

# For Sale: Geography in Old Nubian Land Sales

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## Introduction

In the Old Nubian corpus there are 22 records of land sales, the large majority being from Qaṣr Ibrīm.<sup>1</sup>

According to Giovanni Ruffini, the typical format of a Nubian land sale starts with an invocation of the Holy Trinity, followed by a dating formula and a protocol listing several officials. The main body of the text contains a description of the seller and the buyer, a description of the property that is sold, and its price. The sale is closed by a list of witnesses and what they consumed, and the scribe(s).<sup>2</sup>

In this article I want to focus on the way in which land property is described within the Makuritan kingdom, based on a grammatical analysis of Old Nubian land sales. I will argue that such descriptions are always relative in nature, referring to adjacent plots oriented from south to north on the banks of the Nile. South is thus considered the “up/forward” direction. I will also discuss the multiple ways in which the function and ownership of land can be described. In particular, it appears that land ownership is transferred from mother to daughter. These interpretations are based on a reanalysis of several morphemes frequently occurring in Old Nubian land sales, which so far have not received a satisfying interpretation, in particular the topic marker -ϵION and adessive -Λϵ. The overall structure of land sales also seems to be determined by the process in

- 1 The extant land sales are published in BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qaṣr Ibrīm*, vol. III; RUFFINI, *The Bishop, The Eparch, and the King*; BROWNE, “Griffith’s Old Nubian Sale”; GRIFFITH, “Christian Documents from Nubia,” pp. 12–18; VAN GERVEN OEI et al., *The Old Nubian Texts from Attiri*, pp. 84–86. See also ŁAJTAR & RUFFINI, “Qaṣr Ibrīm’s Last Land Sale, AD 1463 (EA 90225).” I would like to thank Adam Simmons, Giovanni Ruffini, Robin Seignobos, and Alexandros Tsakos for their helpful comments and suggestions.
- 2 Cf. RUFFINI, *Medieval Nubia*, p. 77. Ruffini claims that the Old Nubian land sales are based on Coptic-language predecessors (*ibid.*, pp. 144–146). NOWAK & WOJCIECHOWSKI, “Elements of Legal Practice in Christian Nubia” offers a critique of this assertion, suggesting there may have been a prior, indigenous legal tradition (199).

which they are written down, most likely based on an oral delivery by the owner taken down by the scribe without any prior drafting.

Besides more general propositions based on the current corpus of published Old Nubian land sales, I will also provide a full analysis and translation of the longest and most elaborate extant land sale, known under the siglum P.QI 3 36, including an attempt to visualize the geographical orientation of the plots described in it.

Unlike texts of a religious nature, which have received relatively more scrutiny in Old Nubian scholarship, legal documents provide fewer analogues with known textual formats and their contents are often locally specific and require contextual knowledge not readily available to the contemporary reader. As a result, this is very much work in progress, and comparative work on the geographical descriptions in Coptic land sales and the later Mamluk documents remains a desideratum.

### Setting the boundaries

The description of the geographic location of a plot is accomplished by referring to its neighbors. As the plots were supposedly all laid out along the river Nile, reference only needs to be made to southern/upstream and northern/downstream neighbors:

(1)  
P.QI 3 32.15-17

ὄρον σευδαλ πασῆ παρρελο καλον σευδαλ κουσσανηλλον

*oro-n seud-il pasi-n parre-lo*  
south-GEN boundary-DET Pasi-GEN plot.PRED-FOC<sup>3</sup>  
*kalo-n seud-il koussan-n-il-lon*  
north-GEN boundary-DET Koussan-GEN-DET-TOP

“The boundary of the south is the plot of Pasi; the boundary of the north is the (plot) of Koussan.”

(2)  
P.QI 3 36.i.21

ὄρων σευειδαλ· σογῆριοςνελλο καλον σευειδαλ ῥῥῆ ἄσιηλλο

*oro-n seueid-il souērios-n-a-lo*  
south-GEN boundary-DET Souērios-GEN-PRED-FOC  
*kalo-n seueid-il irti-n as-in-il-lo*  
north-GEN boundary-DET Irti-GEN daughter-GEN-DET-FOC

3 The glossing follows the Leipzig glossing rules. The following abbreviations have been used: 1, 2, 3 – first, second, third person; ACC – accusative; ADE – adessive; CONJ – conjunction; DAT – dative; DEM – demonstrative; DET – determiner; FOC – focus; GEN – genitive; LOC – locative; PF – perfect; PL – plural; PRACT – pluractional; PRED – predicate; PROX – proximate; PRS – present; PST2 – past 2; SG – singular; SUPE – superessive; TOP – topic.

“The boundary of the south is (the plot) of Souērios; the boundary of the north is the (plot) of the daughter of Irti.”

ὄρων ϣεγάλ· ἄνιον ἀκτινάλο· καλοκετάλ ἄνιον ἀκτινάλο·

(3)

P.QI 3 40.15-17

*orō-n*      *šeud-il*              *anio-n*      *asti-n-a-lo*  
 south-GEN boundary-DET Anio-GEN *asti*-GEN-PRED-FOC  
*kalo-ketal*   *anio-n*      *asti-n-a-lo*  
 north-also Anio-GEN *asti*-GEN-PRED-FOC

“The boundary of the south is (the plot) of the *asti* of Anio. Also in the north (the boundary) is (the plot) of the *asti* of Anio.”

ὄρον ϣεγάι κολλ(ογ)θοσσῆναλο· ὄν καλον ϣεγάι κολλ(ογ)θ(οσ)  
 σεῆναλο

(4)

P.QI 4 64.5-6

*oro-n*      *šeudi*              *kollouthossi-nn-a-lo*              *on*  
 south-GEN boundary Kollouthos-GEN-PRED-FOC and  
*kalo-n*      *šeudi*              *kollouthossei-nn-a-lo*  
 north-GEN boundary Kollouthos-GEN-PRED-FOC

“The boundary of the south is Kollouthos’s (plot) and the boundary of the north is Kollouthos’s (plot).”

In these types of geographical descriptions, which mention boundaries, we consistently find the southern or upstream boundary mentioned first, followed by the northern or downstream boundary. Overall, the organization of plots from upstream to downstream is a common feature of Old Nubian land sales. Furthermore, plots are mainly identified by their owners. And finally, we find that every item of the geographic description is marked with the focus marker -λο. This particular usage of this morpheme is well attested in other contexts, such as lists of foodwares and gifts.

### Describing the plot

The description of the plot itself is always given before the description of its boundaries. The description is sometimes part of the selling formula, which typically starts with “I sell/sold.”



north is the (plot) of the (Church of) the 24 (Elders) of Mosmos. One plot the valley of the orchard(?) in the cotton field(?) of Ibrim. Next to the boundary of the south is the (plot) of the *asti* of Aneio, at the boundary of the north is the (plot) of the (Church of) Peter of Ibrim.”

We arrive here at our first serious interpretative issue, namely the meaning of the morpheme *-Δε* in (5) *ϳεϳρηΔε* and (6) *σεϳΔλλε*. Traditionally, this morpheme has been interpreted as the conjunction “and,”<sup>4</sup> but the problem is that in the context of land sales it never appears in isolation or conjoins sentences. In fact, its behavior is much closer to a lexical case marker. Both instances (5) *ϳεϳρηΔε* and (6) *σεϳΔλλε* are mirrored by the northern boundaries marked with the locative *-λο*: (5) *ϳεϳρηλο* and (6) *σεϳΔλλο*. Finally, we find the alternate couple a line before: (6) *ορον σεϳΔλλο ... καλον σεϳΔλλο*, both with locative *-λο*.

It is therefore my proposal to give this morpheme *-Δε* a primary meaning related to place, comparable to locative *-λο*, for which I propose the interlinear gloss “ADE” for an adessive indicating a location adjacent to something. The same morpheme appears in several other land sales, attached to the words for south and north. Note that in all these cases, the old locative *-ο* has been replaced, again suggesting that the suffix *-Δε* performs a similar function.

ταμιτῆ πιγιτα· παρρε ἄπα παννα σϳλμι καλλε πῶλα ταννικα δῶνα  
Δενοῶ εαπῆκα ειτιςῆ ματῆιγοϳ

(7)  
P.QI 3 45.1-4

*tamit-in pigit-a parre apa pan-na sulmi kal-le*  
Tमित-GEN share-PRED plot Apa Pan-GEN Ibrim north-ADE  
*pil-l-a tan-ni-ka jan-a den-j-a*  
grow-PRS-PRED 3SG-GEN-ACC exchange-PRED give>1-PLACT-PRED  
*᳆apik-ka eit-is-in matir-igou-l*  
gold-ACC receive-PST2-2/3SG witness-PL-DET

“It is the share of Tamit. The witnesses that Apa Pan sold us his plot growing next to North Ibrim and received the gold (are):”

The translation of (7) *σϳλμι καλλε* “next to North Ibrim” works here quite well, and if the author had meant “to the north of Ibrim” we would have expected a genitive case on *σϳλμι*.<sup>5</sup>

4 BROWNE, *Old Nubian Dictionary*, pp. 38–39.

5 The homophony between Old Nubian directive marker *-Δε* and these Greek and Coptic clitics may have suggested the extension of the usage of *-Δε* beyond its original semantic field. (It is unlikely that we are dealing here with a straightforward loanword from Greek or Coptic, as suggested by BROWNE, *Old Nubian Dictionary*, p. 38, following STRICKER, “A Study in Medieval Nubian,” p. 452. Just like the topic marker *-ειον* differs phonologically from the

The next example, however, poses significantly more interpretative problems.

(8)  
P.QI 3 39.10-15

αἰοῦ ἀγγέστοτῆ ἀπον· πεσῆ εἰα ματρῶουδα· κειακῶϋκῆ παρρε ἀννοῦ  
ἀπολοκο σεγεισι εἰν εἰαλλο ὄβολκα ἀγγεῶυδαῆνιλο πελῆ σιλιμηκα ὀρρε  
πῆκκον· σῆμι καλλε πῆκκocῆ· ὄανα τιδῶσελο·

*aiou aggestotil apo-n pesi-n ηα maššouda*  
1SG Aggestotil my.father-GEN Pesī-GEN son Maššouda  
*kheiakiššik-ka*  
*choiak.eikšil-ACC*  
*parre an-nou apo-lo-ko seu-eis-i ein*  
plot 1SG-GEN my.father-LOC-from inherit-PST2-1SG DEM.PROX  
*ηal-lo jō-o-l-ka aggešouda-ni-lo*  
side-LOC go-PST1-DET-ACC Aggešouda-GEN-LOC  
*pel-in silimē-ka or-re*  
produce-PRS.2/3SG Ibrim-ACC south-ADE  
*pik-ko-n silmi kal-le*  
produce-PERF-PRS.2/3SG Ibrim north-ADE  
*pik-ko-s-in jan-a*  
produce-PERF-PST2-2/3SG exchange-PRED  
*tij-j-is-e-lo*  
give>2/3-PLACT-PST2-1SG.PRED-FOC

“I, Aggestotil, sold to *choiak-eikšil* Maššouda (and the (?)) son of Pesī, my father, the plot going from this side that I inherited through my father, which produces in (the plot) of Aggešouda, has produced for Ibrim next to the south, and had produced next to North Ibrim.”

Apart from distinguishing the precise number of beneficiaries of the sale, the main problem is the form of the verbs in (8) πῆκκον and πῆκκocῆ. Considering the previous example, it would make sense to interpret these as the same verb as (7) πῆλλα. Gerald Browne consistently treats these as forms of the verb π(λ) “to be, lie, remain,” but this verb cannot take an object. Moreover, it appears that the verb

conjunction *on*, the conjunction *-ae* differs from the adessive marker *-ae*; the former no longer exhibits assimilation, perhaps again under influence of the homophonous Greek and Coptic clitics.) This is also not unlikely, for example in English “from here to there” implies a conjunction between “here” and “there.” This interpretation is strengthened by the frequent presence of *-ae-keλ* on the last member of a conjunction. Etymologically, *keλ* means “limit” or “border,” so originally the coordinated sequence *X-ae (on) Y-ae (on) Z-aekeλ* may have been constructed as “to X (and) to Y (and) limit to Z,” reinterpreted as “X, Y, and Z.” The nearly complete absence of this construction from non-literary texts and the absence of cognates in contemporary Nubian languages suggest that this is again an innovation proper to literary Old Nubian. (STRICKER, “A Study in Medieval Nubian,” p. 452 mentions a single attestation of *-de* in modern Nubian, which I have been unable to verify. REINISCH’s *Die Nuba-Sprache* contains no entry for it.)

of existence is implied throughout in the descriptions. A better proposal in view of the presence of accusative  $\sigma\lambda\mu\eta\kappa\alpha$  is perhaps the labile verb  $\mu\epsilon\epsilon\iota$  “to grow, produce,” which also allows us to interpret the following description:

ΜΟΣΜΟΣ· ΜΑΘΤΟ ΤΟΣΝ̄ . ΤΛ̄ΧΟ ΠΑΡΡΕ Π̄Λ ΜΑΛΛΕΛΟ ὄΡΩΔΕ ΙΕΖΕΚΙΑΣ̄ΙΝ̄ΙΛΛΟ·

(9)

P.QI 3 33 6.i.22

*mosmos mathto tosin* [ ] *t-il-lo parre pi-l*  
 Mosmos east *tosin* [ ] *t-DET-LOC plot grow-PRS.DET*  
*malle-lo orō-de iezekias-in-il-lo*  
 everything-FOC south-ADE Iezekias-GEN-DET-FOC

“Mosmos: everything that the plot in the eastern *tosin* [ ] *t* produces; next to the south (is) the (plot) of Iezekias.”

An interpretation of  $\mu\iota(\lambda)$  as “to grow, produce” also allows us to clarify what appears otherwise to be an anomalous geographic description using “west” and “east” rather than “south” and “north” as geographic determiners:

ΠΑΡΡΕ ΤΑΝΝΙ ΤΙΝΟΚΟΝ· ΜΑΤΤΟΚΟΝ Π̄ΛΛΑ·

(10)

P.QI 3 42.2-3

*parre tan-ni tino-k-on matto-k-on pil-l-a*  
 plot 3SG-GEN west-ACC-CONJ east-ACC-CONJ produce-PRS-PRED

“his plot producing for the west and the east.”

All of this now allows us to read the largest and most extensive land sale in the Old Nubian corpus, land sale P.QI 3 36 (already briefly quoted in example (2) above).

### Land sale P.QI 3 36

Land sale P.QI 3 36 (DBMNT 584) is the longest Old Nubian land sale that is presently known. It was first published in 1991 in Gerald M. Browne’s third volume of *Old Nubian Texts from Qaṣr Ibrīm*.<sup>6</sup> The sale was written on a leather sheet of 46.5 by 51 cm, and carries the date of 5 Hathyr 907 AM, or November 1, 1191 CE.

The land sale documents a transaction in which a woman, Kapopi, who has no heirs of her own, sells all the land she inherited from her mother to Neuesi, the daughter of Adama, the eparch of Nobadia,<sup>7</sup> and Anenikoli. Ruffini pays considerable attention to the document,

6 BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qaṣr Ibrīm III*, pp. 12–13.

7 RUFFINI, *Medieval Nubia*, p. 2.

with which he opens his monograph on Medieval Nubia based on the Old Nubian documentary evidence found at Qaṣr Ibrīm:

The date of Kapopi's landsale is interesting. She speaks to us in 1190, not quite two decades after a pivotal turning point in Nubian history. In 1172/73, Nubia had suffered a damaging raid by Shams ed-Dawla that broke over five centuries of peace between Christian Nubia and Muslim Egypt. This was an ominous event, heralding an ongoing deterioration in relations between the two powers and the ultimate collapse of Christian Nubia in the face of Islamization. But in the short term, Kapopi's land sale [...] reveal[s] her society's remarkable resilience.<sup>8</sup>

Not only the historical context of P.QI 3 36 is interesting, but also its content. As Bechhaus-Gerst already remarked, this land sale contains "detaillierte geographische Bezeichnungen" that could help us understand how Makuritan oriented themselves in the landscape and designated different properties along the fertile banks of the Nile.<sup>9</sup> This article attempts to come to a better understanding of the geographical descriptions in this land sale, offering hopefully an improvement of the translation published in Browne's *editio princeps*,<sup>10</sup> which appeared more than ten years before his *Old Nubian Grammar*.

### *The Plot Descriptions*

The description of the properties sold in P.QI 3 36 is extensive, with a large number of plots spread out over different areas. I first give a structural analysis of the entire section.

(11)  
P.QI 3 36.i.16–31

<ηαθ>ΤΟΝ ΔΙΕΙΔ̄ ΠΑΡΡΕ Γ̄ΛΟ·  
 ▶ ΤΙΝΟ ΑΡΡΕΔΔΟ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΟΣΚΑΛΕ Δ̄ΛΟ· ὄΡΩΝ· ΑΓΓΟΥΡΕΛΑ ΟῩΑΤΙ Γ̄ΛΟ·  
 ὄΡΩΔΕ ΗΟΥΩΕΝ ΑΣΤΙΝ̄ΛΛΟ·  
 ▶ ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ Ἰ̄CΙΝ̄ΛΛΟ·  
 ὄΡΩΝ ΑΓΓΟΥΡΕΛΑ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΟΣΚΑΛΕ Δ̄ΛΟ· ὄΡΩΔΕ Δ̄ΠΟΣΤΟΛΟCΙΝ̄ΛΛΟ  
 ▶ ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ΑΣΤΙΝ̄ΛΛΟ·  
 ΚΑΛΟΝ ΑΓΓΟΥΡΕΛΑ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΟΣΚΑΛΕ Δ̄ΛΟ· ὄΡΩΔΕ ΗΑΤΤΕΝ̄ΛΛΟ·  
 ΚΑΛΟΝ CΕΥΕΙΔ̄ΛΛΟΝ Τ̄ΗΑΚΚΙCΙΝ̄ΛΛΟ·  
 ΓΑΠ̄Η ΕΙΗΔ̄ΕΙΔ̄ ΟΣΚΑΛΕ Β̄ΛΟ ΤΟΥCΚΙΓΙ Τ̄ΕΛ ΑΗΗΑΛΟ· ὄΡΩΝ CΕΥΕΙΔ̄Λ·  
 CΟῩΗΡΙΟCΝ̄Δ̄ΛΟ  
 ΚΑΛΟΝ CΕΥΕΙΔ̄Λ Ρ̄Τ̄Η Δ̄CΙΝ̄ΛΛΟ·

8 RUFFINI, *Medieval Nubia*, pp. 2–3. See for a discussion of land sales as legal genre, *ibid.*, pp. 76–89.

9 BECHHAUS-GERST, "Anmerkungen zu den altnubischen Texten aus Qaṣr Ibrim," p. 16.

10 BROWNE, *Old Nubian Texts from Qaṣr Ibrīm III*, pp. 50–53.

ΜΟΣΜΟΣ·

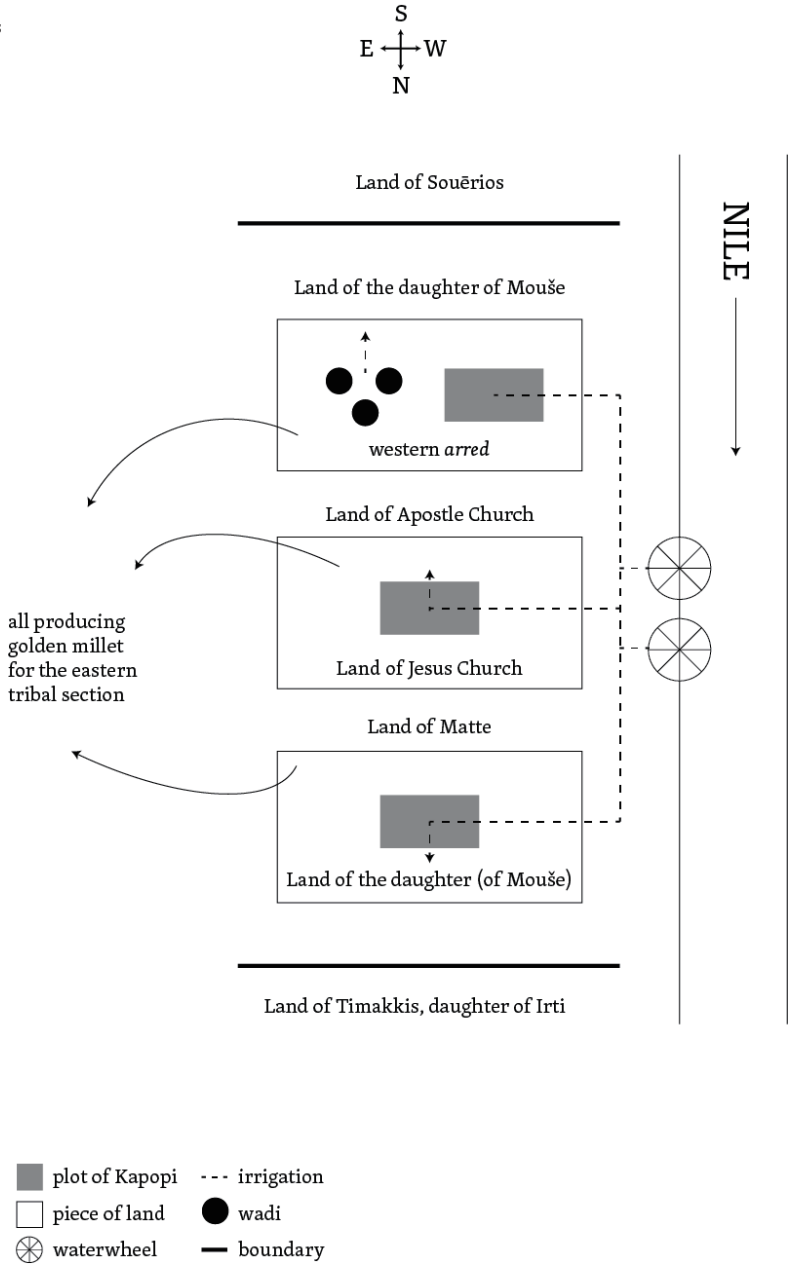
- ▶ ΜΑΘΤΟ ΤΟΣῆ Τῶλο παρρε μαλλελο ὄρωδε ἰε̄ζεκιᾶσινῶλο·
- ▶ ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ΕΙΟΓΓΙ Πῆνῶλο·
  - ▷ ΜΑΘΤΟ ΚΑΛΟ ΟΥΓΓΛΕΚΟΛΛΟ ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ Σ̄εΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ·
  - ▷ ΚΑΝΔΙΚΟΛΟ ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ Σ̄εΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ·
  - ▷ ΠΑΣΚΟΛΑ ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ Σ̄εΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ·
  - ▷ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΔΟΥΣΤῆΝΙΛΑ ΠΑΚΚΑΤῆΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ· ἔΝΟΜΕΔΟΟΥΔΑΛ ΚΟΥΝΝΕΛΟ· ὄρωδε ἄνιειον αστινῶλο·
- ▶ ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ἔΝΟΝ αστινῶλο·
  - ▷ ΟΥΚΟΣῶ παρρε ΚΟΕΙΕΝ ΠΑΡΚῶλο ΑΝΝΑ ΜΑΛΛΕΛΟ ὄρωδε ἄνιειον αστινῶλο·
- ▶ ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ΠΕΤΡῸσινῶλο·
  - ▷ ΟΥΚΟΣῶ παρρε ᾶλο· ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ Σ̄εΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ· ὄρωδε ΤΟΥΚῆ ΚΤΑΛΟ·
- ▶ ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ΕΘῸν ᾶσινῶλο·
  - ▷ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΚΟῤ ΤΑΩΩΙ ΔΕΕΙᾶ ΠΑΡΡΕ Βῶλο· ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ Σ̄εΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ· ὄρεδε ΕΘῸν ᾶσινῶλο·
- ▶ ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ΠΕΤΡῸσινῶλο·
  - ▷ ΠΑΡΡΕΝ ΤΑΕΣΙΛΛΟΝ ΔΑΤῆῆ Πῶλλαλο·
  - ▷ ΠΑΡΡΕ Σ̄ΕΝ ὄρων ΣΕΥΕΙᾶ ᾶφελγοῖν σιπῶλο·
- ▶ ΚΑΛΛΟΛΟΝ Ἰῆσινῶλο·

As we have discussed above, we assume that the description of boundaries is always the last element in the description of a plot (or in this case, group of plots). The beginning of a description can be discerned, in the case of this particular land sale, by the presence of the topic marker *-ειον* (often *-λον*), which is present from the second description onward. In literary texts, *-ειον* always follows the first constituent of the sentence,<sup>11</sup> and assuming this rule also holds for non-literary texts, its position tells us where to divide the plot descriptions. The appearance in a land sale of this morpheme that is otherwise associated with literary texts might also indicate an attempt of the scribe to elevate its language.

There are two pairs of phrases whose first constituent is not marked with the topic marker *-ειον/-λον*, namely (12) <ΜΑΘ>ΤΟΝ ΔΙΕΙᾶ ΠΑΡΡΕ Γῶλο· followed directly by (13) ΤΙΝΟ ΑΡΡΕΔΔΟ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΟΣΚΑΛΕ ᾶλο·, and (20) ΜΟΣΜΟΣ· followed directly by (20) ΜΑΘΤΟ ΤΟΣῆ Τῶλο παρρε μαλλελο. As a topic marker, *-ειον/-λον* marks background information and is therefore not expected at the beginning of a new section. Therefore, we would like to suggest that (13) <ΜΑΘ>ΤΟΝ ΔΙΕΙᾶ ΠΑΡΡΕ Γῶλο· and (20) ΜΟΣΜΟΣ· are not marked by *-ειον* because they are “section headers,” indicating a broad division into two sets of plots, whereas (13) ΤΙΝΟ ΑΡΡΕΔΔΟ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΟΣΚΑΛΕ ᾶλο· and (20) ΜΑΘΤΟ

11 VAN GERVEN OEI, “Subject Clitics,” pp. 3-5.

Fig. 1. The three plots for the tribal section of the east. Drawing by the author.



- plot of Kapopi    - - - irrigation
- piece of land    ● wadi
- ⊗ waterwheel    — boundary

ΤΟΣῆ, Τῆλο παρρε μαλλελο are not marked by -ειον because they are the first in their section.

Additional evidence for this broad division may be gathered from the fact that the first set of plots are all owned by Kapopi, whereas in the second set she only owns (part of) the output. Furthermore, the “three plots” mentioned in (12) are listed as three separate plots in the description that follows.

<ΜΑΘ>ΤΟΝ ΔΙΕΙᾶ παρρε Γῆλο

(12)  
P.QI 3 36.i.16-17

*mathto-n di-eia*                      *parre 3-lo*  
east-GEN tribal.section-DAT plot 3-FOC

“Three plots for the tribal section of the east.”<sup>12</sup>

Considering the reference to the “east” in (12) and the fact that these plots were adjacent to the Nile, which may be deduced by the reference to “waterwheels” in (17), we may perhaps conclude that the three plots are on also the eastbank of the Nile.

The three plots in (12) comprise one waterwheel plot in (13), another waterwheel plot on the land of the Jesus Church in (14), and one waterwheel plot on the land of the daughter in (15) (Fig. 1).

ΤΙΝΟ Ἀρρεᾶλο παρρε οσκαλε ἄλο ὄρων Ἀγγοῦρελα οὔᾱτι Γῆλο ὄρωδε  
ΜΟΥῤΕΝ ἈΣΤΙΝῆλο

(13)  
P.QI 3 36.i.17-18

*тино arred-do parre oskale 1-lo orō-n aggoure-la*  
west arred-SUPE plot waterwheel 1-FOC south-GEN lupine-DAT  
*ouati 3-lo orō-de mouše-n asti-n-il-lo*  
wadi 3-FOC south-ADE Mouše-GEN daughter-GEN-DET-FOC

“One waterwheel plot on the western arred; three wadis for the lupine (plot) of the south; to the south the (land) of the daughter of Mouše.”<sup>13</sup>

The meaning of Ἀρρε(ᾶ)- is obscure. The word is a hapax. Browne connects it with ἄρογ “rain” and ἄρογεῖτ “irrigation,” but this is a questionable etymology. Perhaps it should be analyzed as Ἀρρε-ᾶ-ᾶο “on the wave,” but it is unclear what a “western wave” would mean in this context. The meaning of Ἀγγοῦρε is less obscure. It only appears

12 For the meaning of ΔΙ and ΔΕ in (24) see VAN GERVEN OEI & TSAKOS, “The Etymology of the Toponym ‘Pourgoundi.’”

13 Adam Łajtar suggests that ἈΣΤΙ could also be interpreted as the title *asti*. Considering the large number of women prominently involved in this exchange of land, it seems, however, reasonable to keep the translation “daughter.” Cf. ŁAJTAR, “Varia Nubica XII-XIX,” p. 101. See also RUFFINI, *The Bishop, The Eparch, and the King*, p. 61.



ΚΑΛΟΝ ΣΕΥΕΙΔΛΛΟΝ ΤΙΜΑΚΚΙΣΙΝΙΛΟ·

(16)  
P.QI 3 36.i.20

*kalo-n seueid-il-lon timakkis-in-il-lo*  
north-GEN boundary-DET-FOC Timakkis-GEN-DET-FOC

“The boundary of the north (is) the (land) of Timakkis.”

ΓΑΠῆ ΕΙΜΛḂΕΙḂ ΟΣΚΑΛΕ ΒΛΟ ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ ΤῚΕΛ ἈΝΝΑΛΟ·

(17)  
P.QI 3 36.i.20-21

*ḡapin eimil-a-eia oskale 2-lo touskiti wel*  
gold.GEN millet-?-DAT waterwheel 2-FOC third one.DET  
*ann-a-lo*  
1SG.GEN-PRED-FOC

“Two waterwheels for the millet of gold (plot?); one third is mine.”

ὍΡΩΝ ΣΕΥΕΙΔΛ· ΣΟΥῚΡΙΟΣΝḂΛΟ

(18)  
P.QI 3 36.i.21

*orō-n seueid-il souēriosi-n-a-lo*  
south-GEN boundary-DET Souērios-GEN-PRED-FOC

“The boundary of the south (is) the (land) of Souērios.”

ΚΑΛΟΝ ΣΕΥΕΙΔΛ ῚΤῆ ḂΣΙΝΙΛΟ·

(19)  
P.QI 3 36.i.21

*kalo-n seueid-il irti-n as-in-il-lo*  
north-GEN boundary-DET Irti-GEN daughter-GEN-DET-FOC

“The boundary of the north (is) the (land) of the daughter of Irti.”

The presence of two northern borders to the three plots is puzzling. A solution would be to assume that Timakkis is the daughter of Irti, and (19) therefore a repetition of (16).

The expression (17) “(plot in) millet of gold,” is a hapax. It is not clear whether the specification ΓΑΠῆ “of gold” refers to the color, variety, or quality of the millet, or suggests a concrete monetary value. All other attestations of ΕΙΜΛ- are without further qualification of the type of millet referred to. Moreover, the morpheme -Ḃ between the stem and the dative is unaccounted for. Browne suggests a separate root ΕΙΜΛḂ- “plot in millet,” which seems highly tentative.<sup>15</sup>

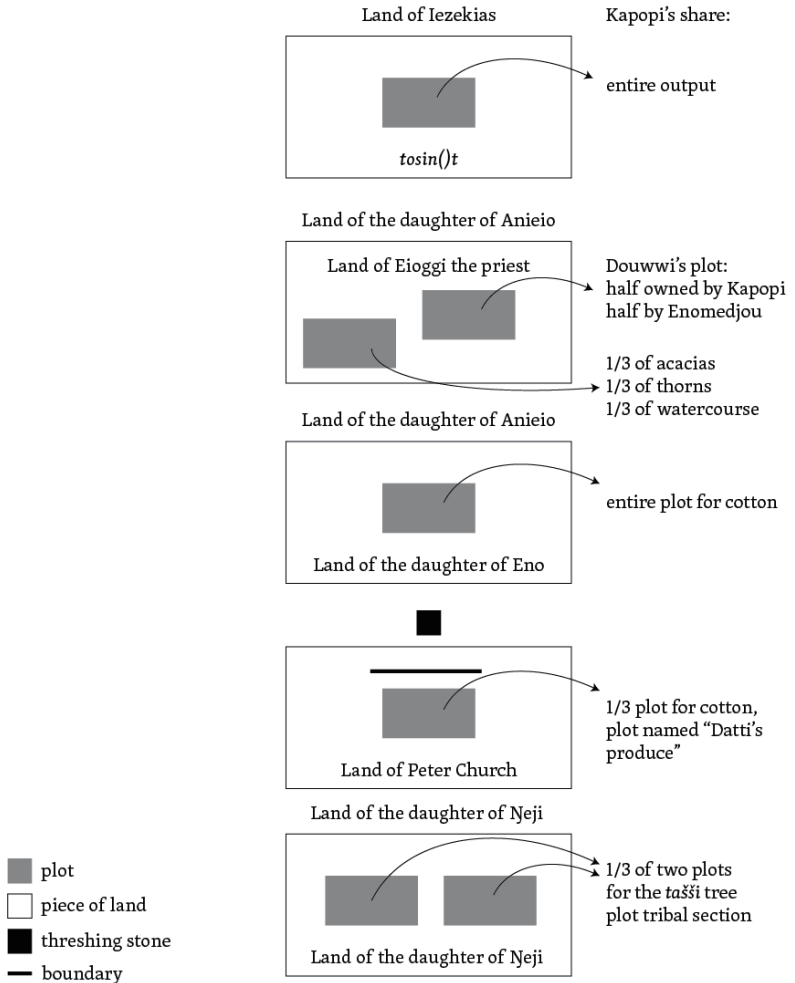
The description then moves on to what appears to be a different set of plots, located in Mosmos (Fig. 2). Mosmos is mentioned earlier in the sale, in a list of witnesses. One of them is called i.11-12 ΕΠΤΑΕΙΡΙ

<sup>15</sup> BROWNE, *Old Nubian Dictionary*, p. 69.

Fig. 2. The plots in Mosmos. Drawing by the author.



### MOSMOS EAST



ΜΟΣΜΟΣ ΓΟΥΨΑ ΕΙΝῆ “Eptaëiri, the gouš of Mosmos.” The same place name is also attested elsewhere in the Qašr Ibrīm documents: The scribe of land sale P.QI 3 32, David, is from Mosmos. Mosmos also appears to have had several churches. P.QI 3 38 mentions a Stauros Church, P.QI 4 78 and P.QI 4 79 a Raphael Church, and P.QI 3 40, P.QI 4 78, and P.QI 4 79 a Church of the Twenty-Four Elders.<sup>16</sup>

Here, Kapopi doesn’t own the plots themselves, but rather (parts of) what they produce.

ΜΟΣΜΟΣ· ΜΑΘΤΟ ΤΟΣῆ· ΤῬΛΟ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΜΑΛΛΕΛΟ ὄΡΩΔΕ ΙΕΖΕΚΙΑΣΙΝῬΛΛΟ·

(20)

P.QI 3 36.i.22

*mosmos mathto tosin* [t-il-lo *parre pi-l*  
 Mosmos east *tosin* [t-DET-LOC plot grow-PRS.DET  
*malle-lo orō-de iezekias-in-il-lo*  
 everything-FOC south-ADE Iezekias-GEN-DET-FOC

“Mosmos: everything that the plot in the eastern *tosin* [t] grows;  
 south (is) the (land) of Iezekias.”

The meaning of ΤΟΣῆ· Τ is obscure. The word is partially damaged, and no cognates can be found in Nile Nubian languages. Perhaps it is related to Midob *tòsì* “far away.”

The “Iezekias” mentioned in (20) may perhaps be the same person as referenced in land sale P.QI 3 40.26 ὄΡΟΝ ΣΕΥῬῬΛΛΟ ΕΖΕΚΙΑΣΙΕΝ ΓΟΥΝῬΛΛΟ ΚΑΛΟΝ ΣΕΥῬῬΛΛΟ ΜΟΣΜΟΣῆ· ΚῬῬῬῬῬΛΛΟ· “At the boundary of the south is the (plot) of the land of Ezekias. At the boundary of the north is the (plot) of the (Church of) the 24 (Elders) of Mosmos” (see also (6)). Both land sales are about nine years apart, so this is a theoretical possibility.

Kapopi also (co-)owns produce from the land of the priest Eioggi:

ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ΕΙΟΓΓΙ ΠῆΝῬΛΛΟ· ΜΑΘΤΟ ΚΑΛΟ ὄΟΥΛΛΕΚΟΛΛΟ ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ ΞΕΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ·  
 ΚΑΝΔΙΚΟΛΟ ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ ΞΕΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ· ΠΑΣΣΚΟΛΑ ΤΟΥΣΚΙΤΙ ΞΕΛ ΑΝΝΑΛΟ·  
 ΠΑΡΡΕ ΔΟΥΨῆΤΙΝΙΛΑ ΠΑΚΚΑΤῆῬ ἈΝΝΑΛΟ· ἘΝΟΜΕΔῆΟΥῬΔΑΛ ΚΟΥΝΝΕΛΟ·  
 ὄΡΩΔΕ ἔΝΙΕΙΟΝ ΔΑΤΙΝῬΛΛΟ·

(21)

P.QI 3 36.i.22-25

*kalo-lon eioggi pr(esbuteri)-n-il-lo mathto kalo*  
 north-TOP Eioggi priest-GEN-DET-FOC east north  
*jouille-ko-l-lo touskiti wel ann-a-lo*  
 acacia-have-DET-LOC third one.DET 1SG.GEN-PRED-FOC  
*kandi-ko-lo touskiti wel ann-a-lo*  
 thorn-have-LOC third one.DET 1SG.GEN-PRED-FOC

16 See RUFFINI, *The Bishop, The Eparch, and the King*, p. 146.

*pass-ko-la* *touskiti wel*  
 dried.up.watercourse-have-DAT third one.DET  
*ann-a-lo* *parre douwwi-n-ila*  
 1SG.GEN-PRED-FOC plot Douwwi-GEN-DAT  
*pakk-att-il* *ann-a-lo* *enomedjou-dal*  
 share-NMLZ-DET 1SG.GEN-PRED-FOC Enomedjou-COM  
*koun-n-e-lo* *orō-de* *anieio-n*  
 have-PRS-1SG.PRED-FOC south-ADE Anieio-GEN  
*ast-in-il-lo*  
 daughter-GEN-DET-FOC

“As regards the north, the (land) of Eioggi the priest: in the north-east one third in what has acacias is mine, one third in what has thorns is mine, one third in what has the dried-up watercourse is mine; half in the plot of Douwwi is mine, I have it together with Enomedjou; to the south the (land) of the daughter of Anieio.”

The land of the daughter of Eno:

(22) P.QI 3 36.i.25-27  
 ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ἔΝΟΝ ΔΑΤΙΝῪΛΛΟ· ὈΚΟΚΛᾶ ΠΑΡΡΕ ΚΟΕΙΕΝ ΠΑΡΚῪΛΛΟ ΔΝΝΑ ΜΑΛΛΕΛΟ  
 ὈΡΩΔΕ ΔΝΙΕΙΟΝ ΔΑΤΙΝῪΛΛΟ·

*kalo-lon eno-n ast-in-il-lo jokos-ila parre*  
 north-TOP Eno-GEN daughter-GEN-DET-FOC cotton(?) -DAT plot  
*koeie-n park-il-lo ann-a*  
 tree-GEN cultivated.depression-DET-LOC 1SG.GEN-PRED  
*malle-lo orō-de anieio-n ast-in-il-lo*  
 everything-FOC south-ADE Anieio-GEN daughter-GEN-DET-FOC

“As regards the north, the (land) of the daughter of Eno: the plot for cotton(?) in the cultivated depression of the woods is entirely mine; to the south the (land) of the daughter of Anieio.”

The land of the Peter Church:

(23) P.QI 3 36.i.27-28  
 ΚΑΛΟΛΟΝ ΠΕΤΡῸΣΙΝῪΛΛΟ· ὈΚΟΚΛᾶ ΠΑΡΡΕ ᾶΛΟ· ΤΟΥΚΚΙΤΙ ΤῪΕΛ ΔΝΝΑΛΟ·  
 ὈΡΩΔΕ ΤΟΥΚῪΝ ΚΤΑΛΟ·

*kalo-lon petros-in-il-lo jokos-ila parre 1-lo touskiti*  
 north-TOP Petros-GEN-DET-FOC cotton(?) -DAT plot 1-FOC third  
*wel ann-a-lo orō-de touk-in kt-a-lo*  
 one.DET 1SG.PRED-FOC south-ADE strike-GEN stone-PRED-FOC

“As regards the north, the (land) of the Peter (Church): one plot for cotton(?), one third is mine; to the south is a threshing stone.”

## The land of the daughter of Njeji:

καλολον γεῶν ἄσινῶλο· παρρε κοῦ ταϋσι Δεεῖᾶ παρρε ἄλο· τοῦσκίτι  
 ἄελ ἀνναλο· ὄρεδε γεῶν ἄσινῶλο·

(24)

P.QI 3 36.i.28-29

*kalo-lon njeji-n as-in-il-lo parre koir tašši*  
 north-TOP Njeji-GEN daughter-GEN-DET-FOC plot tree *tašši*  
*de-eia parre 2-lo touskiti wel ann-a-lo*  
 tribal.section-DAT plot 2-FOC third one.DET 1SG.PRED-FOC  
*ore-de njeji-n as-in-il-lo*  
 south-ADE Njeji-GEN daughter-GEN-DET-FOC

“As regards the north (the land) of the daughter of Njeji: two plots for the *tašši* tree plot tribal section, one third is mine; to the south the (land) of the daughter of Njeji.”

The final two plot descriptions seem again to refer back to earlier ones. The description of the Peter Church plot in the north (23) gives us the name of the plot, whereas the Jesus Church previously described in (14) is only mentioned but not further specified.

καλολον πετρῶσινῶλο· παρρεν ταεσιλλον ἀτῆν πῶλλο· παρρε ἄεν  
 ὄρων σεγείᾶλ ἀφελγοῦν σιπῶλο·

(25)

P.QI 3 36.i.29-31

*kalo-lon petros-in-il-lo parre-n taŋs-il-lon*  
 north-TOP Petros-GEN-DET-FOC plot-GEN name-DET-TOP  
*datti-n pil-l-a-lo parre we-n oro-n*  
 Datti-GEN produce-PRS-PRED-FOC plot one-GEN south-GEN  
*seueid-il aŋ-el-gou-n sip-il-lo*  
 boundary-DET live-PRS-PL-GEN mud(?) -DET-FOC

“As regards the north, the (land) of the Peter (Church), the name of the plot is ‘Datti’s produce.’ The boundary of the south of one plot (is) the mud(?) of the livestock.”

καλλολον ἰῆσινῶλο·

(26)

P.QI 3 36.i.31

*kallo-lon i(ēsou)s-in-il-lo*  
 north-TOP Jesus-GEN-DET-FOC

“As regards the north, the (land) of the Jesus (Church)”

Note that there appear to be several repetitions in the plot descriptions, in which a plot or boundary is further specified. (19) appears

to be a specification of (16), giving the name of the mother of Timakis, Irti; (25) gives the epithet of the plot of land of the Peter Church described in (23), while the land of the Jesus Church described in (14) is only mentioned again in (26) but without any additional information.

The reason for these repetitions could perhaps be the way in which these land sales were written down, namely not by the owner, but by a scribe. As in other land sales, the scribe is mentioned explicitly at the end of the document, in this case ii.5-6 ΜΑΨΟΥΔΑ ΔΙΑΚ/ ΤΙΝΟΝ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΩΣΙΚΟΛ “Maššouda, deacon holding the Georgios (Church) of the West.” One can imagine a scene in which Kapopi, sitting in front of or next to Maššouda, lists her numerous properties and at three occasions remembers additional information to be added to a previous entry. The scribe repeats the entry and adds the additional information: the name of a mother, the epithet of a plot, or, in the last case, no additional information at all. Kapopi maybe wrongly thought she had something to add.

It appears that both in the case of the three main plots and the plots of land in Mosmos, their order of appearance is from upstream to downstream, or from south to north. This conforms with the etymology of ορο “south,” which is related to the word ογρ “head.” In the spatial perception of Medieval Nubia, upstream was the “front.”

The order in which the properties of Kapopi are listed is also relevant. The first three plots “for the tribal section of the east” – a waterwheel plot, a plot on the land of the Jesus Church, and one on the land of the daughter of Mouše – are fully owned by her, planted with “millet of gold” and served by two waterwheels of which she owns one third. After these three main plots, we move on to a number of plots in Mosmos in which Kapopi has a stake in the harvest or the crops, the minor parts of the sale.

The land sale features multiple ways of identifying plots by relative geographical location, ownership, and their function within the agricultural environment. First of all, the land sale seems to make a distinction between wider areas of ownership or influence, which I have here translated with “(land)” (in other land sales explicit as ρογλ) and specific παρρε “plots.” The land is always identified with the owner, who is usually mentioned in the first phrase of the plot description, and is distinguished from the owner of a piece of land bordering on the south mentioned at the end of the description.

Additionally, the land sale mentions a number of borders, which appear to be an indication of the area in which the different lands and plots are situated.

In the land sale, we can find the following identifiers of land plots.

- ▶ Identification by owner: (18) “Souērios”; (20) “Iezekias”; (21) “Eioggi the priest”; (21) “Douwwi”; (21) “Enomedjou”; (15) “Matte”; Several owners are named “the daughter of”: (13), (15?) “the daughter of Mouše”; (16) “Timakkis” = (19) “the daughter of Irti”; (21), (22) “the daughter of Anieio”; (22) “the daughter of Eno”; (24) “the daughter of Njeji”; And several properties belong to churches: (14) “the Jesus Church”; (14) “the Apostle Church”; (23), (25) “the Peter Church”;
- ▶ Identification by agricultural function: (13), (14), (15) “waterwheel plot”; (13), (14) “for the irrigation of the south”; (15) “for the irrigation of the north”; (17) “for the millet of gold”;
- ▶ Identification by geographical feature or landmark: (13) “on the western *arred*”; (13), “wadi”; (20) “the eastern *tosin* [ ]t” (22) “in the cultivated depression of the woods” (23) “threshing stone”; (25) “mud(?) of the livestock”;
- ▶ Identification by place name: (20) “Mosmos”;
- ▶ Identification by epithet: (25) “Datti’s produce”;
- ▶ Identification by beneficiaries: (12) “for the tribal section of the east”; (24) “for the *tašši* tree plot tribal section.”

As may be clear from the enumeration above, identification by owner is the most frequent. Note that the owner can be named in person or as the “daughter of,” or be a church. In case of the proper names, it is not always clear whether a man or a woman is indicated. Souērios, Iezekias, and Eioggi the priest are most probably male, whereas Enomedjou is a female name (containing *en* “mother”). Douwwi and Matte are both a hapax of unknown gender. Second most important appears to be a description of the agricultural function or geographical features of the plot.

The naming of plots was thus most prominently tied to ownership and agricultural function, rather than geographically fixed notions such as names of villages. It should also be noted that any indication of the size of the plots is absent. None of the sales include measurements that would indicate the surface area of the land that is sold.<sup>17</sup>

All forms of identification have also been attested in other land sales, except the last two – by epithet and by beneficiaries. Especially the latter raises important questions about the organization of the Medieval Nubian agricultural economy and the ways in which the produce was allotted, distributed, or sold. Perhaps the reference to “millet of gold,” destined for the “tribal section of the east” was indeed a form of payment.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. RUFFINI, *Medieval Nubia*, p. 79.

The fact that (12) ΔΙ and (24) ΔΕ, if indeed correctly connected to Midob -*tí/-dí* “tribal section,”<sup>18</sup> are otherwise only found in place names, may suggest that Nubian communities were organized around notions of kinship and tribal or clan affiliation. A similar claim is made by Ali Osman, who suggests a social integration “based upon lineages which are organized into territorial units known as Irki (home).” This *irki* was headed by a *dawokati*, “the elder wise man (of a lineage).”<sup>19</sup>

We find evidence that this was already in place in Medieval Nubia in another land sale from Qaṣr Ibrīm, in which Mouna from lower Ibrīm sells land to Iōjoka and Mēna. He is, however, not paid directly by the buyers, but receives the money P.QI 2 26.i.25–26 ϩΟΥΕΤΙ ΡΚἸ ΔΔΥΚΑΤΤἸ ΕΙΛΟ “in the hand of Soueti, *dawokati* of the *irki*,” or “elder of the home.” Soueti is again mentioned in the list of witnesses as P.QI 2 26.i.33–34 ϩΟΥΕΤΙ ΣΛΜἸ ΔΔΥΚΑΤΤἸΛΟ “Soueti, *dowakati* of Ibrīm.” Although it is unclear whether Ibrīm should indeed be equated here with Soueti’s *irki*, or whether it is used as a totum pro parte. We also are unable to assert whether a *di* was smaller or larger than an *irki*. However, like *irki*, the usage of *di*, if translated correctly, appears to confirm the relation between family affiliation, territoriality, and place naming.

Finally, the sale also identifies different forms of ownership:

- ▶ Ownership of (parts of) plots: (12) “Three plots for the tribal section of the east,” (13), (14), and (15); (22) “the plot for cotton(?)”; (23) “one third” of “one plot for cotton(?)”; (24) “one third” of “two plots for the de (of) the *tašši* tree plot”;
- ▶ Ownership of equipment: (17) “one third” of “two waterwheels”;
- ▶ Ownership of harvest: (20) “everything that the plot in the eastern *tosin*[ ]t grows”;
- ▶ Ownership of crops: (21) “one third in what has acacias”; (21) “one third in what has thorns”; (21) “one third in what has the dried-up watercourse”; (21) “half in the plot of Douwwi”;
- ▶ Co-ownership: (21) “I have it together with Enomedjou.”

## Conclusion

In this article, I have taken a closer look at the geographical description and place naming strategies for the different plots sold in Qaṣr Ibrīm land sale P.QI 3 36, hopefully offering a significant improve-

18 VAN GERVEN OEI & TSAKOS, “The Etymology of the Toponym ‘Pourgoundi.’”

19 OSMAN, *The Economy and Trade of Medieval Nubia*, p. 87. Osman elaborates: “The main philosophy behind the *dawokati* system is to keep the affairs of the lineage a secret from the ruling authorities as much as possible and to protect them from any official intervention” (ibid., p. 88).

ment of the interpretation of part of the text, in part by a reinterpretation of the morphemes -ϵΙΟΝ/-ΛΟΝ and -ΔΕ. The resulting analysis has showed the underlying structure of the plot descriptions, and the different ways in which the plots could be referred to in legal transactions between Nubian citizens. The way in which the document has been structured, with several repetitions, suggests us something about the way in which it was composed, namely without prior draft and dictated by Kapopi directly to the scribe Maššouda. Finally, the land sale also provides us with valuable insights into geographical identification and ownership structure in Makuritan society.

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