

PSALIS

The *psalis* are hymns recited before the Odes and the Theotokia. The *psalis* could be sung with the [Adam](#) tune or with the Batos tune. There are several types of *psalis*. The first and most ancient type is the *psalis* “My Lord Jesus Christ” that could date prior to the eighth century. Some of the *psalis* are acrostic, meaning that the first letter of each stanza follows the alphabet. Some of these *psalis* end with the letter “O” (omega), the last letter in the [Greek](#) alphabet, while others end with “Ti,” the last letter of the Coptic alphabet. Two Coptic *psalis* use the reverse order of the Coptic alphabet. At times, an author of a *psali* would put his name at the beginning of each stanza.

The most ancient *psalis* are anonymous, but later the authors of the *psalis* would insert their names in the last stanza. Sarkis is one of those authors of the *psalis*. He was a cantor in the Coptic Church in Jerusalem in the 14th century, where he learned Greek. He is the author of the *psali* of the three young men in the fiery furnace, as well as the [Greek](#) paraphrases that are recited [on Sunday](#) evening during the month of Kiahk. In his *psalis*, Sarkis used many [Greek](#) words, and at times, whole verses are given in Greek. In the 15th century, the **Bishop** of Assiut, Manfalut, and Abu Tig wrote a *psali* for the Sunday **Theotokia**. He borrowed several phrases from the Theotokia as well as from other *psalis*. [Nicodemus](#) is another author of *psalis* from the 18th century. He is of Upper Egyptian origin but lived in Cairo and wrote *psalis* commemorating **saints** who lived in the city.

He visited the **Monastery of al-Baramous**, where he wrote a *psali* to Apollo and Abib. Nicodemus’ style is totally Coptic, but at times he stereotypes expressions and idioms. Another monk, named Solomon the Hegomenus, from the **Monastery of the Syrians**, wrote two *psalis* in the early 19th century in honor of St. John Kame, but they are full of linguistic mistakes.

The *psalis* in the Coptic Church originated prior to the ninth century and are chanted to the present day. The earliest manuscript is from the library of the Monastery of the [Archangel](#) Michael at [Hamuli](#) preserved in the collection of Pierpont Morgan Library, dated 897 a.d. The first publication was edited by Qommos Philotaos al-Maqari, *Kitab al-absaliyat wal-Turuhat Watos wa Adam* [The Book of *Psalis* and *Turuhat* Watos and Adam], in Cairo in 1913. It contains the *psalis* for the first part of the year according to the Coptic calendar. Bishop Matteos edited a reprint of this book, adding a second part. The reader will find also several *psalis* in the Book of the **Psalmodia** of the year and the Psalmodia of Kiahk. *See also* MUSIC, COPTIC.

GAWDAT GABRA

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