

The life of Christ in Coptic Psalis

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Abstract

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

Introduction

The *psalis* are hymns recited before the Odes and Theotokias.¹ F. E. Lanne highlights the importance of a thematic study of the psalis, especially those addressed to Jesus Christ. In a previous study, I investigated the date and place of the composition of the Jesus Christ Psalis.²

In this paper, I will study psalis that narrate Christ's life. It is important to mention that there are psalis commemorating the seven major and the seven minor Lordly feasts.³ These psalis concentrate only on the event or feast commemorated.

The first psali under discussion here is addressed to Jesus Christ; it is the *psali Batos*⁴ from the yearly psalmodia and is chanted on Thursdays.⁵ The second psali under discussion is addressed

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

¹ In his pioneering study, Yassa 'Abd al-Masih analyses the forms of the Psalis (1958, pp. 85–100). Lanne highlights the importance of a thematic study of the psalis; especially the psalis addressed to Jesus Christ. For this genre, see Lanne 1977, pp. 163–203; 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 Psalis.

² Youssef 2009, pp. 237–245.

³ According to Abu al-Barakat Ibn Kabar, the seven major Lordly feasts are:

1. the Annunciation
2. the Nativity
3. the Epiphany
4. Palm Sunday
5. the Resurrection
6. the Ascension
7. Pentecost

The seven minor Lordly feasts are:

1. the Lord's circumcision
2. Christ's entry into the Temple
3. the flight into Egypt
4. the miracle at Cana of Galilee
5. the Transfiguration
6. Maundy Thursday
7. the Sunday of Thomas

See Villecourt 1925, pp. 308–317. These feasts are also attested in Coptic art; see Skalova and Gabra 2003, pp. 200–207, and Skalova *et al.* 1998, pp. 101–112.

⁴ Ishaq 1991a, pp. 2320–2321.

⁵ The psali endeavours to document the main biblical occurrences from Adam to the Apocalypse.

to the "God of Israel"; it is the *psali Adam*⁶ and this psali is used as an introduction to the third Ode during the month of Kiahk.⁷ 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 psalis 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.⁸

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.⁹ This hymn occurs rarely in the manuscripts of the Psalmodia.¹⁰ It seems that it was introduced from the Upper Egyptian rite.¹¹ The oldest manuscript, to my knowledge, is from the White Monastery and is now preserved in the library of Leiden University, Ms Insinger No 32.¹² 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 psalis 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

Thursday Batos Psali ¹³		Psali Adam for the third Ode of Kiahk ¹⁴	
ΛΟΙΠΟΝ ΓΑΡ Ω ΝΑΜΕΝΡΑ† ΜΑΡΕΝΖΙΟΥ΄Ι ΕΒΟΛ ΖΑΡΟΝ ΄ΝΝΕΝΟΥΩΨ ΄ΝΖΗΤ ΕΤΖΩΟΥ ¹⁵ ΕΤΣΩΚ ΄ΜΜΟΝ ΕΒΟΥΝ ΕΦΝΟΒΙ ¹⁶	Once more my beloved, let us reject the evil desire of our hearts that lead us to sin	†ΩΕΠΖΜΟΤ ΄ΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† ΄ΜΠΙΣΛ ΧΕ ΑΚ΄ΙΡΙ ΝΕΜΑΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΚΝΙΩ† ΄ΝΝΑΙ	I thank you, God of Israel, for You did with us according to Your great mercy

⁶ Ishaq 1991b, p. 63.

⁷ Zanetti 1995, pp. 89–90.

⁸ Youssef 2007, pp. 169–203.

⁹ Labib 1908, pp. 65–66.

¹⁰ Zanetti 1995, p. 88.

¹¹ For an overview of the liturgy of Upper Egypt, see Zanetti 2008, pp. 201–210.

¹² Pleyte and Boeser 1897, p. 138.

¹³ Tukhi 1764, pp. 106–108; Mina al-Baramusi 1908, pp. 207–209.

¹⁴ Labib 1911–1922, pp. 481–484. Tukhi 1764, pp. 284–285.

¹⁵ Heb. 12:1.

¹⁶ James 1:14.

Thursday Batos Psali		Psali Adam for the third Ode of Kiahk	
<p>ἄΝΤΕΝΣΜΟΥ ΕΠΙΡΑΝ ἄΝΟΥΧΑΙ ἄΝΤΕ ΠΕΝΘῸΣ ἸΗΣ ΠΧῸΣ ἦΕΝ ΟΥΝΙΩΨ† ἄΜΜΕΤΑΘΜΟΥΝΚ ΕΝΩΨ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΝΧΩ ἄΜΜΟΣ</p>	<p>And to praise without ceasing the name of Salvation [that is] of our Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i>, proclaiming and saying:</p>	<p>†ΨΕΠΖΜΟΤ ἄΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† ἄΜΠΙῸΛ ΧΕ ΑΚΟΥΩΡΠ ἄΜΠΕΚΩΗΡΙ ΨΑ ἄΝΤΕΚΣΩ† ἄΜΜΟΝ</p>	<p>I thank you, God of Israel, for You sent Your Son until You save us</p>
<p>ΧΕ ΠΑΘῸΣ ἸΗΣ ΠΧῸΣ ΠΙΜΙΣΙ ΕΒΟΛῸΣ ἦΕΝ ΦΙΩΤ ἄΛΧΩΟΥ ἄΝΝΙΕΩΝ ΤΗΡΟΥ¹⁷ ΝΑΙ ΝΑΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΚΝΙΩΨ† ἄΝΝΑΙ¹⁸</p>	<p>“O my Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i> who is born of the Father before all <i>ages</i>, have mercy upon us <i>according to</i> Your great mercy</p>	<p>†ΨΕΠΖΜΟΤ ἄΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† ἄΜΠΙῸΛ ΧΕ ΑΚΘΙΣΑΡΞ ΕΒΟΛ ΘΗΕΘΥ ΜΑΡΙΑ</p>	<p>I thank you, God of Israel, for You were <i>incarnated</i> of Saint Mary</p>
		<p>†ΨΕΠΖΜΟΤ ἄΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† ἄΜΠΙῸΛ ΧΕ ΔΥΝΑΥ ΕΠΕΚΩΟΥ ἄΝΧΕ ΝΙΜΑΝΕΣΩΟΥ¹⁹</p>	<p>I thank you, God of Israel, for the shepherds saw Your glory</p>
<p>ΠΑΘῸΣ ἸΗΣ ΠΧῸΣ ΦΗΕΤΑΣΜΑCΦ ἦΕΝ ΒΗΘΛΕΕΜ ἄΝΤΕ †ΟΥΔΕΑ ΣΩ† ἄΜΜΟΝ ΟΥΟΖ ΝΑΙ ΝΑΝ²⁰</p>	<p>My Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i>, who was born of the <i>Virgin</i> in Bethlehem of Judea, save us and have mercy upon us.</p>		
<p>ΠΑΘῸΣ ἸΗΣ ΠΧῸΣ ΦΗΕΤΑΣΜΑCΦ ἦΕΝ ΒΗΘΛΕΕΜ ἄΝΤΕ †ΟΥΔΕΑ ΣΩ† ἄΜΜΟΝ ΟΥΟΖ ΝΑΙ ΝΑΝ²¹</p>	<p>My Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i>, who was born of the <i>Virgin</i> in Bethlehem of Judea, save us and have mercy upon us.</p>		
<p>ΠΑΘῸΣ ἸΗΣ ΠΧῸΣ ΦΗΕΤΑΦΒΙΩΜC ἦΕΝ ΠΠΙΟΡΔΑΝΗC²² ΕΚ ἄΕΤΟΥΒΟ ἄΝΝΕΝΨΥΧΗ ΕΒΟΛΖΑ ΠΩΛΕΒ ἄΝΤΕ ΦΝΟΒΙ²³</p>	<p>My Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i>, who was baptised in the Jordan, purify our <i>souls</i> from the defilement of sin</p>		
		<p>†ΨΕΠΖΜΟΤ ἄΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† ἄΜΠΙῸΛ ΧΕ ΑΚΨΑΙ ΝΑΝ ἦΕΝ ΤΕΚΜΕΤCΑΙΕ</p>	<p>I thank you, God of Israel, for You showed us Your beauty</p>
		<p>†ΨΕΠΖΜΟΤ ἄΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† ἄΜΠΙῸΛ ΧΕ ΑΚἄΙΡΙ ἄΝΖΑΝΨΦΗΡΙ ΕΥΩΨ²⁴</p>	<p>I thank you, God of Israel, for You performed many miracles</p>

¹⁷ Jn 1:1-3, 3:16, 4:9.

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 1:23, Lk 1:27-34.

²² Mt 3:11-17, Mk 1:7-11, Lk 3:21-22, Jn 1:28-34.

²³ 1 Jn 1:7.

²⁴ See the following psali.

Thursday Batos Psali		Psali Adam for the third Ode of Kiahk	
παῦς ἰη̅ς π̅ς φ̅η̅ε̅τα̅φ̅ερ̅νη̅στε̅υ̅ιν ε̅ρ̅ρη̅ ε̅χ̅ων̅ ἄ̅ν̅η̅με̅ ἄ̅νε̅ρο̅υ̅ νε̅μ̅ ρ̅με̅ ἄ̅νε̅χ̅ω̅ρ̅ ²⁵ σ̅ω̅τ̅ ἄ̅μ̅μον̅ ο̅υ̅ο̅ρ̅ ν̅αι̅ ν̅αν̅	My Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i> , who <i>fasted</i> on our behalf, forty days and forty nights, save us and have mercy upon us		
		†̅ψ̅ε̅π̅ρ̅μ̅ο̅τ̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅ο̅τ̅κ φ̅τ̅ ἄ̅μ̅π̅ι̅ς̅λ̅ χ̅ε̅ ἀ̅γ̅ε̅ρ̅σ̅ο̅β̅ν̅ι̅ ε̅ρ̅ο̅κ ἄ̅ν̅χ̅ε̅ ν̅ι̅ο̅γ̅α̅ι̅ ²⁶	I thank you, God of Israel, for the Jews conspired against You
παῦς ἰη̅ς π̅ς φ̅η̅ε̅τα̅γ̅α̅ψ̅α̅ ε̅π̅ι̅σ̅τ̅α̅γ̅ρ̅ο̅ς ²⁷ ε̅κ̅ ἑ̅ρ̅ο̅μ̅η̅ε̅μ̅ ἄ̅μ̅π̅σ̅α̅τ̅α̅ν̅α̅ς̅ σ̅α̅π̅ε̅σ̅η̅τ̅ ἄ̅ν̅ν̅ε̅ν̅β̅α̅λ̅α̅γ̅α̅ ²⁸	My Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i> , who was crucified upon the <i>Cross</i> , crush <i>Satan</i> down under our feet	†̅ψ̅ε̅π̅ρ̅μ̅ο̅τ̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅ο̅τ̅κ φ̅τ̅ ἄ̅μ̅π̅ι̅ς̅λ̅ χ̅ε̅ ἀ̅γ̅α̅ψ̅κ̅ ε̅π̅ι̅σ̅τ̅α̅γ̅ρ̅ο̅ς ἕ̅ν̅ ἰ̅γ̅ο̅λ̅θ̅ο̅α̅	I thank you, God of Israel, for You were crucified upon the <i>Cross</i> at Golgotha
παῦς ἰη̅ς π̅ς φ̅η̅ε̅τα̅γ̅α̅ψ̅α̅ ἕ̅ν̅ π̅ι̅μ̅ρ̅α̅γ̅ ²⁹ ε̅κ̅ ἑ̅ρ̅ο̅μ̅η̅ε̅μ̅ ἄ̅ν̅η̅ρ̅η̅ ἄ̅ν̅η̅η̅τ̅ε̅ν̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅σ̅ο̅υ̅ρ̅ι̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅ε̅ φ̅μ̅ο̅γ̅	My Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i> , who was placed in the grave, break in us the thorn of death	†̅ψ̅ε̅π̅ρ̅μ̅ο̅τ̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅ο̅τ̅κ φ̅τ̅ ἄ̅μ̅π̅ι̅ς̅λ̅ χ̅ε̅ ἀ̅γ̅χ̅α̅κ̅ ἕ̅ν̅ π̅ι̅μ̅ρ̅α̅γ̅ ἄ̅μ̅φ̅ρ̅η̅†̅ ἄ̅ν̅ν̅ι̅ρ̅ε̅q̅μ̅ω̅υ̅τ̅	I thank you, God of Israel, for You were placed in the grave like the dead
παῦς ἰη̅ς π̅ς φ̅η̅ε̅τα̅q̅τ̅ω̅ν̅q̅ ε̅β̅ο̅λ̅ἕ̅ν̅ ν̅η̅ε̅θ̅μ̅ω̅ο̅υ̅τ̅ ³⁰ ἀ̅q̅ψ̅ε̅να̅q̅ ε̅π̅ψ̅ω̅ι̅ ε̅ν̅ι̅φ̅η̅ο̅υ̅ι̅ ε̅κ̅ε̅τ̅ο̅υ̅ν̅ο̅σ̅τ̅ε̅ν̅ ἕ̅ν̅ τ̅ε̅κ̅χ̅ο̅μ̅	My Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i> , who rose from the dead, and ascended to the heavens; raise us with Your power	†̅ψ̅ε̅π̅ρ̅μ̅ο̅τ̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅ο̅τ̅κ φ̅τ̅ ἄ̅μ̅π̅ι̅ς̅λ̅ χ̅ε̅ μ̅ε̅ν̅ε̅ν̅c̅α̅ ἰ̅ ἄ̅ν̅ε̅ρ̅ο̅ο̅γ̅ ἀ̅κ̅τ̅ω̅ν̅κ̅ ε̅β̅ο̅λ̅ ἕ̅ν̅ ν̅η̅ε̅θ̅μ̅ω̅ο̅υ̅τ̅	I thank you, God of Israel, for You arose from the dead on the third day
		†̅ψ̅ε̅π̅ρ̅μ̅ο̅τ̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅ο̅τ̅κ φ̅τ̅ ἄ̅μ̅π̅ι̅ς̅λ̅ χ̅ε̅ ἀ̅κ̅ψ̅ε̅να̅κ̅ ε̅π̅ε̅σ̅η̅τ̅ ε̅ρ̅ο̅υ̅ν̅ ε̅†̅π̅ρ̅ο̅ν̅ι̅α̅ ³¹	I thank you, God of Israel, for You descended by <i>Providence</i>
		†̅ψ̅ε̅π̅ρ̅μ̅ο̅τ̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅ο̅τ̅κ φ̅τ̅ ἄ̅μ̅π̅ι̅ς̅λ̅ χ̅ε̅ ἀ̅κ̅ν̅ο̅ρ̅ε̅μ̅ ἄ̅να̅δ̅α̅μ̅ νε̅μ̅ π̅ε̅q̅r̅ε̅ν̅ο̅ς	I thank you, God of Israel, for You delivered Adam and his <i>race</i>
		†̅ψ̅ε̅π̅ρ̅μ̅ο̅τ̅ ἄ̅ν̅τ̅ο̅τ̅κ φ̅τ̅ ἄ̅μ̅π̅ι̅ς̅λ̅ χ̅ε̅ ἀ̅κ̅ρ̅ο̅ν̅ρ̅ε̅ν̅ ε̅τ̅ο̅τ̅ο̅υ̅ ἄ̅ν̅ν̅ε̅κα̅π̅ο̅σ̅τ̅ο̅λ̅ο̅ς	I thank you, God of Israel for You agreed with Your <i>Apostles</i>

²⁵ Mt 4:2, Lk 4:2.²⁶ Mt 26:3, Mk 14:10, Lk 22:4, [Jn 11:49.²⁷ Mt 27:35, Mk 15: 24-25, Jn 19:18.²⁸ Rom 16:20.²⁹ Mt 27:60, Mk 15:46, Lk 23:53, Jn 19:41-42.³⁰ Mt 28:6-7, Mk 16:6, Lk 24:2, [i?] Jn 20.³¹ 1 Pt 4:6.

Thursday Batos Psali		Psali Adam for the third Ode of Kiahk	
		†ΨΕΡΖΜΟΤ `ΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† `ΜΠΙCΛ ΧΕ ΑΚΩΕΝΑΚ ΕΖΡΗΙ ΕΨΩΙ ΕΝΙΦΗΟΥ ³²	I thank you, God of Israel, for You ascended to the heavens.
		†ΨΕΡΖΜΟΤ `ΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† `ΜΠΙCΛ ΧΕ ΑΚΖΕΜCΙ CΑΟΥΙΝΑΜ ΜΠΙΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ	I thank you, God of Israel, for You sat on the right of the <i>Almighty</i>
παδC ΙΗC ΠΧC ΦΗΘΗΝΟΥ ΞΕΝ ΤΕΦΜΑΖ CΝΟΥ† `ΜΠΑΡΟΥCΙΑ ³³ ΑΡΙΟΥ† `ΝΑΓΑΠΗ ΝΕΜΑΝ ΞΕΝ ΠΕΚΒΗΜΑ ΕΤΟΙ `ΝΖΟ†	My Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i> , who will come in His second <i>Appearance</i> , treat us <i>lovingly</i> as we stand before Your fearful <i>judgment</i>	†ΨΕΡΖΜΟΤ `ΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† `ΜΠΙCΛ ΧΕ ΕΚΕ† Ε†ΖΑΠ Ε†ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΗ	I thank you, God of Israel, for You will come to judge the <i>world</i>
		†ΨΕΡΖΜΟΤ `ΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† `ΜΠΙCΛ ΜΟΙ ΝΗΙ `ΝΟΥΝΑΙ ΝΕΜ ΟΥΧΩ ΕΒΟΛ	I thank you, God of Israel, grant me mercy and pardon
		†ΨΕΡΖΜΟΤ `ΝΤΟΤΚ Φ† `ΜΠΙCΛ ††ΩΟΥ `ΜΠΕΚΡΑΝ ΟΥΟΖ ΤΕΝΟΥΩΨ† `ΜΜΟΚ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΚΝΙΨ† ΝΝΑΙ	I thank you, God of Israel, I glorify Your name and we worship You <i>according</i> to Your great mercy
ΧΕ ΞΕΝ ΠΕΚΟΥΨ `ΜΜΙΝ `ΜΜΟΚ ΝΕΜ Π†ΑΜ† `ΜΠΕΚΙΩ† ΝΕΜ ΠΙΠΝΑ ΕΘΥ ΑΚ† ΟΥΟΖ ΑΚCΩ† `ΜΜΟΝ	For by Your own will and the consent of Your Father and the Holy <i>Spirit</i> , You came and saved us.		

Commentary

The psali of Thursday may be dated to the seventh or eighth century.³⁴ It is attested in the book *Lamp of Darkness*, authored by Ibn Kabar (1324).³⁵ The earliest manuscripts, surviving from St Macarius and kept in Hamburg, dating to the 14th century, attest to this psali.³⁶

The second psali occurs in the manuscripts of the 17th century,³⁷ and was printed for the first time by Tukhi in 1764.³⁸

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.

³² Acts 1:11.

³³ Mt 16:27, Acts 1:10.

³⁴ Youssef 2009, pp. 237–245.

³⁵ Villecourt 1924, p. 228; for the author, see Khalil 2000, pp. 629–655.

³⁶ Störk 1995, pp. 358, 481.

³⁷ See Störk 2002, pp. 50, 97, 115.

³⁸ See above.

As we can see from the references from both the Old and New Testaments, the authors of these psalis were familiar with the Bible.

As a literary structure, both psalis 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 psalis. It is remarkable that the event of Pentecost is mentioned in neither psali.

In the second psali, 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.

Text

ΑΡΙΣΜΟΤ ΗΑΝ ΠΕΝΝΗΒ: ΗΕΝ ΟΥΚΑΤ ΝΕΜ ΟΥΝΟΥΣ: Ω ΠΙΑΡΧΗ ΕΦΟΥΑΒ: Ω ΠΕΝΘΕ ΙΗΘ ΠΧ	Grant us, our Master, intelligence and <i>mind</i> , O holy <i>Leader</i> , ⁴⁰ O our Lord Jesus <i>Christ</i>
ΒΟΗΘΙΝ ΕΤΑΜΕΤΧΩΒ: ΗΕΝ ΤΕΧΟΜ `ΝΝΟΥΤ: ΜΟΙ ΝΑΝ `ΝΟΥΧΒΟΒ: ΝΕΜ ΟΥΖΜΟΤ `ΝΝΟΥΤ	<i>Help</i> my weakness by Your divine power, give us calm- ness and divine grace
ΓΕ ΓΑΡ ΗΕΝ ΠΕΚΝΑΙ: ΑΚ'Ι ΕΘΒΕ ΠΕΝΣΩΤ: Ω ΠΙΡΕΦΟΥΧΑΙ: `ΝΛΟΓΟC `ΝΝΟΥΤ	<i>For</i> with Your mercy, You came for our salvation, O Saviour, the <i>Word</i> of God
ΔΑΥΙΔ ΑΦΕΡΜΕΘΡΕ: ΗΕΝ ΠΙΨΑΛΤΗΡΙΟΝ: ΧΕ ΠΟΥΡΟ `ΝΤΕ ΤΦΕ: ΦΝΑΟΥΟΝΖΦ ΗΕΝ ΣΙΩΝ	David testified in the <i>psalm</i> : "The King of Heaven is revealed in Zion" ⁴¹
ΕΘΒΕ ΠΣΩΤ `ΝΑΔΑΜ: ΑΦΩΑΙ ΣΩΜΑΤΙΚΟC: ΠΘC `ΝΤΕ ΝΙΧΟΜ: ΠΙΑΧΩΡΙΤΟC	For the salvation of Adam, He shone in the <i>flesh</i> , the Lord of Hosts, the <i>incomprehensible [One]</i>
ΖΕΩΨ ΑΛΗΘΩC: ΝΙΧΟΜ ΝΕΜ ΝΙΨΦΗΡΙ: ΕΤΑΦΑΙΤΟΥ ΗΕΝ ΠΙΚΟCΜΟC: ΖΙΤΕΝ ΤΕΦΜΕΤΧΩΒ	<i>Truly</i> numerous are the miracles and the wonders that He did in the world through His humility
ΗΔΕΟC ΛΑΖΑΡΟC: ΜΕΝΕΝCΑ Δ `ΝΕΖΟΟΥ: ΑΦΤΟΥΝΟCΦ ΑΛΗΘΩC: ΕΒΟΛΗΕΝ ΠΙΜΖΑΨ	So He <i>truly</i> raised Lazarus from the grave after four days ⁴²
ΘΑΛΑCΣΑ ΖΙΧΩC: ΑΦΜΩΨΙ ΗΕΝ ΤΕΦΧΟΜ: ΑΦΖΕΡΙ `ΜΠΕΦΧΟΝC: ΝΙΧΟΛ ⁴³ `ΝΤΕ ΦΙΟΜ	He walked on the <i>sea</i> by His power ⁴⁴ and He ceased the violence of the waves of the sea. ⁴⁵

³⁹ Labib 1908, pp. 484–489.

⁴⁰ Meaning uncertain.

⁴¹ This is a free quotation, the meaning may refer to Pss 110:2, 132:13, 146:10.

⁴² Jn 10:40–11:44.

⁴³ Read `ΝΝΙΧΟΛ.

⁴⁴ Mt 14:25.

⁴⁵ Mt 8:24.

ΙC ΠΙΒΕΛΛΕ ἄΜΜΙCΙ: ΑΦΘΑΜΙΟ ἄΝΝΕΦΒΑΛ: ἕΝ ΤΕΦΧΟΜ ΕΤΒΟCΙ: ΑΦΧΑΑΦ ΑΦΝΑΥ ἄΜΒΟΛ	Behold, [for] the one born blind, He ⁴⁶ created His eyes by His sublime power, and He placed it [the clay] so he [who was born blind] could see. ⁴⁷
ΚΕ ΦΕΡΙ ἄΝΤCΖΙΜΙ: ἄΝΧΑΝΑΝΕΟC: ΠΧC ΠΕΝΝΟΥΤ: ΑΦΕΡΦΑΦΡΙ ΕΡΟC	Also the daughter of the <i>Canaanite</i> woman, <i>Christ</i> our God healed her. ⁴⁸
ΛΟΙΠΟΝ ΝΙΒΑΛΕΥ: ΝΕΜ ΝΙΚΟΥΡ ΕΥCΟΠ: ἄΝΘΟΦ ΑΦΤΑΛΒΟΥ: ἄΝΧΕ ΦΗΕΘΥ	Hence, the Holy Himself, healed both the lame and the deaf
ΜΑΤΟΥΝΟC ΠΦΗΡΙ: ἄΝΤΧΗΡΑ ἄΝCΖΙΜΙ: ΑΦΦΕΝΖΗΤ ἕΑ ΠΕCΡΙΜΙ: ΙΗC ΠΦΗΡΙ ἄΜΦΤ	[He] raise[d] the son of the <i>widow</i> , because He was compassionate to her weeping, [that is] Jesus the Son of God. ⁴⁹
ΝΙΚΑΚCΕΖΤ ΔΕ ΟΝ: ΑΦΤΟΥΒΩΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ: ΟΥΟΖ ΠΙΛΕΓΕΩΝ: ἄΝΘΟΦ ΑΦΖΙΤΦ ΕΒΟΛ	The lepers also He cleansed them ⁵⁰ and He cast out the <i>legions</i> ⁵¹
ΞCΜΑΡΦΟΥΤ Ω ΠΧC: ΧΕ ΑΚΤΑΛΒΟ ἄΜΠΑΘΟC: ΤΦΕΡΙ ἄΝΙΑΗΡΟC: ἕΝ ΤΕΚΜΕΤΧΡC	Blessed are You O Christ, for You healed the sorrows (concerning) the daughter of Jairus through Your goodness ⁵²
ΟΥΩΟΥ ΝΑΚ ΦΤ: ΧΕ ἄΝΘΟΚ ΠΙΡΕΦCΩΤ: ΑΦΦΕΝΖΗΤ ἕΑ ΝΙΡΩΜΙ: ΟΥΟΖ ΑΚΕΡΡΩΜΙ	Glory be to You O God, for You are the Saviour, You had compassion on humankind and You became Man
ΠΙΕ ἄΝΩΙΚ ἄΝΘΟΥ: ΝΕΜ ΠΙΤΕΒΤ Β: ΑΦCΜΟΥ ΕΡΩΟΥ: ΑΥCΙ ἄΝΕ ⁵³ ἄΝΦΟ	You blessed the five loaves and the two fish, and the five thousands were satisfied. ⁵⁴
CΜΟΥ ΕΝΙΑΛΦΟΥΙ: ΝΗΕΤΑΥ ἄΝΙ ΝΑΦ: ΑΥΒΙ ἄΜΠΩΛΗΛΟΥ ἄΙ: ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΤΡΑΝΑΦ	[He] bless[ed] the children that came to Him, [and] they received joy according to what pleased Him.
ΤΙΜΗ ΠΦΗΡΙ ἄΝΤΙΜΗ: ΠΙΟΥΩΙΝΙ ΑΦΤ ΝΑΦ: ἕΝ ΝΕΦΒΑΛ Β: ΑΦΦΕΝΖΗΤ ἕΑΡΟΦ	He gave light ⁵⁵ to the eyes of Timi son of Timi and He had compassion on him ⁵⁶
ΥΠΠΕ ΓΑΡ ΛΟΙΠΟΝ: ἕΝ ΠCΑΧΙ ἄΝΤΕ ΡΩΦ: ΑΦΖΙΟΥΙ ἄΝΝΙΔΕΜΩΝ: ἕΝ ΠΙΕΡΦΙΦΙ ἄΝΤΑΦ	For behold, with the word of His mouth [and] by His authority, He also cast out demons.
ΦΤ ἄΝΤΕ ΠΦΟΥ: ἕΝ ΤΚΑΝΑ ἄΝΤΕ ΤΓΑΛΙΛΕΑ: ΑΦΟΥΟΝΖΦ ἕΝ ΠΕΦΩΟΥ: ΝΕΜ ΤΕΦΕΖΟΥCΙΑ	The God of glory, in Cana of Galilee, revealed His glory and His authority ⁵⁷
ΧΩΡΙC ΦΑΝΤΑCΙΑ: ἄΝΤΕ ΖΑΝΖΥΔΡΙΑ ἄΜΜΩΟΥ: ΖΙΤΕΝ ΤΕΦCΟΦΙΑ: ΕΟΥΗΡΠ ΑΦΟΥΩΤΕΒ ἄΜΜΩΟΥ	Without illusion, through His wisdom, He changed the pots of water into wine
ΨΩΤΗΡ ἄΜΠΙΚΟCΜΟC: ΦΗΕΤΦΟΠ ΙCΧΕΝ ΖΗ: ΝΑΙ ἕΑ ΠΕΦΛΑΟC: ΑΦΑΙΤΟΥ ἄΝΡΕΜΖΕ	The Saviour of the world, who is before eternity, had mercy upon His people and freed them
Ω ΠΧC ΠΕΝΝΗΒ: ΧΩ ΝΑΝ ἄΝΝΕΝΝΟΒΙ: ΝΑΙ ἕΑ ΤΕΝΜΕΤΧΩΒ: ΑΝΟΝ ἕΑ ΝΙΖΗΚΙ	O <i>Christ</i> our Master, forgive us our sins and have mercy upon our weakness, we [who] are poor

⁴⁶ It should be "You".

⁴⁷ Jn 9:2.

⁴⁸ Mt 15:22.

⁴⁹ Lk 7:12.

⁵⁰ Lk 7:22, 17:12.

⁵¹ Mk 5:9.

⁵² Lk 8:41, Mk 5:21-43.

⁵³ Read ἄΝΧΕ ΠΙΕ.

⁵⁴ Lk 9:13, Mt 14:17. Mk 6:38.

⁵⁵ Referring to sight.

⁵⁶ Mk 10:46.

⁵⁷ Jn 2:1.

Commentary

The psali 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:

ΒΟΗΘΙΝ ΕΤΑΜΕΤΧΩΒ: (sing.) ΉΕΝ ΤΕΚΧΟΜ `ΝΝΟΥΤ:
ΜΟΙ ΝΑΝ `ΝΟΥΧΒΟΒ: (plur.) ΝΕΜ ΟΥΖΜΟΤ `ΝΝΟΥΤ

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

The author of this psali uses Greek loan words more than the previous two psalis.

In the first stanza the author confuses the fact that the loan word **ΑΡΧΗ** in Greek is feminine, whereas in this psalis it is used in the masculine form instead of the common word **ΑΡΧΩΝ**.

In the third stanza, we find a neologism **ΡΕΦΟΥΧΑΙ** designated for Saviour.⁵⁸ This word is used to rhyme **ΝΑΙ** with **ΟΥΧΑΙ**.

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 psali 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:

ΖΕΩ ΑΛΗΘΩΣ: ΝΙΧΟΜ ΝΕΜ ΝΙΩΦΗΡΙ: ΕΤΑΦΑΙΤΟΥ ΉΕΝ ΠΙΚΟΣΜΟΣ: ΖΙΤΕΝ ΤΕΦΜΕΤΧΩΡΙ	<i>Truly, many are the miracles and wonders He did in the world through His might</i>
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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 psali 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 Mukadimat,⁵⁹ as he did not use the causative for **ΑΦΘΡΕΦΝΑΥ ΕΒΟΛ** but instead used **ΑΦΧΑΦ ΑΦΝΑΥ `ΜΒΟΛ** which is a literal translation from the Arabic colloquial idiom *خليته يشوف*.

In the tenth stanza, we note the omission of the definite article before **ΩΕΡΙ `ΝΤΣΙΜΙ**.

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 **`ΝΧΕ** is placed after the verb. This is not grammatically correct.

The twelfth stanza starts with an imperative mood in order to begin with a “**Μ**.” The subject **ΙΗC ΠΩΗΡΙ `ΜΦΤ** is not introduced by **`ΝΧΕ**.

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

In the fourteenth stanza, the definite article before **ΠΑΘΟΣ** is omitted without any grammatical or even rhythmic reason. The name of Jairus occurs in the New Testament as **ΙΑΙΡΟΣ**.

⁵⁸ Crum 1967, pp. 511–512.

⁵⁹ Sidarus 2001, pp. 63–79; 2002, pp. 141–160; 2003, pp. 237–251.

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 **ΤΕΒΤ Β̄**. The subject for the verb **ϸΙ** is not introduced with **ἵΝΧΕ**.

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

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

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

ΦΤ ἵΝΤΕ ΠΩΟΥ: ΝΕΜ ΤΕΦΕΞΟΥϸΙΑ: ΑΦΟΥΟΝΖΦ ΞΕΝ ΠΕΦΩΟΥ: ΞΕΝ ΤΚΑΝΑ ἵΝΤΕ
ΓΓΑΛΙΛΕΑ.

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:

ΨΩΤΗΡ ἵΜΠΙΚΟϸΜΟϸ: ΦΗΕΤΨΟΠ ΙϸΧΕΝ ΖΗ: ΑΦΝΑΙ ΞΑ ΠΕΦΛΑΟϸ: ΑΦΑΙΤΟΥ
ἵΝΡΕΜΖΕ.

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.⁶⁰ Instead, he used the first person plural: "we, us, our."

Conclusion

The three psalis 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 (*Archons*).

These psalis 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 psalis. 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.

⁶⁰ Youssef 1998, pp. 383–402 (Sarkis); 1994, pp. 625–633 (Nicodemous); 2006, pp. 381–397 (Hermina); 2008, pp. 179–200 (Gabriel).

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