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Ase: A Toponym and/or a Personal Name (Notes on Medieval Nubian Toponymy 3)

Adam Łajtar and Grzegorz Ochała

Scholars studying textual heritage of Christian Nubia frequently found themselves in impossibility to decide whether a proper name occurring in a text is a personal name or a place name. Reasons for that lie in the very nature of Old Nubian (and Nubian Greek standing under a strong influence of the epichoric language), which is still rather unclear in this respect. An additional factor is our poor knowledge of various aspects of culture of the Middle Nile Valley in Christian times, including anthroponomastics and toponomastics. The present paper, devoted to the proper name Ase (ⲁⲥⲉ), is a good illustration of these problems.

As far as we are aware the proper name Ase has been attested eight times so far. Below we present all these attestations going from north to south.

1

Abu Oda, church of Saint Epimachos arranged in the rock temple of Horemheb. Visitor's graffito in the vestibule of the temple, south wall, west end, to the east of the entrance to the south chamber. Dimensions not recorded. Lost. Old Nubian majuscules. The hand is trained but not very skilful.

Editio princeps after autopsy: GRIFFITH, *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period*, p. 67, no. 15e. A new edition after autopsy: MONNERET DE VILLARD, *La Nubia medioevale* I, p. 175, no. 1.

Cf. BEINLICH, *Die Photos der Preußischen Expedition 1908–1910 nach Nubien* IV, no. B0744 (photo of the west end of the south wall of the vestibule with this and neighbouring inscriptions taken between

1908 and 1910 by an expedition of the Berlin Academy under the direction of Heinrich Schäfer).

The date of the inscription is unknown. It is apparently late (13th–15th century) because of the dating of the entire complex.

The present edition was prepared after the photo taken by the Schäfer expedition.

† ἐγὼ ἀβραμῆ ἀσεν τοτ᾽ Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς διάκ(ονος) μέγ(ας)
κ(αὶ) πάλ(ιν) γορτσοῦδ κλι(ρικὸς) γρ[ά]ψ[ον].

1. ⲓⲥ ⲁⲓⲁⲕⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲣⲓ || 2. ⲕⲓ ⲡⲁⲗⲓ | ⲕⲗⲓ

1. ⲁⲤⲈⲖ ⲦⲞⲦⲚ Ⲓⲣⲓⲛⲓⲥⲏⲧ ⲁⲛⲓ ⲛⲟⲛⲛⲉⲣⲉⲧ ⲁⲓ ⲛⲟⲛⲛⲉⲣⲉⲧ || 2. ⲒⲞⲦⲦⲞⲩⲁⲔ
ⲁⲓⲣⲁⲫⲱⲓⲛⲓⲥⲏⲧ Ⲓⲣⲓⲛⲓⲥⲏⲧ ⲁⲛⲓ ⲛⲟⲛⲛⲉⲣⲉⲧ

I, Abramē, tot' of Ase, great deacon of (the church of) Jesus, and also lord of elders, cleric, wrote (this).

1. Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς διάκ(ονος) μέγ(ας): The title of “great deacon,” διάκονος μέγας, has been attested elsewhere in Christian Nubian written sources. Apart from this inscription and no. 2 below, it is found in a private letter from Qasr Ibrim (BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim* III, no. 58, ii, l. 1: ⲙⲉⲓⲣⲓ ⲁⲓⲁⲕⲟⲛⲟⲥ), in a visitor’s inscription from Soba (JAKOBIELSKI, “The inscriptions, ostraca and graffiti,” p. 276, no. 2, l. 1: ⲁⲓⲁⲓⲁⲕⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲣⲓ), and possibly also in a visitor’s inscription from Kulubnarti (ADAMS, *Kulubnarti* I, pp. 301–302, no. 41 c, ll. 1 & 2: ⲁⲕⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲣⲓ [read by S. Donadoni]). It is paralleled by the title πρεσβύτερος μέγας, “great priest,” on record in BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim* III, no. 33, l. 19. We assume that διάκονος μέγας is the equivalent of ἀρχιδιάκονος and πρεσβύτερος μέγας of ἀρχιπρεσβύτερος. Both titles are probably Nubian inventions coined under the influence of Old Nubian, which constructs names of offices with the adjective ⲁⲁⲓⲟⲓⲗⲓ-, “great,” as, for example, “great priest” (ⲤⲞⲦⲦⲞ ⲁⲁⲓⲟⲓⲣⲓ: BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim* III, no. 40, ll. 6–7) or “great scribe” (ⲤⲞⲓⲛⲦⲞⲓⲟⲓⲟⲓⲉ ⲁⲁⲓⲟⲓⲣⲓ: BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim* III, no. 37, ll. 6–7). Another possibility is that a scribal mistake is at stake here and the correct reading would be Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς μέγ(ας) διάκ(ονος), “deacon of the great (church of) Jesus,” “the great church of Jesus” being an otherwise well-attested name for a church (but note that inscription 2 advocates for the first solution).

1 We leave this word untranslated for reasons clarified below, in the general commentary to the entire group.

2. καὶ πάλιν is found frequently in visitors' inscriptions in Christian Nubia as an element connecting various elements of personal presentation, especially names of offices held by a person or titles borne by him/her. It most frequently has a temporal meaning, expressing the chronological sequence of titles/offices, which may also be the case here.

The title of ΓΟΡΤΕΟΔ (spelling varies) occurs often as element of personal presentation in both visitors' inscriptions and documents on parchment and paper originating from the classical and terminal periods of Makuria (11th–15th century). It is frequently recorded as ΓΟΡΤΕΟΔ, which suggests an abbreviation, perhaps to be resolved as ΓΟΡΤ(ΙΝΙΓΟΥΝ)ΕΟΔ or the like. As for its etymology, ΓΟΡΤΕΟΔ should be translated "lord of elders." What reality this title refers to is not known, however. One can suppose that it designated the president of a council composed of "elders," that is most renowned members of a community, possibly heads of families or lineages.

κλι(ρικός) looks redundant as Abramē was already designated as διάκ(ονος) μέγ(ας) in line 1. The same redundant designation is found in another inscription of Abramē in Abu Oda (no. 2 below), which shows that it cannot be a mistake. One can speculate that Abramē wanted to underline that being a member of the clergy of the Church of Jesus was his only activity.

γράφον (probably the first person singular of aorist active with historical ending and augment omitted) is found regularly in visitors' inscriptions from Christian Nubia to describe the process of leaving an inscription. Because of that we reconstruct it also here.

2

Abu Oda, church of Saint Epimachos arranged in the rock temple of Horemheb. Visitor's graffito in the vestibule of the temple, south wall, west end, in the lower part of the wall. Dimensions not recorded. Lost. The hand is obviously the same as in the preceding inscription.

Editio princeps after autopsy: GRIFFITH, *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period*, p. 67, no. 15 k. A new edition after the autopsy: MONNERET DE VILLARD, *La Nubia medioevale* I, p. 175, no. 2.

Cf. BEINLICH, *Die Photos der Preußischen Expedition 1908–1910 nach Nubien* IV, no. B0746 (photo of the west end of the south wall of the vestibule with this and neighboring inscriptions taken between 1908 and 1910 by an expedition of the Berlin Academy under the direction of Heinrich Schäfer).

The date of the inscription is unknown. It is apparently late (13th–15th century) because of the dating of the entire complex.

The present edition was prepared after the photo taken by the Schäfer expedition.

† κάμῆ{α}

ΔΒΡΑΜΗ

Δ̣ϞΕ ΤΟΥΤ ΔΙΑ-

4 ΚΟ(ΝΟΣ) ΜΕΓΑ(Σ) ΚΛΙ(ΡΙΚΟΣ).

1. ΚΑΝΕΑ Griffith and Monneret de Villard; note that both editors omit the initial cross

Also me, Abramē, tot of Ase, great deacon, cleric.

The inscription was obviously authored by the same man as the preceding one. In comparison with the latter, it omits his title of ΓΟΥΤΕΟΔΑ, “lord of elders.” The omission is probably purely accidental.

1. κάμῆ (κάμοῦ) is frequently found as an element opening visitors’ inscriptions in Christian Nubia; cf. remarks by ŁAJTAR, “Wall Inscriptions in the Banganarti Churches,” p. 141. It obviously makes reference to other visitors’ mementos, already existing on the spot. The final Δ, if it really is a letter and not a crack of the plaster, must be a mistake of the scribe or an element of another inscription.

2. Δ̣ϞΕ: The photo shows a vertical stroke touching with its bottom the middle bar of Ϟ. This suggests that the inscription might actually have had Δ̣ϞΕΝ with the last two letters written in ligature. Another possibility is that the scribe omitted the final Ν and tried to correct himself in this way.

3

Faras. Graffito on a wall of the Rivergate Church. Exact position and dimensions not recorded. Judging from Griffith’s copy the hand seems to be the same as in two preceding inscriptions.

Unpublished.

Cf. GRIFFITH, “Oxford Excavations in Nubia,” pl. LXIV, no. 4.

Date unknown, most probably late through comparison with the preceding inscriptions.

† ἐγὼ ΔΒΡΑΜΗ Δ̣ϞΕΝ Δ̣ΠΠ[Ν] ΘΕΓΝΑ Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς [διάκ(ονος)
μέγ(α)ς - - -]

Inscription 3.
From GRIFFITHS,
"Oxford Excav-
ations in Nubia."

I, Abramē, thegna of the town of Ase, great deacon of (the church of) Jesus [- - -].

Griffith's copy suggests the reading ΔCEN,² but this is surely a mistake of the copyists rooted in the visual similarity of two round letters.

It is near to certain that the man mentioned in this inscription is the same as the one occurring in inscriptions 1 and 2. The designation ΔCEN ΤΟΤ in 1 and 2 has obviously the same meaning as ΔCEN ΘΕΓΝΑ in the present inscription; ΤΟΤ and ΘΕΓΝΑ are just language variants, the Nubian and the Greek one respectively, for the same notion, namely an office in the territorial administration of the Kingdom of Makuria. The reconstruction Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς [διάκ(ονος) μέγ(ας) - - -] follows inscription 1.

4

Faras cathedral, sanctuary, wall between south-east pilaster and the first south pier, to the right of the entrance, north face. Dimensions: 11 × 33.5 cm. Graffito. Nubian-type majuscules. Elegant elongated letters. Found during the work of the Polish mission, inv. no. E196a.4, neg. no. 1083/62-3. Lost.

Unpublished.

Probably between the 11th and the 14th century (the inscription is on the latest, fourth layer of plaster).

The present edition is based on the photo and the inventory of wall inscriptions in the Faras cathedral prepared by Stefan Jakobielski during the 1962/3 season of work.

ΔΝΓΙ-

ΔΟΥΛ

ΔCEN

4 Ἰ(ησοῦ)ϣ πρ(εσβύτερος).

4. ἸϞ ϣ

2 On Griffith's drawing there is a note that the word was erased. This is difficult for us to judge having only the drawing at our disposal.

Inscription 4.
Photo © Institute
of Mediterranean
and Oriental
Cultures, Polish
Academy of the
Sciences.



*Angidoul, priest of (the Church
of) Jesus at Ase.*

1-2. The name $\Delta\text{N}\Gamma\text{I}\Delta\text{O}\Upsilon\Lambda$ borne by the author of this inscription occurs in another graffito from the Faras cathedral (inv. no. E202a.4), located on the same north face of the wall between south-east pilaster and the first south pier. Judging by the style of writing, both graffiti were left by the same man. As far as we are aware, the name $\Delta\text{N}\Gamma\text{I}\Delta\text{O}\Upsilon\Lambda$ has not been attested elsewhere in Christian Nubia. It is obviously a name of Nubian origin, compound of two elements. The first element may be cognate with the verb $\Delta\text{N}\Gamma\text{-}$, $\Delta\text{N}\text{K}\text{-}$, $\Delta\text{N}\text{E}\text{-}$, “to remember, consider,

er, think,” the second with the verb $\Delta\text{O}\Upsilon\Lambda\text{-}$, “to be, exist,” or $\Delta\text{O}\Upsilon\text{-}$, “to seek” or “to greet” (as a variant of $\Delta\Delta\Upsilon\text{-}$) with the determiner $\text{-}\lambda$. However, the exact formation and meaning escapes us. The first element occurs in other names, like $\Delta\text{N}\Gamma\text{E}\Theta\Upsilon\text{O}\Upsilon\Delta\Delta$ (RUFFINI, *The Bishop, the Eparch, and the King*, no. 109, i, ll. 16-17), and $\Delta\Gamma\text{E}\text{C}\text{T}\text{O}\Upsilon\text{I}\Lambda$ (BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim III*, no. 39, l. 10).

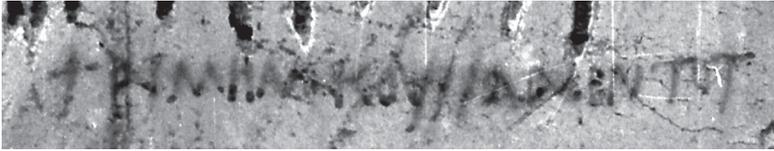
5

Faras cathedral, north aisle, second north pier, west face. Dimensions: 14 × 2 cm. Black ink. Nubian-type majuscules. Found during the work of the Polish mission, inv. no. D109d.3, neg. no. 1442/62-3. Lost.

Unpublished.

Probably between the 11th and the 14th centuries (the inscription is on the late, third layer of plaster).

The present edition is based on the photo and the inventory of wall inscriptions in the Faras cathedral prepared by Stefan Jakobiel-ski during the 1962/3 season of work.



Inscription 5.
Photo © Institute
of Mediterranean
and Oriental
Cultures, Polish
Academy of the
Sciences.

† ἀἰ μῆνακοῦρρα ἀσεν τὸτ.
† [-----].

I, *Mēnakourra*, tot of *Ase*. [---].

μῆνακοῦρρα must be a variant, otherwise unattested, of the well-known name μῆνακοῦδα, literary “servant of (Saint) Menas”; for Nubian names with the element *-kouda*, see SATZINGER, “Das alt-nubische Namenselement *-kouda*: ‘Diener?’” The variant is a result of the substitution of ρ for Δ (for which, see BROWNE, *Old Nubian Grammar*, § 2.2.2) and the gemination of the consonant in question. It is worth mentioning that another wall inscription in the Faras cathedral (inv. no. L41b.3; unpublished; preliminarily, see BROWNE, “Griffith’s Old Nubian graffito 4,” p. 20) contains the name ἰνσοῦκοῦδα. Note also the name κοῦδαδπες (or οὔροκοῦδα) occurring in a commemorative inscription from Amada (GRIFFITH, *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period*, 62, no. 6).

6

Banganarti, upper church, northern column of the southeastern support, northern face, ca. 155 cm above the floor. Dimensions: 29.7 × 10.5 cm; h. of letters: 1.5 cm (ο) – 3.1 cm (ε). Graffito.

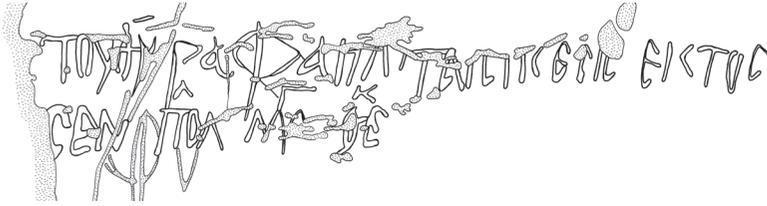
ΛΑΙΤΑΡ, *The Late Christian Pilgrimage Centre at Banganarti*, no. 569.

End of the 13th/first half of the 14th century.

† ἐγὼ μαρτ()κοῦδα(α) ἀσε θεκ(να).

I, *Mart()*kouda, thekna of *Ase*.

The name μαρτ()κοῦδα is attested in RUFFINI, *The Bishop, the Eparch, and the King*, nos. 67, ll. 5 & 12, and 69, ll. 4, 8, 12, & 19. Giovanni Ruffini expands this abbreviated name as μαρτ(γρο)κοῦδα, however other solutions are possible too. Because of this we leave the name unresolved.



Inscription 8.
Drawing by Adam
Łajtar.

see also KHALIL, *Wörterbuch der nubischen Sprache*, [105], s.v. ταμαλ, “schleppen, stützen, helfen (beim Gehen).” Interestingly, Tamal(as) is attested as a name of a Blemmyan king of the late 4th/5th century CE; cf. EIDE *et al.*, *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum* III, no. 310 (graffito in the Mandulis temple in Kalabsha); for this and other Blemmyan names see SATZINGER, “Personennamen von Blemmyern in koptischen und griechischen Texten.” As the language used by the Blemmyes is virtually unknown, it is difficult to say anything certain about possible connections between the Blemmyan and the Nubian name Tamal.

8

Banganarti, upper church, northern column of the southwestern support, western face, 146 cm above the floor. Dimensions: 49.5 × 8.5 cm; h. of letters: 2.2 cm (λ) – 6.5 cm (φ). Graffito. The inscription is found on the first layer of plaster. It partly overwrites an earlier text.

ŁAJTAR, *The Late Christian Pilgrimage Centre at Banganarti*, no. 918.

12th/13th century. The inscription, located on the first layer of plaster, predates the huge epigraphic production connected with the last layer of plaster and dated to the very end of the 13th and the first half of the 14th century.

[- - -] τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ Ῥαφαήλ, ταῖς ἱκεσί<αι>ς ἐκτός
[- - - λ]σεν πόλλ(εως) μεγ(άλης) θεκ(να).

2. read πόλεως

[- - -] of God, Raphael, [- - -] supplications. [- - -] thekna of the great town of Ase.

1. In the lacuna at the beginning of the line, we expect a word in vocative governing the genitive τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ, e.g. [- - - ἀρχάγγελε] τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ Ῥαφαήλ.

1-2. After ἐκτός, we expect a negation: “do not be indifferent towards our supplications” or something of the like.

2. The exact reading of this line may be a matter of controversy. We assume that $\alpha\lambda\sigma\epsilon\eta$ is a complete word, genitive of $\alpha\sigma\epsilon$, depending on $\theta\epsilon\kappa(\eta\alpha)$. If so $\rho\acute{o}\lambda\lambda(\epsilon\omega\varsigma) \mu\epsilon\gamma(\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\varsigma)$ must be an attribute of $\alpha\lambda\sigma\epsilon\eta$. Before $\alpha\lambda\sigma\epsilon\eta$ one expects the name of the author/commissioner of the inscription. This reading was adopted by us in the edition above. It is possible, however, that $\lambda\sigma\epsilon\eta$ is not genitive but nominative and is in fact the name of the author/commissioner of the inscription or part of his/her name. In this case $\rho\acute{o}\lambda\lambda(\epsilon\omega\varsigma) \mu\epsilon\gamma(\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\varsigma)$ must be an attribute to $\theta\epsilon\kappa(\eta\alpha)$, and the entire sentence should be translated: “[I, - - -]sen, *thekna* of the great town.” The designation “great town,” without the name of the town specified, would probably refer to Dongola. It should be observed that the abbreviated notation $\rho\omicron\lambda\lambda\prime \mu\epsilon\gamma\prime$, here resolved as genitive $\rho\acute{o}\lambda\lambda(\epsilon\omega\varsigma) \mu\epsilon\gamma(\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\varsigma)$, can also be read as nominative $\rho\acute{o}\lambda\lambda(\iota\varsigma) \mu\epsilon\gamma(\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta)$. The attributive function of this nominative would be determined, in accordance with the Old Nubian syntax, through its very position.

It is possible that Ase is on record also in RUFFINI, *The Bishop, the Eparch, and the King*, no. 69 (an Old Nubian land sale from Qasr Ibrim dating from 1270s). In line 7 of the document, as the last entry in the protocol, among Nobadian authorities, there occurs: $\sigma\omicron\gamma\varsigma\alpha\pi\alpha \mu\alpha\tau\alpha\delta\acute{\omicron} \alpha\sigma\sigma\eta \tau\omicron\tau\iota \alpha\eta\eta\eta \tau\epsilon\delta\prime$, “Sousapa Mataj, the ‘tot’ of Assē...” Giovanni Ruffini was of the opinion that $\alpha\sigma\sigma\eta$ is the same as $\alpha\sigma\epsilon$, which was known to him through inscriptions 1 and 2. This is not excluded considering the orthographic liberty of Old Nubian, however, not entirely certain.

In inscription 3 Ase is definitely a toponym (cf. the designation $\alpha\tau\iota\pi\tau\text{-}$, “town”). As the author of this inscription appears to be also the author of inscriptions 1 and 2, the name Ase must refer to a place also in them.³ Judging by the syntax, Ase is a place-name in inscription 4 too. The same, though with a lesser degree of probability, holds true for inscription 8. In the remaining cases (5, 6, 7) the meaning of Ase is unclear because of the ambiguity of the word $\tau\omicron\tau/\theta\epsilon\kappa\eta\alpha$ ($\theta\epsilon\gamma\eta\alpha$), which may designate both “child, son,” and “village/town official” in Old Nubian and Nubian Greek.⁴ In all these cases, the expression $\alpha\sigma\epsilon\eta \tau\omicron\tau / \alpha\sigma\epsilon\eta \theta\epsilon\kappa\eta\alpha$ can be translated as either “son of Ase” or “*tot/thekna (thegna)* of Ase.” Assē in RUFFINI, *The Bishop, the Eparch, and the King*, no. 69, l. 7 must be a toponym because it is an element of the name of an office.

3 Thus the reference to these two inscriptions should be removed from the entry “Ase” in the list of Nubian personal names (available online at <http://www.medievalnubia.info/dev/index.php/Names>).

4 See ŁAJTAR, “Christian Saī in Written Records,” pp. 94–98. It is worth noticing that $\theta\epsilon\kappa\eta\alpha$ ($\theta\epsilon\gamma\eta\alpha$) is probably a modified transcript of the Greek τέκνον, “child.”

The etymology of the place-name Ase is unknown. The Old Nubian vocabulary as we know it thus far offers two words as possible sources of derivation: $\Delta C-$, “morning,” and $\Delta C-$, $\Delta \Delta C-$, “to measure.”⁵ If the toponym Ase derived from the first of these two words, it probably made reference to the settlement’s location on the east bank of the Nile; if it was constructed on the basis of the second word, it may have reflected the measurement of land and the assignment of a portion of it for a settlement. It is rather improbable for Ase to be derived from $\Delta C-$, “daughter.”⁶ However, this word is a possible source of derivation for a personal name Ase as Old Nubian frequently constructs proper names out of terms of familial relationship. The above remarks are highly speculative and should be taken with much caution.

Ase from inscriptions 1, 2, and 3 has a good chance to be identical with Ase from inscription 4. The identification of this Ase with Ase from inscription 8 is not certain but possible. Assuming this is the case, one has to conclude that Ase was an urban centre ($\Delta \Gamma \Pi-$, πόλις μεγάλη), which boasted a church of Jesus. As far as the Kingdom of Makuria is concerned, the designation “town, city” (Greek πόλις, Nubian $\Delta \Gamma \Pi-$) has been attested with relation to its principal settlements such Qasr Ibrim (Silmi, Phrim),⁷ Faras (Pachoras, Paras),⁸ Sai (Zae),⁹ and Dongola (Toungoul).¹⁰ These “towns” occupied consider-

5 BROWNE, *Old Nubian Dictionary*, 21, s.vv.

6 *Ibid.*, 20, s.v.

7 Qasr Ibrim (Silmi, Phrim) is called $\Delta \Gamma \Pi-$, “town,” in BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim III*, nos. 35, l. 14, and 40, l. 13. This town is most probably meant in all those cases where the term $\Delta \Gamma \Pi-$ occurs without a name in Old Nubian documents from Qasr Ibrim (BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim III*, nos. 34 ii, l. 21; 36 i, l. 11; 37, l. 14; 38, l. 13; 40, l. 11; 44, l. 21; 55 ii, l. 4). For Qasr Ibrim as $\Delta \Gamma \Pi-$, see also HAGEN, “Districts, Towns and Other Locations of Medieval Nubia and Egypt,” p. 119.

8 Pachoras is called πόλις in the Coptic foundation inscription of the Paulos cathedral of 707 CE (VAN DER VLIET, *Catalogue of the Coptic Inscriptions*, no. 1, l. 9) and in the epitaph of Bishop Thomas of 862 CE (JAKOBIELSKI, *A History of the Bishopric of Pachoras*, pp. 75–79, l. 12). In several sources of the 9th–11th century, both Greek and Coptic, it is designated as μητρόπολις. The list includes (in chronological order): inscription accompanying the portrait of Bishop Kyros in the Faras cathedral (*ibid.*, p. 86); two wall inscriptions of a certain Onnophrios in the Faras cathedral (*ibid.*, p. 89); graffito of Chael, son of Kollouthos, bishop of Faras, on the rocks of the so-called Gebel Maktub near Qasr Ibrim (ΛΑΥΤΑΡ & VAN DER VLIET, “CIG IV, 8952 Revisited”); foundation inscription of the church on the south slope at Faras (VAN DER VLIET, *Catalogue of the Coptic Inscriptions*, no. 2, l. 2); epitaph of Bishop Aaron (*ibid.*, no. 3, l. 8); inscription of Bishop Aaron in the Faras cathedral (JAKOBIELSKI, *A History of the Bishopric of Pachoras*, p. 125); inscription accompanying the portrait of Bishop Petros in the Faras cathedral (*ibid.*, pp. 127–28); graffito of an ecclesiastic with the mention of Bishop Petros in the Faras cathedral (*ibid.*, pp. 134–35); epitaph of Bishop Petros (*ibid.*, pp. 135–38, l. 7). The exact meaning of the term “metropolis” occurring in these sources is a matter of controversy, but it at least testifies to the fact of Pachoras being a “polis.”

9 All attestations come from wall inscriptions in the upper church at Banganarti; cf. ΛΑΥΤΑΡ, “Christian Sai in Written Records,” pp. 99–101, nos. 3, 4, 5 = ΛΑΥΤΑΡ, *The Late Christian Pilgrimage Centre at Banganarti*, nos. 295, 348, 879 respectively.

10 Attested in wall inscriptions in the upper church at Banganarti; cf. ΛΑΥΤΑΡ, *The Late Christian Pilgrimage Centre at Banganarti*, nos. 64, 67, 181, 267. Two inscriptions from the same lot (*ibid.*, nos. 13, 168) make known a place with the name Toungil (τοϋγγιλ-) or Toungili (τοϋγγιλ-), also qualified as “town” ($\Delta \Gamma \Pi-$). This Toungil/Toungili is probably identical with

able space densely built with architecture of multifunctional character encircled by defensive walls. They played an important role as centres of political and cultural life as well as administrative capitals of both state and Church. On the other hand, the designation “town, city” is found also with relation to other settlement points such as Ikhmindī (Mohondi),¹¹ Kelsei,¹² Addo,¹³ Island of Michael,¹⁴ Timmea,¹⁵ and Nawe.¹⁶ Of them only Ikhmindī is known archeologically, and its remains truly resembled a town in urbanistic terms before they were submerged under the waters of Lake Nasser.¹⁷ The remaining “towns” remain unknown for us except for their names and this is also the case of Ase. We have no data at our disposal to connect the toponym Ase with archeological structures known to us or even to localize it within a broader area of the Middle Nile Valley. Findspots of the inscriptions are of little help in search for the localization of Ase. It is true that Christian Nubian cult places were frequented mostly by local population, but visitors from afar can also occur in them. Thus, for example, the upper church at Banganarti, in which our inscriptions 6, 7, and 8 occur, was visited by believers from the entire Makurian territory including Sai, Faras,

Toungoul. Dongola (Toungoul) is probably meant also in all these cases where a town (Δῆσις) without a name occurs in the Banganarti inscriptions.

- 11 KRALL, “Ein neuer nubischer König,” pp. 233–36, l. 2. The document is a contract of sale of Northern Nubian provenance datable to the reign of King Khael (around 800 CE). In another document of the same lot Ikhmindī (Mohondi) is designated ΚΩΜΑ, “village,” however; *ibid.*, p. 237. Ikhmindī is called πόλις apparently also in the famous inscription of the 6th century commemorating the construction of its defensive walls. The text has ἐπλήρωσεν (for ἐπλήρωσεν) τὴν οἰκοδόμην τὴν πολλὴν, with τὴν πολλὴν being a graphic variant for τὴν πόλιν (accusativus pro genetivo τῆς πόλεως). For the most recent discussion of the problem, see VAN DER VLIET, “Gleanings from Christian Northern Nubia,” pp. 191–94.
- 12 P. Lond. Copt. 447 (p. 209), l. 3, and 448 (p. 211), l. 3. The texts in question are legal documents of northern Nubian provenance, datable to the 8th century. They indicate that Kelsei (or at least a part of it) was situated on the east bank of the Nile. It should probably be localized somewhere in north Nubia, in the neighbourhood of Mohondi (Ikhmindī).
- 13 BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim III*, no. 44, ll. 19–20. This Addo should probably be localized somewhere in northern Nubia, at a distance not so far away from Qasr Ibrim. It cannot be identified with Gebel Adda as the latter is called Atwa in Old Nubian texts from Qasr Ibrim (and is not designated “town, city”).
- 14 Attested in a wall inscription in the upper church at Banganarti; cf. ŁAJTAR, *The Late Christian Pilgrimage Centre at Banganarti*, no. 578, l. 10: Νῆσος χῖο (= Μιχαήλ) πόλιν ὁ καλ(ούμενος) θεκ(να). This Island of Michael is possibly identical with a namesake mentioned by Arab historians as lying at the southern extremity of the Second Cataract, commonly identified with present-day Meilnarti; for the latter, see ΣΕΙΓΝΟΒΟΣ, “La liste des conquêtes nubiennes de Baybars,” pp. 567–69.
- 15 Attested in a wall inscription in the upper church at Banganarti; cf. ŁAJTAR, *The Late Christian Pilgrimage Centre at Banganarti*, no. 755, l. 1. The localization of this Timmea is unknown.
- 16 Nawe is called πόλις in line 8 of the so-called Kudanbes inscription written on a wall of Deir Anba Hadra (St. Simeon monastery) in Aswan (1322 CE). The information is based on the new reading and interpretation of the Kudanbes inscription made by Adam Łajtar; see ŁAJTAR, “The So-Called Kudanbes Inscription in Deir Anba Hadra.” The localization of Nawe is unknown. Perhaps it should be equated with Nawi, a big and important settlement on the right bank of the Nile some 30 km to the north of the ruins of Dongola.
- 17 For Ikhmindī and its impressive remains, see STENICO, “Ikhmindī”; DEICHMANN & GROSSMANN, *Nubische Forschungen*, 67–94.

and Qasr Ibrim.¹⁸ Additionally one has to observe that the toponym Ase is found in inscriptions from both the north (1, 2, 3, 4) and the center (8) of Makuria. Modern toponomastics also provides no clue in the matter of the localization of Ase. As far as we can see, such a place name has been recorded nowhere in the Middle Nile Valley in the last two centuries. However, if Ase can be identified with Assē from RUFFINI, *The Bishop, the Eparch, and the King*, no. 69, l. 7, the place must have been located somewhere in Nobadia.

The above discussion should be summarised as follows: There was an important urban centre called Ase in the Kingdom of Makuria that boasted a Church of Jesus, but its localization remains unknown. However, on the basis of the collected evidence, we cannot reject the possibility that the word may have also designated a personal name. It is only to be hoped that future textual discoveries will help us solve this question definitively.

18 For the upper church at Banganarti as a pilgrimage centre, see ŻURAWSKI, *St Raphael Church I at Banganarti*, 365–385; see also ŁAJTAR, “Wall Inscriptions in the Banganarti Churches,” p. 144.

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