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For Sale: Geography in Old Nubian Land Sales

Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei

Introduction

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

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).²

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 -ⲉⲓⲟⲛ and adessive -ⲉⲓ. 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 Lajtar & Ruffini, “Qasr Ibrim’s Last Land Sale, AD 1463 (LE 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 & Wojchiechowski, “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 PQI 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) PQI 332.15-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>oro-n</th>
<th>seud-il</th>
<th>pasi-n</th>
<th>parre-lo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>south-gen</td>
<td>boundary-det</td>
<td>Pasi-gen</td>
<td>plot.pred-loc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalo-n</td>
<td>seud-il</td>
<td>koussan-n-il-lo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>north-gen</td>
<td>boundary-det</td>
<td>Koussan-gen-det-top</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

(2) PQI 336.1.21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>orö-n</th>
<th>seueid-il</th>
<th>souërios-n-a-lo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>south-gen</td>
<td>boundary-det</td>
<td>Souërios-gen-pred-loc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalo-n</td>
<td>seueid-il</td>
<td>irti-n as-in-il-lo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>north-gen</td>
<td>boundary-det</td>
<td>Irti-gen daughter-gen-det-loc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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; PLACT – pluractional; PRED – predicate; PROX – proximate; FRS – 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.”

\[
\text{ōro-} \text{n} \ \ \text{šeud-il} \ \ \text{anio-} \ \ \text{asti-} \text{n-a-lo} \\
\text{south-gen} \ \ \text{boundary-det} \ \ \text{Anio-gen} \ \ \text{asti-gen-pred-fo} \ \ \text{c}
\]

“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.”

\[
\text{ōro-} \text{n} \ \ \text{šeudi} \ \ \text{kollouthossi-} \text{nn-a-lo} \ \ \text{on} \\
\text{south-gen} \ \ \text{boundary} \ \ \text{Kollouthos-gen-pred-fo} \ \ \text{c}
\]

“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 -\text{lo}. 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.”
I sold one-fourth in the high cornfield(?) to Eionŋoka and Kasla. Next to the boundary of the south is the valley. At the boundary of the north are the 10 fertilized (plots).

This way of description is also maintained when several plots of land are mentioned in a single sale. First the description of the plot, then its boundaries.

“I placed four plots. One plot the rock of tios. 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.
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 -ⲇⲉ in (5) ⲣⲉⲣⲏⲇⲉ and (6) ⲥⲉⲇϣⲇⲉ. Traditionally,
this morpheme has been interpreted as the conjunction “and,” 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) ⲣⲉⲣⲏⲇⲉ and (6) ⲥⲉⲇϣⲇⲉ are mirrored by the northern boundaries marked
with the locative -ⲗⲟ: (5) ⲣⲉⲣⲏⲗⲟ and (6) ⲥⲉⲇϣⲇⲟ. Finally, we find
the alternate couple a line before: (6) ⲑⲣⲟ ⲥⲉⲇϣⲇⲟ ... Ⲝⲱⲓ ⲥⲉⲇϣⲇⲟ, both with locative -ⲗⲟ.

It is therefore my proposal to give this morpheme -ⲇⲉ a primary
meaning related to place, comparable to locative -ⲗⲟ, for which I
propose the interlinear gloss “aD e” 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 -ⲟ has been replaced, again
suggesting that the suffix -ⲇⲉ performs a similar function.

“Tamit-in piigita parre apa pan-na cyami kal-le palla tanika oiana
dehda ganeka eitih natrigoula

tamit-gen pigit-a parre apa pan-na sulmi kal-le
Tamit-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
ŋapik-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) cyami kal-le “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 cyami.5

5 The homophony between Old Nubian directive marker -ⲇⲉ and these Greek and Coptic
clitics may have suggested the extension of the usage of -ⲇⲉ 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 -ⲓⲟⲛ differs phonologically from the
The next example, however, poses significantly more interpretative problems.

(8)

\[
\text{aiou aggestotil apo-n pesi-n ē maššouda}
\]

1sg Aggestotil my.father-gen Pesi-gen son Maššouda

\[
\text{kheiakiššik-ka}
\]

choiak.eikšil-acc

\[
\text{parre an-nou apo-lo-ko seu-eis-i ein}
\]

plot 1sg-gen my.father-loc-from inherit-pst2-1sg dem.prox

\[
\text{ŋal-lo jō-o-l-ka aggešouda-ni-lo}
\]

side-loc go-pst1-det-acc Aggešouda-gen-loc

\[
\text{pel-in silimē-ka or-re}
\]

produce-prs.2/3sg Ibrim-acc south-aDe

\[
\text{pik-ko-n silmi kal-le}
\]

produce-perf-prs.2/3sg Ibrim north-aDe

\[
\text{pik-ko-s-in jan-a}
\]

produce-perf-pst2-2/3sg exchange-pred

\[
\text{tij-j-is-e-lo}
\]

give>2/3-plact-pst2-1sg.pred-loc

“I, Aggestotil, sold to choiak-eikšil Maššouda (and the (?)) son of Pesi, 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) ꜝꜝ and ꜝꜝ. Considering the previous example, it would make sense to interpret these as the same verb as (7) ꜝꜝ. Gerald Browne consistently treats these as forms of the verb ꜝꜝ “to be, lie, remain,” but this verb cannot take an object. Moreover, it appears that the verb conjunction ꜝꜝ, the conjunction ꜝꜝ differs from the adessive marker ꜝꜝ; 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 ꜝꜝ- ꜝꜝ on the last member of a conjunction. Etymologically, ꜝꜝ means “limit” or “border,” so originally the coordinated sequence ꜝꜝ ꜝꜝ ꜝꜝ 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 ςιⲟⲛⲕα is perhaps the labile verb ⲥⲉⲓ “to grow, produce,” which also allows us to interpret the following description:

Mosmos  east  tosin[]t-det-loc plot  grow-prs.det
malle-lo  south-aD  iezekias-gen-foc
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 Ⲫⲫⲓ(ⲗ) 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:

Parre  tan-ni  tino-k-on  west-aC  east-aCjug conj  produce-prs-preD
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.6 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,7 and Anenikoli. Ruffini pays considerable attention to the document,

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. 8

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. 9 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, 10 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.

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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 alt>nubischen Texten aus Qasr Ibrim,” p. 16.
10 Browne, Old Nubian Texts from Qaṣr Ibrim III, pp. 50–53.
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 -ⲉⲓⲟⲛ (often -ⲗⲟⲛ), which is present from the second description onward. In literary texts, -ⲉⲓⲟⲛ always follows the first constituent of the sentence, 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 -ⲉⲓⲟⲛ/-ⲗⲟⲛ, namely (12) <ⲙⲁⲑⲧⲟⲛ ⲇⲓⲉⲓⲁ̄ ⲡⲁⲣⲣⲉ ⲅ̅ⲗⲟ· followed directly by (13) ⲧⲓⲛⲟ ⲁⲣⲣⲉⲇⲇⲟ ⲡⲁⲣⲣⲉ ⲝⲕⲗⲉ ⲁ̅ⲗⲟ·, and (20) ⲙⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ· followed directly by (20) ⲙⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ· ⲙⲁⲗⲗⲉⲗⲟ. As a topic marker, -ⲉⲓⲟⲛ/-ⲗⲟⲛ marks background information and is therefore not expected at the beginning of a new section. Therefore, we would like to suggest that (13) ⲧⲓⲛⲟ ⲁⲣⲣⲉⲇⲇⲟ ⲝⲕⲗⲉ ⲁ̅ⲗⲟ· and (20) ⲙⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ· are not marked by -ⲉⲓⲟⲛ because they are “section headers,” indicating a broad division into two sets of plots, whereas (13) ⲧⲓⲛⲟ ⲁⲣⲣⲉⲇⲇⲟ ⲝⲕⲗⲉ ⲁ̅ⲗⲟ· and (20) ⲙⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ·

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.
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.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{<Hao>ton \ awia \ parre \ glo'} \\
nmatho-n \ di-eia \ parre \ 3-lo \\
east-gen \ tribal.section-dat \ plot \ 3-loc
\end{align*}
\]

“Three plots for the tribal section of the east.”\(^{12}\)

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).

\[
\begin{align*}
tino \ appe \ parre \ oskale \ glo' \ orawi \ agtoyrela \ ouyti \ glo' \ orwae \\
\text{hoymen \ actinillo'}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
tino \ arred-do \ parre \ oskale \ 1-lo \ oro-n \ aggoure-la \\
\text{west \ arred-supe \ plot \ waterwheel \ 1-foc \ south-gen \ lupine-dat} \\
ouati \ 3-lo \ oro-de \ mouse-n \ asti-n-il-lo \\
wadi \ 3-foc \ south-ade \ Mouše-gen \ daughter-gen-det-foc
\end{align*}
\]

“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.”\(^{13}\)

The meaning of \(\text{appe(\(\lambda\))}\) is obscure. The word is a hapax. Browne connects it with \(\text{aro} \ “\text{rain}” \ and \(\text{aro} \text{yett} \ “\text{irrigation},” \ but this is a questionable etymology. Perhaps it should be analyzed as \(\text{appe-\(\lambda\)-lo} \ “on the wave,” but it is unclear what a “western wave” would mean in this context. The meaning of \(\text{agtoyrpe}\) is less obscure. It only appears

\(^{12}\) For the meaning of \(\lambda\) and \(\lambda\) in (24) see Van Gerven Oei & Tsakos, “The Etymology of the Toponym ‘Pourgoundi’.”

\(^{13}\) Adam Łajtar suggests that \(\text{asti}\) could also be interpreted as the title \(\text{asti}\). 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.
in this text, in Browne’s translation as “lupine,” based on cognates in Andaandi angále and Mattokki angalê, both meaning “lupine.”

The land of the Jesus Church:

(14) καλολόν ἡςους-ιν-ιλο ὦρο-ν ἀγγουρε-λα παρρε ὕσκαλε ἀλο- ὦρουδε
Ἀποστολοσινάλλο

kalo-lon i(ēsou)s-in-il-lo orō-n aggoure-la parre
north-top Jesus-gen-det-foC south-gen lupine-dat plot
oskale 1-lo orō-de apostolos-in-il-lo
waterwheel 1-foC south-ade apostle-gen-det-foC

“As regards the north (the land) of the Jesus (Church): one water-wheel plot for the lupine (plot) of the south; to the south the (land) of the Apostle (Church).”

The land of the daughter (of Mouše):

(15) καλολόν αστι-ν-ιλο καλον ἀγγουρε-λα παρρε ὕσκαλε ἀλο- ὦρουδε
Ματτηνάλλο

kalo-lon asti-n-il-lo kalo-n aggoure-la parre
north-top daughter-gen-det-foC north-gen lupine-dat plot
oskale 1-lo orō-de matte-n-il-lo
waterwheel 1-foC south-ade Matte-gen-det-foC

“As regards the north, the (land) of the daughter (of Mouše): one water-wheel plot for the lupine (plot) of the north; to the south the (land) of Matte.”

The description then shifts to several boundaries. Perhaps these are the general boundaries of the three main plots described above. Syntactically, this may be indicated by the absence of topic marker -ειον/-λον at the beginning of (16). This implies we are not dealing with the description of a new plot. Furthermore, the “two water-wheels” mentioned in (17) perhaps serve the three different water-wheel plots described above.14 This would mean that all three plots were linked through irrigation canals. The boundaries in question could therefore refer to the borders of the land that contains Kapopi’s waterwheel plots “for the tribal section of the east” served by two waterwheels of which she owns a third. Again from (17) we could infer that these three plots contained “millet of gold.”

14 As Ruffini, Medieval Nubia, p. 80 suggests: “[T]he Qasr Ibrim land sales treat plots just large enough to be served by a single saqiya (waterwheel) or larger plots built up from such component units.”
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 Ⲟⲁⲡⲛ “of gold” refers to the color, variety, or quality of the millet, or suggests a concrete monetary value. All other attestations of ⲉⲓⲙⲁ- are without further qualification of the type of millet referred to. Moreover, the morpheme -ⲃ between the stem and the dative is unaccounted for. Browne suggests a separate root ⲉⲃⲧⲧ- “plot in millet,” which seems highly tentative. 15

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 ⲡⲧⲁⲉⲣⲓ 15 Browne, Old Nubian Dictionary, p. 69.
Fig. 2. The plots in Mosmos. Drawing by the author.

MOSMOS EAST

- **Land of Iezekias**
  - *tosin()t*
  - **Kapopi’s share:**
    - entire output

- **Land of the daughter of Anieio**
  - **Land of Eioggi the priest**
    - **Douwwi’s plot:**
      - half owned by Kapopi
      - half by Enomedjou
    - 1/3 of acacias
    - 1/3 of thorns
    - 1/3 of watercourse
  - **Land of the daughter of Anieio**
    - **entire plot for cotton**

- **Land of the daughter of Eno**

- **Land of Peter Church**
  - **1/3 plot for cotton, plot named “Datti’s produce”**

- **Land of the daughter of Neji**
  - **1/3 of two plots for the taαi tree, plot tribal section**

- **Legend:**
  - grey: plot
  - white: piece of land
  - black: threshing stone
  - black line: boundary
“Eptaeiri, the gour of Mosmos.” The same place name is also attested elsewhere in the Qaṣr 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. 16

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

Mosmos east tosin[ ]t grow-prs.Det
malle-lo south ade Iezekias-gen-det-loc

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

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:

kalo-lon    eno-n    ast-in-il-lo           jokos-ila      parre
north-top   Eno-gen  daughter-gen-det-foC  cotton(?)-D at  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:

kalo-lon petros-in-il-lo     jokos-ila    parre 1-lo touskiti
north-top  Petros-gen-det-foC  cotton(?)-D at  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 or Ṅeji:

\[
\text{kalo-lon gebin ásinllo' parre koi \( t\)ašši parre \( b\)lo' touškiti} \\
\text{fe\( n\) annalo' ṥrēde gebin ásinllo'}
\]

\[
\text{kalo-lon Ṇeji-n as-in-il-lo} \\
\text{parre koi \( t\)ašši north-top} \\
\text{Ṇeji-gen daughter-gen-det-fo}\text{c plot tree \( t\)ašši de-eia} \\
\text{parre 2-lo touškiti wel ann-a-lo tribal-section-dat plot 2-fo}\text{c third one.det 1sg.prec-det-fo}\text{c} \\
\text{ore-de Ṇeji-n as-in-il-lo south-ade} \\
\text{Ṇeji-gen daughter-gen-det-fo}\text{c}
\]

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

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.

\[
\text{kalo-lon petrośinllo' parren tāçasilloon datti pāllalo' parre \( t\)en} \\
\text{őri\( n\) segeļ\( d\) kfellgoŋi sip\( l\)lo'}
\]

\[
\text{kalo-lon petros-in-il-lo parre-n tāns-il-lon} \\
\text{north-top Petros-gen-det-fo}\text{c plot-gen name-det-top} \\
\text{datti-n pil-l-a-lo parre we-n oro-n} \\
\text{Datti-gen produce-prs-det-fo}\text{c plot one-gen south-gen} \\
\text{seueid-il aň-\( el\)-gou-n sip-il-lo} \\
\text{boundary-det live-prs-pl-gen mud(?) det-fo}\text{c}
\]

“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.”

\[
\text{kallo-lon i(ēsou)s-in-il-lo} \\
\text{north-top Jesus-gen-det-fo}\text{c}
\]

“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 Timak-kis, 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 Ἱωάννης Καβάρος Ἱερέας τοῦ Ἱουνίου “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 ὀρό “south,” which is related to the word ὀρός “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 ὀρός) and specific παρεῖα “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 Moušè”; (16) “Timakkis” = (19) “the daughter of Irti”; (21), (22) “the daughter of Anieio”; (22) “the daughter of Eno”; (24) “the daughter of Njei”; 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.¹⁷

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.

¹⁷ Cf. Ruffini, Medieval Nubia, p. 79.
The fact that (12) ρι and (24) ρε, if indeed correctly connected to Midob -tif/-di “tribal section,” 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).”

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 Iōŋoka and Mēna. He is, however, not paid directly by the buyers, but receives the money P.QI 2 26.i.25–26 σωτῆς ἀγαθῶν ἐκ τῆς ἑαυτῆς “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 σωτῆς τὸ τῆς ἑαυτῆς ἐκ τῆς ἑαυτῆς “Soueti, dawokati 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-
ment of the interpretation of part of the text, in part by a reinterpre-
tation of the morphemes -ⲓⲛ/ⲝⲟⲛ and -Ⲇⲧ. The resulting anal-
ysis 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.
Bibliography

