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Wall inscriptions in the Banganarti churches : a general note after three seasons of work

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WALL INSCRIPTIONS
IN THE BANGANARTI CHURCHES

A GENERAL NOTE AFTER THREE SEASONS OF WORK[*]

THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE POLISH JOINT EXPEDITION to the Middle Nile carried out since 2001 on the site of Banganarti, brought to light two churches, one located atop the other.[1]

The Lower Church, so far exposed only in sondages at its eastern side, was probably built in the 6th–7th century. It apparently displayed a large

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The following abbreviations are used throughout: Donadoni, "Graffiti" = S. DONADONI, "Les graffiti de l'Église de Sonqi Tino" [in:] K. MICHAŁOWSKI (ed.), *Nubia. Recentes récherches. Actes du colloque nubiologique international au Musée National de Varovie, 19–22 Juin 1972*, Warsaw 1975, 31–39; IN = *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim* I, ed. by M. J. PLUMLEY & G. M. BROWNE [= *Texts from Excavations* 9], London 1988; II, ed. by G. M. BROWNE [= *Texts from Excavations* 10], London 1989; III, ed. by G. M. BROWNE [= *Texts from Excavations* 12], London 1991; Jakobielski, *Bishopric* = S. JAKOBIELSKI, *A History of the Bishopric of Pachoras on the Basis of Coptic Inscriptions* [= *Faras* III], Warsaw 1972; Kubińska, *Inscriptions* = J. KUBIŃSKA, *Inscriptions grecques chrétiennes* [= *Faras* IV], Varsovie 1974.

[1] For a preliminary presentation of the results of the first two seasons of work of the Polish Mission in Banganarti, see B. ŻURAWSKI, "Survey and Excavations between Old Dongola and ez-Zuma", *Sudan & Nubia* 6 (2002), pp. 73–85.

central apse flanked by two side chapels (pastophoria) accessible from
naves and connected by an eastern passage running behind the apse.

The Upper Church was constructed above the remnants of the Lower
Church sometime in 10th–11th century. It displays a central plan organised
around a square space covered by cupola supported by four piers each
composed of a square pillar with two engaged columns (see Fig. 1).

The walls of the Upper Church bear at least two layers of plaster with
painted decoration. Only the decoration of the latest layer has been suffi-
ciently recognised. Murals are found in all chapels and also on the west face
of the north-west pillar supporting the cupola. The most striking element
of the painted decoration are representations of a Nubian king (or kings)
protected by an archangel amongst twelve apostles, six on either side,
adorning the eastern chapels. Other representations include: Jesus with St.
Thomas (west wall of Room 21), a horseman and a standing figure wearing
horned headgear (east wall of Room 20), Kosmas and Damianos (west wall
of Room 13), Mary with Child (west face of the north-west pillar), and vari-
ous archangels (chapels of the north row).

When one enters the interior of the upper church at Banganarti, one
is struck by the large quantity of wall inscriptions. They are almost omni-
present and on some spots (cf. below) they form a real "jungle", quite im-
pressive but difficult to grasp. After three seasons of work, so far un-
earthing about three-quarters of the church, over 650 wall inscriptions have
been identified. If they appear in the same frequency in the unexcavated
area of the church, some 800 items should result.

Amongst these inscriptions, only six belong to the original "equipment"
of the church. These are: (1–2) two dedications of murals, one on the south
wall of Chapel 1 and the other on the south wall of Chapel 3, both in black
ink and done probably by painters. Both are in the form of prayers for in-
tercession for the donor, a common text in Christian Nubia;[2] (3) an inscrip-
tion in violet paint on the east wall of Room 20, indicating the name and a
title of a person who was probably the donor of the painting of a horseman;
his small figure is seen beneath the text; (4–5) two painted inscriptions on
the west wall of Room 21 reading: †$\Theta\omega\mu\hat{a}s$ and †$\tau o\hat{v}$ $\sigma(\omega\tau\hat{\eta})\rho(o)s$ being

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[2] It is worth noting that the inscription in Chapel 3 is in Old Nubian, a quite unusual
phenomenon as mural dedications in Nubia normally are in Greek. The dedicatory inscrip-
tion in Chapel 1 is in Greek.

legends to the mural depicting Christ and St. Thomas; and (6) an inscription in black ink on the west wall of Room 21, beneath the representation of Christ and St. Thomas, that refers directly to the same scene. All remaining inscriptions (sic) are "secondary" elements to the church's internal appearance. They came into existence, possibly with only a few exceptions difficult to judge, as souvenirs of visits paid to the church by pious worshippers.

The visitor inscriptions occur mainly on walls and areas of walls deprived of painted decoration, but they sometimes also affect the paintings. In some places, such as the pillars at the entrances to Chapels 2–6 and Rooms 21 and 22, the north-east and the south-east supports with adjoining blockages, and the undecorated walls of Rooms 13 and 14 of the west row, they are situated near each other and taking virtually every free space of the walls. A careful study of these locations reveal a kind of inscriptional "stratigraphy". One began to write at the top of a wall, subsequent inscriptions being added below those already existing; later inscriptions as a rule respect the existence of the earlier ones. When an area was completely covered by script, it was white washed and used as vehicle for new texts. Delicate traces of inscriptions belonging to earlier layers of whitewash are seen here and there between letters of the topmost layer. The rapidity with which particular spots were filled with inscriptions differs in different parts of the church, the largest being on the entrance pillars to the eastern chapels. An inscription reading: † ΠΑΠΚῩ is found on the south side of the entrance to Chapel 6 where it belongs to an earlier layer of white-wash. An identical inscription, undoubtedly left by the same man as indicated by the letter forms, occurs on the north wall of Room 14, but this is on the topmost whitewash layer there. The process of renewing a spot for new writing after whitewashing the older inscriptions could have taken place several times during the use of the church.

In overwhelming majority, the visitors' inscriptions are scratched in the plaster with the use of a sharp tool. Only two texts, one on the south side of the entrance to Chapel 4 and one on the south wall of Room 17 – are written in black ink. Palaeographically, all represent so-called "Old Nubian majuscules" characteristic of Nubian literacy, both in Old Nubian and Greek, after the 9th–10th century. The term describes not only the shape of letters (round, mostly inclined majuscules), but also a particular repertoire

of scribal endeavours well illustrated by the Banganarti inscriptions. These include: points over initial vowels to indicate the beginning of a word; points over vowels in the middle of a word to indicate the word accent; points over the first element of consonant clusters to indicate a prothetic /i/; dashes over consonants indicating the preceding /i/; points and double points separating particular words or expressions; slashes, double slashes, sinusoidal lines marking the end of a sentence or a text, etc.

Another important problem must be raised namely: Who executed these inscriptions on the walls? The frequent occurrence of the formula: "I, so and so, have written (this)" allows to suppose that the texts were written by visitors themselves. This supposition is further corroborated by the appearance in different parts of the church of inscriptions mentioning the same people and done in the same hand that must be the hand of this very visitor and no other. Yet inscriptions with the names of different people sometimes seem to have been done by the same hand. Perhaps someone was in charge of inscriptions at Banganarti church, who indicated to the visitor the place for his text, provided him with a writing tool, and, in case of need, executed the text for him. The large number of visitor inscriptions written within a relatively short period (see *infra*) seems to suggest an unexpectedly high grade of literacy in the society that generated these inscriptions.

The texts are formulated mostly in Greek, with fewer in Old Nubian. Many items display a particular mixture of elements taken from these two languages. The latter is mainly attested in inscriptions constructed according to the pattern: "I, so and so, have written (this)". The personal pronoun in Greek may occur here with the verb in Old Nubian, and the reverse (e.g. **8** below). One inscription apparently is in Coptic, and one in Arabic. Generally speaking, the Greek of the inscriptions is rather formulaic and full of phonetic notations and syntactic mistakes. Obviously, the inscriptions are product of a society that used Nubian in everyday communication, but felt obliged to write religious inscriptions left on a church in Greek.

Almost every inscription begins with cross.[3] The simplest items contain only the name of a visitor (cf. **1** below). More elaborate texts add information about the visitor, such as the name of his father, his church or his ci-

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[3] The occurrence of a cross is one element that allows particular items to be identified.

vilian office, his place of origin, etc. (cf. **2–3**). Strangely, the authors of the inscriptions sometimes omit their own names and provide only that of their father(s) (e.g. **9–10, 16**). Further development of the form of the inscriptions adds the personal pronoun "I" at the very beginning of the text, just after the cross (cf. **4–7**), either in Old Nubian (ⲁⲓ) or in Greek. In the latter case, it may stand both in nominative ($\dot{\epsilon}\gamma\dot{\omega}$) and in any oblique case: ($\dot{\epsilon}$)$\mu o\hat{v}$, ($\dot{\epsilon}$)$\mu o\acute{i}$, ($\dot{\epsilon}$)$\mu\acute{\epsilon}$ (cf. esp. **5**). Evidently, all these forms were taken by the authors of the inscriptions for separate lexems meaning "I" and not for secondary formations.[4] The personal pronoun in two language versions (ⲁⲓ $\dot{\epsilon}\gamma\dot{\omega}$ or inversly) occurs within the same text in a few instances. Several inscriptions begin with $\kappa\dot{a}\mu\acute{\epsilon}$ or $\kappa\dot{a}\mu(\acute{\epsilon})$ = "Also me"[5] (cf. **8** and **12**). In doing so, the authors of the inscriptions obviously wished to establish a link with other texts already existing on the same spot or, generally, in the church.

The most common form of inscriptions are texts constructed according to the pattern: "I, so and so, have written (this)" (cf. **9–11**). In some cases, we have "I confess" ($\dot{o}\mu o\lambda o\gamma\hat{\omega}$ or a form of past tense) instead of "I have written". It should be observed that when the verb "I have written" occurs in Greek it as a rule has the form $\gamma\rho\dot{a}\psi o\nu$, illogical from the point of view of the Greek syntax as we would expect $\ddot{\epsilon}\gamma\rho a\psi a$ in this context. The same illogical form $\gamma\rho\dot{a}\psi o\nu$ occurs in visitors' inscriptions on other Nubian sites, suggesting that it is a fossilised form used throughout Nubia exactly in this kind of texts. The general scheme "I, so and so, have written (this)" may be supplemented by information referring to the person of the visitor. Additionally, a pious invocation or a short prayer may follow.

The most elaborate inscriptions start with an invocation or a prayer and add information about the visitor (cf. **12–17**; and see **18** in which personal information is entirely lacking). The invocations and prayers are addressed mainly to the Archangel Raphael (nos. **12–16**). Their redactors made frequent use of motifs occurring in the Book of Tobit: Tobit was a rich Jew living in Nineva in the time of Sanherib and Asarhaddon. He lost his eyesight in result of an accident and became poor. Being oppressed, he decided to send his son, also Tobit, to Raga in Media to recover a large sum of money deposited with his old friend Gabael. As Tobit the son was still a

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[4] In other terms, this testifies to the complete collapse of the Greek declension system in Nubian Greek.

[5] Similarly in Sonqi Tino; cf. Donadoni, "Graffiti", p. 35.

youngster, his father ordered him to find himself a companion. He found a young man with the name Azaria, but this was in fact Archangel Raphael, unrecognised by father and son. The two men made a long trip to Ekbatana where they stopped in home of Raguel, another old friend of Tobit the father. There, Tobit the son cast out with the help of Raphael the demon Asmodaios who oppressed Sara, the daughter of Raguel, and married her. After recovering the money from Gabael, Tobit the son accompanied by his wife Sara and Raphael came back to Nineva and healed his father's eyes aided by the gall of a large fish he had caught in the Tigris river. The authors of the inscriptions in Banganrati church chose the most spectacular elements of the story: freeing Sara from the demon Asmodaios (**13**) and healing the eyes of Tobit the father (**12**). They function in the inscriptions as an illustration of the miraculous power of Archangel Raphael as mediator between God and men, the guide of men and saviour in different oppressions, particularly during illness. In some inscriptions, Raphael is directly designated as saviour ($\rho\acute{u}\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$) of men (cf. **16**), as the one sent into the world to save the souls of sinners. Sometimes the Archangel himself rises to speak and says that he stands in front of the Lord (cf. **14**) or that he is a lamp[6] standing in front of the Lord. He is requested to guard and save people, to guide them, to beseech God for them, etc. The name of Raphael is written either in *scriptio plaena* or in form of a numeric cryptogram XM = 640: P = 100 + A = 1 + Φ = 500 + A = 1 + H = 8 + Λ = 30 (as in **15–16**); it is also inscribed in monogrammes. In addition to the Archangel Raphael, other addressees of invocations and prayers are the Archangel Michael and the Virgin Mary (cf. **17**) who function as mediators between men and God. Prayers are also addressed directly to God, sometimes with the use of Psalm 50.3 (cf. **18**). Information about the visitor added to the prayer has the form "I, so and so" or "I, so and so, have written", already encountered in simpler texts.

The above description of visitors' inscriptions in Banganarti church from the simplest to more complicated does not include some special cases that may be designated "varia" Amongst them are single words, epithets and lists of names (cf. **19–22**). Their function is not obvious; they may be pious invocations or refer to the subjects represented in the murals.

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[6] Note that the word "lamp" ($\lambda\acute{u}\chi\nu o\varsigma$) always occurs in a corrupted form $\lambda\acute{u}\chi\mu o\nu$. Obviously, all inscriptions containing this sentence depend on a common source.

Visitors' inscriptions in the upper church at Banganarti are an important source of information about the society and cultural history of Makuria, and particularly its capital Old Dongola, at the close of existence of independent Nubian state (for the date of the inscriptions, see below). As almost all visitors indicated their names, the inscriptions yield a large quantity of onomastic material. The names occuring in texts are mainly of Nubian origin, many attested for the first time here e.g.: ⲁⲗⲟⲇⲩⲣⲏ, ⲁⲛⲇⲁⲉⲓ, ⲁⲛⲇⲟⲩⲏ(ⲏ)ⲁ, ⲁⲛⲕⲁⲣⲟⲩ, ⲁⲛⲧⲟⲱ, ⲅⲓⲉⲛⲅⲇ, ⲅⲓⲣⲛⲟⲅⲓⲇ, ⲅⲟⲩⲗ(ⲗ)ⲇⲁ, ⲅⲟⲩⲥⲥⲓ, ⲇⲟⲗⲥⲏ, ⲇⲟⲩⲣⲉⲣⲏ, ⲉⲱ̅ⲱⲁⲛ, ⲕⲁⲇⲟⲅⲇ̅, ⲕⲉⲓⲧⲟⲩ, ⲕⲓⲥⲥⲉⲇⲁ, ⲕⲟⲣⲣⲉⲣⲏ, ⲕⲟⲩⲇⲇⲏ, ⲗⲟⲩⲅⲟⲩⲣ(ⲣ)ⲁⲧⲓ, ⲙⲁⲗⲧⲛ̅ⲁⲉⲧ, ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲅⲉ, ⲙⲁⲥⲏ, ⲙⲁⲱⲇⲁ, ⲛⲁⲗⲥⲩ, ⲛⲁⲣⲙⲉ, ⲛⲓⲁⲟⲟⲛ, ⲟⲕⲉⲗⲱ, ⲟⲕⲕⲉⲥⲏ, ⲟⲩⲁⲧⲓⲁ, ⲟⲩⲗⲙⲏ, ⲟⲩⲣⲥⲏ, ⲟⲩⲧⲓⲇⲁ, ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲣ, ⲡⲁⲡⲕⲟ̅, ⲡⲣ̅ⲙⲉⲛⲏ, ⲡⲟⲅⲧ̅ⲧⲁ, ⲥⲟⲙⲟⲙ, ⲥⲟⲩⲡⲟⲩ (ⲥⲱⲡⲁ), ⲧⲁⲩⲣⲟⲥⲁ, ⲧⲉⲡⲁⲣⲁⲡⲁ, ⲧⲉⲇⲁ, ⲧⲁ̅ⲛⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲧⲁ, ⲧⲟⲧⲧⲓⲛⲁ, ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲓ, ⲧⲟⲩⲧⲁⲛ, ⲱⲟⲩⲗⲇⲓⲥⲁ, ⲱⲟⲩⲕⲣⲓ, ⲧ̣ⲥ̅ⲕⲧ̅ⲧⲁ, and many others.[7] There are a number of Graeco-Nubian formations in which a Greek stem is supplied with a Nubian ending or is compound with a Nubian word, most commonly -ⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ = "servant".[8] Amongst these names we have ⲉⲅⲗⲁⲟⲥⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ (apparently a graphic variant of ⲁⲓⲅⲗⲁⲟⲥⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ), ⲅⲁⲃⲣⲓⲉⲗⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ, ⲅⲁⲃⲣⲓⲉⲗⲟⲫⲟⲣⲟⲩ, ⲕⲟⲥⲙⲁⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ, ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ, ⲣⲁⲫⲁⲛⲁⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ, ⲥ̅ⲧⲁⲙⲙⲟⲥⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ, ⲥⲱⲧⲏⲣⲓ, etc. Purely Greek names, including Biblical ones, are relatively rare. One notes: Ἄγαπος, Δα(ουί)δ, Ζωόδωτα, Θεόδωρος, Κλάδων, Μωῦσης, Ῥάβδων, Σέργιος. It is to be observed that some names (Κλάδων, Ῥάβδων) are uncommon in the Greek world.

As some visitors indicated their origin, the inscriptions are an important source of toponomastics. With some ten occurrences, the most frequently mentioned toponym is ⲧⲟⲩⲅⲅⲟⲩⲗ, once attested in the form ⲧⲟⲩⲅⲅⲟⲩⲗⲁ. It most probably is to be spelled "Tungul(a)" and identified as Old Dongola, the capital of the medieval Christian kingdom of Makuria. If so, we have the original Nubian name of the Makurian capital attested for the first time in internal sources. Until now, it was known only in external Ara-

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[7] The occurrence of so many new Nubian names in Banganarti inscriptions is symptomatic. Until now, the main source of Nubian onomastic material were texts from Qasr Ibrim in the heart of Nobadia which necessarily reflect the naming practices of this region. The Banganarti inscriptions now shed light on naming patterns of the heart of Makuria.

[8] For Nubian names with the element -ⲕⲟⲩⲗⲁ, see H. SATZINGER, "Das altnubische Namenselement -kouda: 'Diener'?", [in:] *The Intellectual Heritage of Egypt. Studies Presented to László Kákosy by Friends and Colleagues on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday* [= *Studia Aegyptiaca* XIV], Budapest 1992, pp. 519–521.

bic texts in the form Dunqula. In one inscription, a place-name ⲧⲟⲩⲅⲅⲓⲗⲓ
occurs that probably is but a variant of ⲧⲟⲩⲅⲅⲟⲩⲗ(ⲁ). Other variants of the
name of Old Dongola may be ⲗⲁⲛⲅ( ) and ⲗⲉⲩⲅ( ). ⲧⲟⲩⲅⲅⲟⲩⲗ(ⲁ) (and
ⲧⲟⲩⲅⲅⲓⲗⲓ) is qualified ⲗⲓⲡⲡ = "city, town" in several cases, and in one in-
scription it is followed by the designation πολη μεγ( ) that tentatively may
be emended to πόλις μεγ(άλη) = "great town". On this basis, we may pre-
sume that the words ⲗⲓⲡⲡ and πολη μεγ( ) occurring without a toponym in
other inscriptions also refer to Old Dongola. In three cases, the visitors
indicate that they came from Saï, an island and a town of the same name
some 200 km. north of Old Dongola. In two of these cases, Saï, like ⲧⲟⲩⲅ-
ⲅⲟⲩⲗ/ⲧⲟⲩⲅⲅⲓⲗⲓ, is qualified "city, town" (ⲗⲓⲡⲡ). A special case is the place
name "Island of God". It occurs once in Greek as Θεοῦ Νῆσος, and once in
Old Nubian as ⲧⲓⲗⲗⲁⲣⲧⲓ.[9] It is possibly to be identified with modern Silin-
narti, a locality with Christian ruins on the left bank of the Nile opposite
Old Dongola. Other toponyms include: Silmi (modern Qasr Ibrim in North
Nubia), Ouggeri (modern Argi, some 20 km. east of Banganarti), Nuri (a
village in the area of the 4th Cataract known as a burial place of Napatan
kings), Apko (possibly Abkor, a village some 40 km. east of Banganarti with
important Christian/Funj ruins), Timmea[10] Gonos, Apate, Koussa, Pinne;
the last four toponyms are otherwise unattested and their location remains
unknown.

The majority of visitors to the Banganarti church were ecclesiastics who
as a rule indicated their church affiliation. The most frequently mentioned
church is the Church of (Great) Jesus.[11] In several cases it is specified that

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[9] The toponym Tillarti occurs also in an epitaph from Old Dongola, now in the Fitzwil-
liam Museum in Cambridge (A. ŁAJTAR, *Oriens Christianus* 81 [1997], p. 121–122, no. 5; a new
edition of the inscription is being prepared after the autopsy of the stone by J. VAN DER
VLIET), and in a graffito in a niche in the west wall of Room 3 of the western annex to the
monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola (unpublished). The concentration of the attestations
in and around Old Dongola suggests that the place called "Island of God" was situated
somewhere in the vicinity of the capital of Makuria and speaks in favour of its identification
with modern Silinnarti.

[10] It is possibly identical with Timaeie, mentioned in the epitaph of the priest Stephanos
(Istephanou) from Old Dongola as the location of a monastery of St Mary; cf. A. ŁAJTAR
[in:] A. ŁAJTAR & A. TWARDECKI, *Catalogue des inscriptions grecques au Musée National de Var-
sovie* (= *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology. Supplements* 2), Warsaw 2003, no. 109, line 17. The
location of this Timmea/Timaeie is unknown.

[11] I did not count the occurrences, but they must be in the hundreds.

this church is located in Touggoul(a), probably Old Dongola. The Church of Jesus in Old Dongola is attested in Arabic sources. Polish archaeologists excavating Old Dongola identify it with the so-called "Cruciform Church" exposed in the 1970s and 1980s.[12] Excavation has shown that after partial destruction connected probably with the Mamluk raid on Old Dongola in 1276, the Cruciform Church was rebuilt and served for a considerably long period as the most important church in the Makurian capital.[13] Other churches have only single attestations in Banganarti inscriptions, including the Church of Raphael at Touggili, Church of Three Youths, Church of Basilius, Church of Bishop (Papas) Athanasios, Church of Jacob, Church of Michael, Church of Marc, Church of Andreas,[14] and the Church of the Mother (of Jesus). The majority must have existed in Old Dongola and its immediate vicinity.

In several cases, the name of a church is followed by the expression $\overline{\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha}$ $\overline{\alpha\nu\omega\nu}$ sometimes spelled $\overline{\alpha\nu o\nu}$.[15] The abbreviated word $\overline{\alpha\nu\omega\nu}$ looks like the *nomen sacrum* $\mathring{\alpha}\nu(\theta\rho\omega\pi)os$ in genitive plural. The expression $\mathring{\epsilon}\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ $\mathring{\alpha}\nu(\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi)\omega\nu$ = "the people's church" could have been the Nubian counterpart of the term $\mathring{\epsilon}\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ $\kappa\alpha\theta o\lambda\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$ attested in various Oriental (including Egyptian) churches.[16] If so, it would designate the juridical status of these churches by describing them as belonging to a bishop. On the other hand, an inscription on the north pillar at the entrance to Chapel

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[12] Cf. e.g. S. JAKOBIELSKI [in:] S. JAKOBIELSKI & P. O. SCHOLZ (eds.), *Dongola-Studien. 35 Jahre polnischer Forschungen im Zentrum des makuritischen Reiches (Bibliotheca Nubica et Æthiopica 7)*, Warszawa 2001, p. 13–14 (with further bibliography).

[13] Mention should be made here of an Old Nubian document found at Qasr Ibrim (*IN* III 60) and containing a list of holdings of the Jesus-Church of Touggili that are in Nobadia. If Touggili is to be identified with Old Dongola, the Dongolese Church of Jesus would have had considerable possessions in land and *sakiyas* in the far north, several hundred km. from Old Dongola itself.

[14] The Church of Andreas at Touggili is mentioned in an Old Nubian document from Qasr Ibrim; *IN* III 60, 14.

[15] It is to be found, amongst others, in connection with the Jesus Church in Touggoul. The expression $\mathring{\epsilon}\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ $\overline{\alpha\nu\omega\nu}$ occurs several times in inscriptions from Nubia, e.g. at Faras (JAKOBIELSKI, *Bishopric*, p. 172–173; for the latter inscriptions see also KUBIŃSKA, *Inscriptions*, p. 106, no. 40) and in Sonqi Tino (DONADONI, "Graffiti", p. 35). No explanation for it has been suggested thus far.

[16] Cf. E. WIPSZYCKA, "$K\alpha\theta o\lambda\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$ et les autres épithètes qualifiant le nom $\mathring{\epsilon}\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$". Contribution à l'étude de l'ordre hiérarchique des églises dans l'Égypte byzantine", *JJP* 24 (1994), pp. 191–212.

3 indicates that the Church of the Mother (of Jesus) was in the private hands of a son(?) of Irti, cleric of the Church of Jesus. This is expressed by the junction: name of a church, here $M(\acute{\eta}\tau)\eta\rho$ + the participle $\ \check{\epsilon}\chi\omega\nu$ = "having", evidenced by some dozen occurrences in Nubian sources.[17]

An inscription on the north pillar at the entrance to Chapel 4 (the main chapel) points to the existence of the monastery of St Stephanus.

The inscriptions abound in information concerning the social and/or occupational status of the visitors, thus being a source of information for the social organisation of Christian Nubia. Among those who left inscriptions are the king of Dotawo (cf. 2) and perhaps also a king's mother.[18] Civilian office-holders include: Epirshil of the king (cf. 7, commentary), ⲉⲩⲅⲓⲉⲕ︤ⲱ︦ⲗ︥ (meaning unknown), ⲧⲟⲧ (perheaps head of a town or a village, for the term in question always occurs in connection with a toponym), ⲅⲟⲣⲧⲉ̄ⲟ̄ⲗ̄ⲗ̄ⲉ (Lord of Elders; cf. 13, commentary), ⲗⲉⲗⲫⲟⲓⲥⲟⲗⲗⲉ (perhaps ‹ⲁ›ⲗⲉⲗⲫⲟⲓⲥⲟⲗⲗⲉ = Lord of Brothers), ⲥⲁⲉⲓⲟⲥⲟⲗⲗⲏ (Lord of Governors?), ⲥⲟⲥⲁⲥⲟⲗⲗⲏ, and ⲁⲡⲟⲥⲟⲗⲗⲏ, the last two of unknown meaning. It should be observed that except for ⲅⲟⲣⲧⲉⲟⲗⲗⲉ all these names of offices are attested here for the first time. Ecclesiastics are far more common than civilians, and include two *archimadritai*, a counselor of the archbishop[19] and a plethora of priests and deacons, mainly of the Church of (Great) Jesus (of Touggoul). Some visitors designate themselves as clerics and *levitai*; these two terms probably a terminological variant of deacons. We also find epideacons, an office rarely attested in the Christian world, and a church attendant ($\zeta\acute{\alpha}\kappa o\rho os$).[20] Amongst the names of offices are some puzzling items. One cannot be even certain if they are ecclesiastic or civilian. First is

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[17] Cf. A. ŁAJTAR & J. VAN DER VLIET, "Rich Ladies of Meinarti and their Churches. With and appended list of sources from Christian Nubia containing the expression «Having the Church of So-And-So»", *JJP* 28 (1998), pp. 35–53.

[18] The reading $\mu\acute{\eta}(\tau\eta)\rho\ \beta(\alpha\sigma\iota)\lambda(\acute{\epsilon}\omega)s$ in an inscription on the south side of the entrance to Chapel 3 is certain, but it remains problematic if the text refers to the king's mother herself or to someone connected with her.

[19] The interpretation of the text is uncertain due to the extremely corrupted Greek, however, the reading $\grave{\alpha}\rho\chi(\iota)\epsilon\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\kappa(o\pi os)$ remains beyond any doubt. The occurrence of the term $\grave{\alpha}\rho\chi(\iota)\epsilon\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\kappa(o\pi os)$, otherwise very rarely attested with reference to Christian Nubia, testifies to the fact that Nubia was an ecclesiastic province within the Alexandrian patriarchate in the period under consideration.

[20] The word occurs in an abbreviated version as $\zeta\acute{\alpha}\kappa(o\rho os)$.

Thegna, attested several times in connection either with a toponym or a church name.[21] Other examples include χοιμ( )αρχ( ),[22] παιδ( ) οἰκοδ( ),[23] and ΟΥΑΤΑΦ.[24] Many who did not indicate their social status or occupations were probably simple people living in the neighbourhood of Banganarti.

The visitors' inscriptions in Banganarti church constitute a phenomenon unparalleled in medieval Nubia[25] and find few analogies in the entire Mediterranean world. They testify to Banganarti being an important pilgrimage centre that drew visitors from all Makuria from Qasr Ibrim in the north to Nuri in the south, and from all strata of Nubian society from King to commoners, who felt the need to leave souvenirs of their visits in form of wall inscriptions.[26] This psychological and "turistic" motive probably was supplemented by a religious one: the inscriptions "prayed" for their authors so long as they were visible.

The question arises why all those people frequented Banganarti church. The appearance of the Archangel Raphael as addressee of invocations and prayers suggests that the church was named after him, but this does not explain the phenomenon of pilgrimages and leaving of inscriptions. Basing on the premises of architectonical, iconographical and epigraphical nature, Bogdan Żurawski suggests it functioned either as a memorial church for the cult of local rulers in connection with their graves or as a place where important relics were kept (a third solution also is possible since the rulers could be buried *ad sanctos*).[27] Whilst an interesting supposition, it needs further support to be proven positively.

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[21] For further discussion, see *infra*, **13**, commentary.

[22] Perhaps to be read ἀρχ(ι)χοιμ( ), however, it does not help as no Greek word begins with χοιμ-. A solution would be to admit a mistake, e.g. ἀρχ(ι)κοιμ( ).

[23] It is uncertain if this is one title or two separate titles. In the first case we could take into consideration the possibility of reading: παιδ(ῶν) οἰκοδ(όμος) = "children educator", in the second one: παιδ(αγωγός), οἰκοδ(όμος) = "pedagogue", "architect".

[24] The term is attested in Old Nubian documents from Qasr Ibrim; cf. *IN* III 34 ii 12; 36 i 34; 39, 27; 42, 12; 44, 18.

[25] Wall inscriptions, it is true, occur in Nubian churches, e.g. in Faras cathedral and the church of Sonqi Tino, but they are nowhere so numerous as in Banganarti church.

[26] This is very much in an antique manner and finds particular analogy with visitors' inscriptions in pagan Egyptian temples of Hellenistic and Roman times. In the Christian world, one does not as a rule scratche on the walls of cult places.

[27] In 2003 a curious octagonal structure was found at the focal point of the church under the central dome. It was provided with a subterranean cache.

The visitors' inscriptions identified thus far came apparently into existence within a relatively short period of c. 50–100 years. This is suggested both by the building history of the Banganarti upper church and the uniformity of the script, language and form of the texts. The absolute chronology of the inscriptions may be established on the basis of different external and internal criteria.[28] It should first be observed that the inscriptions are later than the murals, as their location as a rule respects the location of the murals and sometimes the texts are written across murals. Secondly, they are to be found amongst others on the latest alterations done to the substance of the church, such as pillars at the eastern chapel entrances. Moreover, the inscriptions on the central supports are obviously connected with the later floor laid some 20 cm. above the original church floor. All this leads to the conclusion that the inscriptions originate from the second half of the 13th – first half of the 14th century. This dating is further corroborated by the occurrence in several inscriptions of the name of a king Siti who is probably identical with the king of Dotawo of this name reigning in the 1330s (cf. **2**, commentary). As the most important of these inscriptions, commemorating the visit in the Bangarti church of Siti himself, is written already on the last layer of whitewash at the bottom of the entrance to Chapel 6, one can presume that this visit was made towards the end of the epigraphic activity connected with the church as a pilgrimage centre.

APPENDIX:
SAMPLES OF INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE UPPER CHURCH

1. Room 17, south wall (Fig. 2).

† ΚΟϹΝΑ-
ΚΟΥΔ(Α).

Kosmakouda

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[28] One should remark that no inscription contains a year date according to any of the dating systems used in medieval Nubia. This is strange, as dates do occur in this type of texts in Christian Nubia. Several wall inscriptions with dates according to the era of Martyrs were evidenced in monastery on Kom H at Old Dongola.

The same name, also standing alone, occurs twice more in Banganarti church, immediately beneath this inscription and at the entrance to Room 16, north side. Judging from their palaeography, all three inscriptions were left by the same man.

2. Entrance to Chapel 6, south side (Fig. 3).

† ϹΙΤΙ ΟΥΡΟΥ.

King Siti.

This modest inscription attests to the effect that a king named Siti personally visited the church at Banganarti. The same king is mentioned indirectly in two inscriptions left by one Dourere (one is **6**, below) who indicates that he was Epirshil of King Siti. He is probably also on record in an Old Nubian inscription on the west wall of Room 9. The text is badly damaged on the left side and hence difficult to grasp, however, one can safely read ϹΪΤΙΚΑ ΝΟΥΛΟΥΑ = "the leader Siti" (directive) in line 1. Most probably, King Siti from the Banganarti inscriptions is identical with the Siti who was King of Dotawo in the 1330s, as attested by documents found at Qasr Ibrim and Edfu; cf. S. C. Munro-Hay, *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 29 (1982–1983), p. 130. His reign coincides with that of the first Muslim kings on the Old Dongola throne, particularly with that of Kanz ed-Dawla. It would be interesting to know the reasons for his long trip from so far north to the heart of Makuria: was it purely religious or had it political aims and the visit to Banganarti was only a by-product of a visit to Old Dongola? Or, perhaps Siti was king not only in Gebel Adda, but also in Dongola. In any case, the presence of King Siti in Banganarti church testifies to the importance of the latter as a religious and pilgrimage centre. One can imagine that Siti came to Banganarti with an entourage. This would explain the occurrence of inscriptions left by Dourere and other of his officers.

3. North-east pillar, east face (Fig. 4).

† ΠΡΜΕΝΗ Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς
διάκ(ονος).

Pirmene, deacon of (the Church of) Jesus.

Pirmene occurs also in an inscription on the south wall of Chapel 1 (the same man?).

4. Entrance to Chapel 4, north side (Fig. 5).

   † ἐγὼ Γ(α)Β(ΡΙΗ)Λ(Ο)ΦΟΡΟΥ.

   I, Gabrielophorou.

5. Entrance to Chapel 4, south side (Fig. 6).

   † ἐμὲ ΤΟΥΤΑΝ· μοὶ ΟΥϯ.

   I, Touvan; I, Oups.

6. On the engaged column in the north-west support, east face (Fig. 7).

   † ἐγὼ ΟΓδΗΝΟ ΤΟΥΓΓΑΛΗ̄

   ΑΠ̄Π̄ ΡΑΦΑΗΛ ΣΟΥΠΟΥ ΤΟΤ.

   I, Ogjeno of (the church of) Raphael of the city of Touggilli, son of
   Soupou.

The same Ogjeno signed on the south entrance to Chapel 5, about 2 m. from the
present inscription.

1. The personal name Ogjeno is evidenced by a wall inscription in Faras cathe-
   dral; cf. Kubińska, *Inscriptions*, p. 112 f., no. 52. Note that Η has been cor-
   rected from Є in the Faras inscription.

2. The occurence of the word ΤΟΤ here and in other Banganarti inscriptions is
   somewhat puzzling. ΤΟΤ is a generic word for "son" in Old Nubian, but it
   also designates an office which perhaps should be described as "head of a
   town or a village". If the word ΤΟΤ occurs in this second meaning here, we
   have to translate: "I, Ogjeno of (the church of) Raphael of the city of Toug-
   gilli, Tot of Soupou". The same observation also holds for **9, 10**, and **17**.

7. On the sandstone portal leading from the north portico to the church
interior, north face (Fig. 8).

   † ἐγὼ ΔΟΥΡΕΡΗ Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς

   μέγ(ας) διάκ(ονος) ΣΙΤΙ β(ασι)λ(έω)ς

   ΕΠΡϢΛ̄

   I, Dourere, deacon of (the Church of) Great Jesus, Epirshil of the King
   Siti.

The same man left another inscription on an engaged column of the south-east support. The text is badly damaged, but the reading [† ἐγ]ὼ ΛΟΥΡΕΡΗ [᾿Ι(ησοῦ)ς μέγ(ας) διάκ(ονος) ϹΙΤι β(ασι)λ(έω)ς Ε[ΠΡШΛ] seems to be secure by comparison with this text. Not far from this inscription is another reading: † ἐγὼ ΛΟΥΡΕΡΗ ᾿Ι(ησοῦ)ς μέγ(ας) κλι(ρικός) γράψον. Yet another inscription, situated on the east side of the entrance to Chapel 1 has a certain Dourere as author. It reads: † μοὶ ΛΟΥΡΕΡΗ ᾿Ι(ησοῦ)ς μέγ(ας) διά(κονος) ΠΑΙϹΕΛΟ. These two inscriptions may or may not also refer to the same man. In spite of the lack of the title "Epirshil of the King Siti", the possibility cannot be entirely ruled out.

2–3. For King Siti, see commentary to **2**, above. The Nubian word ΕΠΡШΛ is attested here for the first time. It is undoubtedly the name of an office or a title built with the element -ШΛ frequently encountered in other Nubian office names such as ΧΟΙΑΚШШΛ, ϬΟΚΝΑШШΛ, ΕΫΓΙΕΚШΛ, etc. The meaning of the word and the sphere of competence of the officer called ΕΠΡШΛ remain unknown. As often in Late Antique and Mediaeval world, the civilian office (*epirshil*) was held by an ecclesiastic (deacon).

A problem arises for the cumulation of both titles. As discussed above, the designation "Church of Great Jesus" probably refers to the "Cruciform Church" at Old Dongola. How is possible for a deacon of a Dongolese church to be an officer of a king of Dotawo? To my mind, there are two possible solutions: 1) Occurrences of the name "Church of Great Jesus" in Banganarti inscriptions do not always refer to the Cruciform Church at Old Dongola. Some may be connected with another church (or churches) at Dotawo. In fact, a "Church of Great Jesus" is attested in Faras inscriptions; cf. Jakobielski, *Bishopric*, pp. 174–176 (five attestations in all). 2) Dourere, a deacon of the "Cruciform Church" at Old Dongola also was an agent of Siti, King of Dotawo, in the capital of Makuria. The problem is non-existant if Siti was also king in Old Dongola; cf. above, commentary to **2**. The term ΕΠΡШΛ also occurs in another inscription on an engaged column of the south-east support, however, the text is too damaged to allow certain reading of the title in its entirety. Apparently, ϹΙΤΙ β(ασι)λ(έω)ς cannot be read.

8. On the north-east pillar, east face (Fig. 9).

† κἀμ(έ) ΑΝΤΟШ Τρῖς Πêδες

read Τρεῖς Παῖδες (for Τρίων Παιδῶν)

Also me, Antosh, (of the Church) of Three Youngs.

9. On the pillar between Chapels 2 and 3, west face (Fig. 10).

† αϊ αππογ λογγογρατϊ τοτ
αnκαρογ τοτ παϊϲελο.

I, Appou, son of Lougourati, son of Ankarou, have written (this).

Another inscription of this man is on an engaged column of the north-east support, east face. In this second inscription, he did not indicate the name of his grandfather and omitted the word τοτ after λογγογρατι. Additionaly, the name of his father is spelled with double ρ (λογγογρρατι).

10. On the blockage between the north-east support and the wall bordering Chapel 8 on the east, east face (Fig. 11).

† ἐγὼ Ζωόδωτα τοτ ʼΙ(ησοῦ)s μέγ(αs) κλη(ρικὸs) γράψον.

I, son of Zoodota, cleric of (the Church of) Great Jesus, have written (this).

The reading κλη(ρικός) is not entirely certain. One can also read κλη(σία) (for ἐκκλησία). The same is also true for **14**.

11. On the pillar north of the entrance to Chapel 6, west face (Fig. 12).

† ἐγὼ ταγρωϲα τλλαρτι
τοτ παειϲελο.

I, Taurosa, Tot of Tillarti, have written (this).

For the toponym Tillarti = "Island of God", see remarks in text above. For Tot, see commentary to **6**.

12. Entrance to Chapel 4, north side (Fig. 13).

† ὁ τὸν ʼΡαφαὴλ εἰs Μνειδίον ἀπέστελεν θὰ οὔμματα τον Τ[ωβίτ]·
κ[ά]μ(ε) ηαρηϛ ʼΙ(ησοῦ)s μέγ(αs) διάκ(ονοs)· ʼΙ(ησοῦ)s.

1. read Μηδίαν ἀπέστειλεν τὰ ὄμματα τοῦ

You who have sent Raphael to Media (in order to recover) the eyes of Tobit. Also me, Narme, deacon of (the Church of) Great Jesus, (have written). Jesus.

13. Entrance to Chapel 4, north side (Fig. 5).

ἀρχάγγε[λ]ε Ῥαφαήλ, ⟨ὁ⟩ τὸν Ἀσμο⟨δαῖον⟩ ἔδησαν
(καὶ) Σάρρα ἐλευτέ⟨ρω⟩σαν, Χ(ριστο)ῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν [ἱκ]-
έτευε· ἐγὼ Ἰσὰκ Θυμ( ) πόλη μεγ(άλη) θεγνα (καὶ) ἐπ(ι)διάκ(ονος)
(καὶ) πάλ(ιν) ΓΟΡ(Τ)ϹΟΛ(ΔΕ)
4   γράψω[ν].

1. read ἔδησεν or δήσας ‖ 2. read ἠλευθέρωσεν or ἐλευθερώσας ǀ read Χριστόν ‖ 3. read Ἰσαάκ ǀ read πόλις

*Archangel Raphael, You who have bound Asmodaios and have set Sara free,
beseech Christ for us. I, Isaak Thym( ), thegna of the great city (?) and epidea-
con and also Lord of Elders, have written (this).*

1–2. The text refers to the story of setting Sara free from the demon Asmodais,
as told in Tobit 8.1–3; cf. esp. Tobit 8.3: ὅτε δὲ ὠσφράνθη τὸ δαιμόνιον τῆς
ὀσμῆς, ἔφυγεν εἰς τὰ ἀνώτατα Αἰγύπτου, καὶ ἔδησεν αὐτὸ ὁ ἄγγελος.
Comparison with the Biblical text suggests the reading ἔδησεν against
δήσας at the end of line 1.

3. Whatever stands between the words Ἰσάκ and θεγνα is difficult to read and
to understand. The abbreviated word Θυμ( ) may not necessarily refer to
Ισάκ, but also to the following πόλη μεγ(άλη). One should note however,
that the expression πόλις μεγάλη = "Great city" designates Old Dongola in
Banganarti inscriptions; cf. main text above.

The word θεγνα occurs about 10 times in Banganarti inscriptions. It has
been also evidenced several times elsewhere; 1) graffito in the church at Na-
ga el-Sheima (North Nubia), H. Satzinger [in:] M. Bietak, M. Schwarz & *al.*,
*Nagˁ el-Scheima. Eine befestigte christliche Siedlung und andere christliche Denkmä-
ler in Sayala-Nubien* (= *Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-
Historische Klasse, Denkschriften* 191), Wien 1987, pp. 129–130, pl. 47: † ἐγὼ
ειϲ̄ττα Παχ(ω)ρας̇ θεγνα (θε γαια *editio princeps*) υ(ἱὸ)ς ϲοннε γράφ(ω); 2)
graffito in the church in Sonqi Tino, Donadoni, "Graffiti", p. 34: Ἀει θεγνα
(αειθεгнα *editio princeps*); note that Ἀει must be a toponym in this case; 3)
graffito at Faras, F. Ll. Griffith, *LAAA* 13 (1928), Pl. LXIV.4) graffito from
Ashkeit, U. Monneret de Villard, *La Nubia Medioevale* I, Cairo 1935, p. 211;
the word occurs in an abbreviated version here: θεγ(να)); 5) graffito in a
church at Tamit, S. Donadoni [in:] *Tamit [1964]. Missione Archeologica in
Egitto dell'Università di Roma*, Roma 1967, p. 65, no. 3 (θεiнλ ed. princ.).

Thegna occurs in connection either with a toponym or the name of a church. It is undoubtedly the name of a (church) office or a title, but its exact meaning is not yet understood. In the majority of cases, a point is located over the final *alpha* indicating that the word in question was accentuated on the last syllable.

The designation ΓΟΡΤϹΟΛΛΕ (with different spellings) = "Lord of Elders" occurs several times in Banganarti inscriptions in relation to different persons both ecclesiastics (mainly deacons of the Jesus-Church) and civilians. It has been also evidenced in Gebel Adda (F.Ll. Griffith, *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period* (= *Abhandlungen der Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil.-hist. Klasse* 8}, Berlin 1913, p. 67, no. 15e) and in Sonqi Tino (Donadoni, "Graffiti", p. 34). It is undoubtedly the name of an office or a title, most probably of civilian character, but its exact meaning is as yet unknown.

14. Entrance to Chapel 5, north side (Fig. 14).

ⲁⲓ̈
† ἐγὼ ἡμὶν ῾Ραφαὴλ ὁ παρ[εσ]-
τάμενον ἐνόπιον [κ(υρίο)υ - - -]
ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲣ ᾽Ι(ησοῦ)ς μάγα κλι(ρικὸς) [- - -].

1. read εἰμί ‖ 1–2. read παρεστάμενος ‖ 2. read ἐνώπιον ‖ 3. read μέγας, read κλη(ρικός)

I am Raphael who is standing in front of the Lord. [Ι], Paper, cleric of (the church of) Great Jesus [- - -].

1–2. For the idea of Raphael as the one who stands in front of the Lord, see Tobit 12.15 (*e codic. Sinait.*): ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ῾Ραφαήλ, εἷς τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων, οἳ παρεστήκασιν καὶ εἰσπορεύονται ἐνώπιον τῆς δόξης κυρίου. It is possible that the redactors of the Banganarti inscriptions directly borrowed from this passage of the Book of Tobit.

The personal pronoun of the Old Nubian ⲁⲓ̈ = "I" is later addition to line 1. It possibly goes together with ἐγώ or with ῾Ραφαήλ.

3. Paper is the name frequently occurring in the Banganarti inscriptions. One cannot be sure whether all these occurrences refer to the same man or more than one.

15. Entrance to Chapel 4, north side (Fig. 15).

† πρεσβευτά μου Ῥαφαὴλ • (Ῥαφαήλ), ἀεὶ διαφ(ύλαξον) ΠΡΕ
    καὶ λίη
ἡμέρα καὶ νυκτ(ὸς) φύλ(αξον).

1. read λίην (?) ‖ 2. read ἡμέρας

O Raphael, (Raphael), my ambassador, always guard [- - -] surely (?)
guard, guard at day and night.

16. Entrance to chapel 3, south side (Fig. 16).

    † ἐμοῦ καύ-
    χη⟨μα⟩ μου (καὶ) ἡ δ-
    όξα μου (καὶ) ρ-
4   ύστη ἐμοῦ
    (Ῥαφαήλ)· μὲ
    υ(ἱὸ)ν C(ωTH)PI
    ΓΟΝΟC γράψ(ον).

3–4. read ρύστης ‖ 6. read υἱός

O Raphael, (you are) my boast and my glory and my saviour. I, son of
Soteri (from) Gonos, have written (this).

17. North-east pillar, east face (Fig. 17).

    † ἡ τὸν θ(εὸ)ν τεκοῦσαν ἐν σαρκὴ ἄπ(ατ)ερ ὁ γαμέ(της)
    {P} Μαρία αὐτὸν δυσόπησον ὑπέρ
    ἐγὼ CΟΠΑ ΤΟΥΓΓΟΥΛ⟦.⟧ ΔΠΠΙ CΑΠ ΤΟΤ
4   ΔΑΓΕ Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς κλη(σία) ἀν(θρώπ)ον γράψον.

1. read τεκοῦσα ǀ read σαρκὶ ǀ read ἄπ(ατ)ηρ ‖ 2. read δυσώπησον ‖ 4. read ἐκκλη(σία) ǀ
read ἀν(θρώπ)ων

You who have born God in flesh without father (and) unmarried,
Mary, beseech Him for (me). I, Sopa (from) the town of Touggoul, son
of Sap (?), [- - -] of the Jesus church of the people, have written (this).

The reading of the inscription is uncertain. What is printed above is one of several possibilities.

1–2. Perhaps one should read ὁ γαμέ[τη]‖ρ, however, the word γαμέτηρ, though possible, has not been attested thus far. ὁ γαμέτης is probably a mistake for ἀγάμετος.

4. The meaning of the word ⲇⲁⲅⲉ is unknown to me. It is probably connected with the root ⲇⲁⲅ- "to proclaim".

18. Entrance to Chapel 3, north side (Fig. 18).

ἐλεήσο μέ, ὁ θ(εό)ς,
ἐλεήσο μέ, ὁ θ(εό)ς,
κατὰ τὸ μέ-
4   γα σου ἐλέη σου.

1. read ἐλεήσον ‖ 2. read ἐλεήσον

Give mercy, O God, give mercy, O God, according to your great compassion.

This is a somewhat modified quotation of Psalm 50:3: ἐλεήσον μέ, ὁ θ(εό)ς, κατὰ τὸ μέγα ἔλεός σου. The person who inscribed the text on the wall or his source changed for some reason from the singular ἔλεος for plural ἐλέη, but did not coordinate this change with the article and the adjective. σου before ἐλέη is superfluous.

19. On the set of the north wall of Chapel 5, near the representation of the apostle standing last in the row (Fig. 19).

† ⲁ�ⲟⲅⲁ.

The living one.

Similar inscriptions occur several times in Banganarti church. They may have functioned as invocations to God, angels or apostles. Or, perhaps ⲁ�ⲟⲅⲁ is a personal name?

20. Chapel 4, on the capital of the first column from the south, towards east; near the heads of two apostles.

υ(ἰῶ)ν βροντ(ῆς).

(Of the) sons of thunder.

The reading υ(ἰὸ)ν βροντ(ῆς) also is possible. υἱοὶ βροντῆς = "sons of thunder" was the name that, according to Mark 3.17, Jesus gave to the sons of Zebedaeus, John and Jacob. Later, particularly in patristic literature, this name was transmitted to all apostles. Several items reading υ(ἰῶ)ν βροντ(ῆς) are amongst Banganarti inscriptions, e.g., on the south pillar at the entrance to Chapel 3. The function of these inscriptions is unclear. The present text possibly refers to the representation of apostles adorning the apse of the chapel. In other cases, it may be an invocation with the incorrect use of genitive instead of vocative.

21. On the engaged column in the south-west support.

† Ῥαφαήλ, Ῥαφαίλ, [Ῥαφ]αήλ.

read Ῥαφαήλ on the second position

Raphael, Raphael, Raphael.

This is the name of Archangel Raphael repeated three times.

22. On the east wall of the corridor leading from Chapel 6 to an elongated room behind it (Fig. 20).

† Μιχαήλ, Γαβριήλ, Ῥαφα-
ήλ.

Michael, Gabriel, Raphael.

The inscription contains the list of three most reknown Archangels.

*

Wall inscriptions also occur in the Lower Church, but they are much less frequent there than in the Upper Church. Four texts have been evidenced thus far: three on the east wall of a room adjoining the apse from the south-east (the south pastophorium), and one on the east wall closing the south

nave on the east, south of the apse. Amongst the three inscriptions in the south pastophorium we have: 1) a graffito with the names of three archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael; 2) ink inscription in large irregular hand with a request to keep a priest (ἱερεύς) in peace and love; 3) ink inscription in a nice book-hand resembling "insclined Biblical majusles", probably of the 7th century, with a literary text which I am as yet unable to identify.

The inscription on the east wall of the central space is also done in black ink. The hand is nice and skilled, standing midway between Biblical majusles and Old Nubian majuscles. The text reads as follows:

[- - -] ὁ συνοδεύσα[ς] τῷ θεράποντι σου Ι . Ω . [- - -]
[- - - ὁ] συνξενιτεύσα[ς] τῷ δούλῳ σου Ι . . . [- - -]
[- - - συν]όδευσον ʽτῷ Χ(ριστ)ῷʼ Ζαχα[ρ]ίας β(ασι)λ(εὺ)ς
                            ΔΕ . [- - -] . Ν . [- - -]
4 [- - - - -]ΤΩ . [- - -] . ΤΗΡΙΩΝ[- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -]
   [- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -] . . . [- - - - - - - - - - - - -]
   . [-]
   ΑΠΟΚ . [-]
8 ΟΥΜΕΝΟΝ[-]
   βιωτικῶν . . [. . . .] . . . . [- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -]
   καὶ πάλιν Ε . . Ε . ΘΕΙΝ ἐστιν · ὅτι σου ἔστιν[- - - - - - - - -]
   ἀρχάγγελος ὁδηγὲ τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ Ῥαφαήλ, ὁδήγη[σον φ]ύλαξον
12 σκέπασον καὶ ῥῦσαι αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν παγίδ[ων τοῦ ἐ]χθροῦ
   βασιλεύως ἡμῶν Ζαχαρίας, ἀμὴν γέ[νοιτο ἀ]μήν.†

1. ὁ̇συνοδευca[c] ϊ . ω . [- - -] ‖ 2. ϊ . . . [- - -] ‖ 3. [- - - cυν]όδευcον β̅λ̅c̅ ‖ 11. θ̅υ̅

3. the meaning is: συνόδευσον εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν Ζαχαρίᾳ βασιλεῖ ‖ 11. read ὁδηγός ‖ 12. read αὐτόν ‖ 13. read βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν Ζαχαρίας (for βασιλέα ἡμῶν Ζαχαρίαν)

[- - -] *who accompanied your servant* [- - -], *who lived abroad together with your servant* [- - -], *accompany the King Zacharias to Christ* [- - -] *of life* [- - -] *and also is to* [- - -], *for yours is* [- - -] *Archangel, guide of God, Raphael, guide, guard, protect and save him from the traps of the enemy, our King Zacharias, amen, so be it, amen.*

The inscription contains a prayer or, better, two consecutive prayers to Archangel Raphael for a King Zacharias. Zacharias is a name occurring re-

peatedly in the dynasty that ruled Makuria in the 9th–11th centuries (the so-called Zacharias' dynasty). According to the recent study by Włodzimierz Godlewski,[29] three kings had this name at that time: 1) Zacharias I (835–858), the founder of the dynasty, father of the future king Georgios I who, as a young man, undertook in 836 a trip to Baghdad to discuss with the Caliph Al-Mutassim questions concerning relations between Egypt and Nubia; 2) Zacharias II (915/920 – ca. 940), apparently a grandson of Georgios I; 3) Zacharias III (ca. 940 – ca. 965), son of Zacharias II. The inscription yields no certain data that would allow identification of the Zacharias mentioned in it with one of these kings, however, the tenor of the text speaks in favour of Zacharias I. In the first part of the text, the redactor of the inscription, like the redactors of inscriptions in the Upper Church, bases on the story told in the Book of Tobit (see above). Unlike his successors, however, who refer to the specific events that happened during the trip of the young Tobit (binding of Asmodaios, freeing Sara, healing the eyes of the old Tobit), he makes reference to the trip to a foreign country itself, perhaps in order to allude to the trip to Baghdad undertaken by the young Georgios.[30] If so, the inscription should be dated to the period shortly after 836. The occurrence in the Lower Church of prayers to the Archangel Raphael strongly speaks in favour that this church, like the later one, was dedicated to him.

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[29] W. GODLEWSKI, "Introduction to the Golden Age of Makuria (9th–11th centuries)" *Africana Bulletin* 50 (2002), pp. 75–98.

[30] The parallels between the trips of the young Tobit and the young Georgios are numerous. Both youngsters acted according to the will of their fathers and for their good. Both of them travelled more or less to foreign countries to the East. During their trip, they profited from the help of their coreligionists.

PLATE I
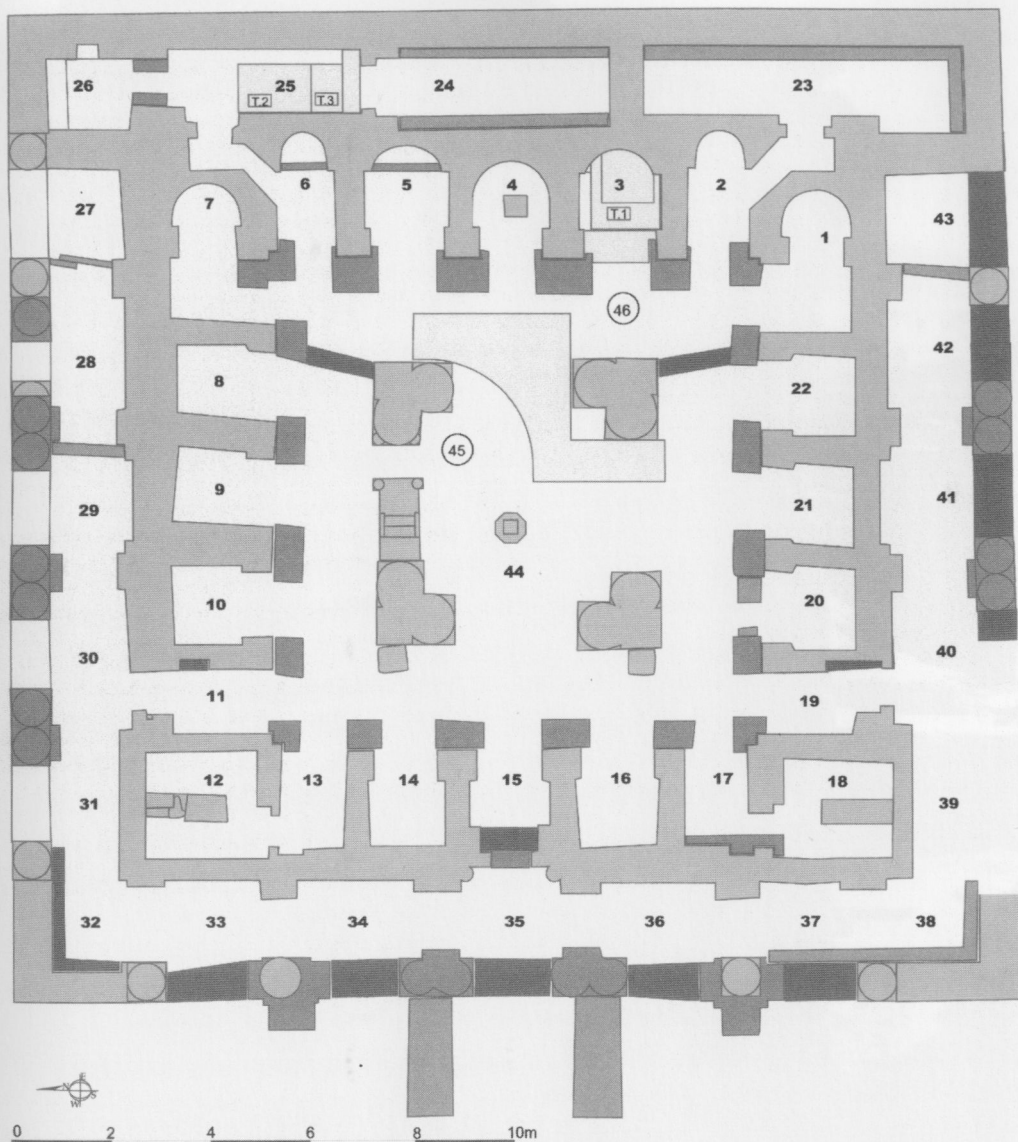
Fig. 1. The Upper Church of Banganarti
(drawn by B. Żurawski)

PLATE II
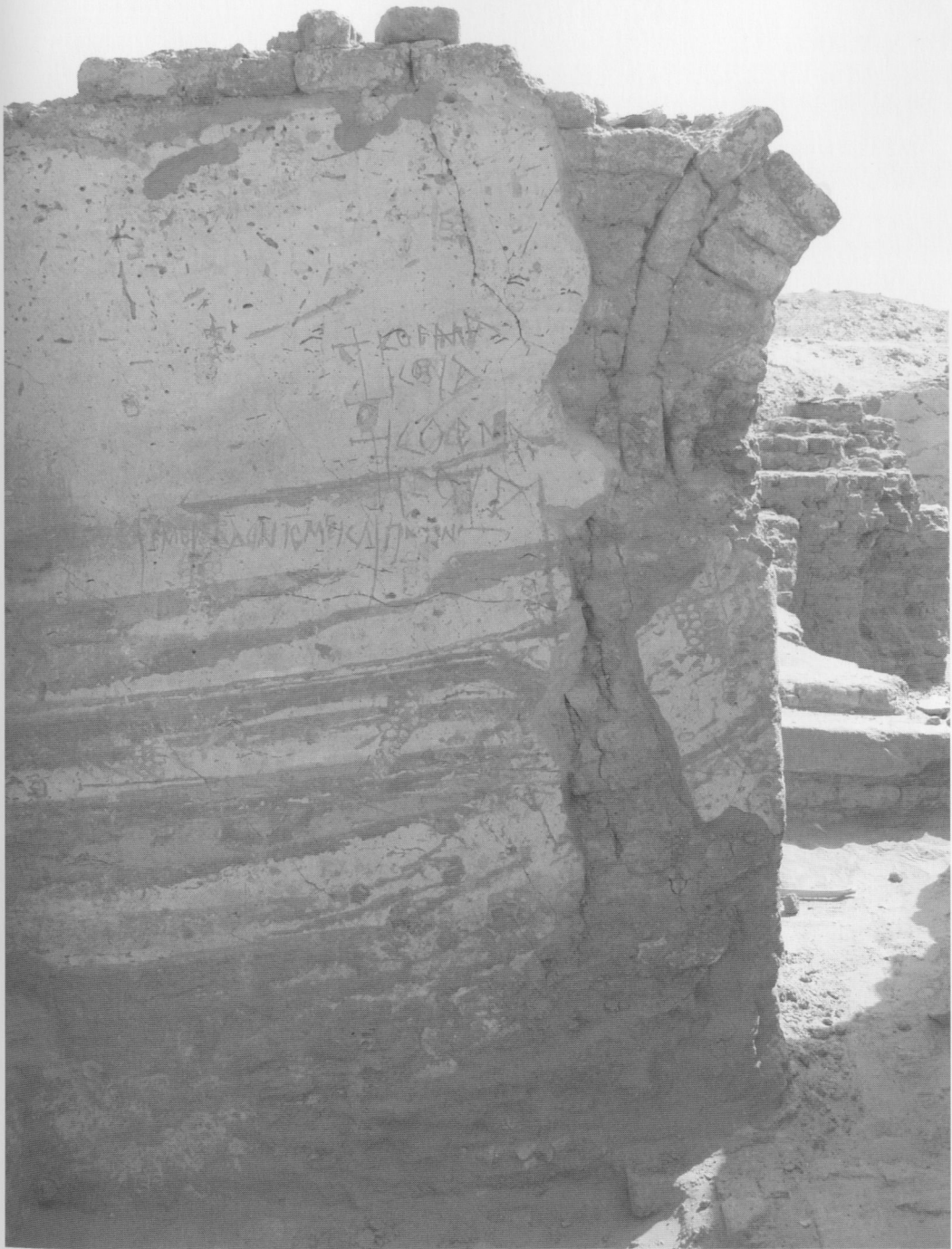
Fig. 2. Inscription no. 1
(photo by B. Żurawski)

PLATE III
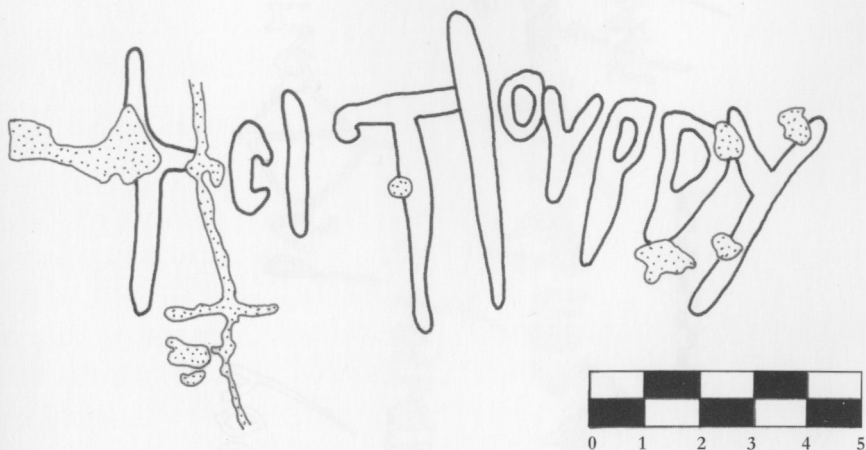
Fig. 3. Inscription no. 2
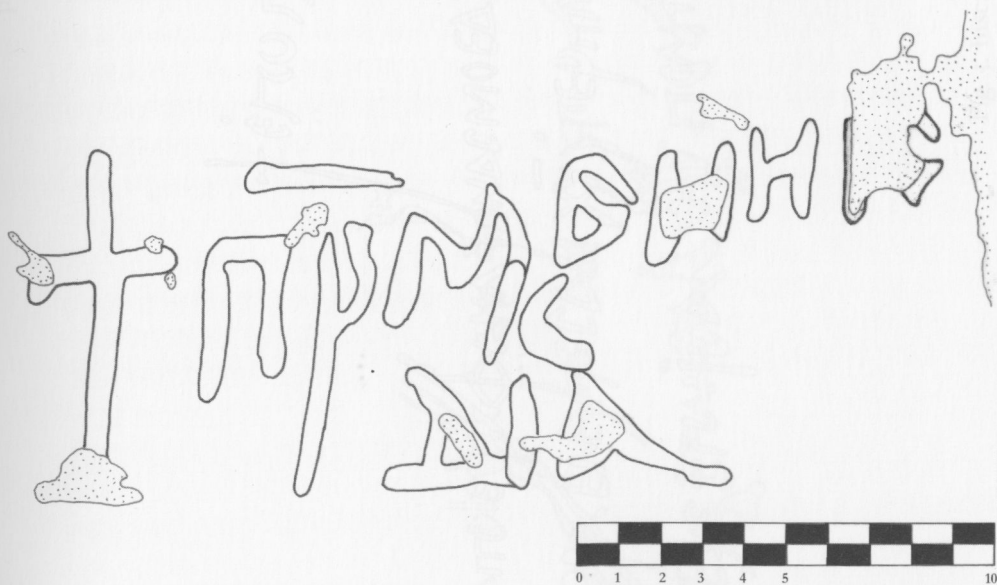
Fig. 4. Inscription no. 3
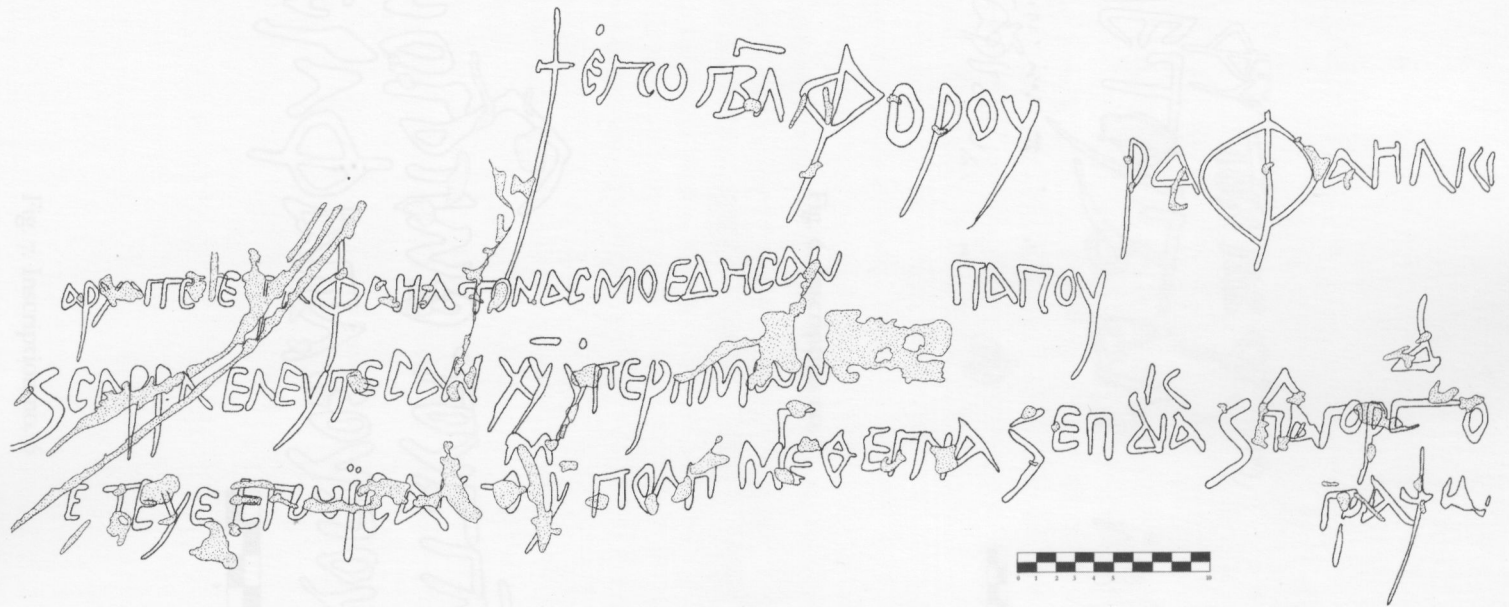
PLATE IV

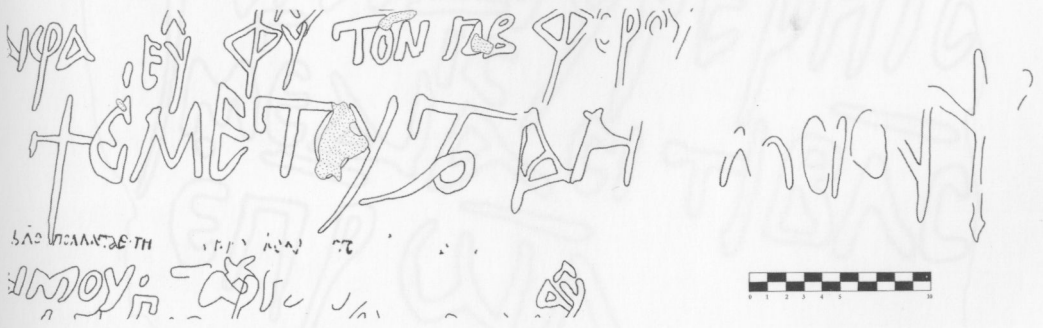Fig. 5. Inscriptions no. 4 and 13

PLATE V

Fig. 6. Inscription no. 5

Fig. 8. Inscription no. 7
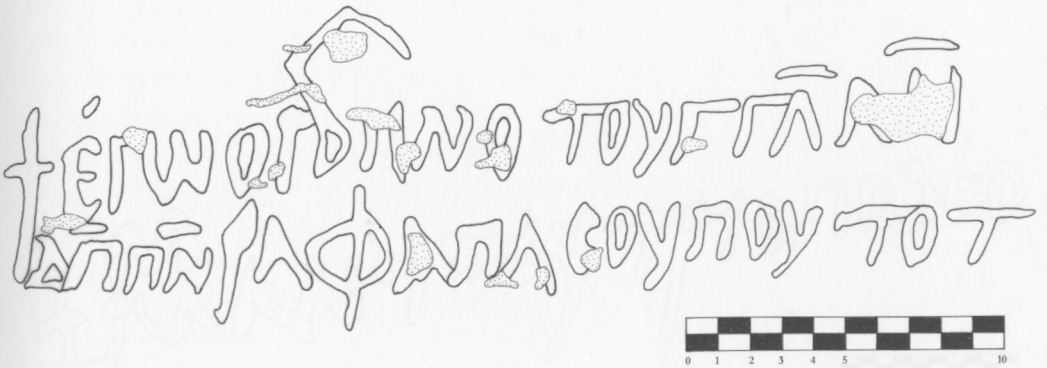
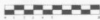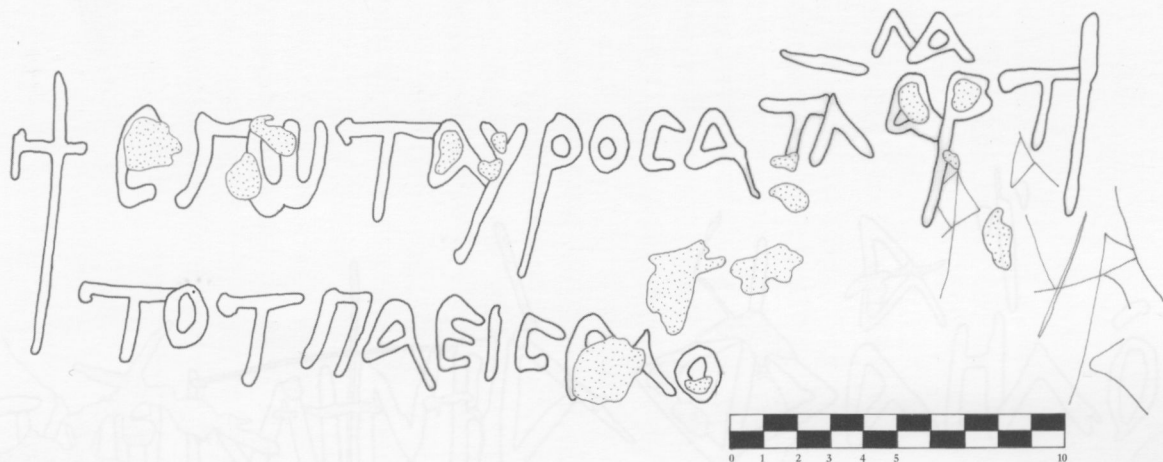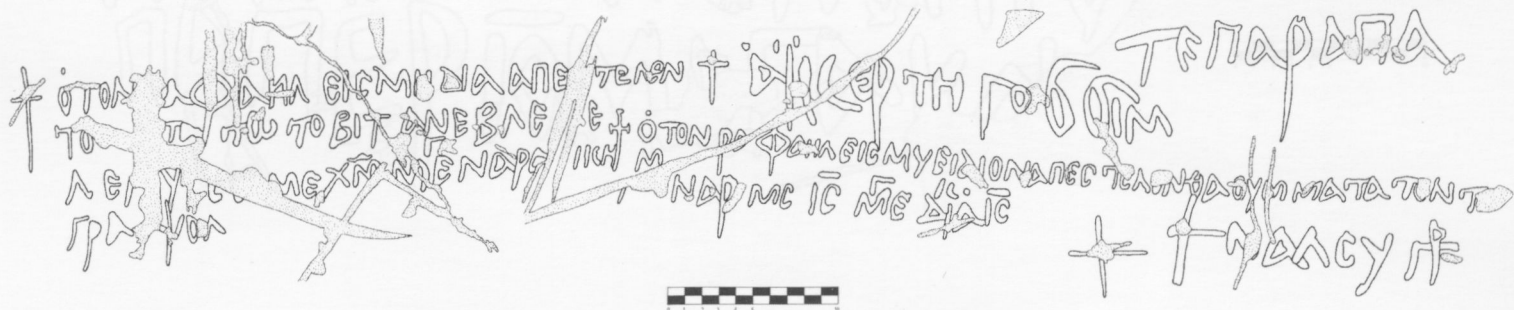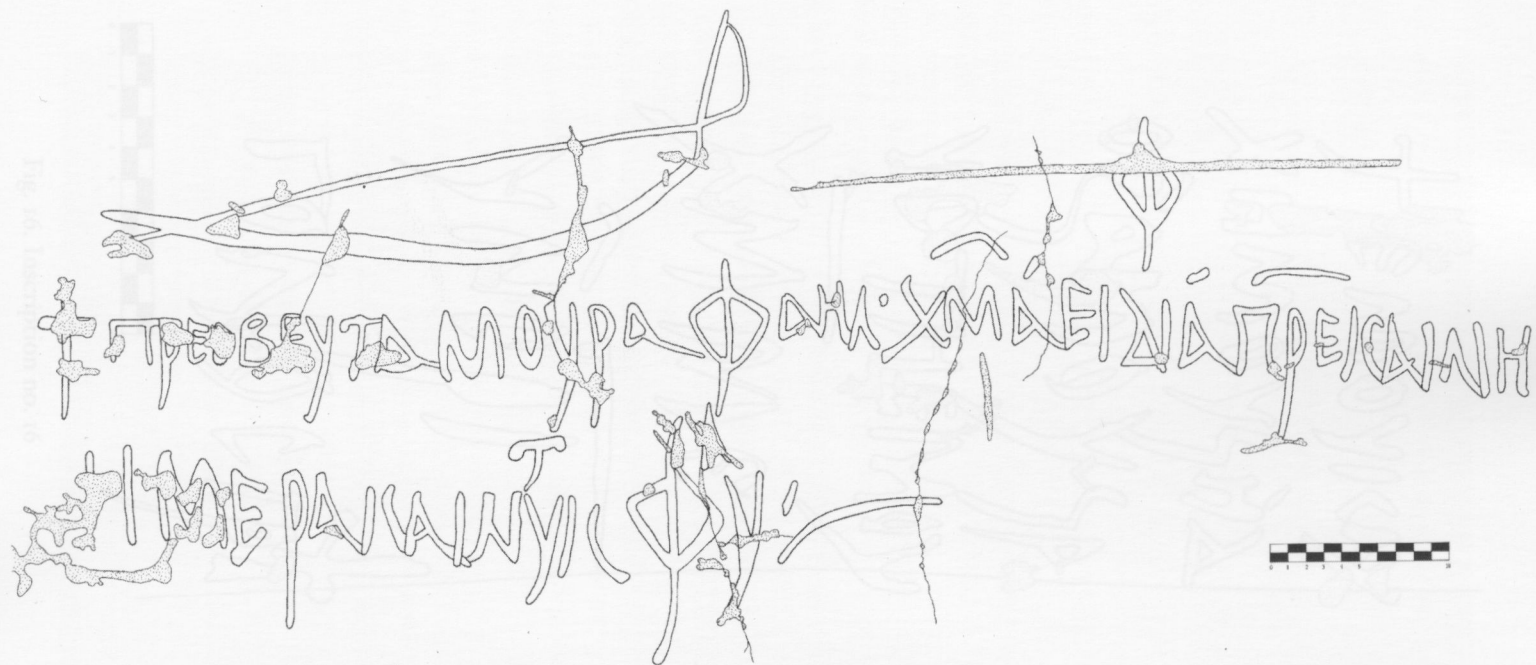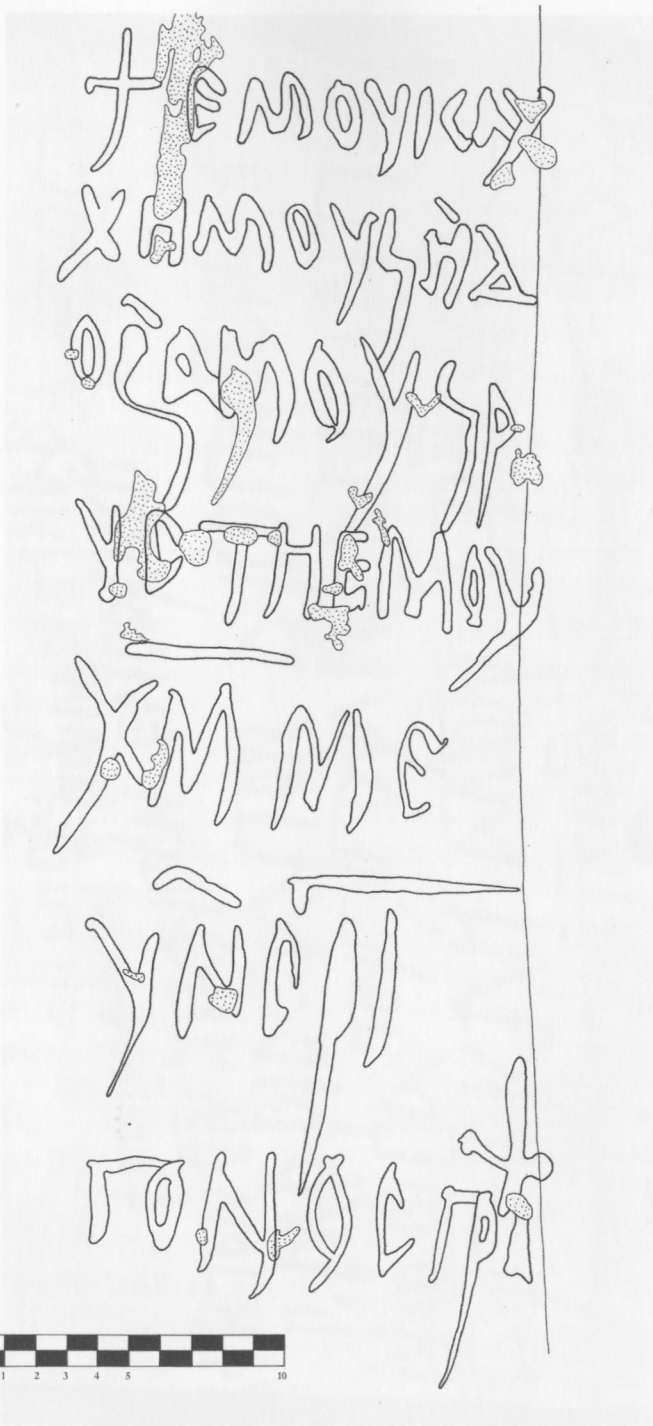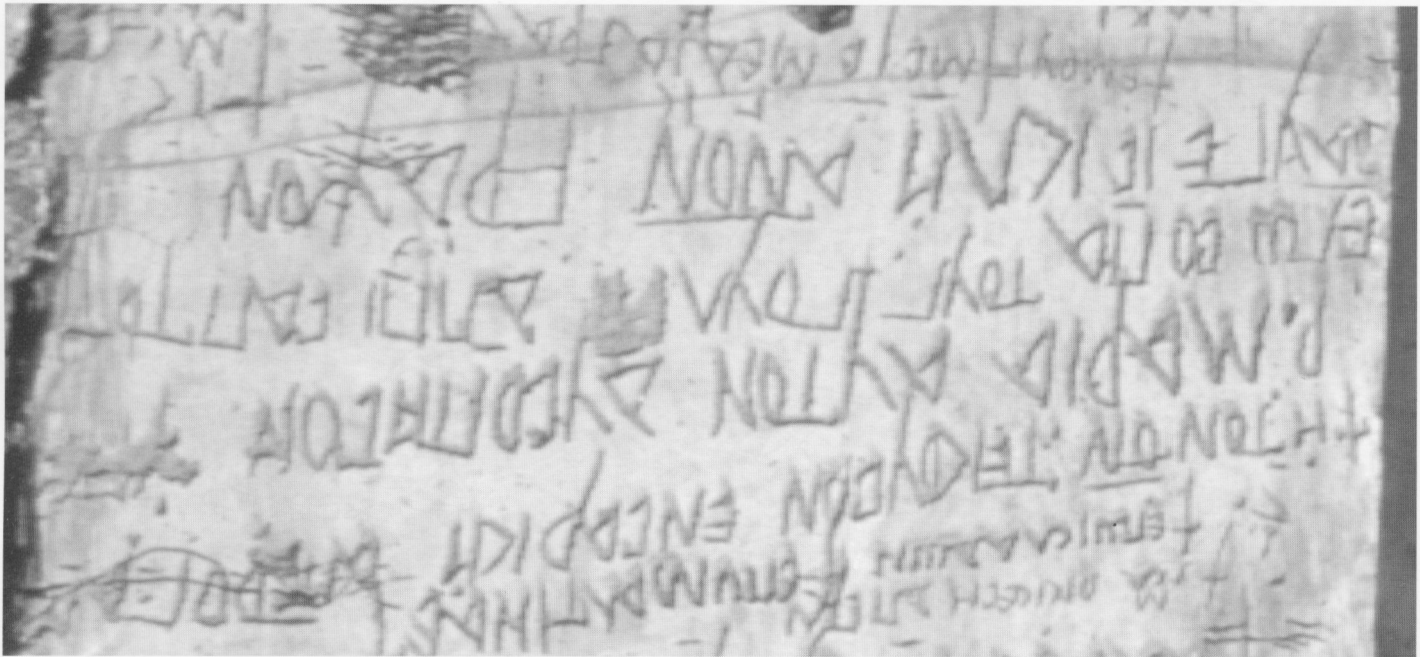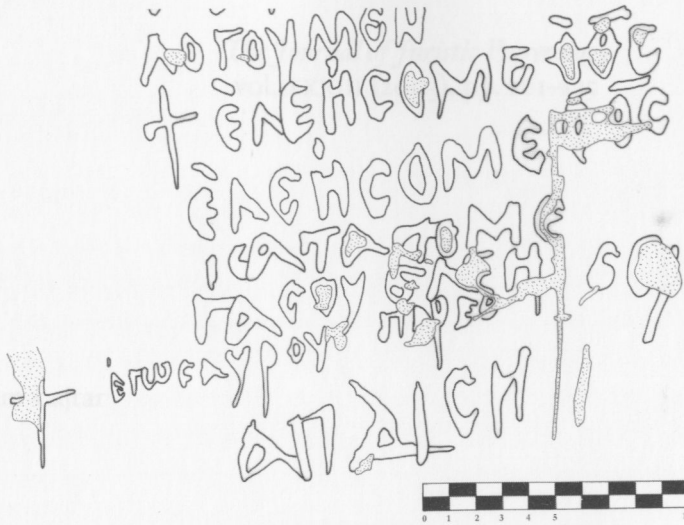Fig. 7. Inscription no. 6

PLATE VI
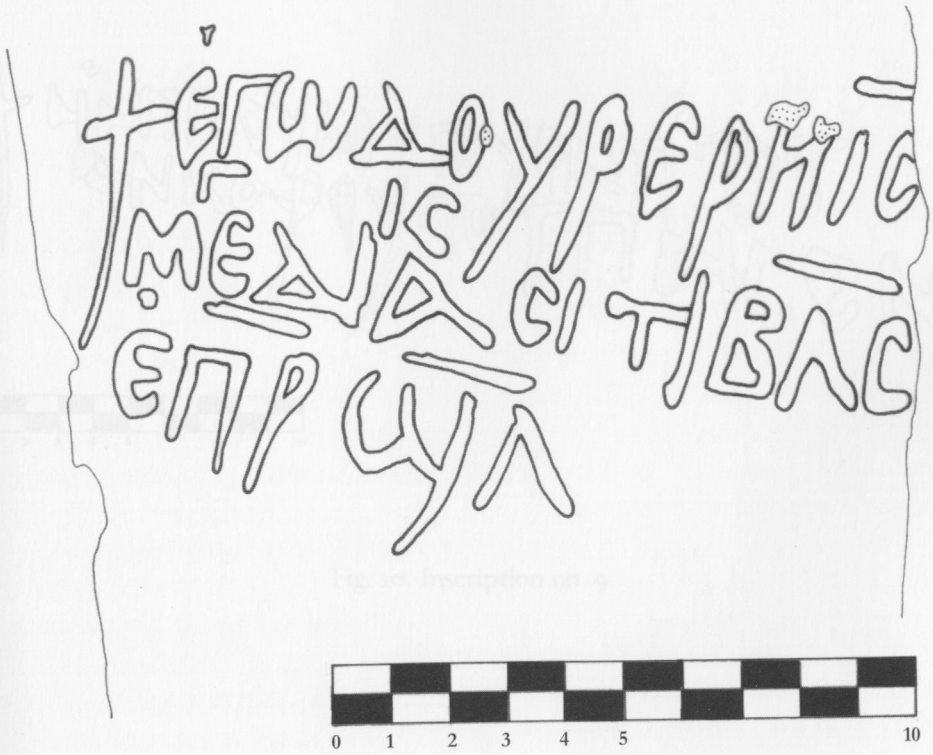
Fig. 8. Inscription no. 7

Fig. 9. Inscription no. 8

PLATE VII
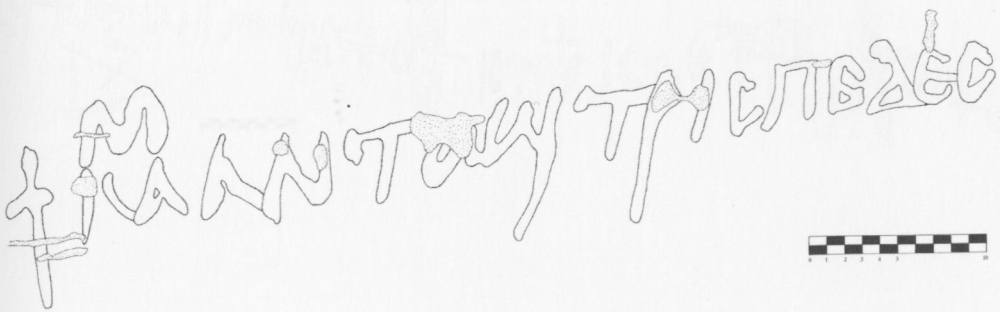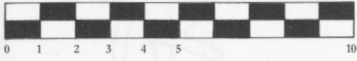
Fig. 10. Inscription no. 9

Fig. 11. Inscription no. 10

PLATE VIII

Fig. 12. Inscription no. 11

Fig. 13. Inscription no. 12

PLATE IX

Fig. 14. Inscription no. 14

PLATE X

Fig. 15. Inscription no. 15

PLATE XI

Fig. 16. Inscription no. 16

Fig. 17. Inscription no. 17
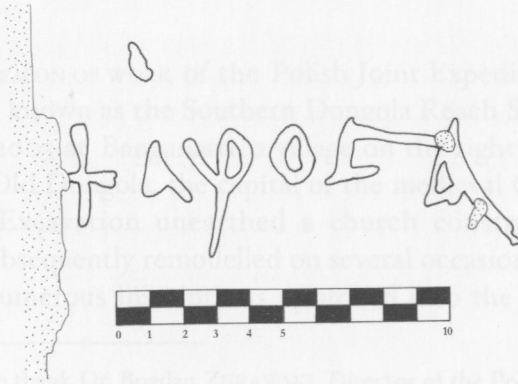
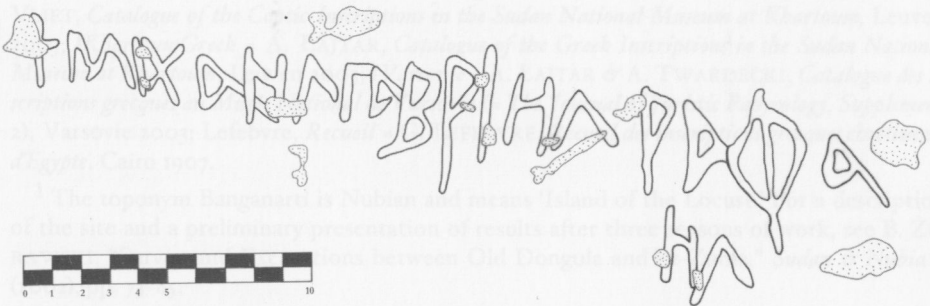PLATE XII

PLATE XIII

Fig. 18. Inscription no. 18

Fig. 19. Inscription no. 19

Fig. 20. Inscription no. 22