

# NUBIAN VOICES II

## NEW TEXTS AND STUDIES ON CHRISTIAN NUBIAN CULTURE

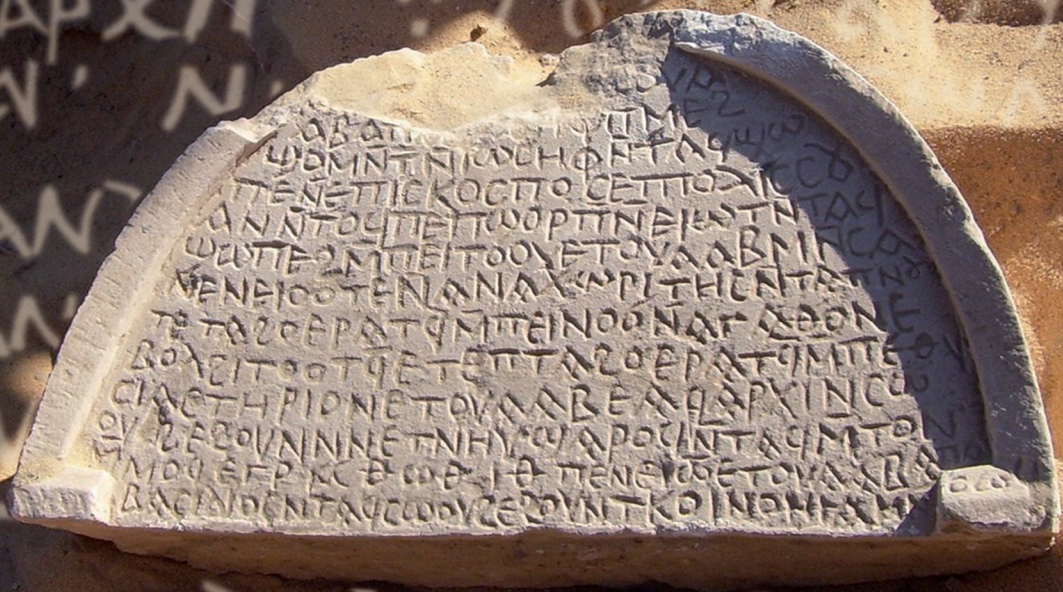
EDITED BY

ADAM ŁAJTAR

GRZEGORZ OCHAŁA

JACQUES VAN DER VLIET

WARSAW 2015





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# **NUBIAN VOICES II**

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## PREFACE

IN 2011 WE PUBLISHED THE VOLUME *Nubian Voices: Studies in Christian Nubian Culture* (*The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplement Series 15*, hereafter referred to as *Nubian Voices I*), which contained eleven papers exclusively devoted to the written heritage of Christian Nubia. In its preface, we declared our willingness to continue with further volumes ‘of the same character and on the same general subject’, on the condition that there would be ‘sufficient interest and enough new contributions’. The months that followed the publication of the first volume of *Nubian Voices* saw the fulfillment of this condition. The book was well received and several colleagues expressed their interest in contributing to a future volume. All this encouraged us to launch, in March 2013, a formal invitation to participate in the creation of a sequel, *Nubian Voices II*. Almost all authors of *Nubian Voices I* as well as several others reacted positively and sent us their contributions. Grzegorz Ochała joined our team as a full-fledged editor and now, two years later, we are happy to present a volume that is as varied as the first and contains no less than fifteen papers.

As in the earlier volume, all fifteen papers published in *Nubian Voices II* focus on written sources from or relating to Christian Nubia. They fall into two categories, which partly overlap, however. The first are basically editions of new texts and the second are primarily studies, both philological and linguistic, based on written sources. We grouped them accordingly, first the new texts, following a geographical order from north to south, then the studies.

The newly edited texts exhibit a great variety of languages (of course Greek, Sahidic Coptic, and Old Nubian, but also Syriac) and supports (plastered walls of churches and tombs, stone and terracotta stelae, textiles, and ostraka). Chronologically, they cover almost the entire history of Christian Nubia, dating between about the sixth/seventh and the thirteenth centuries. They come from the entire territory of the Kingdom of Makuria, from its northernmost limits up to its southeastern extremities in the area of the Fifth Cataract.

The recently discovered Sahidic monument of a bishop Joseph of Aswan, presented by Renate Dekker, hails from the frontier zone between Islamic Egypt and Christian Nubia and offers the additional interest of acquainting us with a successor and namesake of the bishop Joseph, whose epitaph, discovered in Dongola, was published in *Nubian Voices* I. Klaas A. Worp and Jacques van der Vliet publish a small series of funerary stelae, Greek and Coptic, belonging to an early-nineteenth century British collection. A Syriac alphabet on an ostrakon from Qasr Ibrim, edited here by Jan van Ginkel and Jacques van der Vliet, marks the first attestation of this language on Nubian soil, confirming the importance of the Syrian milieu in the Eastern Mediterranean in late antique and medieval times. Giovanni R. Ruffini offers the first edition of an extremely difficult text in Old Nubian, an inscribed shroud from Qasr Ibrim that belongs to a class of objects of capital importance for the study of medieval Nubian funerary beliefs. Adam Łajtar and Grzegorz Ochała present two texts from the walls of the cathedral of Faras, together with a commentary that brings out the full liturgical interest of these at first sight forbidding lists. The texts written on the inside of a burial chamber in Ukma-West, in the Second Cataract area, published by Adam Łajtar and Jacques van der Vliet, link this tomb to a greater group of Nubian and Egyptian monuments inscribed with Gospel-incipits. The inscriptions from the walls of a church in Selib, south of Dongola, edited here by Agata Deptuła, are new witnesses to the popularity of the Egyptian martyr Saint Menas on Nubian territory. Finally, the fragmentary terracotta stelae from the Fifth Cataract region, analyzed by Adam Łajtar show that even in the more remote regions of the kingdom the epigraphic models current in the centre of Makuria were followed.



The section devoted to studies covers topics of historical, literary as well as linguistic interest. Among the former, Robin Seignobos' discussion of the Nubian episcopal sees deserves special mention, as it offers material of prime importance for the study of Nubian ecclesiastic topography. It is based on lists found in Egyptian *scalae*, a kind of dictionaries in Bohairic Coptic and Arabic, and edited here for the first time. Even though the manuscripts are fairly late in date, the lists are clearly based on medieval models and betray detailed and unparalleled knowledge of the southern provinces of the Coptic patriarchate. Seignobos' study immediately allowed the identification, by Adam Łajtar, of the mysterious word Timikleos as the name of Dongola as used in Greek and Coptic sources. The next two papers are devoted to the study of Nubian literary culture. In the first, Alexandros Tsakos proposes an iconic interpretation of the Nubian trigram *MXT*, a variant of the enigmatic *XMT* familiar from the Egyptian papyri, for which he is able to cite several new attestations. In the second, Jacques van der Vliet comments on the Nubian connection of the so-called Esna-Edfu hoard of manuscripts in Coptic, Greek, and Old Nubian, on the basis of a new edition of the second colophon of codex British Library Or. 6784. In her study of the persons bearing the title or sobriquet *soulou* in Old Nubian documents from medieval Qasr Ibrim, Petra Weschenfelder carefully evaluates the current scholarly opinions about the social or ethnic status of the persons thus designated. Finally, two papers, one by Kerstin Weber-Thum and Petra Weschenfelder, the other by Vincent W. J. van Gerven Oei, open up new horizons in the linguistic study of Old Nubian, bearing witness to the recent surge of interest in one of the oldest written languages of Africa. Coincidentally, both deal with the ubiquitous Old Nubian morpheme *-a* and both undertake a critical revision of current scholarly paradigms. We decided to publish both studies, as they represent different approaches and arrive at partly different conclusions.

We hope that *Nubian Voices II* will find as much interest as its predecessor. Whether or not there will be *Nubian Voices III, IV, V*, and so on, depends on the response of both readers and authors.



In the course of the editing process we greatly profited from the help of Hans Barnard, Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, Ewa Wipszycka, and Ewa D. Zakrzewska. The publication of the book was financially supported by the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw represented by Director Wojciech Nowakowski. To all of them, but not in the last place to our authors, we express our most sincere gratitude.

Warsaw & Leiden/Nijmegen, October 2015

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