Łajtar, Adam

Christian Saï in written records (inscriptions and manuscripts)

2006

Adam Łajtar

CHRISTIAN SAÏ IN WRITTEN RECORDS
(INSCRIPTIONS AND MANUSCRIPTS)*

*To the memory of Francis Geus,
the former Director of the French Unit
at the Sudan National Corporation of Antiquities
and Museums and the Director
of the French Mission on the Saï Island*

IT IS A COMMONLY ACCEPTED opinion that Saï was an important centre within the Christian Kingdom of Makuria. Our knowledge of Christian Saï, however, is very scarce. Remains of the town from the Christian period, situated in the northern part of the island of Saï, were never a subject of archaeological excavations. Under these circumstances, the only source of knowledge which we have to our disposal are few mentions of Saï in written records.

Saï occurs twice in external sources. In his *Khitat*, al-Makrizi (1364––1442), based on al-Aswani (10th century), describes it as an administrative centre at the southern border of the province of Upper Maqs, as well as an episcopal see.[1] In Vansleb's *Histoire de l'église d'Alexandrie* (1677), Saï is men-

---

* The following abbreviation is used throughout: *IN = Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim* II, ed. by G. M. BROWNE (= *Texts from Excavations* 10), London 1989; III, ed. by G. M. BROWNE (= *Texts from Excavations* 12), London 1991.

[1] Cf. G. VANTINI, *Oriental Sources Concerning Nubia*, Warsaw – Heidelberg 1975, p. 604. For al-Aswani and his description of Nubia, see G. TROUPEAU, 'La description de la Nubie d'al-Aswani', *Arabica* 1 (1954), pp. 276–288.

tioned in a list of Nubian bishoprics quoted after a Coptic ecclesiastic document.[2] There are several attestations of Saï in internal sources. At issue are inscriptions and manuscripts in Greek, Coptic and Old Nubian originating from Qasr Ibrim, Hambukol, Banganarti, and Saï itself. They provide names of men who held various ecclesiastic and secular offices in Saï. The aim of this paper is to collect all these instances and to analyse them, to the greatest possible extent, in a broader context of Christian Nubia.

BISHOPS OF SAÏ

The Bishopric of Saï is not well known.[3] Its existence is attested *expressis verbis* by Makrizi and by the document quoted by Vansleb (cf. ft. 1 & 2). It has been suggested that the large church, the remains of which are visible on the surface in the northern part of town, served as the cathedral of Saï. The episcopal *fasti* of Saï are very fragmentary. Three epitaphs in Greek and/or Coptic found on the island of Saï, as well as two Old Nubian documents found in Qasr Ibrim and Nauri preserve the names of five bishops.

The list is as follows:

1) **Kerikos (Kyriakos)**. He is known from his epitaph inscribed on a circular marble slab found on the island of Saï, now kept in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, Acc. No. E. 127.1903.[4] The slab bears the epitaph of the bishop in Sahidic Coptic and a quotation from *Ps.* 19(20).2–4 in Greek.

---

[2] Cf. U. MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Storia della Nubia Cristiana* (= *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 118), Roma 1938, pp. 162-167; IDEM, 'I vescovi giacobiti della Nubia' [in:] *Mélanges Maspero* 11 (= *MIFAO* 67), Le Caire 1937, pp. 57–66.

[3] Generally on the Bishopric of Saï, see MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Storia* (cit. n. 2), pp. 161–167; M. KRAUSE, 'Zur Kirchengeschichte Nubiens' [in:] T. HÄGG (ed.), *Nubian Culture: Past and Present. Main Papers Presented at the Sixth International Conference for Nubian Studies at Uppsala, 11–16 August 1986* (= *Kungl. Vitterhets. Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Konferenser* 17), Stockholm 1987, p. 302.

[4] For the complete publication of the inscription, see J. VAN DER VLIET [in:] G. T. MARTIN & al., *Stelae from Egypt and Nubia in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, c. 3000 BC – AD 1150*, Cambridge 2005, no. 115.

The inscription may be dated to ca. AD 800 on palaeographic grounds. According to the epitaph, Kerikos was bishop of Saï for four years.

2) Iesou. He is the best known individual among the bishops of Saï. Information about him is provided by his epitaph written in Coptic on a rectangular slab of sandstone.[5] The stone, acquired in 1905 from a native of Saï and once kept in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum, is now lost. According to this epitaph, Iesou was a monk in the monastery of Neittde (alternative reading: Eittde). He was nominated Bishop when he was 50 and remained on the throne for 32 years. He died in AD 1054. This Iesou is probably identical with a Bishop Iesou mentioned in a graffito which commemorated an unusual Nile-flood on the rocks of the island of Saï.[6] According to this inscription, he was a contemporary of the Makurian king Stephanos who is most probably identical with King Stephanos mentioned in a document of AD 1027 found in Gebel Adda.

3) Leon. His fragmentary Greek epitaph found by the French Mission on Saï Island is kept at the Institute of Papyrology and Egyptology of the University of Lille.[7] Nothing is known about Bishop Leon except for his name. The epitaph should be dated to 11th–12th century on palaeographic grounds.

4) Isou (Iesou). He is the addressee of a letter, written in Old Nubian by Aron, Bishop of Faras, and found in Qasr Ibrim (*IN* III 57). It is rather improbable for this Aron to be identical with the Bishop of Faras of the same name who occupied the episcopal throne in AD 952–972.[8] We are

---

[5] For the complete publication of the inscription, see J. VAN DER VLIET, *Catalogue of the Coptic Inscriptions in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum* (= *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 121), Leuven – Paris – Dudley, Ma. 2003, no. 27.

[6] Cf. A. ŁAJTAR, '*Varia Nubica* v. *SB* I 3897: Ein Nilhochwasser auf der Insel Saï unter dem König Stephanos', *ZPE* 136 (2001), pp. 62–64.

[7] B. BOYAVAL, 'Une stèle grecque inédite de l'île de Saï', *RdÉ* 24 (1972), pp. 20–24.

[8] For him, see S. JAKOBIELSKI, *A History of the Bishopric of Pachoras on the Basis of Coptic Inscriptions* (= *Faras* 3), Warsaw 1972, pp. 119–125; for his epitaph, see VAN DER VLIET, *Catalogue* (cit. n. 5), no. 3.

undoubtedly dealing with his namesake who must have taken over the see of Faras at a much later date and was not included in the famous list of bishops of Faras which ends in AD 1169 with Bishop Iesou.[9] As the Old Nubian documents from Qasr Ibrim originate mostly from the second half of the 12th – the first half of the 13th century, we may suppose that Aron and Iesou were bishops of respectively Faras and Saï exactly in this period. It would be interesting to know why a letter from a Bishop of Faras to a Bishop of Saï was found in Qasr Ibrim. Perhaps one of the two men, the sender or the addressee, resided temporarily in Qasr Ibrim which, as a seat of the Eparch of Nobadia, played the role of the main administrative centre in the north of the Kingdom of Makuria in the 12th–13th century.

5) **Simeon**. He was Bishop of Sai in the time of King Basil (period unknown, perhaps end of the 13th century) as indicated by the protocol of a legal document (a agricultural contract) in Old Nubian, found in Nauri below the third cataract.[10] The find spot of the document may indicate that the diocese of Saï extended to the south as far as the third cataract area.

TOT OF SAÏ AND THEGNA OF SAÏ

An office called *Tot* was known in the Kingdom of Makuria. This office is attested several times in Old Nubian documents from Qasr Ibrim from the second half of the 12th century. It also is on record in the late (13th/14th cent.) inscriptions on the walls of the upper church at Banganarti, unearthed recently by the Polish Joint Expedition to the Middle Nile.[11]

---

[9] For the list of Bishops of Faras, see JAKOBIELSKI, *Bishopric* (cit. n. 8), pp. 190–195.

[10] F. Ll. GRIFFITH, 'Christian Documents from Nubia', *Proc. Brit. Acad.* 14 (1928), pp. 128––130; E. ZYCHLARZ, 'Neue Sprachdenkmäler des Altnubischen', [in:] *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, London 1932, pp. 187–190, no. 1.

[11] On the excavations at Banganarti, see B. ŻURAWSKI *& al.*, *Survey and Excavations between Old Dongola and Ez-Zuma* (= *Nubia* 11. *Southern Dongola Reach Survey* 1), Warsaw 2004, pp. 96–103 and 140–152. For a preliminary survey of inscriptions, see A. ŁAJTAR, 'Wall Inscriptions in the Banganarti Churches. A General Note after Three Seasons of Work', *JJurP* 33 (2003), pp. 137–159, with pl. I–XIII; IDEM, 'Inscriptions from Banganarti,

Thus, in Qasr Ibrim documents we have: ⲁⲗⲗⲟⲛ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of Addo';[12] ⲁⲧⲏ̄ⲗⲁⲛⲏ̄ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of Atindan';[13] ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲥⲏ̄ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of Faras';[14] ⲥⲁ̄ⲙⲏ̄ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of Silmi' (= Ibrim);[15] ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲧⲏ̄ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of Tamit';[16] ⲧⲟϣⲕⲉⲛ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of Toshka'.[17] The Banganarti inscriptions add: ⲁⲏ̄ⲡⲏ̄ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of the town (probably Dongola)'; ⲧⲁ̄ⲗⲁⲣⲧⲓ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of Tillarti' (lit. 'Island of God'); ⲧⲏ̄ⲙⲉⲁ ⲁⲏ̄ⲡⲏ̄ ⲧⲟⲧ = '*Tot* of the town of Timmea'.[18] It should be observed that ⲧⲟⲧ is one of the words for 'son, child' in Old Nubian.[19] In this meaning it is frequently attested in literary texts from Qasr Ibrim and elsewhere. It also occurs in documentary texts from Qasr Ibrim and in the inscriptions from Banganarti in presentation of various persons which normally assumes the form 'so-and-so, son of so-and-so'. As the office of *Tot* also is indicated in the same way ('so-and-so, *Tot* of so-and-so place'), it is often difficult to distinguish between the two meanings. In the above list, I included only unquestionable cases.

The inscriptions from Banganarti also yielded several attestations of another office called *Thegna* (ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ) or *Thekna* (ⲑⲉⲕⲛⲁ). The list includes:

2003', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 15 (2004), pp. 253–260; IDEM, 'Banganarti 2004. Inscriptions', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 16 (2005), pp. 309–313.

[12] *IN* III 37.25. Gebel Adda is most probably meant here.

[13] *IN* III 31.11. Perhaps the office under consideration occurs also in *IN* III 37.23–24. In the place under consideration, the document has: ⲛⲁϣϣⲟⲩⲗⲁ ⲁ̄ⲧⲏ̄ⲗⲁⲛⲏ̄ ⲉⲁⲗⲗⲟ. This was translated by G. M. BROWNE as 'Mashshouda, son of Atindani', but the translation 'Mashshouda, Ñal of Atindan' is possible as well. ⲧⲟⲧ and ⲉⲁⲗ have the same meaning 'son, child' in Old Nubian. ⲁⲧⲏ̄ⲗⲁⲛ must be the modern Adindan, a village on the right bank of the Nile, opposite from Faras.

[14] *IN* III 44.15.

[15] *IN* III 34 & 44 (note that the person mentioned here combined the office of the *Tot* of Silmi with that of the *Tot* of Kisdauoul); 37.37–38; 44.16.

[16] *IN* III 37.33; 38.21; 54 II 2.

[17] *IN* III 37.34; 43.7 (we are dealing with the same person in both cases).

[18] The inscriptions are not published yet. I do not know how the toponyms occurring in them should be identified.

[19] See G. M. BROWNE, *Old Nubian Dictionary* (= *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 556, *Subsidia* 90), Leuven 1996, *s.v.* ⲧⲟⲧ. The word has persisted in modern Nile Nubian languages; cf. Ch. H. ARMBRUSTER, *Dongolese Nubian. A Lexicon*, Cambridge 1965, p. 201, s.v. *tōd* and Mokhtar M. KHALIL, *Wörterbuch der nubischen Sprache (Fadidja/Maḥ-Dialekt)*, Warsaw 1996, p. 104, s.v. ⲧⲟ̄(ⲗ) .

[ⲁ]ⲥⲉⲛ πόλλ(ⲉως) μεγ(άλης) ⲑⲉⲕ(ⲛⲁ) and ⲁⲥⲉ ⲑⲉⲕ(ⲛⲁ) = '*Thegna* of Ase,
the great town' and '*Thegna* of Ase' respectively; ⲑⲩⲙ( ) πόλη μεγ(άλη)
ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ = '*Thegna* of Thym( ), the great town'; (Μιχαὴλ) νῆσον ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ =
'*Thegna* of the Island of Michael'; νῆσος (Μιχαὴλ) πόλην καλ(ὴν) ⲑⲉⲕ(ⲛⲁ) =
'*Thegna* of the Island of Michael, a beautiful town'; ⳟⲁⲅⳝⲉⲛ ⲑ(ⲉⲅ)ⲛⲁ =
'*Thegna* of Jagje';[20] πάπας ᾿Αθανάσιος ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ = '*Thegna* of Papas Athana-
sios'.[21] The office of Thegna also occurs in inscriptions from other Nubian
sites, but the occurrences were misread or misinterpreted by previous edi-
tors. Thus a graffito in the church at Naga esh-Sheima was left by a certain
ⲉⲓⳣⲧⲧⲁ Παχ(ω)ρας ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ υ(ἰὸ)ς ⲟⲟⲛⲛⲉ = 'Eiñitta, *Thegna* of Faras, son
of Ñonne'.[22] An ink inscription from the Faras cathedral mentions a cer-
tain Thoma who was Τρι⟨ὰ⟩ς ᾿Αγίας μέγ(ας) κλι(ρικὸς) κ(αὶ) ⲕⲁⲁⲟⲅⲛ̄
ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ = 'Cleric of the Great (Church of the) Holy Trinity and *Thegna* of
Kadogi'.[23] An inscription in black ink in the church at Sonqi Tino has as
the author a man (name not preserved) who presents himself as:
ⲅⲟⲣⲧ(ⲓ)ⲟⲟⲁⲁ(ⲉ) κ(αὶ) πάλ(ιν) ⲁⲉⲓ ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ, Τέσσαρα Ζῷα πρε(σβύτερος) =
'Lord of Elders, and also *Thegna* of Aei, Priest of (the Church of) the Four
Living Creatures'.[24] The word ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ (ⲑⲉⲕⲛⲁ) also occurs as an element of

---

[20] The name Jagje occurs in several further inscriptions from Banganarti. They indicate
that Jagje is a toponym.

[21] In the given context, 'Papas Athanasios' must be a toponym (compare the place names
Saint Étienne, San Sebastian, Saõ Paulo, &c. in the modern Western civilisation). It goes
back to the famous Alexandrian Bishop of the 4th century, one of the church fathers, an
relentless fighter for orthodoxy. We can imagine that this toponym was rooted in a local
cult of the saint, perhaps connected with a church of his name boasting his reliques.

[22] For the publication of the graffito, see H. SATZINGER [in:] M. BIETAK, M. SCHWARZ
&. al., Nag' el-Scheima. Eine befestigte christliche Siedlung und andere christliche Denkmäler in
Sayala-Nubien (= Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse,
Denkschriften 191], Wien 1987, p. 129–130, pl. 47. SATZINGER read Παχ(ω)ρας θε γαια.

[23] S. JAKOBIELSKI, 'Inscriptions' [in:] K. MICHAŁOWSKI, Faras. Wall Paintings in the Collec-
tion of the National Museum in Warsaw, Warsaw 1974, pp. 304–305. The place under consid-
eration was read by JAKOBIELSKI as follows: ⲧⲣⲓⲥ ⲁⲅⲓⲟⲥ ⲙⲉⲅⲁⲕⲁ ⲕ5 ⲕⲁⲁⲁⲧⲛ̄ⲁ ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ. The
reading ⲕⲁⲥⲟⲅⲛ̄ is also possible.

[24] My reading from the photo kindly provided by Dobrochna ZIELIŃSKA. The inscription
remains unpublished; it was mentioned briefly by S. DONADONI, 'Les graffiti de l'église de
Sonqi Tino' [in:] K. MICHAŁOWSKI (ed.), Nubia. Récentes recherches. Actes du colloque nubio-

presentation of persons in Banganarti inscriptions, in the place where the word 'son', either in Greek (υἱός) or Old Nubian (ⲧⲟⲧ) normally appears. This suggests that ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ (ⲑⲉⲕⲛⲁ), like ⲧⲟⲧ, meant literally 'son, child'. Even if the meaning of the word ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ (ⲑⲉⲕⲛⲁ) is more or less clear, its etymology or even its linguistic appurtenance is problematic. I am inclined to think that it is a Graeco-Nubian formation built upon the Greek τέκνον – 'child' in which the dental stop /t/ at the beginning of the word was changed for aspirated /th/,[25] and the Greek flectional ending -ον was replaced by the Nubian nominal formant –ⲁ.[26] It should be observed that ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ (ⲑⲉⲕⲛⲁ) normally is written with a dot over the final ⲁ in the Banganarti inscriptions. This dot probably marks the word accent thus indicating that the word under consideration was an oxytonon.

The above discussion demonstrated that the words ⲧⲟⲧ and ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ (ⲑⲉⲕⲛⲁ) had a double meaning in the language of the inhabitants of Makuria. Firstly, they designated a 'male offspring, son', secondly they were used as a name of an office within the Kingdom of Makuria. As far as this second meaning is concerned, they probably were but two terms for the same office. The question arises what was the character of this office. Unfortunately, the material to our disposal is too scant and too one-sided to provide a definite answer in this matter. In the Qasr Ibrim texts, *Tots* occur mainly as witnesses to various contracts, while in case of inscriptions from Banganarti and other Nubian sites we see *Tots* and *Thegnas* as pious believers making pilgrimage to a holy place. Nevertheless, some conclusions may be drawn, though very cautiously, from the very name of the office.

logique international au Musée National de Varsovie, 19–22 Juin 1972, Varsovie 1975, p. 34, who read ⲁⲉⲓⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ (one word).

[25] For this change which occurs frequently in Post-Classical Greek, see F. Th. GIGNAC, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods.* I. *Phonology* (= *Testi e documenti per lo studio dell'antichità* 55), Milano 1976, p. 87 and 90–91. The change in question must have occurred already in Greek, before the Nubian derivative ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ (ⲑⲉⲕⲛⲁ) was coined, in other words Nubians took θέκνον and not τέκνον as a formation basis. Proof for this is the consequent use of ⲑ in all Nubian attestations of the word in question and the fact that Old Nubian has no /th/ voice and uses the letter ⲑ only in loan words of Greek origin. For the change of viceless /k/ for voiced /g/, see GIGNAC, *Grammar* I, pp. 77–80.

[26] For this formant, perhaps originally predicative, see G. M. BROWNE, *Old Nubian Grammar*, Lincom Europa 2002, pp. 36–39, § 3.6.4.

We have already seen that ⲦⲟⲦ and ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ (ⲑⲉⲕⲛⲁ) meant 'son, child' and this meaning must be the primary one in respect to the name of the office. That the office is called 'son, child' seems to indicate its inferiority to or dependence on a higher office. Thus *Tot* (*Thegna*) must have been an official under the supreme control of a higher instance. It is easy to observe that the word ⲦⲟⲦ (ⲑⲉⲅⲛⲁ) is always connected with a name of a place (a town or a village) in the lists of attestations collected above. From this we may suppose that the officcial called *Tot/Thegna* (*Thekna*) was the head of a given town (village) or, perhaps, the head of an administrative unit with the given town (village) as its centre. He must have been a representative of the royal administration, appointed by the King or the King's deputy and answering to him. His exact duties are difficult to trace. In addition to administrative tasks, he might have been responsible for economic and fiscal policy and might have had judicial functions like the modern *wali* or *sheikh al-balad*.

Following persons designated as *Tot/Thegna* of Saï are known:

1) **Ourtikashshi** (ⲟⲩⲣⲧⲓⲕⲁϣϣⲓ). He is mentioned in the document *IN* III 34 dated probably to the period prior to AD 1187. On the verso the document contains a sale of land and on the recto a contract of sale and cession of land. Ourtikashshi occurs in the second part (11 9) as the one who, together with a certain Sooja-Piki and his daughter Soundiṅ-Ṅal, passes the payment for the land on to the seller, acting in the name of the purchaser.

2) **Soundiṅ-Ṅal** (ⲥⲟⲩⲁⲁⲉⲅⲁⲁ). He occurs in document *IN* III 37, line 27 (end of 1190s) as one of the witnesses to a sale of land. It is interesting to observe that he bears the same name as the woman who, together with the Tot of Saï named Ourtikashshi, acted as intermediary in the contract of sale of land as indicated by *IN* III 34. Perhaps the name Soundiṅ-Ṅal was characteristic for the Saï island.

3) **Ourse** (oүpcн). He is the author of a graffito (see above) in the Upper Church at Banganrti. The graffito stands on the northern pillar at the entrance to Room 5, 149 cm above the floor. Dimensions: 53 x 9 cm; h. of letters: 2.3 cm (c in cдeιн) – 6.5 cm (p in oүpcн). The inscription is unpublished.

† ἐμῦ oүpcн cдeιн д̄π̄π̄ тoтι παeιceдọ.

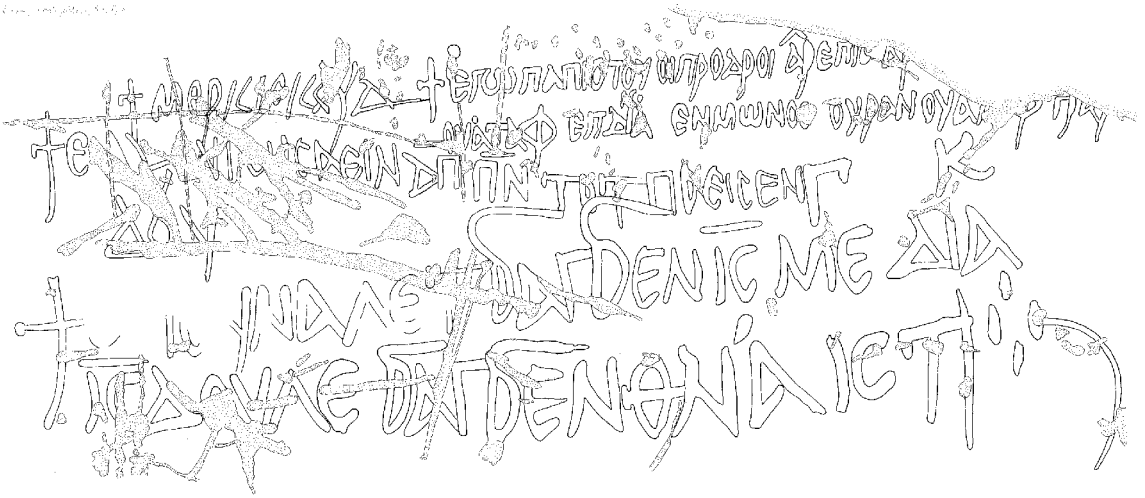*I Ourse, Tot of the town of Sai, wrote this.*

ἐμῦ is a spelling variant for ἐμοῦ. ἐμοῦ stands for ἐγώ here. The authors of the Banganarti inscriptions, just like the authors of visitors' inscriptions on other Nubian sites, took (ἐ)μοῦ, (ἐ)μοί, (ἐ)μέ not for secondary formations of ἐγώ, but for separate lexemes meaning 'I'. This testifies to a complete collapse of the Greek declension system in Nubian Greek.

The personal name oүpcн has been attested only here thus far. Perhaps it is connected with Dongolawi *urse*, Nobiin oүpcι = 'root'.[27]

The spelling cдeι seems to indicate that the toponym was a two-syllable one: /sa-ï/. It fits perfectly with the Meroitic Sye.[28] Note that Saï is qualified as a 'town' (д̄π̄π) here and in other Banganarti inscriptions.

[27] For attestations, see ARMBRUSTER, *Lexicon* (cit. n. 19), *s.v. urse*, and KHALIL, *Wörterbuch* (cit. n. 19), *s.v.* oүpcι.

[28] Information kindly provided by Claude RILLY, Paris.

4) **Unknown person**. He is the author of a graffito in the Upper Church
   at Banganarti. The graffito is located on the northern pillar at the en-
   trance to Room 4, 195 cm above the floor. Dimensions: 57.5 x 13 cm; h.
   of letters: 2.1 cm (ι) – 5.8 cm (γ). Unpublished.

† ἐμὲ [.] ... ϲλϵιⲛ ⲁⲡⲡⲛ̄ ⲧⲟⲧ ⲡⲗϵιϲϵλⲟ.

I [- - -], *Tot of the town of Saï, wrote (this).*

5) **Dolse** (ⲗⲟλϲⲏ). He is the author of a graffito on the western face of the
   southern engaged column in the northwestern support in the Upper
   Church at Banganarti, 199 cm above the floor. Dimensions: 29 x 11.2 cm;
   h. of letters: 1.9 cm (ⲟ in line 2) – 3.5 cm (λ), and note that ⲍ must have
   been much higher (ca. 5.5 cm). The inscription is unpublished.

† ἐμὲ ⲀⲞⲀⲤⲎ ⲌⲀⲎ ̣ [- - -]-
ⲚⲎ πόλ(ις) καλ(ῆ) ⲐⲈⲄ(ⲚⲀ) Ⲉ̄Ⲛ̄Ⲏ̇Ⲏ̇.

I Dolse, being Thegna of Saï [- - -] *a Beautiful Town.*

The reading of the inscription is not certain. It is possible that the text
mentioned two offices of the visitor and not one, with ⲚⲎ at the beginning
of line 2 being the ending of the name of the first office. In this case, the
translation would read: 'I Dolse, [- - -]ne of Saï, being Thegna of the Beau-
tiful Town'.

1. The personal name ⲀⲞⲀⲤⲎ (sometimes written ⲀⲞⲀⲤⲒ) occurs several times in
   inscriptions on the walls of the Upper Church at Banganarti. It has not been
   attested outside the Banganarti inscriptions thus far. It is undoubtedly of Old
   Nubian origin, but its etymology is unknown to me.

   A dot over the final Ⲏ in ⲌⲀⲎ probably marks the word accent thus indicating
   that the toponym was a two-syllable one: /za-ï/; cf. above, commentary to the
   inscription of Ourse.

CHARTOULARIOS OF SAÏ

The Greek epitaph of Merki found by the Canadian Mission in Ham-bukol[29] testifies to the existence of the office of *chartoularios* of Saï. According to the epitaph, which may be dated to the 9th–10th century on palaeographic grounds, the man held the following offices (spelling nor-malised by me): νοτάριος, μειζώτερος, χαρτουλάριος Σαη, ἔξαρχος *TIMIKΛΕΩC* ὑψηλῆς γῆς, πρωτοδομήστικος = 'notary, steward, *char-toularios* of Saï, the very honourable military commander of the Lofty Land,[30] *protodomestikos*'. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure in which sequence he entered these offices, as there are no strict rules of describing one's career in Nubian epitaphs. Additionally, the presentation of the deceased is rather carelessly edited in our epitaph. Only the sequence: χαρτουλάριος Σαη, ἔξαρχος *TIMIKΛΕΩC* ὑψηλῆς γῆς is given in the main text of the inscription, woven into the syntax, while other offices are added freely on the right margin. This seems to suggest following *cursus* for our Merki: χαρτουλάριος Σαη, ἔξαρχος *TIMIKΛΕΩC* ὑψηλῆς γῆς, νοτάρι-ος, μειζώτερος, πρωτοδομήστικος. Provided it were so, Merki would have started his career with offices in local administration (χαρτουλάριος Σαη, ἔξαρχος *TIMIKΛΕΩC* ὑψηλῆς γῆς), then moved up to central offices at the royal court in Dongola (μειζώτερος, πρωτοδομήστικος. As for νοτάριος, it might have been his initial occupation.

The office of χαρτουλάριος is very rarely attested with relation to Christian Nubia. In addition to the present inscription, it is on record only in the epitaph of Istephanou (Stephanos), discovered by the Polish

---

[29] For the circumstances of the discovery, see Julie ANDERSON, 'Monastic Lifestyles of the Nubian Desert: Seeking the Mysterious Monks of Makuria', *Sudan & Nubia* 3 (1999), pp. 71–83, at p. 75. The stone is in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto now. It will be published by me in the report from the excavations. I would like to thank Dr. Krzysz-tof GRZYMSKI, Director of the Canadian Mission to Hambukol, for his invitation to pub-lish the inscription and for providing me with the necessary information concerning the stone.

[30] The translation is uncertain. It depends on the interpretation of the word *TIMI-KΛΕΩC* which, judging by its syntactic position, may be either an epithet of a person or a toponym. An alternative translation: 'military commander of Timikleos, a lofty land'.

Mission in Dongola.[31] In this epitaph, dated to AD 797, the dead man is
designated as (spelling normalised by me): πρεσβύτερος, χαρτουλάριος,
νοτάριος, ἀρχιμανδρίτης Μαρία Τιμαειε, χοιᴀκ‾ⱳⱳ‾ⱬ and δοκнᴀ‾ⱳⱳ‾ⱬ =
'priest, *chartoularios*, notary, archimandrite of the Monastery of Mary in
Timaeie, *Choiakishshil, Joknaishshil*'. It is interesting to observe that both
Istephanou and Merki served in the offices of *chartoularios* and notary dur-
ing their careers. Obviously, these two offices for which the knowledge of
script was a prerequisite, were frequently filled by the same persons in
Makuria, where the literacy rate must have been rather low. Apart from
holding the offices of *chartoularios* and notary, the careers of Istephanou
and Merki developed differently. As a member of the clerus, Istephanou
followed an ecclesiastic *cursus* becoming an archimandrite of a monastery,
while Merki, a layman, had a civilian career which peaked in the high court
office of *protodomestikos*.

It is not easy to determine the exact meaning of the office of *char-
toularios* with relation to Christian Nubia. The term χαρτουλάριος derives
from χάρτης = 'official document' which suggests that χαρτουλάριοι had to
do with tracing and keeping documents and records. χαρτουλάριοι are
attested from AD 326 until the end of the Byzantine Empire, the character
of their office varied considerably in time.[32] In Late Antiquity, they were
subaltern officials in bureaus of various high officials, especially of military
rank, like praetorian prefect, *magister militum*, etc., later also in the impe-
rial chancery. Starting with the Middle Byzantine period (9th–10th cen-
tury), χαρτουλάριοι rose in importance to become high functionaries with
fiscal and archival duties in both central and provincial administration.
They could have been nominated as heads of chanceries, military com-
manders and high-ranking courtiers. As the administrative system of
Christian Nubia was apparently created in the 6th/7th century, during the
official Christianization of the country and shortly afterwards, Nubian
χαρτουλάριοι should correspond to Late Antique χαρτουλάριοι, i.e. they

[31] A. ŁAJTAR [in:] A. ŁAJTAR & A. TWARDECKI, *Catalogue des inscriptions grecques du Musée
National de Varsovie* (= *JJurJ. Supplement* 2), Warsaw 2003, no. 110.

[32] For χαρτουλάριοι, see R. GUILLAND, *Titres et fonctions de l'Empire byzantin*, London 1976,
pp. 405–426.

should be officials of relatively low importance connected with drafting and keeping official documents. Such was surely the case of Istephanou who is simply qualified as χαρτουλάριος without any further designation. But the case of our Merki might have been different. The designation *'chartoularios* of Saï' suggests that he was the head of an office located in Saï where official documents were drawn up and kept. This was either a town-office or an office connected with the administrative unit mentioned by al-Makrizi (cf. *supra*, ft. 1) of which Saï was the capital. Perhaps the *chartou-larios* of Saï was one of the officials subordinate to the *Tot/Thegna* of Saï.

Adam Łajtar

Department of Papyrology
Institute of Archaeology
Warsaw University
Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28
00–927 Warsaw 64
POLAND
e-mail: *a.lajtar@uw.edu.pl*