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Journal of the Italian Research Group on
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24

2018

*The Coptic Book: Codicological Features,
Places of Production, Intellectual Trends*



Morcelliana

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1. Contributi

1.1 Sezioni monografiche

1.1.1 The Coptic Book: Codicological Features, Places of Production, Intellectual Trends

Introduction

by
Paola Buzi

The theme section of this issue of *Adamantius* collects the proceedings of the international conference *The Coptic book between the 6th and the 8th centuries: codicological features, places of production, intellectual trends* (Rome, “Sapienza” Università di Roma – Academia Belgica, 21-22 September 2017)¹, organized within the scientific activities of the ERC project “PATHs - Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature. Literary Texts in their Geographical Context: Production, Copying, Usage, Dissemination and Storage”, plus two more contributions – respectively dedicated to the Coptic version of the letter of Athanasius to the monk Dracontius, transmitted by a horizontal roll, and to the Coptic tradition of John Chrysostom’s homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews – that, although exceeding the chronological limits dealt with the conference, are extremely relevant for the reconstruction of the development of the Christian Egyptian book and literary tradition.

It is important to stress that the term ‘book’ is meant here both as a material object – with its specific codicological and palaeographic features –² and as a carrier of texts and intellectual products. Moreover, it must be clear that the adjective “Coptic” is used in this context to refer to the entire Late Antique Christian Egyptian book production, therefore written also in Greek, and not only to books that transmit texts in the Coptic language.

The choice of dedicating a conference – the first of the “PATHs” project – to the book production between the 6th and the 8th centuries was not fortuitous: despite the important recent progresses made in the understanding of this period of the history of the Coptic book³ – and of the book in general, since Egypt can be considered a real laboratory of the physical features of codices, in terms of formats, quire systems, bookbindings, combination and arrangement of texts –, much remains to be clarified and explored, such as the nature of

¹ ERC Advanced Grant (2015) project n° 687567, hosted by “Sapienza” Università di Roma (paths.uniroma1.it; <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu>). See P. BUZI, *Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature: Literary Texts in Their Geographical Context; Production, Copying, Usage, Dissemination and Storage (PATHs)*, *Early Christianity* 8 (2017), 507-516; P. BUZI – J. BOGDANI – N. CARLIG – M. GIORDA – A. SOLDATI, “*Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths*”: A New International project on Coptic Literature, *Rivista del Museo Egizio* 1 (2017) [<https://rivista.museoegizio.it/>]; P. BUZI – F. BERNO – J. BOGDANI, *The ‘PATHs’ Project: an Effort to Represent the Physical Dimension of Coptic Literary Production (Third–Eleventh centuries)*, *Comparative Oriental Manuscripts Studies Bulletin* 4.1 (???) 39-58.

² More and more specialists of manuscripts and early printed books, of various cultural areas and disciplines, are now studying the textual/cultural aspects of books in strict relation with their physical features, internal and external. See for instance B.J. FLEMING, *The Materiality of South Asian Manuscripts from the University of Pennsylvania MS Coll. 390 and the Rāmamālā Library in Bangladesh*, *Manuscript Studies* 1.1 (Spring 2017) 3-26, and B. WAGNER, M. REED (eds.), *Early Printed Books as Material Objects. Proceeding of the Conference Organized by the IFLA Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Munich, 19-21 August 2009*, Berlin-Munich 2010.

³ For the case of Thebes see A. BOUD’HORS, *À la recherche des manuscrits coptes de la région thébaine*, in *From Gnostics to Monastics. Studies in Coptic and Early Christianity in Honor of Bentley Layton*, ed. D. BRAKKE - S.J. DAVIS - S. EMMEL, Leuven - Paris, Bristol (CT) 2017, 175-212; EAD., *Copie et circulation des livres dans la région thébaine (VII^e-VIII^e siècles)*, in *“Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que village...” Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romain et byzantine*, ed. A. DELATTRE, P. HEILPORN, Brussels 2008, 149-161; EAD., *Copyist and Scribe: Two Professions for a Single Man? Palaeographical and Linguistic Observations on Some Practices of the Theban Region According to Coptic Texts from the Seventh and Eighth Centuries*, in *Scribal Repertoires in Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Early Islamic Period*, ed. J. CROMWELL - E. GROSSMAN, Oxford 2017, 274-295.

libraries and their criteria of selection, the tastes and the interests that were behind their formation, but also the evolution in the making of the codex and the professional competences involved⁴. The scant information concerning all these aspects that are provided by well-known 9th-11th-century libraries in fact is even poorer for previous periods.

A better knowledge of this phase of the Coptic book production will contribute to the definitive abandonment of the misleading praxis for using the most famous mediaeval libraries – White Monastery, Monastery of the Archangel Michael (Hamūli), Monastery of Macarius (Scetis) – as a model and a meter on which to measure the entire history of Coptic manuscript tradition.

Moreover, also thanks to recent discoveries due to active archaeological excavations, it appears clearer and clearer that it is possible to talk about a “regionality of the book production”, being the area of Thebes one of the most generous in providing new finds consisting of books, in all possible forms and writing supports, that shed light on the cultural trainings and literary tastes of the inhabitants of urban settlements (such as Jeme) and of a constellation of different forms of ‘monasteries’ (from essential and remote hermitages to well-organized *topoi*).

Whenever possible, therefore, it becomes essential to take into consideration the place(s) where a text was copied and a book was manufactured and stored and has circulated. In this way, cultural orientations and literary tastes in specific areas of Egypt will be singled out, while changes in the manufacture of codices will emerge, in a manuscript tradition that offers the oldest witnesses for the use of codex.

The theme section is articulated in three parts. The first – *Literary culture(s), and book production in Egypt between the 4th and the 10th centuries* – that aims at analyzing different libraries and regional milieus of Late Antique and early Mediaeval Egypt, is opened by an article of Gianfranco Agosti, which deals with the common ground of Greek and Coptic *paideia*, comparing the Late Antique Greek learned poetry with the contemporary Coptic hagiographic production. Then Sofía Torallas Tovar discusses one of the most important bibliographical discoveries of the last years, a papyrus roll containing Athanasius of Alexandria’s *Letter to Dracontius* in Coptic version, that much adds to our knowledge of the cultural activities of early Egyptian Church institutions. The section continues with a contribution of Paola Buzi dedicated to the ancient library of the cathedral of This, consisting of a number of Coptic codices dating to the end of the 7th century or the beginning of the 8th, preserved in the Egyptian Museum, Turin, and now the object of a complete re-examination within the activities of the “PATHs” project, with particular attention to ancient restorations and re-writings and the codicological features. The criteria of selection and arrangement of the works of two important Christian libraries of early mediaeval Egypt, that of the Monastery of Apa Shenoute and that of the Monastery of Macarius, which represent different manners of preservation of the Coptic literary tradition, are the object of Tito Orlandi’s contribution. Lastly, the section offers an accurate *status quaestionis* of the reception of John Chrysostom’s homilies dedicated to the Epistle to the Hebrews (Francesco Berio).

The second section – *Coptic Books from the Theban region* – takes its inspiration from the discovery of the three Theban Coptic books of the so-called pit MMA 1152 by Tomasz Górecki and his team⁵, whose provenance is archaeologically well documented, a fact of great importance for a project like “PATHs”, that aims at analysing the Coptic book in strict relation to the geo-archaeological context. The section, however, is opened by a more general and at the same time very accurate overview of the literary manuscripts, in Greek and Coptic, found in Thebes, with a particular attention to their archaeological contexts (Elisabeth R. O’Connell). This is followed by a contribution on one of the most interesting multiple-text manuscripts of the Theban area, *P. Bodmer 58*, as far as the content and the physical aspects are concerned (Anne Boud’hors).

⁴ In this respect, the contribution of A. MARAVELA, *Monastic book production in Christian Egypt*, in *Spätantike Bibliotheken. Leben und Lesen in den frühen Klöstern Ägyptens*, ed. H. FROSCHAUER, C.E. RÖMER, Wien 2008, 25-38 is very useful.

⁵ T. GÓRECKI, *Sheikh Abd el-Gurna (Hermitage in Tomb 1152). Preliminary Report, 2005*, *Polish Archaeological Mission 22* (2017) 263-274; ID., *Sheikh Abd el-Gurna*, in A. MAJEWSKA, *Seventy Years of Polish Archaeology in Egypt. Catalogue of the Exhibition. Egyptian Museum in Cairo, 21 October - 21 November 2007*, Warsaw 2017, 176-181; ID., ‘It might come in useful’: *Scavenging among the Monks from the Hermitage in MMA 1152*, *Étude et Travaux 27* (2014) 129-150.

Most of the contributions of this section are, therefore dedicated, to the archaeological context of discovery (this is the case of the article written by Tomasz Górecki† and Ewa Wipszycka), to the texts that are transmitted by the codices (Renate Dekker, Alberto Camplani with the collaboration of Federico Contardi, Przemysław Piwowarczyk), to their codicological features (Nathan Carlig), to the liturgical aspects of the historical contexts (Agnes Mihálykó), and to scribal subscriptions (Agostino Soldati).

Lastly, the third sections contain an article by Julian Bogdani that aims at showing how digital humanities, with their broad and diversified tools and methodologies, can contribute to a better knowledge of Late Antiquity, notably of Christian Egyptian manuscript and literary production in its geographical context.

A few days before the conference, we received the sad news of the passing of Mons. Paul Canart, an inspirer and guide for several of the authors of this theme section. He had been invited to take part in the conference as discussant and therefore I find it appropriate and dutiful to celebrate his memory with a brief *ricordo* of his human and scientific qualities by Marilena Maniaci. It is our way to thank him for his extraordinary teachings in the fields of codicology and palaeography.

Paola Buzi

ERC Advanced Grant 2015 Principal Investigator:

«PATHs - Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: an Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature.

Literary Texts in their Geographical Context.

Production, Copying, Usage, Dissemination and Storage»

One of the oldest extant Coptic ‘colophons’

by
Agostino Soldati

Ms. Cairo, Coptic Museum, inv. 13488, bears at least two paratexts on the *recto* of its conclusive leaf (f. 75), the first of which (ll. 1-7) offers noteworthy information about the context where such codex, in a period conterminous to its realization, would have been circulating (Fig. 1). It consists of seven lines written in the upper portion of the leaf through a perspicuous documentary hand, whose letters appear tenuously sloping rightward and still exhibit wholly capital features, if one excepts the minuscule traits of the η. Its use of diacritical signs, as was customary around the beginning of the Islamic era, seems to be characterized by an apparently random versatility. The τρήματα occur both in their usual shape (l. 3-4: ραπογ|χαϊ) and stylized in a tiny cusp (l. 1: in the opening demonstrative παῖ), whereas the indicators of syllabic morpheme, when marked, appear chiefly as a grave accent, as well as a short horizontal *lineola* (e.g. l. 5: ῥπεφνα; l. 6: ἵουεφρηνη). In a single case the sound is rendered through a mere dot (l. 3: ἵλχημε).

As far as the text is concerned, the examination of some rather clear photographs of the leaf bounteously provided by the Polish colleagues allows a few meek improvements to its albeit commendable *editio princeps* which Alberto Camplani and Federico Contardi offered in their delectable foretaste of the sizable Theban manuscript². If the omitted transcription of the intensifying preposition ε- following ερογν and prefixed to τκα|θολικη εκκλησια is to be considered as a trivial misprint, the phrase χεκασε επχοεις | ιϛ πεχϛ ῥπεφνα (ll. 4-5) entails a somehow puzzling hindrance, due to the unexpected ‘Uyropolitan’ coloring χεκα(α)σε and, above all, to the dubious prefix ε- foregoing the nominal subject πχοεις. Such ε- in this position could only be interpreted as a circumstantial or ‘second tense’ converter, neither of them suiting the preceding final conjunction χεκασε. A closer inspection of the available pictures reveals both an ε- before τκα|θολικη and the husk of a ρ – the lower ending of the stem and traces of the loop – between the pretended χεκασε επχοεις. Thus, an expected ερογν ετκα|θολικη εκκλησια as well as a normative third future final construction χεκαε ερεπχοεις ερεπχοεις ῥπεφνα introduced by the habitual Ṣa’īdic form χεκαε are to be definitely restored.

The text of the first “colophon” preserved by f. 75 could consequently be transcribed as follows:

παῖπε πχωωμε ἵταπετρος
ἵπεπερε τλααφ ερογν ετκα-
θολικη εκκλησια ἵλχημε ραπογ-
χαῖ ἵτεφγχη χεκαε ερεπχοεις
5 ιϛ πεχϛ ῥπεφνα ἵημαφ ρἵηροογ
ἵπεφσμηωμε ἵουεφρηνη ρα-
μην

2. ἵπεπερι *ed. pr.*

ερογν τκαθολικη *ed. pr.*

4. χεκασε επχοεις *ed. pr.*

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¹ About these matters of Coptic orthography, see now A. BOUD’HORS, *L’apport des signes diacritiques à la codicologie copte*, in to be published in *Signes dans les textes. Continuités et ruptures des pratiques sribales en Égypte pharaonique, gréco-romaine et byzantine. Actes du colloque international de Liège (2-4 juin 2016)*, ed. N. CARLIG, G. LESCUYER, A. MOTTE, N. SOJIC (Papyrologica Leodiensia 9), Liège.

² A. CAMPLANI – F. CONTARDI, *The Canons attributed to Basil of Caesarea. A new Coptic codex*, in *Coptic Society, Literature and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times*. Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Rome, September 17th-22nd, 2012, and Plenary Reports of the Ninth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Cairo, September 15th-19th, 2008, ed. P. BUZI, A. CAMPLANI, F. CONTARDI, Leuven-Paris-Bristol 2016, 797-992: 983. Further philological evaluation of the Theban witness in Eid., *Remarks on the Textual Contribution of the Coptic Codices preserving the Canons of Saint Basil, with Edition of the Ordination Rite of the Bishop* (Canon 46), in *Philologie, herméneutique et histoire des textes entre Orient et Occident. Mélanges en hommage à Sever J. Voicu*, ed. F.P. BARONE, C. MACÉ, P.A. UBIERNA (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia 73), Turnhout 2017, 139-159.

«This is the book which Petros | of Pepere gave to the catholic church (καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία) of Ĝēme for the relea|se of his soul (ψυχὴ) in order that the Lord | Jesus the Christ might have mercy of him in the day | of his visitation in peace (εἰρήνη), a|men».

Beyond the aforementioned substantial amendments, the examination of the photographs could also raise doubts about the validity of reading ἡ-πε(-)περι for the proper name following the onomastic of the donor, πετρος. Such a plausible patronymic, expressed through a simple genitive instead of the expected *status constructus* π-ωνη-, seems rather to be πε(-)περε, if one considers the tendency of this hand to trace a sort of ε whose ring is reduced to a vertical stroke imperceptibly curved at the lower end, as it can be observed in the closely subsequent instance of ερογν. As far as this alleageable anthroponym is concerned, Πέπερι is attested in Egyptian context thanks to a Byzantine account of pounds (O.Eleph. DAIK 133, 1; 5th-6th cent. CE)³, and also by the likely relevant hypocoristic Πεπερούς/Ππερούς, which occurs in papyrus documents of the late Roman period (P.Athen. 54, 20 and, respectively, P.Oxf. 15, 4; 20; 22)⁴. Related instances are to be gleaned also from the Greek Orient epigraphy of the Roman period: the *alias* of a lost name ὁ κ(αἰ) Ππερᾶς preserved by a Bithynian inscription (TAM IV, 1 42, 14; Nicomedia)⁵, as well as the name Αὐρήλιος Ππερᾶς borne by both men (father and son) attested by a Pisidian one (TAM III, 1 658, 2; Nicomedia)⁶. Nor the name Ππερᾶς (its papyrological instances are: P.Laur. III 98r, 6; P.Tebt. II 424, 1, both 3rd cent. CE) is unknown to Latin documentation, being attested by an inscription from *Dacia Superior* (IDR III, 1 26, 4, 2nd-3rd cent. CE), where a certain *Piper(as)* is cited⁷. As regards the origin of the aforementioned onomastic evidence, it seems to point to a conjectural *Berufsnamen* *πεπερᾶς/ππερᾶς, *piperarius*, to which also some medieval and modern Greek family names (e.g. Ππέρας/Ππεράς, Πέπερας/Πεπεράς etc.) could easily be referred⁸. Instead of the Indian loanword for the spice name, one could rather discern in πε(-)περε a Coptic outcome of the Greek πέπειρος, echoing e.g. the much older Ππερίας of a silver *lamella* from Macedonian Aigai (SEG XLVI 831, 1st half of the 5th cent. BC). Actually, it is doubtful whether a Coptic name as ππεριος occurring in a sherd recovered at Madīnat Hābū (O.Medinet Habu Copt. 25, 1)⁹ – namely within a cultural and chronological context decisively akin to the one in which the Theban codex of *Canones* was copied and was circulating – is to be referred to the name of the pepper or to the learned Greek adjective for “ripe”. Only an advantageous autoptic examination of the leaf will uphold the legitimacy of the aforesaid surmises or rather will disclose that the apparently overblown spacing between the second (ε) and the third (π) letter would not conceal a faint ρ. In that case the patronymic of the donor would have been a Coptic *Verschreibung* of the Greek Πορφύριος similar to the already known (πε)περιπος¹⁰. As warned in advance by the segmentation employed, it behooves us to consider that the proper name could be preceded by the article πε-: ἡ-πε-περε would therefore be a new occurrence of the equally already attested περε/-ι. On the other hand, the aforesaid dearth of an unequivocal π-ωνη- introducing the name requires us to contemplate the possibility that the genitive ἡ-πε(-)περε could rather be the toponym of the hamlet whence the donor originated, as already sagily suggested by Anne Boud’hors¹¹. In such a case, being περε/-ι, to the best of my knowledge, an undetected

³ The first entry of the list, preserved by an ostrakon, sounds Πέπερι λί(τραί) [.

⁴ In the first document, the name (possibly a virile one, like the others there recorded) occurs in the variant Πε- as entry of a “κατάλογος χρηματικός” that Petropoulos vaguely ascribed to Roman period, in the latter, a “contract concerning an inheritance”, Ππερούς (gen. -οὔτος) is undoubtedly a *nomen muliebris*. In the instance of l. 20, we discern a correction *ex* πεπερουτ[ος].

⁵]νος ὁ κ(αἰ) Ππερᾶς ὁ φιλότιμος.

⁶ A certain Aurelia Nikē, daughter of Agathopous, reserved a multiple grave (σωματοθήκη), to herself as well as τῷ προενημίνῳ αὐτῆς | ἀνδρὶ Αὐρ(ηλίῳ) Ππερᾶ Δοιδου καὶ τῷ νιῷ αὐτῶν Αὐρ(ηλίῳ) Ππερᾶ δῖς.

⁷ The father of the dead child there commemorated is *Piper(as)* | *Timostrati disp(ensatoris)* | *vik(arius)*.

⁸ The word ππερᾶς is perhaps also attested by Egyptian Greek in the meaning of “pepper-pot”, cp. *LJS* p. 1406b, s.h.v.

⁹ Fragment of a short account, the first extant entry of which is ππεριος α.

¹⁰ See *NB Copt.*, 75b.

¹¹ A. BOUD’HORS, *Copie et circulation des livres dans la région thébaine (VIIe-VIIIe siècles)*, in “Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages...” *Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistiques, romaine et byzantine. Actes du colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 2 et 3 décembre 2005*, ed. A. DELATTRE, P. HEILPORN (*Papyrologica Bruxellensia* 34), Bruxelles 2008, 149-161. EAD., *À la recherche des manuscrits coptes de la région thébaine*, in *From Gnostics to Monastics: Studies in Coptic and Early Christianity*, ed. D. BRAKKE, S.J. DAVIS, S. EMMEL (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*), Leuven 2017, 175-212: 193-194. See also P. BUZZI, *Titoli e colofoni: riflessioni sugli elementi paratestuali dei manoscritti copti saidici*, in *Colofoni*

Since the aforesaid remains are so scant, it seems appropriate to expound some evaluation regarding uniquely the text drafted in the upper portion of the page. As we still lack an exhaustive terminological categorization by scholars focused on ancient *Buchwesen*, the denomination ‘colophon’ has been thus far attributed to paratexts of the widest possible variety. If one confines the attention to the field of Coptic studies, a meaningful example of the substantial vagueness of this word is offered by the illustrious *Recueil* of Arnold van Lantschoot, where plenty of paratexts of the very diverging content – conclusive titles, scribal subscriptions, owner’s notes, prayers, obituaries, even mere *lusus calami* – are gathered and masterfully edited. In view of the above, before defining it crudely as a colophon, it seems worthwhile to clarify which typology the text sewing up the Theban codex of the *Canones* does not correspond to. Firstly, it is not a scribal subscription, lacking any mention of the copyist or of the date when his work had been accomplished, and bearing neither any devotional note, nor, obviously, the *explicit* of the work preserved by the manuscript. Our text cannot even be described as a simple owner’s note, since a special stress is laid upon the donor through a turn of phrase which, starting from the subsequent century, was to become a canonical locution within the formulaic repertory of “colophons”¹⁷.

The comparison of the paratext borne by the manuscript recovered at Ṣayḥ ‘Abd al-Qurnah with the only analogous and about coeval evidence allows us to pinpoint the main features marking the *incunabulum* of Coptic “colophons”. Both touchstones are preserved by single leaves kept in the *papyrotheca* of the Museo Egizio of Turin among the Coptic treasures with which Bernardino Drovetti endowed the Piemontese institution in the early 1820’s. The one which is supposed to be the most ancient, is Inv.Prov. 6266, the likely conclusive page of a lost papyrus codex¹⁸. It consists in a terse owner’s note setting forth an ecclesiastical property (ll. 1-2: ⲛⲧⲕⲁⲑⲟⲗⲓⲕⲏ | ⲉⲕⲕⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲧⲓⲛ) followed by the mention of a reader (ⲁⲛⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲏⲥ) who was more probably the donor than the manufacturer of the book. Below the date in Greek, there is a thoroughgoing table of the contents the missing manuscript hosted (l. 21: ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉⲧⲥⲏⲣⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲗⲁⲩⲟⲩⲙⲉ), apparently due to the same bookhand although it resorts to letters of diminished size.

† ⲡⲁⲓⲡⲉ ⲡⲬⲟⲩⲙⲉ ⲛⲧⲕⲁⲑⲟⲗⲓⲕⲏ
 ⲉⲕⲕⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲧⲓⲛ ⲉⲛⲟⲩⲉⲓⲣⲏⲛⲏ
 ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲁⲙⲏⲏ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲓⲉⲟⲣ-
 ⲓⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲗⲁⲕⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲏⲥ
 5 ⲟⲩⲗⲏⲗ ⲉⲗⲟⲓ ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲁⲙⲏⲏ ·
 ⲙⲏⲛⲟⲥ Ⲃⲑⲩⲣ ⲓⲑ ⲧⲣⲓⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲓⲕⲓⲕⲓ(ⲓⲟⲛⲟⲥ).

«This is the book of the catholic | church (καθολική ἐκκλησία) of Tin, in peace (εἰρήνη) | of the God, amen. I am George the least reader (ἀναγνώστης) | pray for me as an act of charity (ἀγάπη), amen | 19th (day) of month Athyr of third indiction».

A more long-winded “colophon” is offered by a dateless single leaf, Inv. Prov. 8548¹⁹. The hand could be easily described as a documentary one. Van Lantschoot, albeit *dubitanter*, assigned it to the 8th or 9th century, but nothing prevents us, in my opinion, from evaluating it as slightly older, that is approximately coeval with the bulk of the Thinite library. The subscription ratified the gift of the equally lost manuscript of unknown content to the monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Thinis (ll. 3-4: ⲉⲡⲓⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲏⲥ ⲁⲛⲁ | [ⲓ]ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲏⲛⲏⲥ ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲧⲓⲛ). As it often occurs in later “colophons”, Christian modesty and faith in divine omniscience (l. 2: ⲡⲬⲟⲩⲉⲓⲥ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲏⲉⲩⲣⲁⲛ) implied the aposiopesis of the identity of the pious widow who presented the book and the relatives, on whose behalf she was entreating:

ⲡⲓⲁⲓⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲣⲏⲧ ⲛⲧⲁⲛⲓⲛ ⲛⲓⲥⲣⲓⲙⲉ ⲙⲓⲡⲉⲩ-
 ⲣⲓⲟⲩⲟ ⲡⲬⲟⲩⲉⲓⲥ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲏⲉⲩⲣⲁⲛ
 ⲁⲥⲓⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲡⲓⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲏⲥ ⲁⲛⲁ
 ⲓⲟⲩⲁⲛⲏⲛⲏⲥ ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲧⲓⲛ ⲉⲁⲡⲟⲩ-

ⲕⲉⲙⲉ, ⲕⲉⲙⲏ, ⲕⲏⲙⲉ, ⲕⲏⲙⲏⲉ, ⲧⲕⲉⲙⲉ, ⲧⲕⲏⲙⲏⲉ, Βοῦ. ⲉⲉⲛⲓ.

¹⁷ The customary phrasing consists of the name of the donor, ⲁⲩⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲉ-, or an equivalent relative form, followed by the mention of the donee religious institution, see the instances indexed in A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil, cit.*, 142b.

¹⁸ VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil, cit.* (n. 8), 180 f., n° CV.

¹⁹ VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil, cit.* (n. 8), 181 f., n° CVI.

- 5 Ⲭⲁⲓⲛ ⲛⲧⲉ[ϭ]ϯϥϫⲏ ⲛⲓⲛⲛⲉϭⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟϥ
 ⲛⲓⲗⲁⲓ ⲛⲛⲛⲉϭⲟⲛⲣⲉ ⲛⲛⲛⲉϭⲣⲟⲙⲉ
 ⲧⲓⲛⲣⲟϥ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲛⲉϥⲣⲁⲛ ⲕⲉⲕⲁϥ ⲉⲣⲉ-
 ⲡⲛⲟϥⲧⲉ ⲛⲓⲛⲡⲣⲁⲗⲓⲟϥ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲓⲱⲗⲁⲛ-
 ⲛⲓⲛϥ ⲛⲁϭⲓⲟϥ ⲉⲣⲟⲟϥ ⲛⲓⲛⲡⲉⲕⲗⲏ-
 10 ⲣⲓⲟϥ ⲧⲏⲣ[ϭ] ⲛⲓⲛⲡⲉⲓϥⲛⲓ ⲧⲏⲣϭ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ-
 ⲡⲉⲓⲕⲓⲟϥ ⲛⲁⲃⲣⲁⲗⲁⲛ ⲛⲓⲓϭⲁⲕ ⲛⲓ-
 ⲓⲁⲓⲕⲟⲃⲱ ⲗⲓⲛⲟϥⲉⲣⲏⲏⲏ ⲗⲁⲙⲏⲏ.

«This is the vow of which a certain woman took | care – The Lord God knows their names – | she put it upon to the place (τόπος) of the Saint Apa | John the Baptist of Tin for the relea|se of her soul (ψυχή) with (that of) her blessed (μακάριος) | husband, with (that of) her sons, with (that of) her men, | all according to their names, in order that might | God with the Saint (ἅγιος) Apa Joh|n bless them with the cler|gy (κλήρος) all, with their house all according | to the blessing of Abraham, with Isaac, with | Jacob in peace (εἰρήνη), amen».

The paratext concluding the Theban codex of the pseudo-Basilian *Canons* and the couple preserved in the Turinese collection, not to mention their uneven extent as well as the diverse eulogies to which they have recourse, exhibit an undeniable resemblance. This is also likely due to their chronological congruity and to their provenance from neighboring contexts. Each one begins with the same demonstrative *tournaire* (ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲕⲱⲱⲙⲉ, ⲡⲓⲗⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲉⲣⲏⲧ) in order to highlight their unavoidable material connection with the book they sew up²⁰. Hints at the confection of the book or at the identity of the copyist are lacking anyhow. Irrespective of the presence or absence of a forthright mention of the benefactor, a stable and main feature of these texts is the enunciation of the ecclesiastical institute receiving the gift, even though they could not be demoted to trivial owner’s notes. Despite the fact that it might seem untoward to develop a hypothesis with the comfort of such a scarce evidence, I am inclined to believe that these three documents could actually depict what Coptic ‘colophons’ were before the *scriptorium* of Toutōn dictated its broadly accepted and long-lasting stylistic precepts. They were, presumptively, nothing more than concise *Schenkungsurkunden*, necessarily bound, even on a physical level, to the object whose charitable gift they sanctioned.

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Abstract. The article offers a new edition with some amendments of the colophon preserved by the last leaf of ms. Cairo, Coptic Museum, inv. 13488. Together with two similar paratexts belonging to the Turinese library of Thi(ni)s, the colophon of the manuscript of Šayḥ ‘Abd al-Qurnah is one of the most ancient example of this documentary genre within the extant Coptic Schrifttum.

Keywords. Coptic Colophons. Coptic codices. Katholike ekklesia.

²⁰ Comparable openings with the “deictic” pronoun and the relative clause (ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲕⲱⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲓⲛⲉ-) are to be found, for instance in Ms. Cairo, Ifao, fr. 1v = A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil*, cit., LXXI, 1 (Aḥmīm?, 9th-10th cent.); Ms. Cairo, E. M. inv. 9270, fol. 2v = A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil*, cit., LXXII, 1 (Aḥmīm?, 9th-10th cent.); Ms. Leiden, Rijksmuseum, Insigner n° 81, fol. 3r = A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil*, cit., LXXIII A, 1 (Aḥmīm, AD 1000 circa); Ms. London, BL Or. 6781, fol. 35v = A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil*, cit., LXXXIV A, 1 (? , AD 983 : ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲉⲣⲏⲧ ⲁϥⲱ ⲡⲁⲱⲣⲟⲛ | ⲉⲛⲁⲡⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲛ ⲛⲧⲁ-); Ms. Paris, BNF Copte 1321, fol. 70r = A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil*, cit., LXXXV A, 1 (? , AD 985-986). The same verbiage occurs also in some final titles: e.g. A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Recueil*, cit., II A, 1 (ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲓⲱⲟϥ ⲕⲧⲗ.).