The life of Christ in Coptic Psalms

Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF

Abstract

This article overviews a genre of psalms in the Coptic liturgy that have never been studied before. We publish here three psalms that are used in the month of Kishk and during the Coptic year. We compare the episodes of the Life of Christ treated in these texts. We make a commentary on these psalms.

Introduction

The psalms are hymns recited before the Odes and Theotokia. F. E. Lanne highlights the importance of a thematic study of the psalms, especially those addressed to Jesus Christ. In a previous study, I investigated the date and place of the composition of the Jesus Christ Psalms.

In this paper, I will study psalms that narrate Christ’s life. It is important to mention that there are psalms commemorating the seven major and the seven minor Lordly feasts. These psalms concentrate only on the event or feast commemorated.

The first psalm under discussion here is addressed to Jesus Christ; it is the psalm Batos from the yearly psalmodia and is chanted on Thursdays. The second psalm under discussion is addressed

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1 I wish to thank my colleague Lisa Agaihy for her kind help in reviewing the English language of this article.

2 In his pioneering study, Yassa ‘Abd al-Masih analyses the forms of the Psalms (1978, pp. 85-100). Lanne highlights the importance of a thematic study of the psalms; especially the psalms addressed to Jesus Christ. For this genre, see Lanne 1977, pp. 161-203; reprinted in 1997, 307-338. In a previous study (2009, pp. 237–245), I investigated the date and place of the composition of the Jesus Christ Psalms.


5 The psalm endeavours to document the main biblical occurrences from Adam to the Apocalypse.
to the “God of Israel”; it is the *psali Adam* and this psali is used as an introduction to the third Ode during the month of Kiahk. A second *psali Adam* (the third psali under discussion here) provides the reader with a list of all the miracles Jesus performed, as documented in the four gospels.

Remarks on the Rite of Kiahk

Interestingly, the first two psalms mentioned above are dedicated for the month of Kiahk (Advent fast), the month which generally commemorates the Virgin Mary and precedes the Feast of the Nativity. However, in a previous article, we demonstrated how the Ode that is chanted during Kiahk is in fact a yearly Ode. There is another hymn for the month of Kiahk that praises the Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace. This hymn contains some stanzas in Greek, while others are in Bohairic and Sahidic. This hymn occurs rarely in the manuscripts of the Psalmodia. It seems that it was introduced from the Upper Egyptian rite. The oldest manuscript, to my knowledge, is from the White Monastery and is now preserved in the library of Leiden University, Ms Insinger No 32. The first stanza of this hymn is mentioned in fol. 66 and is chanted on the second Saturday of Lent, and the second stanza is in fol. 67 and is chanted on the Tuesday of the fourth week of Lent.

It may be assumed, therefore, that the actual rite of the psalmodia of Kiahk consists of earlier rites and hence our two psalms seem to be taken from a rite of another occasion. We shall compare the two texts narrating the life of Christ in the below tabulation, whilst the psali detailing the miracles will be dealt with separately after that.

Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday Batos Psali¹⁰</th>
<th>Psali Adam for the third Ode of Kiahk¹¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>λοιπον γαρ ο εμεροφατομενουν ι εβολα ξακον ηνηνουσιν νημις επιδε σιν</td>
<td>ὀμνημον ἵντο τι προ το τον ἁγιασμον καθαρα πενήνυτ τι ἀνανιστατος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Once more my beloved, let us reject the evil desire of our hearts that lead us to sin.</em></td>
<td><em>I thank you, God of Israel, for You did with us according to Your great mercy.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁰ Ishaq 1991b, p. 61.
¹³ Labib 1908, pp. 65–66.
¹⁵ For an overview of the liturgy of Upper Egypt, see Zanetti 2008, pp. 201–210.
¹⁶ Pleyte and Boeser 1897, p. 338.
¹⁷ Tukhi 1764, pp. 106–108; Mina al-Baramusi 1908, pp. 207–209.
¹⁹ Heb. 12:1.
²⁰ James 1:14.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday Batos Psali</th>
<th>Psali Adam for the third Ode of Kiahk</th>
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</table>
| ινθενομον ηπιαν  
'ην ουχαι 'ντε πενδο 
ινε παζ ραοι 
ενθελομον ηπιαν 
ενωσ εβοι ενωσ  
'ηνομ | And to praise without  
cessing the name of  
Salvation [that is] of our  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
proclaiming and saying:  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε 
ακουορπ 
'ηνεκυρπ χα 
'ντεκςωτ' ημον |
| xe παδε ηνε πα 
πιμιε εβολεκ 
φιατ ηακωου 
'ηνεκυρν ρπο 
'ην κατα πεκιν 
'ηναϊ 16 | "Oh my Lord Jesus Christ  
who is born of the Father  
before all ages, have mercy  
on us according to Your  
great mercy  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε 
ακιερα εβοι 
ενεκυρπ χα 
'ημον |
| παδε ηνε πα 
φηεταζαες ρη 
βολεξει ην 
τουαελ ζωτ' ημον 
ογο λαι ναλ | My Lord Jesus Christ, who  
was born of the Virgin in  
Bethlehem of Judea, save  
us and have mercy upon  
us  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε ηα 
'ημενεκσωυη 19 |
| παδε ηνε πα 
φηεταζαες ρη 
βολεξει ην 
τουαελ ζωτ' ημον 
ογο λαι ναλ | My Lord Jesus Christ, who  
was born of the Virgin in  
Bethlehem of Judea, save  
us and have mercy upon  
us  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε ηα 
'ημενεκσωυη 19 |
| παδε ηνε πα 
φηεταζαες ερ 
βολεξει ην 
πιρακιε 
εκ'ετογα 
'ηνεκυρν εβολε 
πιρακιε ην 
'ηνοβι 19 | My Lord Jesus Christ, who  
was baptised in the Jordan,  
purify our souls from the  
defilement of sin  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε ηα 
'ημενεκσωυη 19 |
| ι ιν | I thank you, God of Israel,  
for You sent Your Son  
until You save us  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε ηα 
'ημον |
| ι ιν | I thank you, God of Israel,  
for You were incarnated  
of Saint Mary  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε ηα 
'ημον |
| ι ιν | I thank you, God of Israel,  
for the shepherds saw Your  
glory  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε ηα 
'ημον |
| ι ιν | I thank you, God of Israel,  
for You showed us Your  
beauty  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε ηα 
'ημον |
| ι ιν | I thank you, God of Israel,  
for You performed many  
miracles  
Πενθομον ηντοκ 
φτ' ηπιελ χε ηα 
'ημον |

18 Mt 20:31, Mk 10:48, Lk 18:39.  
19 Lk 2:8-13.  
20 Mt 1:23, Lk 1:27-34.  
21 Mt 1:36-37, Mk 1:17-18, Lk 3:21-22, Jn 1:28-34.  
22 Jn 1:7.  
23 Jn 1:7.  
24 See the following psali.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday Batos Psal</th>
<th>Psal Adam for the third Ode of Kiahk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἔχειν ζητήσειν ἑκατέρον ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγέλῳ ἐπί τῷ Κριστῷ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἀποκαθιστήσῃ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν καὶ ἐπεστρέφῃ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ἰδίαις ἐπιστάσεως.</td>
<td>I thank you, God of Israel, for the Jews conspired against You.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγέλῳ ἐπί τῷ Κριστῷ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἀποκαθιστήσῃ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν καὶ ἐπεστρέφῃ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ἰδίαις ἐπιστάσεως.</td>
<td>I thank you, God of Israel, for You were crucified upon the Cross at Golgotha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγέλῳ ἐπί τῷ Κριστῷ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἀποκαθιστήσῃ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν καὶ ἐπεστρέφῃ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ἰδίαις ἐπιστάσεως.</td>
<td>I thank you, God of Israel, for You were placed in the grave like the dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγέλῳ ἐπί τῷ Κριστῷ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἀποκαθιστήσῃ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν καὶ ἐπεστρέφῃ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ἰδίαις ἐπιστάσεως.</td>
<td>I thank you, God of Israel, for You arose from the dead on the third day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγέλῳ ἐπί τῷ Κριστῷ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἀποκαθιστήσῃ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν καὶ ἐπεστρέφῃ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ἰδίαις ἐπιστάσεως.</td>
<td>I thank you, God of Israel, for You descended by Providence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγέλῳ ἐπί τῷ Κριστῷ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἀποκαθιστήσῃ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν καὶ ἐπεστρέφῃ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ἰδίαις ἐπιστάσεως.</td>
<td>I thank you, God of Israel, for You delivered Adam and his race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγέλῳ ἐπί τῷ Κριστῷ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἀποκαθιστήσῃ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν καὶ ἐπεστρέφῃ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ἰδίαις ἐπιστάσεως.</td>
<td>I thank you, God of Israel, for You agreed with Your Apostles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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35 Mt 4:3, Lk 4:3.  
36 Mt 26:53, Mk 14:10, Lk 22:46, [Jn 11:49.  
38 Rom 16:20.  
41 1 Pt 4:6.
Thursday Batos Psali | Psali Adam for the third Ode of Kiahk
---|---
τούτοις ντότκ φτ 'Μπίελ χε ἄκωμεν εκρίνει ἐπιώι ἐνιφθοῦνι | I thank you, God of Israel, for You ascended to the heavens.

My Lord Jesus Christ, who will come in His second Appearance, treat us lovingly as we stand before Your fearful judgment

τούτοις ντότκ φτ 'Μπίελ χε ἄκωμεν εκρίνει ἐπιώι ἐνιφθοῦνι | I thank you, God of Israel, for You will come to judge the world.

τούτοις ντότκ φτ 'Μπίελ χε ἄκωμεν εκρίνει ἐπιώι ἐνιφθοῦνι | I thank you, God of Israel, grant me mercy and pardon.

τούτοις ντότκ φτ 'Μπίελ χε ἄκωμεν εκρίνει ἐπιώι ἐνιφθοῦνι | I thank you, God of Israel, I glorify Your name and we worship You according to Your great mercy.

For by Your own will and the consent of Your Father and the Holy Spirit, You came and saved us.

Commentary

The psali of Thursday may be dated to the seventh or eighth century. It is attested in the book *Lamp of Darkness*, authored by Ibn Kabar (1324). The earliest manuscripts, surviving from St Macarius and kept in Hamburg, dating to the 14th century, attest to this psali.

The second psali occurs in the manuscripts of the 17th century, and was printed for the first time by Tukhi in 1764.

Neither psali is acrostic. An acrostic psali may have 24 or 32 stanzas, while the psali for Thursday has only 12 stanzas and the psali of Kiahk has 20 stanzas. This indicates that both authors intended to stress the message, regardless of the consistency of the number of stanzas.

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31 Acts 11:11.
32 Mt 16:37, Acts 11:10.
34 Villecourt 1934, p. 228, for the authors, see Khalil 2000, pp. 629–655.
37 See above.
As we can see from the references from both the Old and New Testaments, the authors of these psalms were familiar with the Bible.

As a literary structure, both psalms start with one stanza as an introduction, and the last stanzas serve as the conclusion.

We may note that there are some episodes missing from each of the psalms. It is remarkable that the event of Pentecost is mentioned in neither psalm.

In the second psalm, while the first part of the stanza is addressed to God the Father: "I thank you, God of Israel, for You sent Your Son...", the second part is addressed to God the Son: "You saved us...".

The Greek loan words are among the most common words in Coptic liturgical texts.

There is another psali Adam for the third ode, also for the month of Kiahk, that narrates the miracles of Jesus Christ.39 This Psali is acrostic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ΑΡΙΣΘΩΤ ΗΛΙΑΝ ΠΕΝΝΗΒ: ΠΕΝ ΟΥΚΑΤ ΗΜΕΡ ΟΥΝΟΥΣ: Ω ΝΙΑΡΧΗ ΕΡΩΥΑΙ: Ω ΠΕΝΔΕ ΗΗΗ ΗΠΤΕ</td>
<td>Grant us, our Master, intelligence and mind. O holy Leader. 40 O our Lord Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΒΟΝΗΙΝ ΕΤΑΜΕΤΩΒ: ΒΕΝ ΤΕΚΧΟΜ 'ΝΝΟΥΓΡ: ΗΟΙ ΝΑΝ 'ΝΟΥΧΒΟΒ: ΒΕΝ ΟΥΜΟΘ 'ΝΝΟΥΓΡ</td>
<td>Help my weakness by Your divine power, give us calmness and divine grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΓΕ ΓΑΡ ΗΛΙ ΠΕΚΝΑΙ: ΛΑΙ ΕΒΕ ΠΕΝΕΙΩΠ: Ω ΠΙΡΕΟΥΧΑΙ: ΛΑΛΟΟΟΣ 'ΝΝΟΥΓΡ</td>
<td>For with Your mercy, You came for our salvation, O Saviour, the Word of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΛΑΥΛΙΑ ΑΕΡΗΟΕΡΟ: ΒΕΝ ΠΙΨΑΛΤΗΡΙΟΝ: ΥΕ ΠΟΥΡΟ ΟΝ ΤΕ ΦΕ: ΟΝΙΩΟΥΘΙ ΒΕΝ ΕΙΩΝ</td>
<td>David testified in the psalm: &quot;The King of Heaven is revealed in Zion.&quot;41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΕΒΕ ΠΕΣΤΕ 'ΝΝΑΛΑ ΑΠΟΙΑ ΑΘΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ: ΠΕΔΕ ΒΕΝ ΝΙΧΟΜ: ΠΙΧΟΡΙΤΟΣ</td>
<td>For the salvation of Adam, He shone in the flesh, the Lord of Hosts, the incomprehensible [One]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΖΕΟΥΟ ΑΛΗΘΟΣ: ΝΙΧΟΜ ΡΕΝ ΝΙΨΗΡΗΙ: ΕΤΑΧΙΤΟΥ ΒΕΝ ΠΙΧΟΜΟΣ: ΖΙΤΕΝ ΤΕΑΜΕΤΟΒ</td>
<td>Truly numerous are the miracles and the wonders that He did in the world through His humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΗΛΕΟΣ ΛΑΖΑΡΟΣ: ΜΕΝΕΝΕΚΑ Α ΝΕΣΟΟΥ: ΑΥΤΟΝΟΜΟΥΣ ΑΛΗΘΟΣ: ΕΒΟΛΘΕΝ ΠΙΧΑΛΥ</td>
<td>So He truly raised Lazarus from the grave after four days42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΩΑΛΛΑΣΑ ΤΙΧΟΣ: ΑΠΟΙΟΣ ΒΕΝ ΤΕΧΟΜ: ΑΔΙΣΕΙΡ ΜΠΕΘΟΝΙΚΟ: ΝΙΧΟΛ 43 ΝΤΕ ΦΙΟΝ</td>
<td>He walked on the sea by His power43 and He ceased the violence of the waves of the sea.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39 Labib 1908, pp. 484–489.
40 Meaning uncertain.
41 This is a free quotation, the meaning may refer to Ps 110:2, 132:13, 146:10.
42 Jn 10:40–41:44.
43 Read "ΝΙΧΟΛ.
44 Mt 14:25.
45 Mt 8:24.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ΙΣ ΜΙΛΕΣ &quot;ΝΗΜΙΟ: ΑΓΩΝΟΝ: ΝΗΝΕΘΑΛΝΑ:</td>
<td>Behold, [for] the one born blind, He created His eyes by His sublime power, and He placed it [the clay] so he [who was born blind] could see.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΚΕ ΣΩΠΙΡ &quot;ΝΗΣΙΟ: ΝΗΝΠΛΕΝΟΝ: ΝΗΣΟΝ ΑΓΩΝΟΝ: ΑΓΩΝΟΝ ΑΓΩΝΑ: ΝΗΜΩΛ</td>
<td>Aloe the daughter of the Canaanite woman, Christ our God healed her.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΛΟΠΟΝΝ ΝΙΟΛΕΛΚ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΟΛΕΛΚ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΟΛΕΛΚ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΟΛΕΛΚ:</td>
<td>Hence, the Holy Himself, healed both the lame and the deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΝΑΠΟΥΝΝΟΝ ΝΙΠΑΝ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΠΑΝ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΠΑΝ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΠΑΝ:</td>
<td>[He] raise[d] the son of the widow, because He was compassionate to her weeping, [that is] Jesus the Son of God.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΝΙΚΑΚΣΕΣΤ ΔΕ ΟΝ: ΝΗΝΝΟΥΝΕΝ: ΝΗΝΝΟΥΝΕΝ:</td>
<td>The lepers also He cleansed them50 and He cast out the leprosy.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΣΜΑΡΘΩΝΟΥΝ Ω ΝΗΣΟΝ: ΔΕ ΑΣΚΑΛΝΟ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΑΝΟΝ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΑΝΟΝ:</td>
<td>Blessed are You O Christ, for You healed the sorrows (concerning) the daughter of Jairus through Your goodness.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΟΥΝΟΥΝ ΗΑΚ ΦΤ: ΔΕ ΑΣΚΑΛΝΟ: ΑΣΚΑΛΝΟ: ΑΣΚΑΛΝΟ:</td>
<td>Glory be to You O God, for You are the Saviour, You had compassion on humankind and You became Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΠΙΕ ΝΑΙΚ: ΝΗΝΟΥΝ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΠΑΝ: ΝΗΝ ΝΙΠΑΝ:</td>
<td>You blessed the five loaves and the two fish, and the five thousands were satisfied.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΣΜΟΥ ΕΝΑΛΛΟΝΟΥΝ: ΝΗΝ ΝΑΤΑΡ: ΑΚΟΥΡΑ: ΑΚΟΥΡΑ:</td>
<td>[He] bless(ed) the children that came to Him, [and] they received joy according to what pleased Him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΤΙΜΗ ΠΗΒΛΙΡ: ΝΗΝΙΜΙΝ: ΝΗΝΙΜΙΝ: ΝΗΝΙΜΙΝ:</td>
<td>He gave light55 to the eyes of Timi son of Timi and He had compassion on him.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΥΠΝΗ ΓΑΡ ΛΟΠΟΝΝ: ΜΕΝ ΝΙΑΚΙ: ΝΗΝ ΡΑΑΠ:</td>
<td>For behold, with the word of His mouth [and] by His authority, He also cast out demons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΦΤ: ΝΗΝ ΝΟΟΥΝ: ΜΕΝ ΝΙΑΚΑ: ΝΗΝ ΤΑΛΛΑΛΕ:</td>
<td>The God of glory, in Cana of Galilee, revealed His glory and His authority.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΧΑΡΙΣ ΦΑΝΤΑΣΙΑ: ΝΗΝ ΣΑΦΙΠΑΡΑ:</td>
<td>Without illusion, through His wisdom, He changed the pots of water into wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΨΩΥΜΠΡ ΝΗΝΙΚΟΧΟΝΩ: ΦΙΝΗΤΟΝ ΙΚΑΘ ΝΗΝ:</td>
<td>The Saviour of the world, who is before eternity, had mercy upon His people and freed them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ω ΝΗΣΟΝ ΠΕΝΝΗΒ: ΧΟ ΝΑΝ ΝΗΝΝΟΝΙΒ: ΝΑΙ ΜΕΝ ΤΕΛΗΣΑΛΟΝ</td>
<td>O Christ our Master, forgive us our sins and have mercy upon our weakness, we [who] are poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46 It should be "You".  
47 Jn 9:12.  
48 Mt 15:22.  
49 Lk 7:12.  
50 Lk 7:14, 17:12.  
51 Mk 5:26.  
52 Lk 8:41, Mk 5:21-43.  
53 Read "ΝΑΙ ΠΕΙΛΑΤΟΣ: ΑΓΩΝΟΝ ΝΙΠΑΝ".  
54 Lk 9:33, Mt 14:17, Mk 6:38.  
55 Referring to sight.  
56 Mk 10:46.  
57 Jn 2:1.
Commentary

The psai is rhythmic. We note the change of the person and number; for example, in the second stanza we find both the first person singular and first person plural:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{\textbf{vex}
\textbf{etamexw}: } & \text{(sing.)} \\
\text{\textbf{mex}
\textbf{enhoxbo}: } & \text{(plur.)}
\end{align*} \]

Help my weakness by Your divine power, give us calmness and divine grace

The author of this psai uses Greek loan words more than the previous two psais.

In the first stanza the author confuses the fact that the loan word \textit{axh} in Greek is feminine, whereas in this psai it is used in the masculine form instead of the common word \textit{axwn}.

In the third stanza, we find a neologism \textit{peqyxa} designated for Saviour.\(^8\) This word is used to rhyme \textit{nai} with \textit{qyxa}.

In the fourth stanza, the psalm is not a direct quotation but its meaning can be found in more than one place. With the intention of keeping the rhythm, the author of this psai chose of Psalm of David because it is quite hard to find a Coptic word starting with the letter delta.

In the fifth stanza, we find the change of the person from the second person “You”—as in the previous stanzas—to the third person “He”.

The sixth stanza seems to be a misreading, it should be read thus to keep the rhythm:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{\textbf{zegw}
\textbf{aheoc}: } & \text{\textbf{mex}
\textbf{nem}
\textbf{niwhr}:} \\
\text{\textbf{etqaito}
\textbf{men}
\textbf{pikocnaoc}: } & \text{\textbf{qiten}
\textbf{teqnetxw}:}
\end{align*} \]

\textit{Truly, many are the miracles and wonders He did in the world through His might}

From the seventh stanza onwards is a list of the miracles. While according to the Gospel of John, the miracle at Cana is the first miracle and that of Lazarus is the last, it seems the authors of this psai wanted to highlight the most spectacular miracle first.

In the eighth stanza, the author mentions two miracles of Jesus in one sentence.

In the ninth stanza, it seems that the author learnt Coptic from the Mukadam,\(^9\) as he did not use the causative for \textit{aqeqnaq} \textit{eboa} but instead used \textit{aqxaq aqnaq} \textit{mboa} which is a literal translation from the Arabic colloquial idiom.

\text{خليطه ينوه}.

In the tenth stanza, we note the omission of the definite article before \textit{wepi} \textit{\ntcmi}.

The eleventh stanza does not refer to a particular miracle. We note that the independent subject pronoun is placed before the verb and another subject introduced by \textit{nxe} is placed after the verb. This is not grammatically correct.

The twelfth stanza starts with an imperative mood in order to begin with a “\textit{m}.” The subject \textit{\ntc} \textit{\ntc} \textit{\ntc} is not introduced by \textit{nxe}.

In the thirteenth stanza, the author mentions two miracles of Jesus in one sentence.

In the fourteenth stanza, the definite article before \textit{naoc} is omitted without any grammatical or even rhythmic reason. The name of Jairus occurs in the New Testament as \textit{idnoc}.

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\(^8\) Crum 1967, pp. 511-512.

The fifteenth stanza does not narrate any miracle; it is a contemplation on Christ’s incarnation.

In the sixteenth stanza, we note that the definite article is not omitted before ἐπελθεῖν. The subject for the verb εἶναι is not introduced with ἦν.

As this psali is acrostic, hence we find that the seventeenth stanza starts with an imperative mood in order to begin with a “καὶ”.

In the eighteenth stanza, the name of the blind man in the Gospel of Mark is Μηνομός. The author of our psali refers to an Arabic version. We may note that the possessive adjective is not omitted before θαλαπάτων.

The twentieth stanza, in order to respect the grammar and semantics should be read thus:

φθινον οἱ δύο: οἱ τε κρατοῦσαι: αὐλατόν ἡν πεσόντων: οἱ τε κανα ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ.

The twenty-first stanza refers to the same miracle of Cana in Galilee.

The last two stanzas serve as a conclusion to the list of miracles. Hence, the second last stanza should be read thus:

Ψαυθῷρ ἡμικοσμει: φιλητῶν ἐκέχει τι: ἄνθρωποι ἡ πέφερον: αὐξίοντο ἐν περατεῖ.

The author of the psali did not mention his name in the last stanza, being consistent with the manner of other authors such as Sarkis, Nicodemous Christodolus, Hermina and Gabriel. Instead, he used the first person plural: “we, us, our.”

Conclusion

The three psalms are unique in the Coptic liturgical corpus. They reflect a familiarity and perfect knowledge of biblical texts by their authors, which may indicate that one or more of them were among the clergy or the learned notables (Ἀρχοντος).

These psalms for a long time served as a pedagogical tool to instruct the congregation. The first two seem to have been composed when Coptic was still understood, and hence the grammatical structures are correct. Both are neither acrostic nor rhythmic. Greek loan words are rarely used and, where they are, they are among the most common in Coptic texts. This indicates that Greek had ceased to be used as a spoken language by the time of composition. It is difficult to date these psalms. Most of the liturgical works appeared at a relatively late date, as they are used more frequently than other literary texts. The psali of Thursday is attested in the manuscripts of the 14th century but the Kiahk psali is not attested before the 17th century. However, the texts should be earlier.

The third psali is a late composition. It is acrostic and follows a particular rhythm. The grammatical structure of the stanza is not correct and the meaning in many places is uncertain.

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