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*Vigiliae Christianae* 67 (2013) 436-450

Vigiliae  
Christianae  
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## “Me, This Wretched Sinner”: A Coptic Fragment from the Vision of Theophilus Concerning the Flight of the Holy Family to Egypt

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### Abstract

The *Vision of Theophilus* is one of the important apocryphal narratives concerning the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt. Although the text is known to survive in Arabic, Ethiopic and Syriac, a lost Coptic original has long been accepted by scholars. The present paper introduces a hitherto unidentified fragment from the Coptic version of this text. The fragment came from the White Monastery in Upper Egypt and it is currently kept in the National Library in Paris. The fragment is edited in this article together with its Arabic and Ethiopic parallels.

### Keywords

Coptic, Holy Family, *Vision of Theophilus*, Christian apocrypha, White Monastery, manuscripts

Among the works pseudonymously attributed to Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria from 385 to 412, has been preserved a sermon that is of fundamental importance for the study of the apocryphal traditions concerning the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt (*Sermo de ecclesia s. Familiae in Monte Qusqam* = CPG 2628; CANT 56). This text is known to survive in Arabic, Ethiopic and Syriac. I shall present here a previously unidentified Coptic fragment which is, until now, the only direct witness of the sermon attributed to Theophilus in this language. For the purpose of the present article, I will first introduce Ps-Theophilus’ homily, spelling out its basic

ideas and reviewing the different forms and versions in which it has been transmitted.

It appears that the text sprung from a local tradition according to which, during the flight to Egypt, the Holy Family visited the town of Qosqam (modern al-Qusiya).<sup>1</sup> Even today, pilgrims from all over Egypt are gathering in the nearby monastery, named Deir al-Muḥarraq (الدير المحرق),<sup>2</sup> to celebrate the sojourn of the Holy Family in that place. This pilgrimage site was so renowned that it inspired the Abyssinians to call Dabra Qwəsqwam a church which was built by the middle of 18th century in the north-west of Gondar.<sup>3</sup>

The homily mentions that the emperor Theodosius the Great sent the patriarch Theophilus in Upper Egypt to confiscate the treasures of the pagan temples and to use them for building churches. On his way back to Alexandria, Theophilus stops to pray in the Monastery of the Virgin in Qosqam. During the night, the patriarch has a vision, in which Virgin Mary recounts to him the sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt for three years, five months and three days. According to the author, this number would correspond to the period spent by the woman in the wilderness in the allegory of Revelation 12:6. The last station of the Holy Family before their return to Bethlehem was “the mountain of Qosqam,” a toponym obviously meant to legitimize the monastic settlement of Deir al-Muḥarraq, which is called elsewhere in the text the “holy mountain.”<sup>4</sup> The vision of Theophilus

<sup>1</sup> L.S.B. MacCoull, “The Holy Family Pilgrimage in Late Antique Egypt: The Case of Qosqam,” in E. Dassmann – J. Engemann (eds.), *Akten des XII internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie: Bonn 22-28 September, 1991* (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband, 20,1 = Studi di Antichità Cristiana, 52,1; Münster/Città del Vaticano: Aschendorff, 1995) 987-993; S. Davis, *Coptic Christology in Practice: Incarnation and Divine Participation in Late Antique and Medieval Egypt* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 135-139. On Qosqam in ancient sources, cf. S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit* vol. 5: Q-S (Beiheft zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B, 41/5; Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1991) 2180-2191.

<sup>2</sup> R.-G. Coquin – M. Martin, “Dayr al-Muḥarraq,” in A.S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia* vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1991) 840-841. On the pilgrimage at Deir al-Muḥarraq see G. Viaud, *Les pèlerinages coptes en Égypte* (Bibliothèque d’Étude Coptes 15, Cairo: IFAO, 1979) 48-50.

<sup>3</sup> D. Crummey, “Däbrä Säḥay Qwəsqwam,” in *Encyclopedia Aethiopica* vol. 2: D-Ha (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005) 37.

<sup>4</sup> In Greek, Coptic and Arabic Christian monastic sources of Egyptian provenance, both literary and documentary, the words ὄφος (or πέτρα)/τοογ/**جبل** are meant to designate the monastic establishments. For example, the colophons of the Sahidic manuscripts from the

embeds various literary *topoi* which appear as well in the Protoevangelium of James, the Arabic Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and other apocryphal nativity and infancy narratives: it introduces the midwife Salome as companion of the Holy Family to Egypt; the encounter between the Holy Family and the two thieves which shall be crucified later with Jesus; the statues of the idols of Hermopolis Magna (al-Ashmunein), which fell down and broke to pieces when the child Jesus passed them; the tree which bowed down to worship Christ; the miraculous powers of the spring in which the divine child was bathing. At the end of the vision, Mary informs Theophilus that Deir al-Muḥarraq is situated on the same site where the first church in the world had been consecrated by Christ. In this church, Jesus Christ himself celebrated the first mass on the 6th of Hator (November 2). The sermon ends with a note allegedly written by Cyril of Alexandria, who claims to be the one who wrote down Theophilus' words.

The Vision of Theophilus is part of the Coptic cycle of the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt.<sup>5</sup> This cycle includes other homilies by Ps-Timothy

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Monastery of Apa Shenoute usually call the settlement “the mountain of Atripe” (πτοογ ίατριπε). On the meaning of “mountain” in the monastic sources see W.E. Crum & H.I. Bell, *Wadi Sarga. Coptic and Greek Texts from the Excavations Undertaken by the Byzantine Research Account* (Coptica, 3; Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel-Nordisk Forlag, 1922) 6-7; H.G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi 'N Natrūn Part 2: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis* (Publications of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932) 21-22; P. Kahle, *Bala'izah. Coptic Texts from the Deir el-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt* vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) 27-29; H. Cadell – R. Rémondon, “Sens et emploi de *to oros* dans les documents papyrologiques,” *Revue des études grecques* 80 (1967) 343-349.

<sup>5</sup> In general on the theme of the flight to Egypt see, e.g., O.F.A. Meinardus, “The Itinerary of the Holy Family in Egypt,” *Studia Orientalia Christiana: Collectanea* vol. 7 (Cairo: Edizioni del Centro francescano di studi orientali cristiani, 1962) 3-44; Idem, *The Holy Family in Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986); G. Gabra, “Über die Flucht der heiligen Familie nach koptischen Traditionen,” *Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte* 38 (1999) 40-48; G. Gabra (ed.), *'Be Thou There': The Holy Family's Journey in Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001); S.J. Davis, “A Hermeneutic of the Land: Biblical Interpretation in the Holy Family Tradition,” in M. Immerzeel – J. van der Vliet (eds.), *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August-2 September 2000* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 133; Leuven – Paris – Dudley: Peeters, 2004) 329-336.

Aelurus,<sup>6</sup> Cyriacus of Behnesa,<sup>7</sup> and Zacharias of Sakha.<sup>8</sup> Being the case that the Vision of Theophilus was translated in several vernacular languages, that it is often quoted in the later sources and that it served as a model for other texts in the same cycle, it can be suggested that it must have been quite popular, first in Egypt and afterwards in Ethiopia and Syria. In this sense, Anne Boud'hors and Ramez Boutros pointed out that the discourse of Ps-Timothy Aelurus on the flight to Egypt and the consecration of the Church of the Rock used the Vision of Theophilus as its main source of inspiration.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, our text was used by other authors as well. For example, it is mentioned in the Egyptian synaxary in the note for Hator 6. The synaxary refers to our text, saying that on this day Christ travelled with his disciples to Qosqam, "the place of the first mass," as Philotheos (= Theophilus) and Cyril of Alexandria have written.<sup>10</sup> Talking about Deir al-Muhaarraq, the author(s) of the *History of Churches and Monasteries* quotes, in his turn, the discourse on the flight to Egypt attributed to Theophilus.<sup>11</sup> Besides, there is evidence that the homily penetrated also into the liturgical sources. Youhanna Nessim Youssef investigated the rite of consecration of

<sup>6)</sup> A. Boud'hors – R. Boutros, *L'homélie sur l'Église du Rocher attribuée à Timothée Aelure* (Patrologia Orientalis, 49/1; Turnhout: Brepols, 2001). See also their study "La Sainte Famille à Čabal al-Ṭayr et l'homélie du Rocher," in N. Bosson (ed.), *Études coptes VII. Neuvième journée d'études, Montpellier, 3-4 June, 1999* (Cahiers de la bibliothèque copte, 12; Paris – Louvain – Sterling – Virginia: Peeters, 2000) 59-76.

<sup>7)</sup> Two homilies on the flight to Egypt have survived in Arabic under the name of Cyriacus of Behnesa. The Arabic text is available in **كتاب ميامير وعجائب العدرا** (Cairo, 1902) 73-95; second edition, with the same title, published in Cairo, 1927, 106-139. Abstracts in P. Dib, "Deux discours de Cyriaque évêque de Behnésa sur la Fuite en Égypte," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 15 (1910) 157-161. Cf. also G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* vol. 1 (Studi e testi, 118; Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica, 1944) 232-234.

<sup>8)</sup> Arabic text in **كتاب ميامير وعجائب العدرا**, 39-55; second edition, 56-81. Abstract and list of manuscripts in Graf, GCAL I, 228-229. The Arabic text was republished more recently in **ميامير السيدة العذراء من مكتبة دير السريان العامر** (second edition, Deir al-Surian, 2005) 26-38. According to the introduction to this volume, the first edition appeared in 1974. However, I have not been able to find it. Check also U. Zanetti, "Matarieh, la sainte famille et les baumiers," *Analecta Bollandiana* 111 (1993) 21-68.

<sup>9)</sup> Discussing the homily of Ps-Theophilus, Boud'hors – Boutros, "La Sainte Famille à Čabal al-Ṭayr," 65, remark: "Il est tout à fait évident que l'homélie de Timothée est construite sur le même modèle. La composition est analogue, le récit de la Vierge est quasiment identique."

<sup>10)</sup> R. Basset, *Le synaxaire arabe jacobite (rédaction copte)* vol. 2: *Les mois de Hatour et de Kihak* (Patrologia Orientalis, 3/3; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909) 255 [179].

<sup>11)</sup> B.T.A. Evets, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighbouring Countries Attributed to Abu Salih, the Armenian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895) 224-227.

the Church of Qosqam, which draws heavily upon Ps-Theophilus' sermon, and the reminiscences which this text has left in the liturgical books of the Copts.<sup>12</sup> All these sources testify to the prominence that the Vision of Theophilus must have once enjoyed.

The homily on the flight to Egypt by Ps-Theophilus of Alexandria survived in two main recensions—one long and one short—preserved in Arabic, Ethiopic and Syriac. In addition, some Arabic manuscripts offer yet a third recension of the text.<sup>13</sup> The short recension, which survived in Arabic and Ethiopic, contains only the revelation of Mary to Theophilus, being obviously an excerpt from the longer one. The Ethiopic text was edited and translated into English in 1900 by Ernest A. Wallis Budge after a manuscript which was, at that time, in the collection of Lady Meux.<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to remark that the Ethiopic short recension is included in some compilations of the so-called Miracles of Mary (ተአምራ: ማርያም:).<sup>15</sup> The Arabic version of the short recension was published in 1921 by Michelangelo Guidi after *Vaticanus arabicus* 170 (18th century).<sup>16</sup>

The Ethiopic text of the long recension was edited and translated into Italian by Carlo Conti Rossini in 1912.<sup>17</sup> Several years later, Michelangelo Guidi edited the Arabic and the Syriac versions of the same recension after two manuscripts in the Vatican, *Borgianus* 128 (dated 1720 AD) and

<sup>12</sup> Y.N. Youssef, "The Rite of the Consecration of the Church of Koskam," *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 46 (2009) 72-92; Idem, "Notes on the Traditions Concerning the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt," *Coptic Church Review* 20 (1999) 48-55.

<sup>13</sup> Graf, *GCAL* I, 230-232. This recension belongs to a collection of homilies dedicated to the Virgin. Published in *كِتاب مِيَامِر وَعَجَاب الْعَدْرَا*, 81-95; second edition, 119-139.

<sup>14</sup> The manuscript is presently in the possession of Martin Schøyen. Text translated in E.A.W. Budge, *The Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Life of Hanna (Saint Anne), and the Magical Prayers of Ahēta Mīkāl* (London: W. Griggs, 1900) 111r-131r. The translation was republished in Idem, *Legends of Our Lady Mary the Perpetual Virgin and her Mother Hanna* (London – Liverpool – Boston, Mass.: Medici Society, 1922) 61-80.

<sup>15</sup> See E. Cerulli, *Il libro etiopico dei miracoli di Maria e le sue fonti nella letteratura del Medio Evo latino* (Studi orientali pubblicati a cura della Scuola orientale, 1; Rome: G. Bardi, 1943) 206-208.

<sup>16</sup> M. Guidi, "La omelia di Teofilo di Alessandria sul Monte Coscam nelle letterature orientali II," *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia di Lincei. Classe di scienze storiche* ser. 5, 30 (1921) 217-237.

<sup>17</sup> C. Conti Rossini, "Il discorso su Monte Coscam attribuito a Teofilo d'Alessandria nella versione etiopica," *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia di Lincei. Classe di scienze storiche* ser. 5, 21 (1912) 395-471. Cf. also the new edition of the long Ethiopic version in S. Bombeck, *Die Geschichte der heiligen Maria in einer alten äthiopischen Handschrift* 2 vols. (Bottrop: Verlag Proxiswissen, 2005).

Vaticanus arabicus 698 (dated 1371 AD).<sup>18</sup> For his part, Alphonse Mingana republished, under the title “Vision of Theophilus,” the Syriac text from two manuscripts in his private collection and Borgianus 128, unaware that the latter was already edited some years before by Guidi.<sup>19</sup> Besides, Mingana mentioned also two Garšūnī manuscripts of the Vision of Theophilus which were in his possession, although he did not use them for the edition.<sup>20</sup> The long Syriac version of the discourse of Ps-Theophilus on the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt belongs to a compilation titled *History of the Virgin* in six books (CANT 95), which begins with the *Protoevangelium of James* and closes with the Dormition of Mary.<sup>21</sup>

We can discern with some degree of confidence the redactional relationships between the various versions mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the Syriac

<sup>18</sup> M. Guidi, “La omelia di Teofilo di Alessandria sul Monte Coscam nelle letterature orientali I,” *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia di Lincei. Classe di scienze storiche* ser. 5, 26 (1917) 381-469; translation of the Syriac and notes on the Arabic and Syriac texts in Idem, “La omelia di Teofilo di Alessandria sul Monte Coscam nelle letterature orientali. Traduzione,” in *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia di Lincei. Classe di scienze storiche* ser. 5, 30 (1921) 275-315. Parts of the translation were reprinted in G. Gharib et al. (eds.), *Testi mariani del primo millennio* vol. 4: *Padri e altri autori orientali* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1991) 714-728. The Syriac version was presented before Guidi’s publication in F. Nau, “La version syriaque de la Vision de Théophile sur le séjour de la Vierge en Égypte,” *Revue de l’Orient chrétien* 15 (1910) 125-132.

<sup>19</sup> A. Mingana, “The Vision of Theophilus, or the Book of the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 13 (1929) 383-425; reprinted in Idem, *Woodbrooke Studies* vol. 3 (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1931) 1-92. Description of the Mingana Syriac manuscripts in A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts* vol. 1: *Syriac and Garshūnī Manuscripts* (Woodbrooke Catalogues, 1; Cambridge: Heffer & Sons, 1933) 19-20, 134. Another Syriac manuscript, unnoticed by Mingana when he prepared his edition of the Vision of Theophilus is signaled in *Ibidem*, 1040. Mingana obtained some years later fifteen leaves from an Arabic manuscript of the same work; see the description of this manuscript in A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts* vol. 2: *Christian Arabic Manuscripts and Additional Syriac Manuscripts* (Woodbrooke Catalogues, 2; Cambridge: Heffer & Sons, 1936) 23 (= no. 18). The edition of this manuscript is forthcoming; see J.P. Monferrer-Sala, “The Coptic-Arabic Fragment of the *Visio Theophili* in the ‘Mingana Collection.’ A Contribution to the Study of the Textual Tradition.” I should like to thank Dr. Monferrer-Sala, who kindly sent me his paper before its publication.

<sup>20</sup> Description in A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection* 1, 101-102, 277-278.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Nau, “La version syriaque,” 125-126.

<sup>22</sup> Check, e.g., the useful remarks in J.P. Monferrer-Sala, “From Antiquity and Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Translating in a Multilingual Setting,” in E. Parra-Membrives – M.A. García Peinado – A. Classen (eds.), *Aspects of Literary Translation. Building Linguistic and Cultural Bridge in Past and Present* (Translation, Text and Interferences, 1; Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2012) 61-79, at 63-67.

and the Ethiopic translations were both made from Arabic. For the Syriac, Mingana supplied some good arguments, indicating that the version displayed “distinct Arabic words which could not have crept into the Syriac text except through an Arabic original.”<sup>23</sup> As for the Ethiopic version, Conti Rossini suggested that the translation from Arabic into Ge’ez was made around the 14th century, under Abba Salama II, perhaps in Deir al-Muḥarraq.<sup>24</sup> In that period, in the Qosqam monastery was settled a community of Ethiopian monks. Moreover, a note in an Ethiopic manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Et. 32), dating from the reign of the Negus Saifa Ar’ed (1344-1372), mentions that an Abyssinian monastery dedicated to the apostles existed near Qosqam.<sup>25</sup> With regard to the Arabic version, it has been accepted almost unanimously that it represents the translation of a lost Coptic original. This is suggested, *inter alia*, by the colophon of one of the surviving Arabic manuscripts, which says that the translation of the homily of Ps-Theophilus was made from Coptic at the demand of a superior of the Monastery of the Virgin, known as Deir al-Muḥarraq.<sup>26</sup>

However, no Coptic manuscript, neither complete nor fragmentary, of the sermon of Ps-Theophilus on the flight of Holy Family to Egypt has been found until now. Those fragments that were signaled in the past were wrongly attributed to the Vision of Theophilus, following a confusion made by Walter Ewing Crum between Ps-Theophilus and Ps-Timothy (Aelurus).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Mingana, “Vision of Theophilus,” 4. See the examples supplied by Mingana on pp. 4-6.

<sup>24</sup> Conti Rossini, “Il discorso su Monte Coscam,” 399. On Abba Salama activity see A. van Lantschoot, “Abbā Salāma, métropolite d’Éthiopie (1348-1388) et son rôle de traducteur,” in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Quaderni, 48; Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1960) 397-401.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., T.P. Platt, *A Catalogue of the Ethiopic Biblical Manuscripts in the Royal Library of Paris, etc.* (London: Richard Watts, 1823) 18-21. Other testimonies regarding the Ethiopian community in Qosqam can be found in L. Störk, “Dayr al-Muḥarraq,” in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* 2, 116-117.

<sup>26</sup> M. Richard, “Les écrits de Théophile d’Alexandrie,” *Le Muséon* 52 (1939) 33-50, at 44; Graf, *GCAL* I, 231.

<sup>27</sup> In Crum—Bell, *Wadi Sarga*, 7 n. 2, Crum mentioned the fragments Paris BnF Copte 131<sup>5</sup>, foll. 101-104 and 132<sup>1</sup>, fol. 22 as “remnants of Timothy’s sermon on the church at Koskam.” It seems that this confusing information was taken over in S. Gero, “Apocryphal Gospels: A Survey of Textual and Literary Problems,” in *ANRW* 2.25.5 (1988) 3969-3996, at 3984 n. 82; MacCoull, “The Holy Family Pilgrimage,” 987; Davis, “A Hermeneutic of the Land,” 335 n. 11; C. Horn, “Apocryphal Gospels in Arabic, or Some Complications on the Road to the Traditions about Jesus,” in J. Frey – J. Schröter (eds.), *Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen. Beiträge zu außerkanonischen Jesusüberlieferungen aus verschiedenen Sprach- und Kulturtraditionen* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 254;

As a matter of fact, the first fragment of the Vision of Theophilus in Coptic surfaced while I was trying to identify a series of small parchment fragments kept in the collection of the National Library in Paris. Upon inspection, the fragment BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, fol. 80 revealed some portions from Ps-Theophilus' sermon in the Sahidic dialect of Coptic.<sup>28</sup> The fragment, originally part of a codex, was written in two columns. However, only the vestiges of the lower part of a column survived on each side. As with the majority of the Sahidic parchment fragments in the Bibliothèque Nationale, BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, fol. 80 once belonged to the Monastery of Apa Shenoute (also called the White Monastery), situated in Upper Egypt, near Atrię. The age of this small manuscript fragment is difficult to discern, on the one hand because the little amount of surviving text, which does not allow a proper paleographical inspection, and on the other because the dating of literary Coptic manuscripts is usually problematic.<sup>29</sup> However, a 10th to 11th century date seems probable.

It is somewhat remarkable that the fragment in question is placed in the volume BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, a modern miscellany that brings together various disparate fragments from the White Monastery codices, between a fragment (fol. 79) from a sermon on the Cross and the Good Thief attributed to the same Theophilus (CPG 2622; *clavis coptica* 0395),<sup>30</sup> and another one

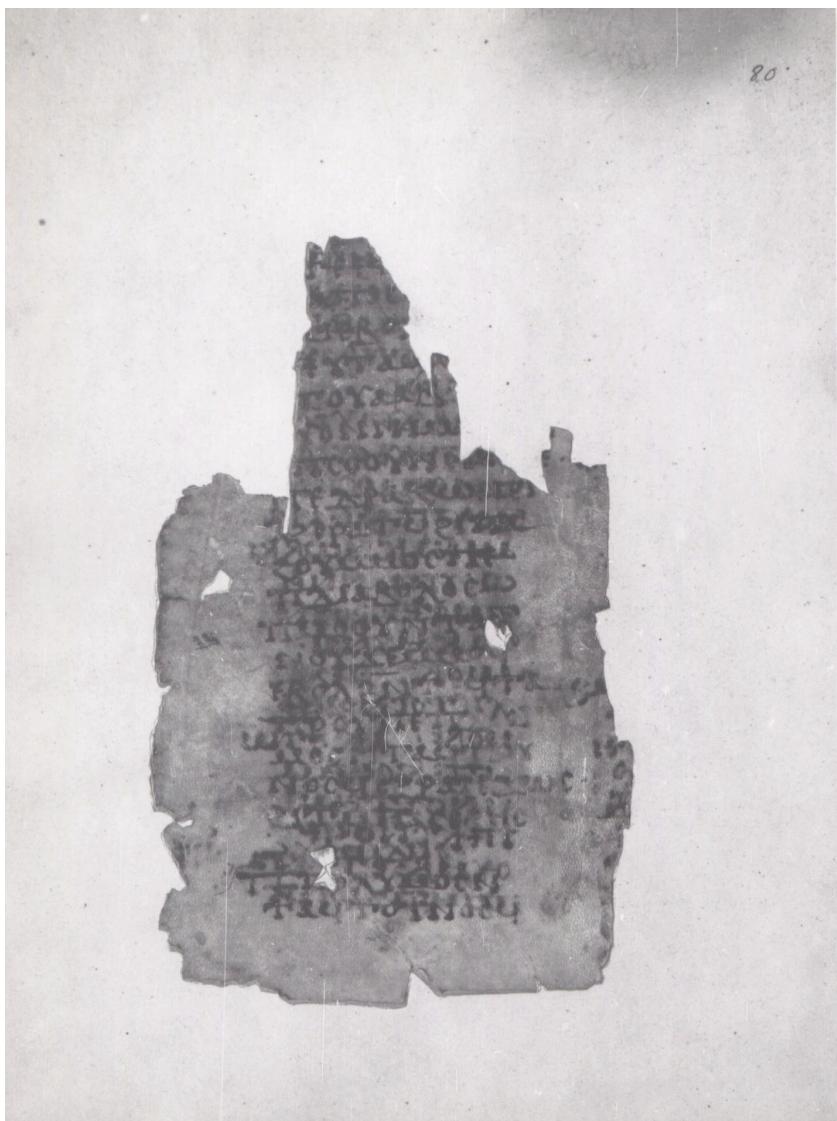
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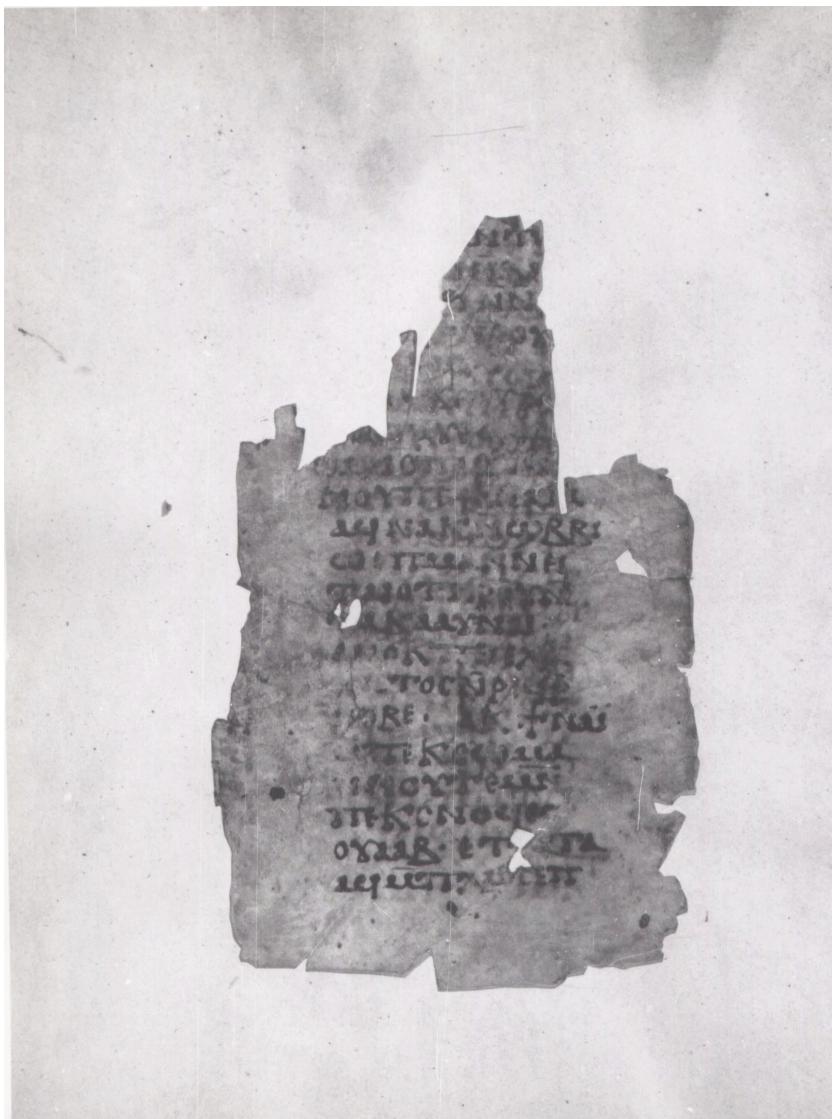
Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 583-609, at 601-602 n. 83; Sala, "From Antiquity and Late Antiquity," 63 n. 16. However, there is no sermon of Timothy (presumably of Alexandria) on the church at Qosqam. Actually, the Paris fragments mentioned by Crum belong to the sermon of Ps-Timothy Aelurus on the Church of the Rock and they were published by Anne Boud'hors and Ramez Boutros together with their Arabic parallels (see Boud'hors – Boutros, *L'homélie sur l'Église du Rocher*, 7 for the directory of the Coptic fragments identified). The confusion has already been remarked in Youssef, "The Rite of the Consecration," 75 n. 15, Idem, "A Coptic Inscription from the Monastery of the Virgin Mary Known as al-Moharraq Monastery," *Göttinger Miszellen* 195 (2003) 109-110, at 110 n. 6, and Idem, review of Boud'hors—Boutros, *L'homélie sur l'Église du Rocher*, *Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte* 42 (2003) 159-161.

<sup>28</sup>) Summary description of the fragment in E. Porcher, "Analyse des manuscrits coptes 131<sup>8</sup> de la Bibliothèque nationale, avec indication des textes bibliques (*suite et fin*)," *Revue d'Egyptologie* 2 (1936) 65-123, at 111.

<sup>29</sup>) Coptic paleography is still lacking the scientific fundamentals which would allow an evaluation of the data. See B. Layton, "Towards a New Coptic Palaeography," in T. Orlando – F. Wisse (eds.), *Acts of the Second International Congress of Coptic Studies. Roma, 22-26 September 1980* (Rome: C.I.M., 1985) 149-158.

<sup>30</sup>) This text was edited for the first time after a papyrus manuscript in Turin in F. Rossi "Trascrizione di un codice Copto del Museo Egizio di Torino," *Memorie della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 2nd ser., 35 (1883) 64-83 (text), 84-90 (Italian translation);

BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, fol. 8or



BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, fol. 8ov

(fol. 81), which belongs to the sermon of Ps-Timothy Aelurus on the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt (CPG 5491; *clavis coptica* 0416).<sup>31</sup> The fragments are not paleographically related and they are coming from different manuscripts. However, although the three fragments have elements in common, I think that their consecutive arrangement in the volume BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup> is nothing else than a fortuitous coincidence. Émile Amélineau, the one who organized the Bibliothèque Nationale fragments from the Monastery of Atripe in thirty-nine thick volumes at the end of 19th century, could not have known their identity being the case that, with the sole exception of BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, fol. 79, they belong to texts which had been published only later.<sup>32</sup>

Returning now to the homily on the flight to Egypt which interests us here, it must be pointed out that the text of the Paris fragment belongs to a part of the sermon which precedes the vision of Theophilus. Thus, it logically comes from the long recension since the short one omits this section of the text.

The recto (hair side of the skin) contains twenty-one damaged lines of the left-hand column. Only a few traces of letters, mostly illegible, have survived on the second column. The legible text of the better preserved column offers the concluding remarks of an allegorical interpretation of Revelation chap. 12. The author tries to show that the woman with the child, who is persecuted by the dragon and takes refuge in a mountain, corresponds to the episode of the flight of Mary and Jesus to the "holy

reprinted in Idem, *I papiri copti del Museo Egizio di Torino* vol. 1 (Torino: Ermanno Loescher, 1887); N. Russell, *Theophilus of Alexandria* (Early Church Fathers; London – New York: Routledge, 2007) 63-70 (English translation from Italian). My new edition, based on all the available manuscript witnesses currently known, appeared in A. Suciu, "Ps.-Theophili Alexandrini Sermo de Cruce et Latrone (CPG 2622): Edition of Pierpont Morgan M595 with Parallels and Translation," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum—Journal of Ancient Christianity* 16 (2012) 181-225. On the identification of the fragment BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, fol. 79 see E. Lucchesi, "Identification de P. Vindob. K. 2644," *Orientalia* 76 (2007) 174-175.

<sup>31</sup> See note 6 supra.

<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, as the anonymous reviewer of the present paper remarked, the possibility that Amélineau actually knew the identity of the three fragments cannot be totally ruled out. Indeed, he had access to the Arabic version of the Vision of Theophilus in the manuscripts BnF arabe 73 and BnF arabe 155. See G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes. Première partie: Manuscrits chrétiens* vol. 1: N<sup>o</sup>s 1-323 (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1972) 54, 131. However, none of the three fragments is identified in Amélineau's *Catalogue des manuscrits coptes de la Bibliothèque nationale* (1890), deposited at the Département des manuscrits orientaux of the National Library of France.

mountain” of Qosqam. Thus, the woman who gave birth to the child who shall rule the nations with a rod of iron is the representation of Mary. The sun, the moon and the crown of twelve stars which adorns her head are Christ, John the Baptist, and the twelve apostles, respectively. The dragon who attacks the woman is Satan, while the water cast out of his mouth is the anger of Herod, which led to the massacre of the innocents. The first undamaged lines on the recto of BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, fol. 80 read πεδρακων εταχερατη̄ ̄σιπαχογ̄ ̄τημος πε παιαβολος (“the dragon which stands behind her is the Devil”). They are parallel to the Arabic **وَالَّتِيْنَ الَّذِيْ وَقَفَ خَلْفَهَا هُوَ الشَّيْطَانُ**<sup>33</sup> and the Ethiopic **ወከዥ፡ ከድገት፡ ስደግ፡ ወአቶ፡**<sup>34</sup> The remaining part of the recto is quite difficult to decipher due to the translucent aspect of the parchment, which often make the letters on the verso appear intercalated with those on the other side. However, the sentence πμοογ̄ ̄νταቁኖγጀ ተሞቅ ማዬል ሽተቁጥጥሬ ማ ማለመ ማስቀመጥ ማዬል ማስቀመጥ ማስቀመጥ ማስቀመጥ (“the water that he cast out of his mouth is the pestilence which he incited against her through the impious Herod”), which occurs on lines 12-19, is fairly readable. Except for some minor variant readings, which do not jeopardize the meaning of the sentence, we find the same phrase in Arabic **وَالْمَاءُ الَّذِيْ قَذَفَ مِنْ فَاهَةِ خَلْفَهَا هُوَ الْأَسْطَهَادُ الَّذِيْ مِنْ قَبْلِ هِيرَودِسِ**<sup>35</sup> and also in Ethiopic: **ወማድ፡ ምክዥ፡ ከድገት፡ መዬት፡ ወአቶ፡ ከወዬአ፡ ከምሂረድ፡** (“And the water spilled out from his mouth is the anger that came out of Herod”).<sup>36</sup> The column ends abruptly after this with the words ππολγμος ̄νταቁኖγጀ [...] (“The battle which he stirred up [...]”), which are present also in the Arabic and the Ethiopic versions of Ps-Theophilus’ sermon.

The fragment’s verso (i.e. the flesh side) preserves the inferior part of the right-hand column, with twenty-one lines of text more or less damaged. In this section of the homily, Ps-Theophilus underlines that he is ruling the church in a period of stability, when the peace prevails and all enemies of the church have been vanquished. Besides, God established a faithful Christian emperor, like Theodosius. The author is asking rhetorically how could he praise Christ properly for all the honors he received. The *explicit* **ἀνοκ πειελαχιστος ἑρεψῆνοβε· ακτὴ ναὶ ተጠቃውማ ንኖህተ ተጠቃውሙ**

<sup>33)</sup> Guidi, “La omelia di Teofilo I,” 444.

<sup>34)</sup> Conti Rossini, “Il discorso su Monte Coscam,” 405, line 95.

<sup>35)</sup> Guidi, “La omelia di Teofilo I,” 444.

<sup>36)</sup> Conti Rossini, “Il discorso su Monte Coscam,” 405, lines 95-96.

ετογαλα· ετρατα· μπλαοс εп[...] (“... me, this wretched sinner. You granted me your divine body and your holy blood in order to give it to the people [...]”) corresponds to the Arabic التى اعطيتني انا هو الحقير الخاطئ<sup>37</sup> and the Ethiopic አሁን፡ ተወስኑ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ወደም፡ ንጂ፡ አሁን፡ ስም፡ ለአሁን፡<sup>38</sup>

Finally, it is interesting to note that the name of the speaker is not revealed, the author calling himself, in an act of humble obedience, “me, this wretched sinner”. If the Arabic and the Ethiopic versions harmonize with the Coptic text at this point, the Syriac version offers a different *lectio*: “me, the wretched and the sinner *Theophilus* (ወረዳዊሁ).” Had our Coptic fragment contained the same variant, it would have supplied an important clue which could make its identification to occur much earlier. But “better than never is late.”

Edition of BnF Copte 131<sup>8</sup>, fol. 80

<i>recto</i>	<i>verso</i>
[ ]†εν[ ]	[ ]ΝΤ[ ]
[ ]ῆλπος[τολοс]	[ ]ῆλ[ά]
[ ]ει εβολ[ ]	[βολοс] ḥnñ[ ]
[ π]εγταω[εοειω]	[ ]τηρογ[ ]
[ε]τογαλ[ ]	[ ]..γ[ ]
[ο]γονηη[ ]	[ειη]άχε ογ η[άκ]
[ ]παοογη ητ[η]ε	[ ].γε..[ ]
πεδρακων εт	ω ḥ παχοειс
αχερατ̄η ςπα	η ογ πε †ната
σογηη мос πε	άγηη нак ḥввві
πλιаволос·	ω εтіма ннсі
πмооуηη та	тако тироуηη
ноγдєηη миоц	такааγηη наї·
евол շնтевта	анок пеіела
про πε πλои	хистос ḥреçр
мосηηη тацтоу	нове· ак†η наї
нос̄ есрдї ежвс	μπεκсѡмѧ
շїтнпасевис	нноյтє мн
շнрѡднс·	пексноц εт
пполуγмосηη	ογааб εтрапа
тацтоγнос̄	άγηη мплаос εп

<sup>37</sup> Guidi, “La omelia di Teofilo I,” 445.

<sup>38</sup> Conti Rossini, “Il discorso su Monte Coscam,” lines 110-111.

## TRANSLATION:

*recto:* [...] apostles (ἀπόστολος) [...] [...] their pure preaching [...] everyone [...] the knowledge of truth. The dragon (δράκων) which stands behind her is the Devil (διάβολος). The water that he cast out of his mouth is the pestilence (λοιμός) which he incited against her through the impious (ἀσεβής) Herod. The battle (πόλεμος) which he stirred up [...]

*verso:* [...] of the Devil (διάβολος) and all the [...]. What shall I say to you [...] O, Jesus, my Lord [...], or (ἢ) what shall I give you in recompense for all these favors that you have done to me, this wretched (ἐλάχιστος) sinner? You granted me your divine body (σῶμα) and your holy blood in order to give it to the people (λαός) [...]

## ARABIC TEXT AND TRANSLATION:<sup>39</sup>

(هُمَا بَيْنَ الرُّسُلِ هُوَلَاءِ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِ بَشْرَاهُمُ الطَّاهِرُ تَقْدِمُ كُلُّ أَحَدٍ إِلَى مَعْرِفَةِ الْحَقِّ)  
وَالَّتِينَ الَّذِي وَقَفَ خَلْفَهَا هُوَ الشَّيْطَانُ وَالْمَاءُ الَّذِي قَدَّفَهُ مِنْ فَأْةِ خَلْفَهَا فَهُوَ الْأَضْطَهَادُ  
الَّذِي مِنْ قَبْلِ هِيرَودِسْ وَالْحَرْبُ الَّذِي الْقَاتِلُ (عَلَى سَيِّرِ نَسْلِهَا) [...] )  
جَمِيعُ الْفَنَاطِسِ الشَّيْطَانِيَّةِ وَكُلُّ اهْتِمَامٍ بِاللَّبِيْسِ الْلَّعِيْنِ  
وَمَاذَا الْقَوْلُ عَنْكَ وَامْدِحْكَ بِأَكْرَامَةٍ وَمَاذَا عَلِيَّةٍ عَوْضُ هَذِهِ الْكَرَامَاتِ الَّتِي أُعْطَيْتَنِي إِنَّا  
هُوَ الْحَقِيرُ الْخَاطِيِّ . اعْطَيْتَنِي جَسَدَكَ الْأَلِيِّ وَدَمَكَ الطَّاهِرَ لَا عَطِيَّةٌ لِشَعْبِكَ [...] )

(...those are our fathers the apostles, through their pure preaching everyone approached to the knowledge of truth.) The dragon who stood behind her is Satan. The water which he spit out of his mouth towards her is the persecution which came out of Herod. The war which he cast (against all her offspring) [...] all the satanic illusions and everything that the Devil cares about. What can I say about you and how can I praise you with honor? What is the reward of these honors which you gave me, the wretched sinner? You grant me your holy flesh and your pure blood in order to give them to your people...

## ETHIOPIC TEXT AND TRANSLATION:<sup>40</sup>

(አጥርያት፡ እመንቱ፡ ለበኢትዮጵያውያ፡ በእ፡ እስካብ፡ ወሰን፡ ፍጥ፡ ጥናቁ፡  
ወከራለ፡ ከደንጋጭ፡ ለይጣን፡ ወእቱ፡ መማይ፡ ለከው፡ እምአኅሁ፡ መዕት፡ ወእቱ፡  
ዘወስት፡ እምሂረድስ፡ ወወስት፡ ከወደም፡ (ለወለ፡ እገዛቃለሁ፡) [...] (ከላ፡ መናግንት፡  
ሰይጣን፡ ወቻከባለ፡ ዓለም፡) የሚት፡ እብል፡ ወጥምት፡ እስከም፡ ለአጻዘላ፡ ለብኅት፡  
ዘገበ፡ ለተ፡ ዘንተ፡ ቴጋለ፡ እ፡ እናይ፡ ወአባለ፡ ከወሁኑ፡ ሚጋሁ፡ ቅጋስ፡  
መደም፡ ጥናቁ፡ ከመ፡ እሁወሙ፡ ለአጻዘለ፡

<sup>39</sup>) Arabic text taken from Guidi, "La omelia di Teofilo I," 444-445.

<sup>40</sup>) Ethiopic text taken from Conti Rossini, "Il discorso su Monte Coscam," 405.

(... the apostles, through whom the nations entered the way of truth.) The dragon behind her was the Devil. The water spilled out from his mouth is the anger that came out of Herod. The battle which he cast (against her relatives...). [...] (all the tricks of the Devil and the troubles of this world). What shall I say and how shall I reward the Lord of Glory, who made all this for me, the wretched and the sinner, to him who granted me his holy flesh and pure blood in order to give [them] to the people ...