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COPTIC SOCIETY, LITERATURE AND RELIGION FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO MODERN TIMES

Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of
Coptic Studies, Rome, September 17th-22th, 2012
and
Plenary Reports of the Ninth International Congress of
Coptic Studies, Cairo, September 15th-19th, 2008

Volume II

edited by

PAOLA BUZI, ALBERTO CAMPLANI and
FEDERICO CONTARDI



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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	XV
-------------------------	----

Paola BUZI, Alberto CAMPLANI, Tito ORLANDI

Introduction	XVII
------------------------	------

NINTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF COPTIC STUDIES, CAIRO, SEPTEMBER 15th-19th, 2008

PLENARY REPORTS

Theofried BAUMEISTER

Orient and Occident in Early Christian Monasticism	3
--	---

Heike BEHLMER

Research on Coptic Literature (2004-2008)	19
---	----

Nathalie BOSSON

Recent Research on Coptic Bible (2000-2008)	49
---	----

Jean-Daniel DUBOIS

Études gnostiques 2004-2008 avec un appendice sur le Manichéisme en Égypte	99
---	----

Mark SHERIDAN

Research and Publications in Egyptian Monasticism, 2004-2008	131
--	-----

Stephen J. DAVIS

History and Historiography in Coptic Studies 2004-2008	151
--	-----

Tonio Sebastian RICHTER

Recent Research in Coptic Papyrology (2004-2008)	197
--	-----

Ewa D. ZAKRZEWSKA

Coptic Linguistics 2004-2008: Synthesis and Perspectives	227
--	-----

Cäcilia FLUCK

Late Antique and Christian Art in Egypt: Progress in Research between 2004 and 2008	259
--	-----

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TENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF COPTIC STUDIES,
ROME, SEPTEMBER 17th-22nd, 2012

PART I – PLENARY REPORTS

Anne BOUD'HORS	
Adresse Présidentielle	297
Heike BEHLMER	
New Research on Coptic Literature 2008-2012	303
Andrew CRISLIP	
Shenoute Studies	335
James E. GOEHRING	
New Developments in the Study of Egyptian Monasticism 2008-2012	365
Alain DELATTRE	
Recherches récentes en papyrologie documentaire copte (2008-2012)	405
Sofía TORALLAS TOVAR	
Progress in Coptic Palaeography and Codicology (2004-2012) . . .	431
Heinzgerd BRAKMANN	
New Discoveries and Studies in the Liturgy of the Copts (2004-2012)	457
Tonio Sebastian RICHTER	
Coptic Linguistics 2008-2012.	483
Alessandro BAUSI	
Ethiopic Literary Production Related to the Christian Egyptian Culture	503
Karel C. INNEMÉE	
Archaeological Fieldwork 2008-2012	573
Gertrud J.M. VAN LOON	
Christian Art in Egypt (2008-2012)	597

PART II – PANELS

Bawit. A Monastic Community, its Structures and its Texts

Gesa SCHENKE	
Introduction	637
Gisèle HADJI-MINAGLOU	
Découvertes récentes à Baouît	639

Cédric MEURICE	
La sculpture copte: découvertes récentes à Baouît	651
Florent CALAMENT	
L'apport des nouvelles découvertes épigraphiques à Baouît (2006-2012)	659
Olivier BOUET	
La chaire de Baouît: hypothèse de restitutions à partir de modèles numériques	669
Gesa SCHENKE	
Micro- and Macro-Management Responsibilities of the Head of the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit	683
 Thebes in Late Antiquity	
Malcolm CHOAT and Jennifer CROMWELL	
Introduction	695
Richard BURCHFIELD	
“The Man of Jeme” Designations of Place and Witness Statements in Western Thebes	699
Alain DELATTRE et Guy LECUYOT	
À qui et à quoi servaient les «ermitages» des vallées sud-ouest de la montagne thébaine?	709
Esther GAREL	
Les testaments des supérieurs du Monastère de Saint-Phoibammon à Deir el-Bahari. Documents inédits.	719
Suzana HODAK	
The <i>ostraca</i> of Deir el-Bachit and the “Anatolios-Zacharias Archive”	723
Thomas BECKH	
Monks, Magicians, Archaeologists. New Results on Coptic Settlement Development in Dra‘ Abu el-Naga North, Western Thebes	739
Malcolm CHOAT	
Posidonios and the Monks of TT233 on Dra Abu el-Naga	749
Renate DEKKER	
A Relative Chronology of the <i>Topos</i> of Epiphanius: The Identification of its Leaders	755
Andrea HASZNOS	
Writings and Readings of the Monks at TT 65	769

Matthew UNDERWOOD and Heike BEHLMER

Coptic Documents from the Tomb of Mery, Theban Tomb No. 95 . . . 779

The Reconstruction and Edition of Coptic Biblical Manuscripts

Frank FEDER

Introduction 797

Siegfried G. RICHTER

The Coptic New Testament and the *Editio Critica Maior* 803

Karlheinz SCHÜSSLER

Zur ¹⁴C-Datierung der koptischen Pergamenthandschriften sa 11,
sa 615 und sa 924. 811

Nathalie BOSSON

Jonas. La version saïdique du Codex *Crosby-Schøyen Ms. 193* et les
ses liens avec la version paléo-bohairique du *Papyrus Vatican Copte 9*
des Petits Prophètes 821

Hany N. TAKLA

The Sahidic Book of *Tobit* and its Relationship to Arabic Manuscripts
Found in Egypt 839

Hans FÖRSTER

Die sahidische Überlieferung des Johannesevangeliums und ihre Bedeu-
tung für die Neutestamentliche Textkritik (FWF-Projekt P22017) . . . 847

Anne BOUD'HORS

The Gospel of Mark in Sahidic Coptic: New Insights 855

Christian ASKELAND

The Sahidic Apocalypse and its Greek *Vorlage* 865

Albertus TEN KATE

Variantes significatives des chapitres 26 et 27 de Matthieu selon le
Codex Schoeyen 877

PART III – PAPERS FROM THE THEME SECTIONS

Literature

Tito ORLANDI and Alin SUCIU

The End of the Library of the Monastery of Atripe 891

Janet TIMBIE

Meleta and Monastic Formation 919

Carolyn SCHNEIDER

- The Image of God in *On Love and Self-Control and Instruction concerning a Spiteful Monk* 929

Stephen EMMEL

- Editing Shenoute, Old Problems, New Prospects: The Date of Shenoute's Death 937

David BRAKKE

- Shenoute and the Jews. 945

Victor GHICA and Antonia ST DEMIANA

- "His Toil was not in Vain". Two Unpublished Coptic Fragments of the Encomium on Athanasius Attributed to Cyril of Alexandria (IFAO inv. 79-80) 953

Matthias MÜLLER

- Re-Editing "The Correspondence of Peter III Mongus, Patriarch of Alexandria, and Acacius, Patriarch of Constantinople" (Codex Vatican Copt. 62, ff. 62r-89r). A Preliminary Report. 969

Alberto CAMPLANI and Federico CONTARDI

- The Canons Attributed to Basil of Caesarea. A New Coptic Codex 979

Carol DOWNER

- Some Unparalleled Fragments of De Lagarde's *Catenae in Evangelia Aegyptiacae quae supersedunt* (Göttingen 1886) which may Contribute to our Knowledge of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Quaestiones ad Stephanum et ad Marinum*. 993

Mark SHERIDAN

- Pseudepigrapha and False Attribution in Coptic Sermons. 1005

Bigoul AL SURIANI

- A Copto-Arabic Text Ascribed to Rufus of Shotep. 1013

Jason R. ZABOROWSKI

- The Stylistic Sophistication of the Sahidic *Life of Samuel of Kalamōn* . 1023

Faustina DOUFIKAR-AERTS

- The Copto-Arabic or Quzman Version of the Alexander Romance and its Religious Muslim-Christian Hybridity. 1033

Myriam WISSA

- Yusab of Alexandria, Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, Al-Ma'mun of Baghdad, the Bashmurites and the Narrative of the Last Rebellion in 'Abbassid Egypt: Re-Considering Coptic and Syriac Historiography 1045

- Fatin Morris GUIRGUIS
Orality as Resistance among the Persecuted Copts 1063

- Anba MARTYROS
Ancient Manuscripts Folios Found in the Keep of al Surian Monastery
in Wadi al Natrun 1073

Hagiography

- Theofried BAUMEISTER
Der Apostel Paulus in der ägyptischen Märtyrerhagiographie . . . 1085

- Nikolaos KOUREMENOS
The Account of Seventy Idols in Coptic Hagiographical Tradition. 1095

- Paola BUZI
Re-Interpreting History: Constantine and the Constantinian Age
According to Coptic Hagiography 1117

- Anna ROGOZHINA
A ‘Tour of Hell’ in the Martyrdom of St Philoteus of Antioch . . . 1129

- Marc MALEVEZ
Essai de datation relative des différentes versions de la *Mission de Paphnuce / Vie d’Onuphre* et des Apophthegmes qui en sont à l’origine 1137

- Sami ULJAS
A Preliminary Report on the Edition Project “Martyrs and Archangels: Five Coptic Texts in the Pierpont Morgan Library” 1147

- Asuka TSUJI
Preliminary Report on Four Saints from the Mamluk Period: Ḥaḍīd, Yuḥannā al-Rabbān, Barṣaumā al-‘Uryān, and ‘Alam 1153

Gnostic Literature and Magical Texts

- Wolf B. OERTER
Schreiber oder Korrektoren? Zu den Korrekturen in den Nag-Hammadi-Schriften 1163

- Hugo LUNDHAUG
Nag Hammadi Codex VII and Monastic Manuscript Culture . . . 1177

- Zuzana VÍTKOVÁ
Adam gives Names to the Animals: Genesis 2,19-20 and the Significance of Names in Gnostic Theology 1193

Jean-Daniel DUBOIS

- La figure de Bérénice et ses sources dans la version copte des *Actes de Pilate* 1201

Anna SOFIA

- Pharmakeia*'s Scene from *PSI XI 1214* Reconsidered: Survivals in Coptic Magic. 1213

Luigi PRADA

- Oneirology versus Oneiromancy in Early Christian Egypt: Contextualising P. Duke inv. 244 (= Duke Coptic MS. 25) 1221

Korshi DOSOO

- Baktiotha: The Origin of a Magical Name in P.Macq. I 1 1237

Anna VAN DEN KERCHOVE

- De quelques énoncés barbares dans des écrits gnostiques. 1245

Liturgy

Magdalena KUHN

- Preserving Traditional Coptic Melodies outside Egypt 1259

Epiphanius ALMACARY

- The Morning Adam Doxologies According to the Manuscripts of St Macarius' Library 1267

Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF

- Doxology and Eschatology 1279

Ashraf Alexandre SADEK

- L'héritage copte des prières de l'Égypte ancienne: d'Horus à Abou Tarbou? 1289

Documentary Papyrology

María Jesús ALBARRÁN MARTÍNEZ

- The Coptic *Ostraca* of the Palau-Ribes Collection. New Perspectives and Edition 1301

Sohair S. AHMED

- Two Coptic Legal *Ostraca* 1317

Linguistics

Wolf-Peter FUNK

- The Future Conjunctives of Southern Coptic Dialects. 1325

Ariel SHISHA-HALEVY

Noun Predication in Shenoute's Rhetorical Poetics. 1333

Victor GHICA

Two Newcomers in the B5 Family: The Naqlūn *Kalandologia*. . . 1339

Chris H. REINTGES

Tense/Aspect and Polarity-Sensitive Complementizer Alternations
in Coptic Relative Clause Constructions 1349

Adel SIDARUS

Une introduction arabe médiévale à l'alphabet et à la phonologie
coptes 1361

Frank FEDER

The Integration of a Coptic Lexicon and Text Corpus into the *The-
saurus Linguae Aegyptiae*. 1375

Archaeology

Eva SUBÍAS

A Byzantine Domain in the Suburbs of Oxyrhynchos 1383

Dolors CODINA REINA

Le monde funéraire byzantin du V^e au VII^e siècles sur le site d'Oxyrhin-
chus, el-Bahnasa, Égypte 1397

Yvonne PETRINA

Late Antique Jewellery from Egypt: Workshops and Select Literary
Sources 1413

Anton VOYTENKO

Grave 249/2 at Deir el-Banat. A Typical Example of Coptic Ordinary
Burial Custom 1421

Rosanna PIRELLI and Paola BUZI

The Coptic Site of Manqabad: An Italian-Egyptian Project . . . 1433

Giuseppina CIPRIANO

Ritual Equipments in the Cemetery of el-Bagawat (Kharga Oasis):
Some Remarks 1447

Karel C. INNEMÉE

The Monastery of St. Macarius, Survey and Documentation Work
2009-2012. 1463

Amandine MÉRAT

Tell-Edfou au Musée du Louvre: Nouvelles recherches menées sur
les broderies provenant du cimetière médiéval 1479

Giacomo CAVILLIER

- The Butehamon Project. Coptic “Traces and Paths” in the Theban Necropolis 1495

Sherin Sadek EL GENDI

- L’ambon dans l’art copte 1501

Randa BALIGH

- Coptic Antiquities in the Sudan National Museum and Early Christianity in Sudan 1521

Julien AUBER DE LAPIERRE and Lorelei VANDERHEYDEN

- The “Simaika-Pacha” Association: Salvaging a Forgotten Storage Unit of the Coptic Museum, Cairo 1537

Elisabeth R. O’CONNELL

- Wadi Sarga at the British Museum: Sources for Study (with Annotated Bibliography) 1547

Art

Dominique BÉNAZETH, Anita QUILLES, Mark VAN STRYDONCK et Michel WUTTMANN

- La question des datations dans l’art et l’archéologie coptes: recherches au Musée du Louvre 1567

Emiliano RICCHI

- Aspects of Restoration Work and Studies Conducted in the Coptic Monasteries of Egypt during the Last Twenty Years 1579

Alberto SUCATO

- Late Antique Paintings at the Red Monastery: Differences between Ancient Egyptian Secco and Roman Fresco Painting Techniques . . 1589

Olga V. OSHARINA

- On a More Precise Definition and Dating of a Coptic Miniature Representing Christ. 1597

Randa BALIGH and Mostafa SHALABY

- A Comparison between Coptic Icons in Egypt and Icons of St Catherine’s in Sinai 1611

Mary KUPELIAN

- Notes on the Armenians and the Coptic Heritage 1623

Monica RENÉ

- The Renaissance of Coptic Art during the Late 20th Century in Egypt 1641

THE END OF THE LIBRARY OF THE MONASTERY OF ATRIBE

Tito ORLANDI and Alin SUCIU*

The highly complicated circumstances of the dispersal of the library of the famous Monastery of Atripe, founded by Shenoute,¹ the actual state and collocation of its scattered fragmentary codices, and the efforts to reconstruct its remains have been explained in my article *The Library of the Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe* and will not be repeated here.²

It is time to attempt to advance in the study of the original library in its structure and composition, as a collection of codices, making comparative observations derived from what is extant. One might object that it is still early for such an investigation, especially because of the great number of fragments still unpublished. I do not think this is the case: the unpublished fragments have in any case been studied by a number of scholars; the work to reconstruct the dispersed fragments of each codex has been carried on since the end of the 19th century by at least three generations of great Coptologists; the major groups of fragments belonging to one codex have been indicated, and it is hardly conceivable that many other unknown fragments may be found in the future.

So, the time seems ripe to take a step forward in order to better understand the significance of the library. Our attention shall focus on the codices surviving in a fair number of fragments, because this will also have implications for the knowledge of the last stage of the living library, which in turn may shed light on its previous life.

But what do we mean by “a fair number”? Of course this is a matter of highly subjective estimation. We begin by reckoning that the codices, of which at least 5 folios have remained in different collections, amount to 394 (I take this calculation from the database of the CMCL, which may be consulted at <http://cmcl.it>, like all other calculations which I shall propose). Amongst them, I have selected those with more than 20 remaining folios, which number 111, because I believe that they can provide more significant clues for our investigation. What will

* The first part of this article is by T. Orlandi, while the second is by A. Suciú. We should like to express our gratitude to our friend David Tibet for carefully proofing the final version of our article.

¹ I prefer to avoid the name White Monastery; the official name was in Coptic πτοογ νατριπε, therefore it is better to call it ‘the monastic complex (or settlement) of Atripe’.

² T. ORLANDI, *The Library of the Monastery of St. Shenoute of Atripe*, in A. EGBERTS, B.P. MUHS, AND J. VAN DER VLIET (eds.), *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, Leiden – Boston, 2002, p. 211-232.

follow are not statistics in the proper sense, but rather observations driven by numerical comparisons, starting from classifications based on the significance of the codices for dimensions and content. All of this is very much subjective, but useful (I believe) as the beginning of a study which has not yet been attempted. It may be added that these “total numbers” have no meaning by themselves, but only in comparison with those which we shall extract later. The sigla of the codices are those of the database of the CMCL; the abbreviation of the content should be sufficiently clear for our purpose here, and in any case is given *in extenso* in the same database.

The first table lists the codices taken into consideration:

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.ab	18	400	Pachomiana
monb.ac	54	332	Pachomiana
monb.ad	30	202	Pachomiana
monb.an	40	214	Athanasius Epp. Monast.
monb.at	37	220	Athanasius Epp. Festal.
monb.av	24	240	Shenoute
monb.ay	22	114	Homiletica
monb.ba1	118	522	Besa opp.
monb.ba2	118	522	Besa opp.
monb.bb	39	702 (start 327)	Besa opp.
monb.bd	37	190	Pachomiana
monb.be	32	246	Homiletica
monb.bm	20	220	Rufus
monb.bq	25	222	Isaia Asc.
monb.br	23	222	Isaia Asc.
monb.bs	23	360	Homiletica
monb.bv	31	316	Shenoute
monb.bz	83	352	Shenoute
monb.cf	23	276	Hist sacr.
monb.cp	30	??	Homiletica
monb.cr1	66	366	Chrysostom Hebr.
monb.cr2	66	366	Chrysostom Hebr.
monb.cy	23	242	Homiletica

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.db	28	164	Homiletica
monb.dd	30	254	Shenoute
monb.df	62	366	Shenoute
monb.dg	23	430	Shenoute
monb.dh	19	60	Evodius
monb.dl	18	100	Cyril Hierusalem
monb.dm	22	206	Acta App. apocr.
monb.dn	28	180	Acta App. apocr.
monb.do	23	202	Acta App. apocr.
monb.dq	29	296	Shenoute
monb.ds	34	280	Shenoute
monb.du	49	294	Shenoute
monb.dv	25	330	Homiletica
monb.dy	23	154	Homiletica
monb.ee	25	??	Homiletica
monb.ef	49	202	Canones
monb.eg	62	314	Apophth. Patr.
monb.el	35	144	Pleroph. Monast.
monb.ep	49	104	Conc. Ephes.
monb.eq	51	282	Victor
monb.ey	20	272	Homiletica
monb.fa	50	256	Shenoute (giov)
monb.fl	37	376	Shenoute
monb.fo	27	restart	Homiletica
monb.fy	32	210	Hist. Eccles.
monb.fz	22	126	Shenoute
monb.gb	27	156	Pleroph. monast.
monb.gc	20	108	Pleroph. Monast.
monb.gd	25	164	Cyril Hierusalem
monb.gf	55	388	Shenoute
monb.gg	37	218	Shenoute
monb.gl	29	334	Shenoute
monb.go	40	414	Shenoute

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.gp	52	298	Shenoute
monb.gs	22	192	Basil Caesar.
monb.ha	19	220	Epiphanius
monb.hb	30	306	Shenoute
monb.hd	34	342	Shenoute
monb.he1	75	150	Bible Apcl.
monb.he2	75	150	Bible Apcl.
monb.ia	27	194	Bible Gen. Sus.
monb.if	36	restart	Bible Pent.
monb.ig	32	322	Bible Pent.
monb.io	28	190	Bible Var. min.
monb.ip	48	restart	Bible Regg.
monb.ja	82	restart (143+87)	Bible Sap.
monb.jc	26	140	Bible Proph.
monb.jf	31	142	Bible Proph.
monb.ji	28	?	Lectionar
monb.jq	20	146	Bible Mt Mc
monb.jr	29	106	Bible Mt
monb.ju	34	198	Bible Mt Mc
monb.jv	53	266	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.kb	25	328	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.kl	21	188	Bible Lc Io
monb.km	22	190	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.kn	44	170	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.ko	23	210	Bible Lc Io
monb.kr	53	300	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.ks	23	284	Bible Lc Io
monb.kt	33	361	Bible Tetraevang. II part
monb.ku	28	232	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.lb	31	318	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.ll	44	713 (start 377)	Bible Tetraevang. II part
monb.ln	30	246	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.lr	57	172	Bible Tetraevang.

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.lu	27	195	Bible Epp. Pauli
monb.mb	35	238	Bible Epp. Pauli
monb.mj	21	94	Cyril Hierusalem
monb.ne	55	270	Ephrem
monb.nf	32	224	Lectionar
monb.ng	20	192	Bible Proph.
monb.nj	32	288	Bible Ps.
monb.nk	29	322	Bible Ps.
monb.nn	24	135	Bible Ps.
monb.os	22	236	Chrysostom varia
monb.ty	20	228	Shenoute
monb.vy	23	150	Chrysostom varia
monb.xc	39	268	Shenoute
monb.xf	79	278	Shenoute
monb.xh	102	376 complete	Shenoute
monb.xj	28	356	Shenoute
monb.xl	50	397	Shenoute anthol.
monb.xm	74	560	Shenoute
monb.xo	137ca	310	Shenoute
monb.xq	24	302	[Shen.] John arch.
monb.xs	28	390	Shenoute
monb.xu	38	505	Shenoute
monb.ya	29	554	Shenoute
monb.zj	21	178	Shenoute

The second table lists, in descending order, the codices preserved in more than 49 folios:

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.xo	137ca	310	Shenoute
monb.ba2	118	522	Besa opp.
monb.ba1	118	522	Besa opp.
monb.xh	102	376 compl.	Shenoute

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.bz	83	352	Shenoute
monb.ja	82	restart (143+87)	Bible Sap.
monb.xf	79	278	Shenoute
monb.he2	75	150	Bible Apcl.
monb.he1	75	150	Bible Apcl.
monb.xm	74	560	Shenoute
monb.cr2	66	366	Chrysostom Hebr.
monb.cr1	66	366	Chrysostom Hebr.
monb.eg	62	314	Apophth. Patr.
monb.df	62	366	Shenoute
monb.lr	57	172	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.ne	55	270	Ephrem
monb.gf	55	388	Shenoute
monb.ac	54	332	Pachomiana
monb.kr	53	300	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.jv	53	266	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.gp	52	298	Shenoute
monb.eq	51	282	Victor
monb.xl	50	397	Shenoute Anthol.
monb.fa	50	256	[Shen.] (John arch.)
monb.ep	49	104	Conc. Ephes.
monb.ef	49	202	Canones
monb.du	49	294	Shenoute

The third table lists, in descending order, the codices that have the last page number preserved:

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.ll	44	713 (start 377)	Bible Tetraevang. II part
monb.bb	39	702 (start 327)	Besa Opp.
monb.xm	74	560	Shenoute
monb.ya	29	554	Shenoute
monb.ba2	118	522	Besa Opp.

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.ba1	118	522	Besa Opp.
monb.xu	38	505	Shenoute
monb.dg	23	430	Shenoute
monb.go	40	414	Shenoute
monb.ab	18	400	Pachomiana
monb.xl	50	397	Shenoute Anthol.
monb.xs	28	390	Shenoute
monb.gf	55	388	Shenoute
monb.xh	102	376 compl	Shenoute
monb.fl	37	376	Shenoute
monb.df	62	366	Shenoute
monb.cr2	66	366	Chrysostom Hebr.
monb.cr1	66	366	Chrysostom Hebr.
monb.kt	33	361	Bible Tetraevang. II part
monb.bs	23	360	Homiletica
monb.xj	28	356	Shenoute
monb.bz	83	352	Shenoute
monb.hd	34	342	Shenoute
monb.gl	29	334	Shenoute
monb.ac	54	332	Pachomiana
monb.dv	25	330	Homiletica
monb.kb	25	328	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.nk	29	322	Bible Ps.
monb.ig	32	322	Bible Pent.
monb.lb	31	318	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.bv	31	316	Shenoute
monb.eg	62	314	Apophth Patr.
monb.xo	137ca	310	Shenoute
monb.hb	30	306	Shenoute
monb.xq	24	302	[Shen.] John arch.
monb.kr	53	300	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.gp	52	298	Shenoute
monb.dq	29	296	Shenoute

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.du	49	294	Shenoute
monb.nj	32	288	Bible Ps.
monb.ks	23	284	Bible Lc Io
monb.eq	51	282	Victor
monb.ds	34	280	Shenoute
monb.xf	79	278	Shenoute
monb.cf	23	276	Hist. sacr.
monb.ey	20	272	Homiletica
monb.ne	55	270	Ephrem
monb.xc	39	268	Shenoute
monb.jv	53	266	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.fa	50	256	[Shen.] John arch.
monb.dd	30	254	Shenoute
monb.ln	30	246	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.be	32	246	Homiletica
monb.cy	23	242	Homiletica
monb.av	24	240	Shenoute
monb.mb	35	238	Bible Epp. Pauli
monb.os	22	236	Chrysostom var.
monb.ku	28	232	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.ty	20	228	Shenoute
monb.nf	32	224	Lectionar
monb.br	23	222	Isaia Asc.
monb.bq	25	222	Isaia Asc.
monb.ha	19	220	Epiphanius
monb.bm	20	220	Rufus
monb.at	37	220	Athanasius Epp. Festal.
monb.gg	37	218	Shenoute
monb.an	40	214	Athanasius Epp. Monast.
monb.ko	23	210	Bible Lc Io
monb.fy	32	210	Hist. Eccles.
monb.dm	22	206	Acta App. apocr.
monb.ef	49	202	Canones

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.do	23	202	Acta App. apocr.
monb.ad	30	202	Pachomiana
monb.ju	34	198	Bible Mt Mc
monb.lu	27	195	Bible Epp. Pauli
monb.ia	27	194	Bible Gen Sus
monb.ng	20	192	Bible Proph
monb.gs	22	192	Basil Caesar.
monb.km	22	190	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.io	28	190	Bible var. min.
monb.bd	37	190	Pachomiana
monb.kl	21	188	Bible Lc Io
monb.dn	28	180	Acta app apocr
monb.zj	21	178	Shenoute
monb.lr	57	172	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.kn	44	170	Bible Tetraevang.
monb.gd	25	164	Cyril Hierusalem
monb.db	28	164	Homiletica
monb.gb	27	156	Pleroph. Monast.
monb.dy	23	154	Homiletica
monb.vy	23	150	Chrysostom var.
monb.he2	75	150	Bible Apcl
monb.he1	75	150	Bible Apcl
monb.jq	20	146	Bible Mt Mc
monb.el	35	144	Pleroph. Monast.
monb.jf	31	142	Bible Proph
monb.jc	26	140	Bible Proph
monb.nn	24	135	Bible Ps
monb.fz	22	126	Shenoute
monb.ay	22	114	Homiletica
monb.gc	20	108	Pleroph. Monast.
monb.jr	29	106	Bible Mt
monb.ep	49	104	Conc. Ephes.
monb.dl	18	100	Cyril Hierusalem

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content
monb.mj	21	94	Cyril Hierusalem
monb.dh	19	60	Evodius
monb.ji	28	?	Lectionar
monb.ja	82	restart (143+87)	Bible Sap
monb.ip	48	restart	Bible Regg
monb.if	36	restart	Bible Pent
monb.fo	27	restart	Homiletica
monb.ee	25	??	Homiletica
monb.cp	30	??	Homiletica

The fourth table lists the codices for which we have a “nucleus” (cf. below), with indication of the colophon, when it is preserved:

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content	nucleus (folios) (call number)
monb.xo	137ca	310	Shenoute	132 CF.copte.2
monb.xh	102	376	Shenoute	101 [colophon Atripe] CF.copte.1
monb.eq	51	282	Victor	91 [colophon Touton/atripe] PN.129.15.037-127
monb.ja	82	restart (143+87)	Bible Sap	78 [colophon Atripe] RV.b109cass07.024.01-78
monb.ba2	118	522	Besa Opp.	67 BL.or.08810.15-82
monb.xm	74	560	Shenoute	66 not together PN.130.1.001-088 passim
monb.he1	75	150	Bible Apcl	59 BS.oct408
monb.bz	83	352	Shenoute	54 PN.130.1.089-142
monb.lr	57	172	Bible Tetraevang.	48 PN.129.09.001-048
monb.ep	49	104	Conc Ephes.	45 PN.129.14.001-045
monb.eg	62	314	Apophth patr.	44 IB.17.19-62
monb.du	49	294	Shenoute	40 IB.04.23-62
monb.gf	55	388	Shenoute	37 IB.03.056-092
monb.kn	44	170	Bible Tetraevang.	36 PN.129.04.38-73
monb.xu	38	505	Shenoute	35 IB.07.13-21+IB.05.19-43+IB.17.04

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content	nucleus (folios) (call number)
monb.xf	79	278	Shenoute	35 IB.03.001-035
monb.fa	50	256	Shenoute(giov)	32 [colophon Atripe] BL.or08811.01-32
monb.ba1	118	522	Besa Opp.	32 IB.06.1-32
monb.ip	48	rit	Bible Regg	30 RV.B109.cass05.015.01-30
monb.xl	50	397	Shenoute Anthol.	29 not together PN.130.4.131-159
monb.cr2	66	366	Chrysostom Heb.	29 not together IB.11.081-109
monb.ne	55	270	Ephrem	27 not together ib.11.110-136
monb.jf	31	142	Bible Proph.	27 RV.B109.cass09.029.01-27
monb.ef	49	202	Canones	27 not together [colophon Erebe/Atripe] RV.B109.cass29.159.01-09+IB.10.10-27
monb.hd	34	342	Shenoute	25 IB.03.042-055+093-103
monb.an	40	214	Athanasius Epp. Monast	24 PN.131.2.090-113 (e cf. altri PN)
monb.ya	29	554	Shenoute	23 IB.17.63-75+IB.02.26-36
monb.gp	52	298	Shenoute	23 PL.e10612.01-23
monb.ee	25	??	Homiletica	22 RV.B109.cass27.145.01-22
monb.xj	28	356	Shenoute	21 IB.05.44-64
monb.kt	33	361	Bible Tetraevang II part	21 not together [biling; cf II] RV.B109.cass18.065.01-21
monb.fl	37	376	Shenoute	21 IB.05.72-92
monb.if	36	rit	Bible Pent	19 RV.B109.cass03.006.02-20
monb.fy	32	210	Hist. Eccles.	18 not together RV.B109. cass29.160.01-18
monb.mb	35	238	Bible Epp. Pauli	16 PN.129.11.047-082passim
monb.he2	75	150	Bible Apcl	16 BL.or03518
monb.nj	32	288	Bible Ps	15 not together PN.129.02.011-094passim

sigla	preserved folios	number of last page extant	content	nucleus (folios) (call number)
monb.ks	23	284	Bible Lc Io	15 RV.B109.cass18.064.01-15
monb.bd	37	190	Pachomiana	15 IB.09.26-40
monb.cr1	66	366	Chrysostom Heb.	14 not together PN.131.2.147-160
monb.av	24	240	Shenoute	14 PN.130.2.075-088
monb.lu	27	195	Bible Epp. Pauli	12 PN.129.11.052-093passim
monb.ko	23	210	Bible Lc Io	12 (RV.B109.cass16.059.01-12)

Two parameters are especially to be taken into consideration: the number of preserved folios, and the total number of folios that one codex originally contained. For the first parameter we find that we have today 137 folios of the most preserved codex, from the at least 155 that it originally contained; the second, 118 upon at least 261 and so on. All in all, there are 21 codices preserved in more than 50 folios. They are very few, in respect to the more or less 1,000 codices contained in the library, say, in the 12th century.

As for the second parameter, the largest codex that we know presents as its highest page number 713 (356 folios); but in my opinion the codices with more than 400 pages (200 folios) were bound in two “volumes”, even if the page number may continue from the first into the second. In other words, there is a logical and perhaps chronological gap between the numbering of the quires, the numbering of the pages, and the binding of the volumes. Other highest page numbers are 702, 560, 554, etc.

We know of 35 codices containing at least 300 pages (150 folios); and we also observe that some codices present a numeration beginning anew with each work. We may assume 200 pages as the length of an average codex.

One observation concerns what we may call the “consistent nuclei” that we find for some codices, and not for others. I classify in this way a good number of continuous folios preserved together in the same collection, so that we may suppose that they were never separated, and represent codices which were preserved complete until a comparatively late age, viz. one or two centuries before the first dispersal, in the 18th century. And we may also suppose that this is not fortuitous, but that the codices were saved because of their importance. We count 35 codices preserved in more than 25 folios in which such nuclei are present (5 are debatable).

A second observation concerns the content of the codices. Here, more than in the previous cases, one must refrain from drawing unwarranted conclusions; nevertheless, it is interesting to assemble such information, provided it is used

cum grano salis. We consider the codices preserved in more than 50 folios, for the obvious reason that, in order to obtain a general view of the library, all existing fragments should be considered (for this, one may be referred again to the *clavis coptica* in the CMCL database).

We count 9 codices of Shenoute's works, to which one of Besa's works (not the Life of Shenoute!) is probably to be added, as in the same category; 5 biblical codices; and 1 item each for the following categories: canons, acts of Ephesus, lives of the Pachomians, apophthegmata, Chrysostom, Ephrem, Victor the Martyr. I think that we are able to see in this catalogue the core of the intellectual heritage of the Shenoutean community in the 12th-13th century.

A third observation concerns the colophons (for which the collection remains that of VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d'Égypte*, Louvain, 1929), with the usual provisos, but especially because it is problematic to attribute a colophon-folio to one codex, given the total change in script and layout. The relevant cases are therefore very few, but perhaps not without meaning. We have 8 cases of attribution of an extant colophon to one Atripe codex: in 5 cases the colophon states that the codex was produced in Atripe, in 2 cases that it was produced elsewhere (Touton, Erebe) but officially brought to Atripe, while in the last case the place of production remains unknown. This may point to a deliberate choice of what to produce in Atripe, which may be considered to be confirmed by the fact that for the 50-more codices we find 4 Atripe-coloph., one Touton-Atripe and one Erebe-Atripe. We note that 6 attributed colophons out of 8 belong to codices having more than 50 folios.

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This section of the paper focuses on the final stage of the library of the Monastery of Atripe, providing an account of the repository, or possibly repositories, where the vestiges of the codices have been found, and proposing a new theory concerning the reasons behind the fragmentary state of the codices. However, as much of the data, both historical and empirical, is missing (a situation that will probably not improve in the near future), our viewpoint on the end of the library is only tentative. In spite of this, the theory sketched here about the end of the library fits well with the physical evidence provided by the manuscript fragments. It is possible that the remains of the damaged codices give us an important clue about the extinction of the Coptic library at the Monastery of Atripe.

LOCATIONS OF THE CODICES' VESTIGES AND THE EXTINCTION OF THE LIBRARY

According to a widespread view, the Sahidic library of the Monastery of Shenoute fell into decay when Coptic started to become forgotten by the monks. According to this hypothesis, as the Arabic language became more important in the Coptic

liturgy, the old Sahidic codices were abandoned somewhere in a remote corner of the monastery, where they gradually decayed. Beginning in the second half of the 18th century, the monks sold piecemeal the manuscripts to various European travelers, breaking them into pieces in order to obtain a higher price. In this way, the leaves of the manuscripts were scattered throughout the world.

This theory has been supported from the very moment when Western scholars became aware that the source of the numerous Sahidic fragments sold in the vicinity of the ancient town of Akhmim is the ancient library of the Monastery of Shenoute. For example, Gaston Maspero, who was the one who discovered inside the monastery a secret room which contained a significant part of the remains of the library, describes what he saw there in 1883:³

C'étaient pour la plupart de vieux livres hors d'usage, écrits sur peau ou sur papier épais, enfermés jadis dans la librairie du couvent, puis jetés au rebut, soit qu'il leur manquât trop de pages, soit que les dialectes dans lesquels ils étaient conçus, dialecte thébain et dialecte d'Akhmîm, ne fussent plus intelligibles aux moines. Un reste de respect pour le caractère saint des matières qu'ils contenaient avait empêché qu'on ne les brûlât ou qu'on ne les balayât au dehors, et on les avait relégués pêle-mêle dans une chambre de débarras, à côté des vêtements déchirés, des vases rompus ou du matériel d'église brisé, de tous les objets consacrés au culte ou à l'édification des fidèles qui peuvent s'accumuler dans un monastère au cours des siècles.⁴

Maspero believed that the remains of the old library were transferred into the small room that he discovered because the language of the manuscripts had become incomprehensible. If the monks did not throw them away or burned them as old rubbish is because they were still regarded as holy books.

In an article published in 1913, Henry Hyvernât tried to provide an answer to the same question. He wrote regarding this:

Dès que, pour une raison ou pour une autre, un manuscrit cessait d'être utile, on l'abandonnait dans quelque réduit où le temps, la poussière et la vermine achevaient en silence de détruire ses feuillets, fatigués et déchirés par les doigts des lecteurs; quand on ne le dépeçait pas de propos délibéré, pour en employer la matière aux usages les plus variés.

Cela nous explique comment dans aucun couvent de la Haute-Égypte on n'a trouvé de manuscrits sahidiques complets ... Cela nous explique enfin comment

³ On the circumstances of this find and the animosities between Gaston Maspero and Émile Amélineau, who in his turn also claimed the primacy of the discovery, see C. LOUIS, *The Fate of the White Monastery Library*, in G. GABRA, H. TAKLA (eds.), *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt* vol. 1: *Akhmim and Sohag*, Cairo – New York, p. 83-90 and esp. EAD., *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits littéraires coptes conservés à l'IFAO du Caire. Contribution à la reconstitution de la bibliothèque du Monastère Blanc* (Ph.D. thesis, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses), Paris, 2005, p. 8-39.

⁴ G. MASPERO, review of G. STEINDORFF, *Die Apokalypse des Elias*, in *Journal des savants* (1899), p. 31-43, at 31; reprinted in Id., *Études de mythologie et d'archéologie égyptiennes*, vol. 6, Paris, 1912, p. 425-442, at 425.

ce qui nous est parvenu est de date relativement récente. Plus un manuscrit servait et moins il durait, et plus vite il était envoyé à la Genizah pour être remplacé par un exemplaire tout flambant neuf.⁵

However, the theory maintained by Maspero and Hyvernat fails to answer a few questions. Firstly, as can be observed in the first part of this contribution, the approximate estimation of the surviving folios of the codices hardly reaches 10 % of the original number when the manuscripts were intact. This means that most of the library is lost, raising a legitimate question: to where has the rest of the library disappeared if the monks did not throw away the old books even when these ceased to be in use? Furthermore, it is remarkable that, as far as we are aware, no manuscript cover from the Monastery of Shenoute has survived. This seems to imply that, at the time when the remains of the library started to emerge outside the walls of the monastery, the codices must have already been in a deplorable state for a long time since none of them any longer had their covers.

If one finds reliable Maspero's statement that the room that he saw in 1883 was unopened for a long time, it is possible that this location was not the only cache for the manuscript fragments. Although this possibility remains speculative, it deserves nevertheless some attention. One can observe that the European collections formed before 1883, namely those of Stefano Borgia, Charles Woide in Oxford, Jacoppo Nani in Venice and Henry Tattam (kept today in the John Rylands Library in Manchester), Robert Curzon and Constantin Tischendorf, generally contain well-preserved folios.⁶ Therefore, it is tempting to think that certain complete leaves, bifolios and quires were kept in a different location known to the monks before Maspero's discovery.

The second cache, the secret room discovered by Maspero in 1883 in the north of the central apse of the church, contained intact folios but also hoards of fragments in a much poorer state of preservation, covered by a thick layer of sand and pigeon excrement. The content of this room left the monastery in parcels, most of them purchased by Maspero and his collaborators between 1885 and 1887.⁷ Numerous others, however, were acquired by different individuals and today form the collections in Leiden, Vienna, Oslo and the Berlin Staatsbibliothek, to name only a few.

It appears that Maspero's secret room was actually the location of the library when the codices were still intact. This is suggested by the Coptic inscriptions which decorated the walls of this room, transcribed by Canon Thomas Oldfield

⁵ H. HYVERNAT, *Pourquoi les anciennes collections de manuscrits coptes sont si pauvres*, in *Revue biblique* n.s. 10 (1913) p. 422-428, at 423-424.

⁶ This does not mean that the collections formed later do not contain well preserved folios, but that they are always mixed with other heavily damaged fragments.

⁷ LOUIS, *Catalogue IFAO*, p. 13-39.

and published by Walter Ewing Crum in 1904.⁸ Lists of books were inscribed on the walls, indicating the precise location the manuscripts inside the room. However, we do not know exactly when the secret room became the repository of the Sahidic codices. The inscriptions published by Crum are dated to the 12th-13th centuries.

During the restoration works started at the Monastery of Shenoute in 1898, numerous other manuscript fragments were discovered. These fragments found their way principally to the Coptic Patriarchate in Cairo, from where some of them arrived at the British Library, through the mediation of George Horner.⁹ As no account of the exact location of this discovery has been published, it is not clear whether they came from a third repository¹⁰ or if, rather, they had remained in the secret room. I find the latter more probable since at least one of the parchment scraps found during the restoration work, namely London BL 6954(33) belonged to the same leaf as Paris BnF Copte 132¹, f. 72.¹¹ This might suggest that the fragments were kept, at least for a while, in the same location.

Finally, an archaeological team of Yale University, led by Stephen Davis, discovered recently another deposit of 1,334 tiny fragments.¹²

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* *

As the photographs below exemplify, a multitude of fragments, which join perfectly and do not exhibit signs of natural decay, suggests that the codices were destroyed systematically and deliberately. The images provided here aim to show that numerous parchment fragments from the Monastery of Atripe actually bear signs of mutilation done by human hand.¹³

⁸ W.E. CRUM, *Inscriptions from Shenoute's Monastery*, in *Journal of Theological Studies* 5 (1904), p. 552-569. The inscriptions have disappeared in the meantime.

⁹ The British Library lot, which comprises 63 fragments, was bought from Horner in 1909, cf. B. LAYTON, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired Since the Year 1906*, London, 1987, p. xxx-xxxi.

¹⁰ Catherine Louis believes this to be the case, basing her assumption on a remark made by Maspero, see LOUIS, *Catalogue IFAO*, p. 12.

¹¹ These fragments contain the colophon of the Shenoute codex MONB.GL, dated 957-958 AD. Description of the London fragment in LAYTON, *Catalogue*, 219 (= no. 176). The Paris fragment was edited in A. LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d'Égypte (Bibliothèque du Muséon 1)*, Leuven, 1929, p. 142-143 (= no. 83). However, one may also imagine that some of the fragments that remained in the secret room were transferred in another location by the monks.

¹² S. DAVIS et al., *Left Behind: A Recent Discovery of Manuscript Fragments, in the White Monastery Church*, in *Journal of Coptic Studies* 14 (2014), p. 69-87.

¹³ Montages prepared by Alin Suciú using Adobe Photoshop CS5.

EXAMPLES

Example 1

Codex MONB.DH. Ps.-Evodius of Rome, *In apostolos* (CANT 81; clavis coptica 0150). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 129¹⁸, f. 158 + Copte 131⁵, f. 150 + Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, K 9371 + Bolaffi 1. Cf. E. LUCCHESI, *Regards nouveaux sur la littérature copte*, in P. Buzi, A. Camplani (eds.), *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 125)*, Roma, 2011, p. 369-414, at 389-395.

**Example 2**

Codex MONB.NE. Ephrem Graecus. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 131⁷, f. 75 + Copte 131⁵, f. 147 + Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, K 9789. Cf. A. SUCIU, *The Borgian Coptic Manuscripts in Naples: Supplementary Identifications and Notes to a Recently Published Catalogue*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 77 (2011), p. 299-325, at 310-311.



Example 3

No CMCL siglum. Ps.-Severian of Gabala, *In apostolos* (CPG 4281; *clavis coptica* 0331). Cairo, Coptic Museum, *sine numero*¹⁴ + Toronto, Fisher Library, Item 18.¹⁵



Example 4

No CMCL siglum. Proverbs of Solomon. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 132⁴, f. 293 + London, British Library, Or. 3579A, f. 27 (= Crum no. 39).



BnF Copte 132(4), f. 293

Example 5

No CMCL siglum. Shenoute. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 129¹², f. 17 + 131⁵, f. 32.



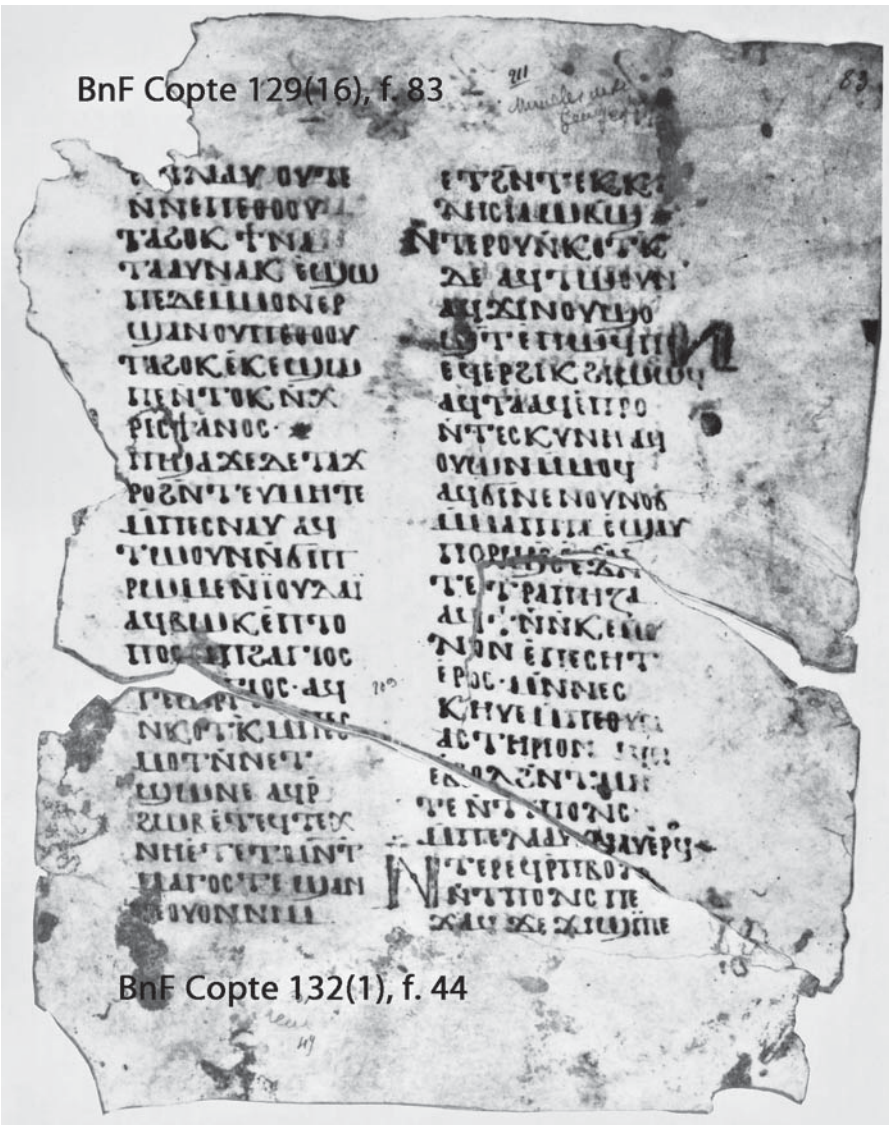
Paris BnF Copte 131(5), f. 32

¹⁴ I conventionally designate this fragment as *sine numero* because the call number is not completely visible on the photographs I have at hand. The number is of four digits and the first two are 2 and 6. The fragment formerly belonged to the collection of the Coptic Patriarchate and was discovered in 1906 during the restoration work at the White Monastery.

¹⁵ See <http://link.library.utoronto.ca/vellum/>. This is most likely not the true call number of the fragment but only a conventional designation adopted for the website.

Example 6

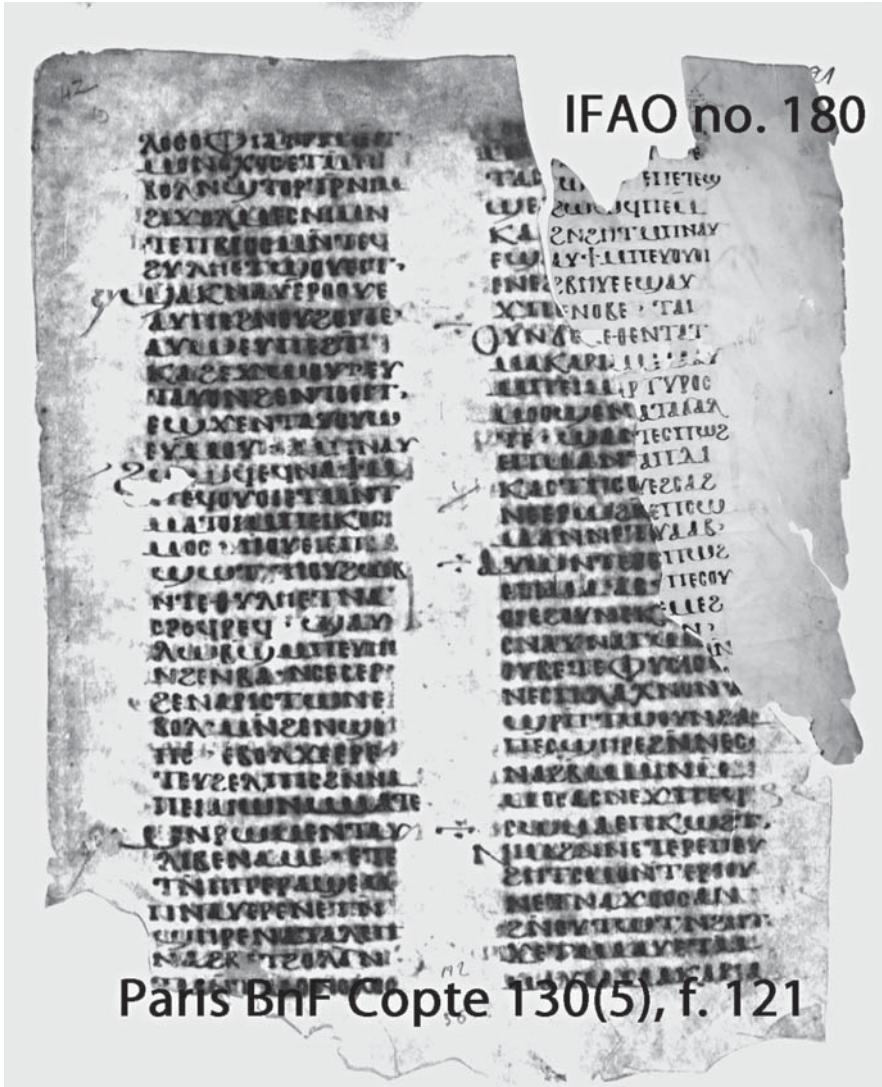
MONB.EA. *Miracula Georgii* (clavis coptica 0229). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 129¹⁶ + Copte 132¹, f. 44.



¹⁶ Emmel provides there a montage of the other faces of the two fragments in Paris.

Example 7

No CMCL siglum. Encomium on the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 130⁵, f. 121 + Cairo, IFAO inv. no. 180.



Example 8

No CMCL siglum. Unidentified. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 132¹, f. 35 + 134⁴, f. 284.



Example 9

MONB.XL. Shenoute. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 130⁴, f. 132 + 132⁴, f. 303. Cf. S. EMMEL, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus* vol. 1 (CSCO 599. *Subsidia* 111), Louvain, 2004, p. 114 (= pl. 3).¹⁶



The examples of similar torn manuscript fragments from the Monastery of Apa Shenoute can easily be multiplied. However, the photographs above suffice to show that the damage of the manuscripts does not seem accidental, but rather inflicted by human hand. This is suggested by the fact that the damage pattern is different from that of those manuscripts which suffered from corrosion due to natural causes (sun exposure, humidity, insects etc.).

However, the reasons behind such a systematic “bibliocide” remain obscure. It is possible that it was caused either during an attempt to abolish the Christian culture in Egypt or during one of the numerous raids of barbarian desert tribes. Be that as it may, the existence of numerous small fragments, insignificant in terms of size or physical aspect, seem to exclude the possibility that the monks purposely caused the damage in order to sell the manuscripts for higher prices.

THE END OF THE LIBRARY OF THE MONASTERY OF ATRIBE

The period when the Sahidic library of the Monastery of Atripe came to an end can be only approximately documented with the help of some of the surviving fragments of its manuscripts. Thus, the latest dated colophon bears the year 964 A.M., which corresponds to 1247 CE.¹⁷ This date fits well with three inscriptions published by Crum, dated 1237 and 1259 CE.¹⁸ Several other colophons and scribal notes are dated to the 12th century.¹⁹ Similarly, the fragment Paris, BnF Copte 132², frag. 212 features a list of patriarchs of Alexandria, the last name before the text breaks off being that of John V (1147-1166 CE).²⁰

Although the latest dated note which features on the fragments from the Monastery of Shenoute is, as we have seen, from 1247 CE, there are reasons to believe that the library still continued to exist after this date as well. The argument is supplied by the presence in the library of several bilingual Copto-Arabic manuscripts whose *membra disiecta* are today scattered across several collections. These manuscripts are exclusively of paper and are paleographically similar. One such example is a Holy Week lectionary of which the following fragments have been identified until now:

Vatican, Borgia copto 109, cassetta 23, fasc. 98, ff. 1-4²¹

Paris, BnF Copte 132¹, f. 32²²

Paris, BnF Copte 102, f. 2

This lectionary features as “sa 349L” in Franz-Jürgen Schmitz and Gerd Mink’s list of the Sahidic manuscripts of the New Testament²³ and as “sa 74L”

¹⁷ This date features on the fragment Paris, BnF Copte 132¹, f. 67. Edited in VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Colophons*, p. 79-82 (= no. 51). The first colophon of this manuscript is dated 927-928 CE, but a second hand added a few centuries later another scribal note with the year indicated above.

¹⁸ CRUM, *Inscriptions*, p. 557, 558, 561 (= inscriptions A 4, A 5, A 7).

¹⁹ These are Paris, BnF 129¹⁹, f. 55 — dated 1118 CE (VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Colophons*, p. 137-139 [= no. 81]), Paris, BnF Copte 132¹, ff. 69 + 71 — dated 1190 (VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Colophons*, p. 178-179 [= no. 104]).

²⁰ This fragment is still unpublished. The recto seems to contain the names of the archimandrites of the Monastery of Atripe. The names of the patriarchs on the verso are copied in different hands and they were obviously added gradually over a long period of time. The names of the patriarchs from Theophilus (385-412) to Abraham (975-978) seem to be written in the same scribe’s hand. Another hand inscribed the names of Philotheos (979-1003) and Zacharias (1004-1032). Finally, to a third hand are due the names of the Coptic patriarchs of Alexandria between Shenoute II (1032-1046) and John V (1147-1166). Notably, the text breaks off at this point, but other names probably followed.

²¹ Description in G. ZOEGA, *Catalogus codicum Copticorum manu scriptorum qui in Museo Borgiano Velitris adservantur*, Romae, 1810, p. 189 (= no. 98).

²² On this fragment, which contains a portion of 4 Ezra, see A. SUCIU, *On a Bilingual Copto-Arabic Manuscript of 4 Ezra and the Reception of this Pseudepigraphon in Coptic Literature*, in *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 25.1 (2015), p. 3-22.

²³ F.-J. SCHMITZ, G. MINK, *Liste der koptischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* vol. I.2.2 (ANTF 15), Berlin – New York, 1991, p. 1057-1059.

in Karlheinz Schüssler's *Biblia coptica*.²⁴ Another lectionary very similar from a paleographical point of view is Zoega 99.²⁵

The aforementioned manuscripts feature the biblical lections on two parallel columns, with the Sahidic text on the inner column in terms of the pages' binding, and the Arabic translation on the outer column. Although none of these Copto-Arabic paper lectionaries are dated, we can place them paleographically to the very late 14th or early 15th centuries. This dating is based on two similar dated comparanda, namely Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 44 (*Scala*),²⁶ and Ms. Huntington 393 (the *Mysteries of the Greek Alphabet*),²⁷ kept in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, which are dated Era of the Martyrs 1109 (= 1393 CE) and 1105 (= 1389 CE) respectively. All these are bilingual Copto-Arabic paper manuscripts written in the same slopping uncial of a later date.²⁸

The presence of the remains of these bilingual Copto-Arabic codices among the fragments from the Monastery of Shenoute is important as it allows us to postulate that the library still existed at the beginning of the 15th century CE.²⁹ In conclusion, the end of the Sahidic library of Shenoute's Monastery must have occurred sometimes between this date and the second half of the 18th century CE, when the first fragments emerged from their cache.

²⁴ K. SCHÜSSLER, *Biblia Coptica. Die koptischen Bibeltexte* vol. I.3, Wiesbaden, 1998, p. 70.

²⁵ ZOEGA, *Catalogus*, p. 189-192; SCHMITZ, MINK, *Koptischen Handschriften*, 1084-1086 (= sa 16L); K. SCHÜSSLER, *Biblia Coptica. Die koptischen Bibeltexte* vol. I.4, Wiesbaden, 2000, p. 49-69 (= sa 108L).

²⁶ H. MUNIER, *La Scala copte 44 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris*, 1: *Transcription*, Le Caire, 1930; A. FOUAD KHOUZAM, *La langue égyptienne au moyen âge. Le manuscrit Copte 44 de Paris de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, 2 vols., Paris, 2002.

²⁷ Published in A. HEBBELYNCK, *Les mystères des lettres grecques d'après un manuscrit copte-arabe de la Bibliothèque Bodléienne d'Oxford*, in *Le Muséon* 19 (1900), p. 5-36, 105-136, 269-300; 20 (1901) p. 5-33, 369-414; reprinted as a single volume, *Les mystères des lettres grecques*, Louvain, 1902. Cf. HEBBELYNCK's report on the manuscript in *Une page d'un manuscrit copte intitulé «Les mystères des lettres grecques» (description cosmologique)*, in *Mélanges Charles de Harlez*, Leiden, 1896, p. 127-132; see also É. GALTIER, *Sur les mystères des lettres grecques*, in *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 2 (1902), p. 139-162. For the original Greek version of the text see C. BANDT, *Der Traktat "Vom Mysterium der Buchstaben": kritischer Text mit Einleitung, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen*, Berlin, 2007 (with a partial re-edition of the Coptic version); see also J. REYNARD, *Le Mystère des lettres grecques: Un inédit à paraître aux Sources Chrétiennes*, in J. BAUN, A. CAMERON, M. EDWARDS, M. VINZENT (eds.), *Studia Patristica 45. Papers presented at the Fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2007*, Louvain – Paris – Walpole, 2010, p. 277-282.

²⁸ See A. BOUD'HORS, *L'onciale penchée en copte et sa survie jusqu'au XV^e siècle en Haute-Égypte*, in F. DEROCHE, F. RICHARD (eds.), *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, Paris, 1997, p. 117-133, at 120-124.

²⁹ The fact that the library of the Monastery of Shenoute still existed in the late 14th or early 15th century does not necessarily mean that all the Sahidic codices were still in use since the Coptic language had been out of use for some time. This is suggested by the fact that in the bilingual manuscripts mentioned above the Sahidic text needed to be translated into Arabic.

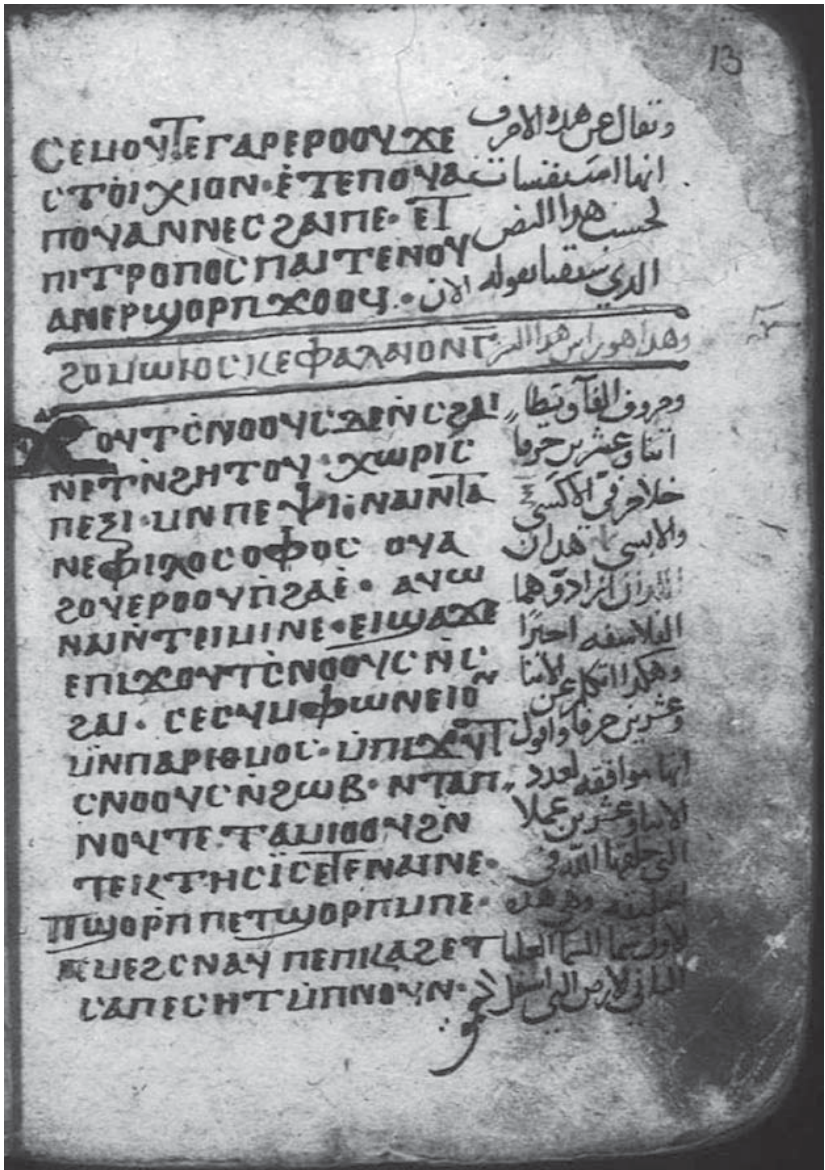
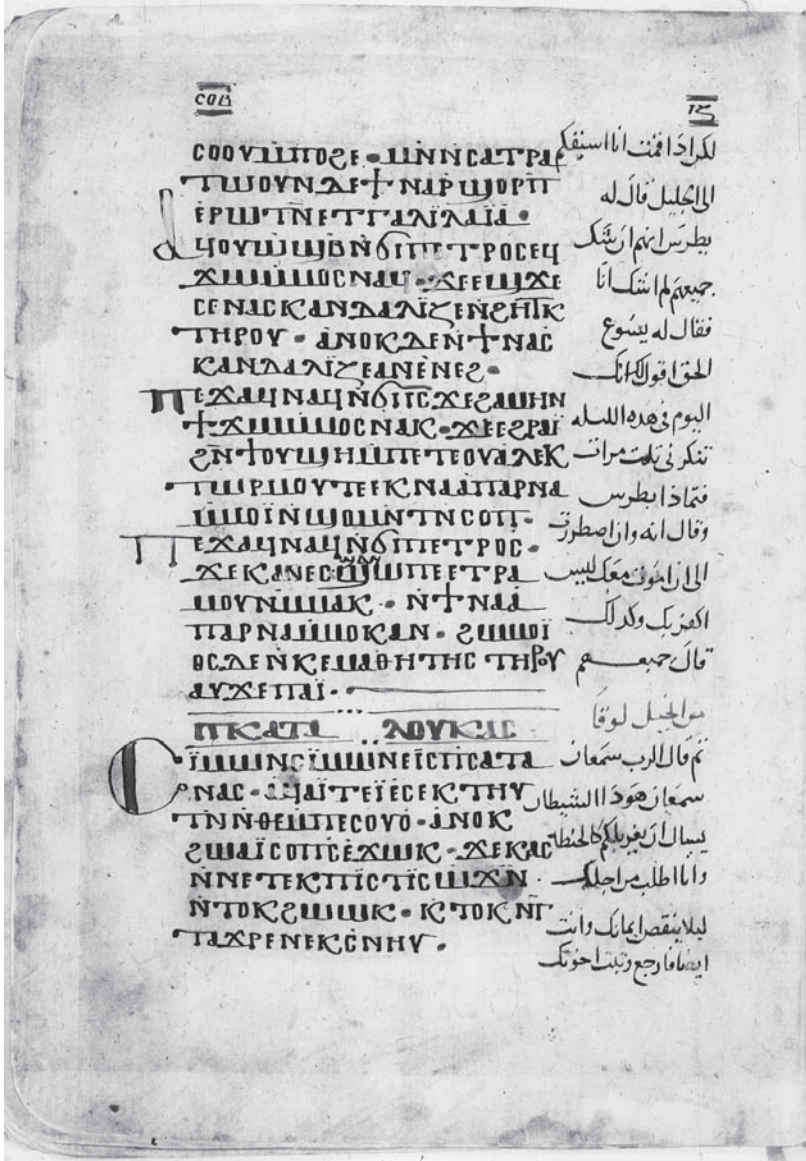


Photo 1. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms Huntington 393. The *Mystery of the Greek Letters*. Manuscript dated Era of the Martyrs 1109 (= 1389 CE).

Photo 2. Vatican, Zoega 99. Holy Week lectionary. Late 14th-early 15th century.

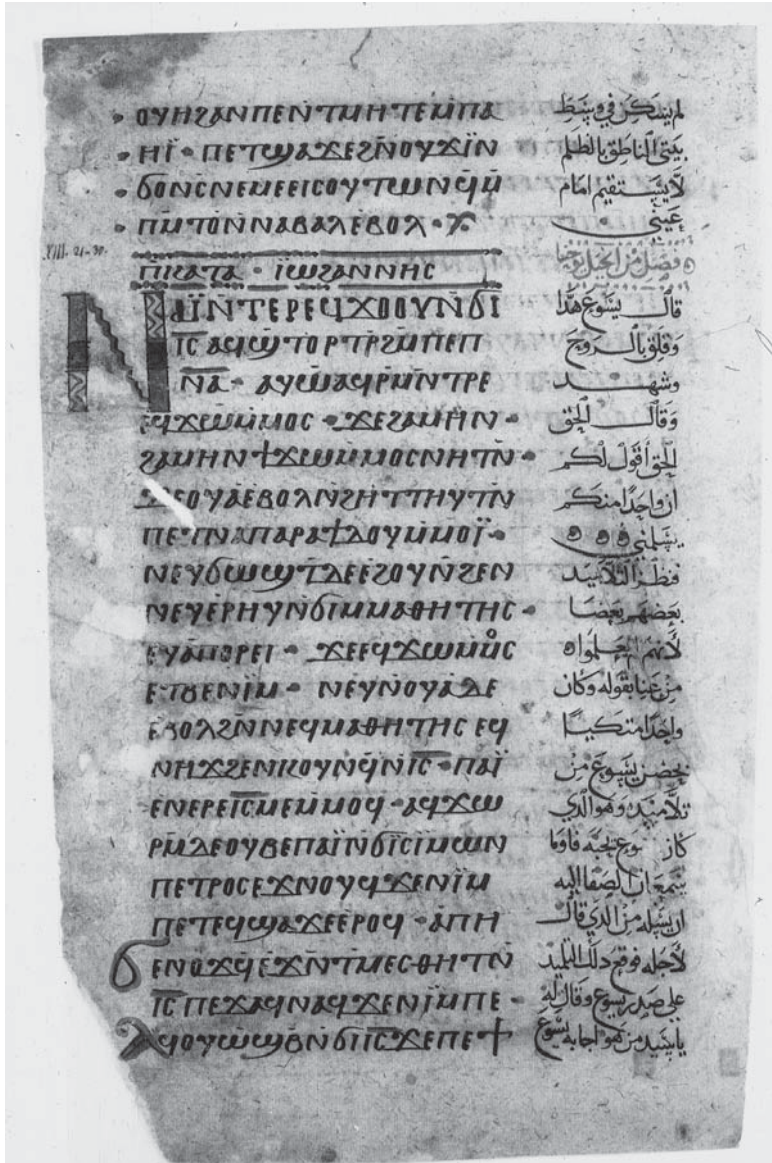


Photo 3. Vatican, Zoega 98. Holy Week lectionary. Late 14th-early 15th century.