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Three Greek epitaphs from Banganarti

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THREE GREEK EPITAPHS
FROM BANGANARTI

The third season of work of the Polish Joint Expedition to the Middle Nile (also known as the Southern Dongola Reach Survey – SDRS) was conducted in 2003 at Banganarti, a village on the right bank of the Nile c. 10 km. south of Old Dongola, the capital of the medieval Christian Kingdom of Makuria. Excavation unearthed a church constructed in the 10th century and subsequently remodelled on several occasions. The walls of the church bear numerous inscriptions scratched into the plaster by persons.

1 The toponym Banganarti is Nubian and means ‘Island of the Locust.’ For a description of the site and a preliminary presentation of results after three seasons of work, see B. Żurawski, “Survey and Excavations between Old Dongola and Ez-Zuma,” Sudan & Nubia 6 (2002), pp. 73–85.
visiting this place of worship. As many inscriptions contain invocations and prayers to Archangel Raphael, one may presume that the church functioned under the name of this very Archangel.

Below this church another church was discovered. It probably was constructed in the 7th/8th c. An inscription in black ink near the south edge of the apse was found to contain a prayer to the Archangel Raphael for a King Zacharias, most probably Zacharias I (first half of the 9th c.). It indicates that this ‘Lower Church’, like the ‘Upper Church’, must have been dedicated to the Archangel Raphael.

During the 2003 season, three funerary stelae with inscriptions in Greek were discovered. All three were found in a secondary context, but they doubtless originally were placed on graves surrounding either the ‘Lower’ or ‘Upper Church’.

1. EPITAPH OF MARKOS, A HEGEMON (PLATE I)

The stone was found inserted, the script upside down, in the pavement of an elongated room behind the main chapel of the ‘Upper Church’. Originally, it must have been placed in a grave situated near the ‘Lower Church’.

It is a roughly rectangular slab of a blue-grey marble, 37.8 cm. high, 23.5 cm. wide, and 4.8 cm. thick. But for some minor surface damage, the stone is entirely preserved. Its reverse is unworked, whilst the plainly incised text covers its entire upper surface. Delicate guidelines indicating both the bottom and the top of letters are visible in lines 1-4 and 7 of the inscription. The hand may be described as round epigraphic majuscules (note alpha ‘â barres brisées’, sigma both square and lunar). The stonemason used nomina sacra (θυ in line 2, ὅ and πυνῶν in line 7). He abbreviates words through shifting the last written letter (μ and ι in line 5), or by crossing the last written letter by an oblique stroke (διοκν)). και is written either in scriptio plena, or in an abbreviated form κ, or as a siglum S. Numerals are marked by a horizontal dash above, and β (= 2) in line 5 also has points on both its

2 Over 650 inscriptions were identified by the end of the 2003 season. For a general presentation of this material, see the contribution by the present author in this volume.

3 Only the apse and the south pastophorium have been identified thus far.
Three Greek Epitaphs from Baganarti

Sides. The initial iota in the names Ισαάκ and Ιακώβ has a trema. Letter heights range between 1.1 and 2.5 cm.

26th February, AD 786

† νεύσει καὶ κελεύσει θ(εο)ύ τοῦ ζώντος ἐκοιμήθη
4 Μάρκος ὁ ἡγεμών
μη(νί) Φαμενοῦθ • Β •, ἤνδ(ικτῖνος) θ, ἔτους ἀπὸ Διοκλ(ητίανοῦ) φβ.
ὅ θ(έ)ς τῶν πνε(υμάτ)ῶν (καὶ) πά-
8 σης σαρκός, ἀνά-παυσον τὴν ψυχήν αὐτοῦ ἐν κόλποις
Ἀβραάμ (καὶ) Ἰσαάκ (καὶ)
12 Ἰακώβ, ἐν χώρῳ φω-
τιῶν, ἐν τόπῳ ἀνά-
ψυχῶσι, ἐνθά ἀπέ-
δρα ὀδύνη καὶ λύ-
16 πη κ(αὶ) στεναγμός. †

12-13. φωτεινῷ

Through the inclination and order of the living God, Markos, a Hegemon, fell asleep in the month of Phamenoth (day) 2nd, in the 9th indiction, in the year from Diocletian 502. God of spirits and of all flesh, rest his soul in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in a shining place, in a place of refreshment, from which pain and grief and lamentation have fled away.

1-3. The formula νεύσει καὶ κελεύσει is rare. It is found in the epitaph of Petros, Eparch of Nobadia (died AD 798), recovered at Old Dongola; cf. IKhartoum Greek 23, with commentary in which similar formulae in Greek and Coptic (ἐν τῇ κελεύσει θεοῦ κυρίου, κατὰ νεύσιν καὶ κατὰ κέλευσίν, 2ΙΤΗ ΤΕ-
ΚΕΛΕΥΣΙΟ ΜΠΙΝΟΥΤΕ) are cited. It occurs also in a fragmentarily preserved epitaph IKhartoum Greek 73 from Khor Dam el-Tor near Bageri. The designation θεὸς ὁ ζων ἐν unparalleled in Nubian inscriptions, but is attested elsewhere in epigraphic texts; cf. e.g., Studia Pontica III, 15, l. 10;
The office of ἡγεμών is attested here for the second time so far in Christian Nubia. The other attestation is yielded by the epitaph, now in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum, commemorating a ἡγεμών with the name Theodorou (Theodoras); cf. IKhartoumGreek 29. The Theodorou epitaph may be dated on palaeographic grounds to the 8th–10th c. According to the register book of the Museum, it came to light in Tanqasi. There are two villages of this name between the 3rd and 4th Cataracts: one on the right bank, immediately south-east of Banganarti,4 and the other on the left bank, several km. west of Merowe. The discovery of the epitaph of the Hegemon Markos at Banganarti advocates strongly for the former of these two villages as the provenance of the epitaph of the Hegemon Theodorou. I believe we can even hypothesise that both Hegemones were originally buried not far from each other in the cemetery surrounding the ‘Lower Church’ at Banganarti.

The exact meaning of the term ἡγεμών relative to Christian Nubia remains unknown; for a detailed discussion of this question, see IKhartoumGreek 29, commentary to line 5. Since in the Eastern Roman Empire of 5th–6th c., the word ἡγεμών was a quasi terminus technicus for the governor of a province (lat. praefectus, praeses), we may suppose that the same or similar meaning may also be applied to it in Nubia. The Hegemones Markos and Theodorou living in the 8th–10th century may have been governors of some administrative units within the Kingdom of Makuria.

5-6. Indiction and the Era of Diocletian are the standard systems used to indicate a year in early epitaphs from Nubia, until the first half of the 10th c. Both indications agree with each other here, not always the case in Nubian inscriptions. It should be noted that the present epitaph is the second oldest dated funerary inscription from the Dongola area, the oldest being the epitaph of a woman Kel discovered at Old Dongola and dated to AD 785; cf. IKhartoumGreek 20.

7-16. The prayer for the dead contained in these lines clearly is modelled on the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type characteristic of Nubian funerary inscriptions (for that, see infra, commentary to inscription no. 3). It preserves from this prayer the initial invocation to God and the list of places of eternal rest for the deceased’s soul. As far as I can see, the prayer from Markos’

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4 Some local people even say that the Banganarti kom is part of Tanqasi village.
epitaph has no exact parallel in Nubian epitaphs written in Greek, but more or less similar prayers do occur; the differences consist in the kind of invocation and the choice of names for the places of rest. An example is the epitaph of Christina originating from Merowe (IKhartoumGreek 30) with the prayer reading (ll. 4-13): κ(ύρι)ε 'Ι(ησο)ΰ Χ(ριστ)έ, ανάσταντες την ψυχήν αυτής τόπῳ φω[τίω], ἵνα άπεδρα δόξα καὶ λύπη κ(αί) στενόμος. It is interesting to observe that the expression ἐν τόπῳ φωτεινῷ from the textus receptus of the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type was changed here to ἐν χώρῳ φωτεινῷ; as for φωτεινῶν extant on the stone, it is most probably only a graphic variant of φωτεινῷ under the change of 'ελ for 'ι and the addition of non-etymological 'ι in the final position. The epitaph of Ioannes, a monk of Benganarti(?,) found in el-Khandaq, a village on the left bank of Nile some 30 km. north of Benganarti (IKhartoumGreek 15), contains the request (ll. 8-10): δός δὲ πάνω ἐν χώρῳ φωτεινῷ, which apparently should be emended to: ἐν χώρῳ φωτεινῷ χώρᾳ instead of χώρῳ, probably arose under the influence of the expression: ἐν χώρᾳ ζώντων. These two epitaphs, both originating from the Old Dongola area, seem to suggest the existence in this part of Nubia of a tradition to use χώρα instead of τόπῳ in the expression 'in a shining place,' either within the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type or elsewhere.

2. EPITAPH OF AN UNKNOWN WOMAN (PLATE II)

This stone was found in the rubble filling the apse of the 'Lower Church,' also acting as the foundation for the two eastern supports of the cupola of the 'Upper Church.' It must have originally been placed in a grave connected with the 'Lower Church.'

Slab of light grey sandstone, 34 cm. high, 29 cm. wide, 9.5 cm. thick. The upper edge and the upper right corner of the slab are lost, the stone surface, particularly to the centre and in the lower left corner, is much worn and crumbles to the touch, the upper left corner shows traces of contact with fire or hot ashes, both lower corners are chipped. The plainly incised text covers the entire upper surface of the slab. Letters are cut without guidelines, but quite nicely and carefully. The hand may be designated as round epigraphic majuscules. The lapicide uses nomina sacra (θυ in line 3, κυ in line 7). He abbreviates words by shifting the last preserved letter (διοκλῆ in line 8). The diphthong 'όν' is ligatured and placed over the 'τ' in the word ἐτούς in line 9. καὶ is recorded as the siglum S. The numeral 'β' (= 2) in line 9 has a horizontal dash above it. The initial iota in the name
Through the will of Almighty God, the servant of God [name] died leaving [ ] children motherless (and) giving back to the earth what was of the earth in order to fulfill the saying of the Lord: “Dust thou art and into dust thou will return,” in the month of [ ] 2nd, in the year from Diocletian [ ]. O Christ God, rest her soul in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, where Your saints found rest (before), amen.

1-2. Will of God – βούλησις – as a cause of death of a person is a frequent reference in Greek epitaphs from Nubia. As a rule, it occurs together with a divine inclination – νεύσις – in a formula νεύσει καὶ βουλήσει opening the inscriptions; a list of occurrences of this formula is compiled in IKhartoum Greek 1, commentary to lines 1–2. Here, βούλησις apparently occurred alone, unless νεύσις was mentioned in the line immediately above the present line 1. One should observe, however, that the sequence † νεύσει καὶ is too short with its 10 letters to fill the entire length of this supposed line which, similar to other lines, must have contained ca. 18–20 letters. If the formula νεύσει
και βουλήσεις really did occur in this inscription, it must then have been twisted into a much elaborated introductory statement, as in the epitaph of Mariankouda, *Tetrarch* of Makuria, found in Hambukol (*I.Khartoum* Greek 18).

2. A verb stating the death of the commemorated person should have been contained in the lacuna on the right side of this line. As the lacuna has about 13-14 letters, only a long verb-form like ἀνεπάυσατο or ἐτέλευσεν is suitable in this place. ἐκοιμήθη, which occurs most common in this context in Greek epitaphs from Nubia, is definitely too short.

3. We expect to have the name of the dead woman in the lacuna between δ[ούλη and λυπόθεσα. It must have been rather short, containing about 3-4 letters. There is no room for other elements of the presentation of the dead person, such as her filiation or information on her social status.

4-5. After ἀμήτορα we expect another attribute referring to τέκνα, for example: [τὰ ἐκουσθὲς τέκνα, [νῆσία τέκνα, [τέσσερα τέκνα καὶ νεκραμένα. The intimately overtoned sentence λυπόθεσα ἀμήτορα - remains without analogy in the rather formulaic and arid Nubian epitaphs in Greek, deprived of any element of personal or familial sentiment. On the other hand, it finds parallels, both in wording and in its socio-psychological contents, in Classical Antiquity. A mother who left her children orphans at her death is a common motif in Greek epitaphs from Hellenistic and Roman times, and occurs particularly often in Greek funerary poetry; c.f. e.g., *IG VII* 455: λυπόθεσα πόσιν και τέκνα μοι φίλια; *IG IX* 2, 312: διασα δὲ τέκνα λυπόθεσαν ὁ παντοβαρής λάβε μ' Ἀδης; *TAM V*, 546: νῆσία τέκνα λυπόθεσα. Its re-dactor might have been influenced by an Antique or Byzantine source unknown to us which he had to his disposal, when putting the sentence under consideration into the epitaph. The sentence testifies to a good knowledge of Greek and Greek literary motifs in the 8th/9th century in the Dongola area. One can suppose that the woman who received such an exceptional epitaph belonged to highest echelons of the Nubian society of the period.

5-6. We expect something like ἄστοδοιος[α τά ἀπό τῆς γῆς γης τῆς γης.

7-8. This is a quotation of the words God said to Adam, according to Gen. 3:19: ἐν ἀνρώτι τοῦ προσώπου σου φάγη τοῖν ἀρτον σου ἐως τοῦ ἀποστρέφει σε εἰς τῆν γῆν, ἐξ ἢς ἐνθύμησε· ὅτι γῆ εἰ καὶ εἰς γην ἀπελέυση. In view of its eschatological connotation, these words enter into the funerary liturgy of various churches, including Greek Orthodox and the Coptic; cf. J. Goar, *ΕΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΟΝ sive rituale graecorum*, Venice, 1730 (reprint, Graz 1960), p. 427, bottom. They are very often quoted in Coptic epitaphs from Nubia (cf. *I.Khartoum Copt.*, nos. 3, 5, 4, 4, 5, 3-4; 6, 5, 17, 3, 3, 18, 3, 19, 3, 20, 3, 27, 5), whilst they are rather rare in Greek funerary inscriptions. Apart from the present epitaph, I am aware of only two examples: the epitaph of Mariankouda,
Tetrarch of Makuria, who died in AD 887, found at Hambukol (Khartoum Greek 18, line 13, with the introduction: τοῦ θεοῦ φίλαντος τῶν Αδαμί τοῦ), and the epitaph of a woman Iesous[... - -] found in Faras and now in Berlin (Lefebvre, Recueil 334; an improved reading in: H. Junker, ZAS 60 [1925], pp. 117-120; the introduction is: κατὰ τὴν τοῦ παντοκράτορος θεοῦ ἀμεταθέτων ἀπὸ[δ]φασιν, ἡτοι τὸ).

8-9. The reading of the dating clause creates some problems. It most probably began just after the double point in the middle of line 8 with the indication of a month day: μήνι + a month name + a numeral. The crucial point in reading this is the letter following 'μ' which may be either 'η' or 'π'. In the first case, we would have: μη[νι] Ά[0ύρ] - 'in the month of Hathyr', in the second: μ[ηνί] Ά[wL] - 'in the month of Pauni', or μ[ηνί] Παχών - 'in the month of Pachon'. With this second reading we must assume the existence of a smaller letter 'η', now lost, shifted to mark an abbreviation. Both Ά[θνρ] as well as Πα[υν]i and Πα[χών] are rather short names, apparently too short to fill the lacuna at the end of line 8. This suggests that the numeral β (=2) at the beginning of line 9 is not the number of a day of the month, but a number of indiction. The complete reading would be: Μ[ . . . + a numeral, ἀδ(ικτιώνος)] β, but uncertainty must remain. The number of years according to the Era of Diocletian contained in line 9 apparently had two letters, of which the first is undoubtedly 'φ' (=500). The second letter after 'φ' looks very much like 'χ', thus belonging any more to the numeral, but being the first letter of an invocation to God; cf. below, commentary to line 9.

In the light of the above reasoning, we can date the present epitaph broadly to one of the years of the sequence: φα'-'φι' (=501-510), φι' (=520), φλ' (=530), φμ' (=540), φν' (=550), φξ' (=560), φο' (=570), φμ' (=580), φν' (=590) of the Era of Diocletian, i.e., AD 784-794, 803/4, 813/4, 823/4, 833/4, 843/4, 853/4, 863/4, 873/4. This date may be further narrowed due to the observation that the second letter of the number of years according to the Era of Diocletian was probably rounded at the bottom like 'α', 'ε', 'θ' or 'ο'. If this observation is correct, the following possibilities remain: φα' (=501), φε' (=505), φθ' (=509) and φο' (=570) of the Era of Diocletian, i.e., AD 784/5, 788/9, 792/3, 853/4. Of this series, year 570 of the Era of Diocletian actually corresponds with the second indiction of the number of years according to the Era of Diocletian was probably rounded at the bottom like 'α', 'ε', 'θ' or 'ο'. Therefore, year 509 of Diocletian (AD 792/3) partly falls with the second indiction, under the assumption that the indiction is of Egyptian and not Constantinopolitan type. The use of the Egyptian type of indiction in Christian Nubia seems to be attested by the foundation inscriptions at Faras cathedral (cf. IVarsowie, comment on line 7). In the latter case, only the names Pachon nad Pauni come into question as a possible supplement in line 5. Hathor of the second indiction of
the Egyptian type of that cycle already falls within the year 510 of the Era of Diocletian.

9. The prayer for the dead began apparently with the invocation to Jesus Christ. Invocations to Jesus Christ are rare in Nubian epitaphs, as compared with invocations to God the Father; see IKhartoumGreek, commentary to inscription 2, Part B, II. 1-2.

12-14. The request for rest in a place where the saints of God already have found rest is paralleled by a request for rest ἀνάπαυσις (ἀνάπαυονται) that occurs in two epitaphs from Old Dongola: the epitaph of Petros, the Eparch of Nobadia, who died in AD 798 (IKhartoumGreek 23, II. 14-15) and the epitaph of an unknown man, probably of the 8th-10th c. (A. Łajtar, Orients Christianus 81 [1987], p. 123, no. 7, ll. 5-6). The word ἀνάπαυλα occurring here is very rare in inscriptions, which normally use ἀνάπαυσις to designate the eternal rest of human souls. In Nubia, we find it only in the epitaph of Ignatios, the Bishop of Faras, who died in AD 802 (Kubińska, Faras IV, pp. 26-31, no. 4, l. 9): καλήν ἀνάπαυλαν ἔσχεν, and in the epitaph of Ioannes, a monk of Benganarti(?), found in Khandaq (IKhartoumGreek 15, ll. 8-10): δός δ[ι]ς ἀπαύλαν ἐν Χ[ωρ[ι]][φωτίνῳ. After ἀνάπαυλαν we undoubtedly have the male participle medium in the nominative plural of ἔχω (cf. ἀνάπαυλαν ἔσχεν in the epitaph of Bishop Ignatios cited above). The reading possibilities include: έχ[όμ]ένοι, σχ[όμ]ένοι, and σχ|ή|μβΌΐ. The number of letters offered by each of these possibilities is too small to completely fill the lacuna at the beginning of line 14, therefore we must admit a free space of 2-3 letters.

3. EPITAPH OF A KING? (PLATE III)

The stone was found inserted, the script facing up, in the pavement of the 'Upper Church', in the north part of the central space enclosed by four supports that originally carried a dome, in the axis of the passage between the pulpit and the north-east support. The surface of the stone was covered with lime mortar that had preserved the inscription, at least partly, from complete erasure by wear from the feet of walking persons.

Slab of firm grey sandstone, 46 cm. high, 24-24.5 cm. wide, and 10 cm. thick. The stone is preserved intact; the lower left-hand corner that had broken off was glued. The surface is much worn, particularly at the bottom, the edges being heavily chipped. At the bottom, the slab has an offset, 2.5–3.5 cm. wide, running along the lower edge. It possibly was intended as a
means of aiding to set the slab in an upright position. The plainly incised
text covers the entire upper surface of the slab. The letters are not very
carefully cut, and lack guidelines. The hand may be designated as Nubian-
type majuscules. The lapicide uses nomina sacra (ὅ and πνατ[ων in line 1,
φιλανοε in line 17, αὐς in line 19, ὁ in line 21). He abbreviates words by
shifting the last preserved letter (δου in line 7). The diphtong ‘ου’ is
ligatured in the word σου in line 7. ἱ and is recorded as the siglum S. Letters
height varies between 0.8 cm. (ομικρον) and 2.9 cm. (πι). 
11th–13th cent. (palaeography)

† ὁ (εῶς [τῶ] [ν] πν[ευμ]ατ[ω][ν]
(καῖ) πάσης σαρκός, ὁ το[ν θ]ά-
natov καταργήσας (καῖ) τόν
4 Ἀδην καταπατήσας (καῖ)
ξανή τῷ κόσμῳ χαρι-
σίμενοι, ἀνάπαυσον
τήν ψυχήν τ[ο][ν] δουλ[ον] σου
8 ΒΑΣ . , Α ἐν κόλποις
Ἀβραὰμ (καῖ) Ἰσαὰκ (καῖ) Ἰακώβ,
ἐν τόπῳ φωτιῶν ἐν
τόπῳ ἀναψύχεσως, ἐ-
12 θα ἀπέδρα δύνη (καῖ)
λύη (καῖ) στεν[αγμός]. πά[ν]
ἀμάρτημα παρ’ [αὐτ]οῦ
πραγμάτευσεν λό[γων] ἦ ἐργα
16 ἦ κατὰ διάνοια [ό]ς ἀγα-
θὸς (καῖ) φιλανθρωπικός συνορθο-
μόν ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὅς
ζήσει πᾶς ἄνθρωπος (καῖ)
20 οὐχ ἀμαρτηθηκεν εἰ μὴ σὺ
μόνος ὁ θ(εός) ὑπάρχεις εἰς
τὸν αἰῶνα (καῖ) εἰς τὸν αἰῶ-
THREE GREEK EPITAPHS FROM BANGANARTI

God of spirits and of all flesh, You who have defeated death and trodden down Hades and given life to the world, rest the soul of Your servant in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in a shining place, in a place of refreshment, from which pain and grief and lamentation have fled away. As a good God and loving mankind, forgive every sin committed by him in word or in deed or in thought since, except for You, there is no one who would live and would not sin (cf. commentary). (You), O God, remain for ages, and for ages of ages.

The present epitaph supplements the group of some 40 Nubian epitaphs in Greek containing a long and elaborated prayer for the dead beginning with the words: ὁ θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός. The same prayer has been known, with some minor differences, for over 14 centuries in the Greek Orthodox church, where it has been transmitted in the manuscript tradition of euchologia, hence the designation ‘the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type’ forged by some editors; for the history of the prayer and a most exhaustive list of Greek epitaphs from Nubia making the use of it, see Łajtar, “Varia Nubica IV: Das älteste nubische Epitaph mit dem Gebet vom sogenannten Typus Euchologion Mega?,” ZPE 113 (1996), pp. 101-108. It should be noted that the text of the prayer contained in the present epitaph differs considerably at the end (ll. 17-23) from the standard version occurring on Greek epitaphs from Nubia which reads: συγχώρησον ὃτι οὐκ εἶσθε ἀνθρωπος δε ζήσεται καὶ οὐχ ἀμαρτήσῃ· σὺ γὰρ μόνος, ὁ θεός, πάσης ἀμαρτίας ἐκτὸς ὑπάρχει καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἡ ἀλήθεια. σὺ γὰρ εἰ ἡ ἀνάπαυσις καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ δούλου σου τοῦ δείνος καὶ σοι τὴν δόξαν κτλ. Differences of the same kind as compared with the textus receptus of the prayer occur in the epitaph of Theodorou, a Hegemon, found in Tanqasi, now in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum (IKhartoumGreek 29), ll. 10-17: συγχώρησον τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτοῦ πᾶς ἀνθρωπος ζήσεται οὐχ ἀμαρτήσει· σὺ γὰρ εἰ ὁ μόνος ἀναμάρτητος, ἐκτὸς ἀμαρτίματος ὑπάρχει· σὺ, ὁ θεός, πρῶ τῶν αἰῶνων ὑπάρχει· εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος διαμένει. In particular, both epitaphs have a similarly corrupted form of the phrase: ‘for there is no man who would live and not sin’ with πᾶς inserted before ἀνθρωπος; cf. commentary ad locum. Apparently, these two epitaphs are interdependent with each other in this phrase. Either the earlier epitaph of Theodorou served as a model for the present inscription or, more likely,
both have a common source, possibly an euchologion containing a corrupted version of the prayer for the dead. As both epitaphs originate most probably from the same place (cf. above, commentary to inscription no. 1, line 4), one may presume this euchologion was held at Baganarti church.

4. The common praxis of scholars who deal with the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type is to begin the word ‘hades’ with a small letter (αδης) and to translate it as ‘hell’. I followed this praxis in earlier publications, but am now convinced that the word in question should be capitalised and rendered as ‘Hades.’ What the Byzantine author of the prayer meant here was not ‘hell’ in the sense of Christian theology, but the pagan Greek god Hades, ruler and personification of the underworld. Numerous Byzantine representations show him as a nude male monster trampled by Christ during His resurrection; for this motif in Byzantine art, see S. Skrzyniarz, Hades. Reception, ideology and transformation of the image of a pagan god in Byzantine art (Ars vetus and nova 8), Kraków 2002.

6. ‘ν’ at the end of the line is written obliquely due to lack of space.

7. The reading τ[ο]ν δούλ(ον) is not obvious, but is more probable than τ[o]û δοûλ(ον). Use of the accusative τον δοûλον instead of genitive του δοûλου very often occurs in Nubian epitaphs in Greek as an indirect object after ἀνάπαυσον την φυχήν. For this phenomenon, see IKhartoumGreek 3, commentary to line 6.

8. The first part of the line until ἐν κόλποις provided information about the dead. It probably contained six letters. The first three letters can surely be identified as ‘βας.’ The identification of the fourth and the fifth letters is uncertain, the sixth letter looks like ‘δ’. It is possible that the fourth letter had a horizontal dash above that might also have extended to above the next letter to the right. The occurrence of the letter ‘δ’ in the sixth position excludes the possibility of reading the name Βασιλίος, regardless of its standing in the nominative or an oblique case. Any other personal name beginning with Βα- (either from the stem βασιλ- or βασσ-) is hardly possible in Christian Nubia, and in any case no such name ends with -δ. Under these circumstances, the best solution is to consider the letters ‘βας’ as an abbreviated notation of the word βασιλεύς = ‘king’ and to see in the following letters the name of this king. The reading βασιλεά, without a name, is excluded for palaeographic reasons as are also the readings of other oblique cases of the word βασιλεύς. The most common personal name ending in -δ is in Christian milieu Δαυίδ. If it really occurred here it must have been recorded in an abbreviated version as ΔΔΔ. This notation is well attested with
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reference to the Biblical King David and also was used for persons of later
history. It is evidenced in Nubia; cf. e.g., the epitaph of King David found
in Soba, *IKhartoum*Greek 79, line 5. Putting together all these observations,
we come to the reading: άνάπαυσον | την ψυχήν το[ν] δούλον σου | βα-
si(λέως) Δη(υ)ς = 'rest the soul of Your servant King David.' This reading
should be taken with much caution. The word βασιλέως normally was
abbreviated in Nubia not through suspension as βασ(ιλεύς), but through
contraction as β(ασι)λ(εύ)ς (see, however, S. Jakobielski, *A History of the
Bishopric of Pachoras on the Basis of Coptic Inscriptions [= Faras III]*, Warszawa
1972, p. 111, l. 1: μήτηρ βασιλέως), and the reading of the first letter of the
name as 'δ' is difficult palaeographically.

Provided that the stele actually commemorated a king of the name David,
we have at least two candidates for its ownership. Thanks to Arabic sources,
we know that David was the name of two kings, father and son at that, who
sat on the throne of Dongola in 1260/1270s.; cf. U. Monneret de Villard,
*Storia della Nubia cristiana [= Orientalia Christiana Analecta 118]*, Rome, 1938,
pp. 118–120; D. Welsby, *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia. Pagans, Christians and Muslims
along the Middle Nile*, London, 2002, pp. 243–245. Palaeographically, there are
no obstructions against dating the present stele into this period. Assuming
that it truly belongs to one of these two Kings, it would be the youngest
Greek epitaph known from Nubia thus far. As the list of the kings of Ma-
kuria has many lacunae, however, one cannot exclude the possibility of yet
another king David who lived either earlier or later than the 1260/1270s.
It should be noted that David is attested as a royal name also in Aiwa (*IKhar-
toum*Greek, no. 79, probably 9th/10th cent.) and in the Kingdom of Dotawo
(IN III 30 i 4 in margin, before AD 1153).5

18–25. The whole sentence beginning with οτι is not understandable as it stands.
Apparently, we are dealing with the contamination of two otherwise similar
phrases here: οτι ούκ εστιν άνθρωπος δς ζησεται και ούχ άμαρτηση from
the prayer of the Euchologion Mega type, and πάς άνθρωπος δς ζη άμα-
tάνει from a source unknown to me. The same is also valid for the epitaph
of the Hegemon Theodorou; cf. above, general commentary to this inscrip-
tion. The following ει μη ου μόνος ο θεος fits well the first of these two
phrases under the condition that we eliminate the word άνθρωπος; οτι ούκ
εστιν δς ζησεται και ούχ άμαρτήση ει μη ου μόνος ο θεος. Possibly, the
original form of this sentence was as such, but was later corrupted through

5 The document states that Moses George, the then king of Dotawo, was nephew of
King David. Both Moses George and David might have been not only kings of Dotawo, but
all Makuria including Dotawo as its northern part.
the insertion of πάς ἄνθρωπος. On the other hand, σὺ μόνος ὁ θεός must also be the subject for ὑπάρχεις. Thus, to introduce order into this entire part of the text we have additionally to assume a haplography. The hypothetical reconstruction of the original form would read: διὰ οὐκ ἔστιν δὲ ζήσεται {πάς ἄνθρωπος} καὶ σὺ ἀμαρτήσῃ εἴ μὴ σὺ μόνος ὁ θεός· ὁ μόνος, ὁ θεός, ὑπάρχεις εἰς τὸν αἰώνα κτλ. The rest of the inscription is too damaged to allow a certain reconstruction.

The three epitaphs from Banganarti discussed above have parallels mainly amongst inscriptions originating from Makuria, especially from the Dongola area. The office of Hegemon attested by Inscription 1 is on record also in an epitaph that came to light in Tangasi, a village neighbouring with Banganarti to the south. The formula νεύσει καὶ κελεύσει opening Inscription 1 occurs in the epitaph of Petros, Eparch of Nobadia, found at Old Dongola, and in an epitaph from Khor Dam et-Tor in the area of the 4th Cataract. The request for rest ἐν χώρῳ φωτεινῷ appearing in the epitaph of the Hegemon Markos is paralleled only by the epitaph of Ioannes, a monk from Banganarti(?), discovered at el-Khandaq, several kilometres north of Dongola. The request for rest amongst the saints of God who went for rest before, on record in our Inscription 2, has analogy in an appropriate part of the Dongolese epitaphs of the Eparch Petros and an incognitus. The rare word ἀνάπαυλα occurring in this request is found in the epitaph of the monk Ioannes found at Khandaq. The Euchologion Mega-type prayer contained in our Inscription 3 shows variations of the textus receptus of the prayer that are paralleled, at least partly, by the epitaph of the Hegemon Theodorou from Tanqasi. Both epitaphs may depend on a version of the prayer contained in an euchologion used for service in Banganarti church. All this testifies to the existence in and around Dongola of an individual sociocultural milieu organised, as is obvious, around the King’s court, the courts of the highest officials and Church institutions. Initially, this milieu expressed itself in written form only in Greek, and later in both Greek and Old Nubian.\(^6\) The Greek, particularly at the earlier period, in 8th/10th

\(^6\) This is well documented in the finds of Polish Missions in both Old Dongola and Banganarti. The lack of Coptic is remarkable. At Old Dongola, Coptic occurs only in monastic contexts (two fragmentary epitaphs and several wall inscriptions discovered in the Monastery on Kom H). At Banganarti, only one modest dipinto in Coptic is found amongst the 650 wall inscriptions recorded thus far.
cent., was of exceptionally good quality. As far as epitaphs are concerned, this milieu is characterised by the use of separate prayer versions, and the predilection for special expressions or words. Some epitaphs, e.g., our Inscription 2, are still rooted in an antique tradition.

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Epitaph of Markos, a hegemon.

Photo by P. Pearce
Plate II

Epitaph of an unknown woman.
Photo by C. Calaforra-Rzepka
Epitaph of a king (?)  
Photo by C. Calaforra-Rzepka