

**A Review of: Alain Delattre, Jitse  
Dijkstra, and Jacques van der  
Vliet (eds), *Christian Inscriptions  
from Egypt and Nubia. A  
Critical Bulletin (2013-2022).*  
*Papyrologica Bruxellensia* 43.  
Association Égyptologique Reine  
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Leuven — Paris — Bristol, CT  
2024, pp. xi + 291.**

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The critical bulletin “Christian Inscriptions from Egypt and Nubia” (hence CIEN) is the result of discussions among its editors during the 27th International Congress on Papyrology held at the University of Warsaw in August 2013. They realized that there is a desideratum for an epigraphical bulletin offering an annual overview of inscriptions in Coptic and Greek from Christian Egypt, on the one hand filling the gap that existed for the Coptic material since the Greek inscriptions are being presented in the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* and the *Bulletin Épigraphique*, and on the other hand recognizing the interdependence of the Coptic and Greek languages in the Christian milieus of ancient and medieval Egypt, as well as in Christian Nubia.

The editors admit the problematic character of the term “Christian” and include in CIEN both inscriptions whose “Christian” character is not apparent — but which nevertheless come from the same milieus like clearly Christian inscriptions — and *occasionally*

cover other languages that are used in these milieus, like Arabic and Syriac. In the context of the Nubiological journal *Dotawo*, it is important to underline that CIEN not only covers Nubian inscriptions in Coptic and Greek, but also inscriptions in Old Nubian — albeit again only occasionally. This occasional character, however, does not do justice to the role that Old Nubian played in Christian Nubia, since this Nilo-Saharan language was the mother tongue of the indigenous population and used in the Christian kingdoms of medieval Nubia across the literary genres and types of texts. Conversely, the editors have not missed any publications relevant for CIEN, although material from the journal *Dotawo*, like Richard Holton Pierce, “Nubian Toponyms in Medieval Nubian Sources”, *Dotawo* 4 (2017), pp. 35-55, are not included in the volume at hand. While abolishing the frontiers separating Coptic and Greek is indeed a successful decision, the occasional presentation of the material in other languages, be that Old Nubian, Arabic or Syriac, remains problematic.

Nevertheless, the exhaustiveness of CIEN is impressive, just like the erudition with which the editors comment and, if need be, amend the published inscriptions. CIEN covers almost all the material published between 2013, year of the first installment published in the *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, and until 2022, when the editors decided to assemble the first ten installments in a single volume published by Peeters. This decision has caused some changes to the style of the first three volumes of the CIEN in *BASP*, which were not published by Peeters. The assemblage of the first decade of CIEN installments is thus offered to the interested readers “with all material in one place and presented in a uniform manner” and where “indices and concordances can be added that make it easier for researchers to find specific information” (p. ix).

For Nubiologists, what is surprising in this overview material is that the commonest manner to refer to medieval Nubian texts, namely by the numbers given in the Database for Medieval Nubian Texts (DBMNT) is not used in CIEN. Moreover, the efforts to create similar bulletins like CIEN for the Nubian world are not highlighted, especially the “Berichtungsliste” by Ochała and Ruffini that in fact follows the DBMNT numbers, something that — strangely — “appears to be arbitrary” for the editors of CIEN (p. 47). Given that they explicitly state in the introduction that CIEN is a critical bulletin and not a *Literaturübersicht* (or *Berichtungsliste*, one may add?), and this can therefore explain their critical distance to the Nubian *Berichtungsliste*, it will be interesting to see how the series of articles titled “*Epigraphica Nubica*” and penned by Łajtar and Ochała in the *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* (since?) 2023 will be

treated in the coming volumes of CIEN, i.e. whether they will be considered another *Berichtungsliste* or whether they will be seen as a critical bulletin — like CIEN — and therefore a discussion should be opened as to the relation between CIEN and *Epigraphica Nubica*. Actually, this publication is not included in the eleventh installment of CIEN dating from 2023 and already published,<sup>1</sup> but this is not uncommon since often the editors of CIEN had not been alerted or seen a publication before closing an installment and therefore the presentation had to wait the next installment.

One more critical point from a Nubiological standpoint should be added concerning the way Nubian epigraphy is being treated in CIEN. It concerns the orthography of toponyms and personal names, where the choices of the editors are often surprising. Among the toponyms, we glean Khartum for Khartoum, Makouria for Makuria, Noubadia for Nobadia; and among the personal names, the variants for “Kolouthos”, “Kolothos” or “Colluthus” (the last one, not indexed). All these could cause hindrances in retrieving the information one is searching for on the basis of the more often used orthographies. Finally, at least in one instance — again from a Nubiological study — the name of the author has been misspelled, i.e. Hafnaas for Hafsaas (*passim*). How can these points be amended in the future?

A solution to the challenges faced by the editors of CIEN — like the need for constant updates, corrigenda, and overviews of the material assembled through indices — could be resolved if the bulletin was (also) appearing in digital form. Such a choice would have moreover improved the interested public’s accessibility to the labors of Delattre, Dijkstra, and Van der Vliet, which are now separated from the less privileged researchers by the barrier of the 80 euros price tag that Peeters has set to the book at hand. Perhaps this volume is indeed only addressed to libraries and those old-school bibliophiles that prefer the printed book form to that of the searchable and scrollable pdf. The present reviewer would have opted for both alternatives but is glad to be able to consult his own copy figuring centrally among the other works on Christian epigraphy (and papyrology) from Christian Nubia and Egypt.

1 [https://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=issue&journal\\_code=BASP&issue=0&vol=61](https://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=issue&journal_code=BASP&issue=0&vol=61) (accessed May 2025).

