was inscribed with a Sahidic text of an estimated length of thirteen–fifteen lines, of which eleven are partly preserved. The length of the lines can be estimated at about fourteen–fifteen characters. Parts of the death statement with an extensive date (ll. 1–8) and the prayer section (ll. 8–12) survive, both in a very lacunary state. The letters preserve traces of an original painted gesso layer.

AD 771/2

[--- ΝΤΑϞ-]  
 Μ[ΤΟΝ ΜΜΟϞ ΝΒΙ ΠΕΥ-]  
 ΛΑ[ΒΕΣΤΑϞΤ' . . . . .]  
 4 ἰΩ[ϞΑΝΝΗΣ . . . . .]  
 ϞΜ Π[-----]  
 ΟΥΝ[-----]  
 ΕΤΟΥ[Ϟ ΑΠΟ ΔΙΟΚΛΗϞΤ']  
 8 ὙΠΗ . | . . [ . . . . . ]  
 Π[ΤΕΧ]ΝΙΤΗ[Ϟ . . . . ΜΠ-]  
 [ΤΗΡ]Ϟ ΕϞΕ† Μ[ΤΟΝ ΝΑϞ]  
 [ϞΝ] ϞΟΥΝῶ ΝΑΒ[ΡΑϞΑΜ]  
 12 [ΜΝ Ι]ϞΑΔΚ ΜΝ ἰΔϞ[ΩΒ †]

4. ἰΩ[ϞΑΝΝΗΣ: ΟΓ ἰΩ[ϞΗΦ || 6. ΟΥΝ]: ΝΟΤ ΟΥΝ[ || 7. ΕΤΟΥ[Ϟ ΑΠΟ ΔΙΟΚΛΗϞΤ']: ἔτους ἀπὸ Διοκλητιανοῦ

[---] *went to rest the most reverend* [...] *John* (?) [---] *in the* [---] *of the year since Diocletian 488.*

*May* [---], *the* [...] *artificer of the universe, grant him rest in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.* †

1. The statement of death must have been preceded by an opening formula, such as ϞΙΤΝ ΤΚΕΛΕΥϞΙϞ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ, ‘by the command of God’, popular in Ghazali, or some variant (such as exhibited, for instance, by the other stela published here).

2–3. The term of address ΕΥΛΑΒΕΣΤΑΤΟϞ (ΟΓ ΕΥΛΑΒΗΣ) must have been followed by a clerical (or monastic) title; see *I. Khartoum Greek* 50; *I. Khartoum Copt.* 84, l. 3;



Fig. 3. Epitaph of a cleric  
(photo W. Godlewski; courtesy of PCMA)

J. van der Vliet, in A. Łajtar, 'New finds of Greek epitaphs at Dongola (with an appendix by J. van der Vliet)', [in:] Łajtar & van der Vliet (eds.), *Nubian Voices* (cit. n. 3), pp. 37–94, at 93, on l. 2, all with further references.

8. The faint traces following the date do not allow the reconstruction of the opening of the prayer section (ll. 8–12), which must have begun with an address of the Godhead, continued in line 9.



9–10. Before the verb in line 10, an epithet of God is expected, for which the preserved remains suggest *τεχνίτης*, ‘craftsman, artificer’, which is a common synonym of *δημιουργός* in early-Christian literature, ever since Hebr. 11:10; see G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961, p. 1392a, *s.v.* The epithet is not uncommon in Coptic homilies; see, e.g., Severian of Gabala, *Encomium on Saints Peter and Paul*, Sahidic, ed. M. E. Foat, [in:] L. Depuydt (ed.), *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library [= Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 544, Scriptores Coptici 47]*, Leuven 1993, p. 100, l. 20, where Christ is called precisely *πτεχνίτης μπητηρϥ*. In the present context, this epithet clearly functions as a variant of the much more common *πδνημιουργος μπητηρϥ* (see *I. Khartoum Copt.*, pp. 26–27; cf. *I. Khartoum Greek* 23, ll. 2–3), for which *I. Khartoum Copt.* 27, ll. 13–14, from Sai Island, has the slightly different *πδεσποτης μπητηρϥ*. In the somewhat hypothetical lacuna after *π[τεχ]μητη[ς]*, in line 9, perhaps fill in *μμε*, ‘the true artificer’.

In addition to an indubitable date, the fragmentary remains of this elegantly inscribed epitaph of a clergyman or monk offer, in the opening of the prayer section, an address of God as ‘artificer of the universe’ (*πτεχνίτης μπητηρϥ*, ll. 9–10, largely reconstructed). Although well attested in Coptic literary texts, the epithet is as yet unparalleled in Nubian funerary epigraphy.

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