

# ADAMANTIUS

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Rivista del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su  
“Origene e la tradizione alessandrina”

Journal of the Italian Research Group on  
“Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition”

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 6<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries: codicological features, places of production, intellectual trends* (Rome, “Sapienza” Università di Roma – Academia Belgica, 21-22 September 2017)<sup>1</sup>, 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 –<sup>2</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries was not fortuitous: despite the important recent progresses made in the understanding of this period of the history of the Coptic book<sup>3</sup> – 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

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<sup>1</sup> ERC Advanced Grant (2015) project n° 687567, hosted by “Sapienza” Università di Roma ([paths.uniroma1.it](http://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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>e</sup>-VIII<sup>e</sup> 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 involved<sup>4</sup>. The scant information concerning all these aspects that are provided by well-known 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>-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 4<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 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 team<sup>5</sup>, 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).

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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’: *Scavening 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»

**The Canons Attributed to Basil of Caesarea  
in the Context of the Canonical Literature Preserved in Coptic**

by

Alberto Camplani – Federico Contardi\*

1. A REPORT ON THE EDITION OF THE CANONS OF BASIL

Through two articles published respectively in 2016 and 2017<sup>1</sup> the authors of the present contribution informed the scientific community about the discovery of a new complete Coptic papyrus codex containing the *Canons* attributed to Basil of Caesarea (CPG 2973, *Clavis coptica* 0090<sup>2</sup>, here abbreviated with ‘CanBas’), which can be dated to the end of the seventh century or the beginning of the eighth century<sup>3</sup>, as well as its textual significance in comparison with the other fragmentary codices preserving the work. The discovery was due to the Polish Archaeological Mission in Thebaid<sup>4</sup>. In the meantime, in the framework of the ERC ‘PATHs’, Nathan Carlig and Paola Buzi have improved our knowledge of this codex, by describing it in all the details and by studying it directly on the site of preservation (*Coptic Museum*, Cairo, inv. 13448 = C)<sup>5</sup>. The edition of the codex was trusted to Alberto Camplani, who in turn charged Federico Contardi with the task of transcribing both the new codex and the Turin fragments, in preparation for the edition of the Coptic text; other scholars are being involved in the project with the task of studying the Arabic version and writing sections of the literary, canonical, and liturgical commentary. After this discovery, the textual situation of the *Canons* can be described in the following way, with reference to the CMCL’s and PATHs’s siglas<sup>6</sup>:

- 1) a quotation of *Canon* 1 in a Coptic (Sahidic) liturgical manuscript of paper<sup>7</sup>;

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\* The first paragraph of this contribution has been written by Federico Contardi, who is responsible also for the Appendix containing some examples of comparison of the Coptic textual tradition; Alberto Camplani has written paragraph 2, devoted to the literary and ideological contextualization of the *Canons*. Both authors are grateful to the staff of the ERC Advanced Grant Project (2015) n. 687567 ‘PATHs - Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature. Literary Texts in their Geographical Context: Production, Copying, Usage, Dissemination and Storage’ (Principal Investigator Paola Buzi), hosted at Sapienza University of Rome, for giving so much attention and cultural space to the codex of the *Canons* of Basil not only during the conference but also in the daily research activity. In a sense, both the Theban codex and the Coptic text of the *Canons* have been ‘adopted’ by PATHs and its publication (some studies on the text and the edition) will take place in the framework of this project.

<sup>1</sup> 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 17-22, 2012, and Plenary Reports of the Ninth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Cairo, September 15-19, 2008*, ed. by P. BUZI, A. CAMPLANI, F. CONTARDI, Leuven 2016, 979-992; A. CAMPLANI – F. CONTARDI, *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*, éd. F.P. BARONE, C. MACÉ, P.A. UBIERNA (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia 73), Turnhout 2017, 139-159.

<sup>2</sup> For *Clavis coptica* (CC) 0090 see <http://www.cmcl.it>.

<sup>3</sup> 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, 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 in Honor of Bentley Layton*, ed. D. BRAKKE, S.J. DAVIS, S. EMMEL (OLoA 263), Leuven-Paris-Bristol (CT) 2017, 175-212.

<sup>4</sup> See, among other contributions, T. GÓRZECKI, *Sheikh Abd el-Gurna (Hermitage in Tomb 1152). Preliminary Report, 2005*, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 17 (2007) 263-274; of course, take into consideration also his contribution in collaboration E. Wispyzcka in this section.

<sup>5</sup> As the reader may learn from N. Carlig’s contribution to this section.

<sup>6</sup> [www.paths-erc.eu](http://www.paths-erc.eu).

<sup>7</sup> Cairo, Coptic Museum, J 42572, see J. DRESHER, *A Coptic Lectionary Fragment*, *Annales du Service des Antiquités*

2) a number of fragments belonging to different Coptic codices, edited and inedited, among which are to be mentioned<sup>8</sup>:

- two leaves from a lost papyrus codex coming from Deir Bala'izah (n. 31), with the text of *Canon 36*<sup>9</sup>, preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Copt., b10 and d178a (Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 940);
- some Chester Beatty Library leaves (ms 819C, ff. 1-8) from a parchment codex (*Canons 48-96*) likely deriving from the White Monastery<sup>10</sup> (here 'D'), to be attributed to the tenth / eleventh century (Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 1668);
- the Turin *Codex XIII*, which is constituted by a good number of fragmentary leaves from a papyrus codex; it has been called GIOV.AN in the *Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari*<sup>11</sup> (here 'T'), Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 58 in the PAThs project, to be attributed to the eighth century; its fragments have been transcribed by F. Contardi, who has identified some new fragments. It is constituted by a good number of fragmentary leaves<sup>12</sup>, to be attributed to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This codex contained originally the whole of the text, which is disposed in two-columns on numbered pages. F. Rossi published some fragments for the first time without recognizing the identity of the text, which was later revealed by Crum<sup>13</sup>. The first partial reconstruction was carried on by Th. Lefort, whose notes remained unpublished. Obviously, the lack of a Coptic parallel allowed only a very partial reconstruction, which on the contrary is now possible<sup>14</sup>.
- The new manuscript, Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 713 according to the PAThs project: Egypt, Cairo, *Coptic Museum*, inv. 13448.

3) an Arabic version (**Ar**), preserved by a number of Arabic manuscripts, divided in 106 chapters – a form of the text known to Abū 'l-Barakāt ibn al-As'ad ibn Kabar – probably made on the basis of a Coptic *Vorlage*<sup>15</sup>: one of these manuscripts was translated in German by Riedel<sup>16</sup> ('R'), but not edited<sup>17</sup>; a partial transcription of the Arabic version of two canons (97, 99) from one manuscript, namely «ex cod. Bibliothecae Maronitarum Alepi saec. XIV», originally copied in Keft, was published by Ignatius Efrem II Rahmani in 1920<sup>18</sup>;

d'Egypte 51 (1951) 247-256.

<sup>8</sup> F. ROSSI, *I papiri copti del Museo Egizio di Torino*, Torino 1892, II, fasc. IV, 81-92. For the identification and a first proposal of arrangement of the fragments, see W.E. CRUM, *The Coptic Version of the 'Canons of S. Basil'*, Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology 26 (1904) 57-62, who was able to check also an Arabic manuscript containing the work (BL add. 7211).

<sup>9</sup> P.E. KAHLE, *Bala'izah*, London 1954, vol. 1, 410-416.

<sup>10</sup> T. ORLANDI, *Les manuscrits coptes de Dublin, du British Museum et de Vienne*, Le Muséon 89 (1976) 323-338: 324.

<sup>11</sup> T. ORLANDI, *Les papyrus coptes du Musée égyptien de Turin*, Le Muséon 87 (1974) 115-127 : 125; Id., *The Turin Coptic Papyri*, Aug. 53 (2013) 501-530, in particular 505 and 523; see also <http://www.cmcl.it>.

<sup>12</sup> T. ORLANDI, *Les papyrus coptes du Musée égyptien de Turin*, Le Muséon 87 (1974) 115-127: 125; Id., *The Turin Coptic Papyri*, Aug. 53 (2013) 501-530, in particular 505 and 523.

<sup>13</sup> W.E. CRUM, *The Coptic Version of the "Canons of S. Basil*, cit.

<sup>14</sup> A. CAMPLANI – C. CONTARDI, *The Canons attributed to Basilus of Caesarea*, cit., 983-984.

<sup>15</sup> G. GRAF, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*. I Band. *Die Übersetzungen*, Città del Vaticano 1944, 606.

<sup>16</sup> Riedel's translation of the Arabic text was based on the 'Berliner Handschrift R' (Königliche Bibliothek zu Berlin Diez A. quart. 107): W. RIEDEL, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien*, Leipzig 1900, 231-282.

<sup>17</sup> We could consult only the ms. *Vaticano arabo 149* ('V').

<sup>18</sup> We thank Heinzgerd Brakmann for this very useful information, which is missing in our two previous publications: the text of *Canons 97 and 99* is edited in IGNAZIO EFREM II RAHMANI, *I fasti della Chiesa patriarcale antiochena. Conferenza d'inaugurazione tenuta in nome dell'Istituto Pontificio Orientale, colla pubblicazione in appendice di varii antichissimi documenti inediti*, Roma 1920, XIV-XVIII. The manuscript could be «Aleppo 196», pp. 332-397 quoted by GRAF, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, cit., 606.

This research should lead to an edition of the Coptic text with a translation in a modern language, accompanied by the edition of the Arabic version, and followed by a historical, canonical, and liturgical commentary<sup>19</sup>.

There are still some questions concerning the Coptic material which need further clarification. For example, it should be wondered whether the differences among C, T and D are to be explained with the textual diversification within the Coptic tradition or as the consequence of two distinct processes of translation from Greek to Coptic. The first hypothesis seems more likely, although the task of proving its plausibility is made difficult by the fact that the main part of the text is preserved by C, while T and D contribute only with minor fragments.

On the other side, the Arabic text, as it appears in V, in Rahmani's transcription of an Aleppo codex and in Riedel's German translation from R, is usually close to the Coptic one, but in some cases provides expressions, sentences, paragraphs that in Coptic, or at least in C, have disappeared. However, the most noteworthy difference concerns the structure of the text of Ar, which has been changed in comparison to the Coptic one: the units in which Ar is divided are shorter in comparison with those of the Coptic version, numbered from 1 to 106, as confirmed by Abū 'l-Barakāt ibn al-As'ad ibn Kabar<sup>20</sup>, and provided with section-headings. Abū 'l-Barakāt too transcribes these section-headings in a very similar form. That means that Ar is the result of a literary reworking of the text, which loses its appearance of a sequence of long or less long literary units inserted in a fictional framework dominated by the figure of Basil of Caesarea, to acquire the typical form of a sequence of short canons. The differences between the Coptic and Ar affect also the occurrence and disposition of certain themes. At the end of the Coptic text, preserved only by C, we read some prescriptions about the first fruits and tithes followed by some lines about apocryphal books, and a very important final section about the writing of the text itself, where the writer, a fictional 'historiographer' Paulinus of the diocese of Caesarea (the same episcopal see of Basil), declares to have written the canons according to the words pronounced by his father<sup>21</sup>. On the contrary, in the Arabic version the last canon (n. 106), with which the text ends, is the one specifically devoted to the post-baptismal prayer: it corresponds to a section of the Coptic text which immediately precedes the prescriptions on first fruits and the section about the composition of the work, eliminated from the Arabic version. From Abū 'l-Barakāt ibn al-As'ad ibn Kabar we may infer that this abridged form was the one known at his time<sup>22</sup>. We have suggested that it is more likely that in the course of time the text of the *Canons* has been shortened and deprived of their fictional frame rather than the opposite. This is what happened, though with less radicality, to the *Canons* of Athanasius, which, in their passage into Arabic, underwent a process of segmentation (107 canons) which can be attributed to a historical figure, Michael bishop of Tinnis in the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>23</sup>. To this same time could be dated both the reworking and the translation into Arabic of CanBas too.

<sup>19</sup> This research will assume a collective dimension in the course of time: we thank in particular Perrine Pilette and Agnes T. Mihálykó for having discussed some issues of this project with Alberto Camplani.

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. chapter VII, ed. W. RIEDEL, *Der Katalog der christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache von Abū 'l-Barakāt*, Nachrichten der Kgl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-hist. Klasse 5 (1902) 635-706; see also W. RIEDEL, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien*, cit., 35, and the edition by KH. SAMIR, *Abū al-Barakāt ibn al-As'ad ibn Kabar: Miṣbāḥ al-zulma fī iḏāḥ al-ḥidma*, Cairo 1971, 178-182.

<sup>21</sup> See A. CAMPLANI – F. CONTARDI, *The Canons attributed to Basil of Caesarea*, cit., 979-992.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. W. RIEDEL, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien*, cit., 238: Abū 'l-Barakāt ibn Kabar declares that Basil's *Canons* are 106 and that the canon numbered 103 is the one dealing with baptism.

<sup>23</sup> *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria. The Arabic and Coptic Versions edited and translated with introductions, notes and appendices*, by W. RIEDEL – WE. CRUM, Oxford 1904, IX.

## 2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER CANONICAL LITERATURE IN COPTIC

The general content of CanBas can be compared with other canonical literature, for the study of which we have new tools at our disposal: namely Kaufhold's history of canon law in the eastern churches<sup>24</sup> and Orlandi's recent repertoire of manuscripts containing canonical works<sup>25</sup>. The first is a synthesis, accompanied by a number of original insights, of the studies about the development of canonical literature in the East, its rich typology, the elaboration of new writings and collections, the competition among different normative traditions. The second is a study of the Coptic manuscripts containing at least one canonical work, which gives the possibility not only to have an idea of the canonical literature circulating in Coptic language, but also to understand the significance of the coexistence of single canonical works within sets of texts, preserved in their turn into manuscripts and libraries which can give the modern scholar further elements of analysis.

Our aim is to understand the culture and the reading experience not only of the authors who either wrote the works or translated them into Coptic, but also of the environments which received them and put them into circulation. To do this, we will take into consideration a reduced number of single writings which show similarities of content or structure with CanBas; but also collections of canonical works preserved in Coptic will be mentioned, because their cultural meaning transcends that of the individual units of which they are composed and may be usefully compared with CanBas. Why texts not completely Egyptian in their ecclesiastical outlook were not only composed in certain historical and geographical circumstances (non necessarily in Egypt), but also collected, translated and put into circulation in Coptic language? The initial general index<sup>26</sup> of CanBas as preserved in C makes reference to the main themes of the text, although not in the order in which they appear in the work:

«The Canons of Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia, (1) about the faith in the Holy Trinity; (2) about those (who live) in the marriage and the virgins; (3) about the widows and the ascetics; (4) about all the ecclesiastic orders, from the bishop to the doorkeeper; (5) about the hour in which it is proper to pray; (6) about the fasts and the first fruits and tithes; (7) about the way of baptizing and celebrating the (eucharistic) mystery; (8) about the sins and the times that is necessary to establish according to the kind of sin; (9) about the ornaments of male and female (believers), in order that we can find the way of going into the house of God».<sup>27</sup>

Also the section-headings which mark the beginning of each literary unit of CanBas give us a good indication about how the compiler that the Coptic text is subdivided in a number of units of different length by a system of section-headings marking the beginning of each unit:

- «First of all we believe (Credal formula)» (*Canon 1*)
- «These are the commandments of the way of life and the way of death» (ⲡⲠⲛⲉ ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲗⲏⲛ ⲙⲓⲡⲓⲟⲩ: *Canon 2*)
- «About those (who live) in the marriage» (*Canon 3*)
- «About the times (ⲛⲉⲗⲣⲟⲛⲟⲥ) that is necessary to establish each one according to the kind of sin» (*Canon 20*)
- «About magicians» (*Canon 22*)
- «About the ornaments » (*Canon 26*)
- «About the hour in which it is proper to pray» (*Canon 28*)
- «About the fasts» (*Canon 29*)

<sup>24</sup> H. KAUFHOLD, *Sources of Canon Law in the Eastern Churches*, in *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, ed. W. HARTMANN, K. PENNINGTON (History of Medieval Canon Law), Washington D.C. 2012, 215-342: 275.

<sup>25</sup> T. ORLANDI, *Coptic Texts Relating to the Church Canons. An Overview*, Roma 2016. A good presentation is also R.-G. COQUIN, *Canons of Saint Basil*, in *Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. A.S. ATIYA, New York 1991, 459a-459b. Of great importance is of course W. RIEDEL, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen*, cit. Some interesting, although debatable, remarks on dating and provenance had been offered by J. WORDSWORTH, *The 106 Canons of Basil, an Egyptian Church Order, probably of the fifth century*, in Id., *The Ministry of Grace*, London 1903<sup>2</sup> (1901), 445-461.

<sup>26</sup> On the codicological position of this index, see N. Carlig's contribution in this section.

<sup>27</sup> A. CAMPLANI - F. CONTARDI, *Remarks of the Textual Contribution*, cit., 142-143.

«About the fact that is not seemly to go to the tombs called *martyria* to celebrate the liturgy (συναξιας) or praying» (Canon 31)

«About the male ascetics (ασκητης) and female ascetics (ασκητριας)» (Canon 32)

«About the fact that is not seemly to bring the bodies of the martyrs into the Catholic Church (εξοχη εκκαθολικη), but (this canon is) in order that *martyria* will be built for them» (Canon 33)

«About the fact that it is a great sin the incantation (μουγτε) or to go to an enchanter (ουρεφμογτε)» (Canon 34)

«About the widows and the virgins» (Canon 36)

«About the fact that it is a great sin to go to the theatres (νεωεατρον) and to the horse race (ιριππικος), or any other polluted place» (Canon 37)

«About the constitution of all the orders (ταγμα) of the Church» (Canon 38)

«About the dispositions (νεπιστημη) of the altar» (Canon 96)

«About the breaking (πρω) of the [eucharistic] mystery» (Canon 97)

«About the breaking (πρω) of the bread; about the institution (καταστασις) and about the order (τεπιστημη) of the way of celebrating the [eucharistic] mystery» (Canon 98)

«About the way (τυπος) of celebrating the baptism» (Canon 101)

«About the first fruits and tithes» (ετβε ηρεμητ μηναπαρ[χη] not preserved in Arabic).<sup>28</sup>

In some occasions these units are defined by the compiler as '*kephalaion*', while the whole work is called '*logos*'<sup>29</sup>: it is clear that he perceives his work on the one hand as a composite one (the norms, the rules, the decrees of the councils, the Biblical interpretations), on the other as a monothematic work with one great subject, the life of the believers within the Church<sup>30</sup>.

What are the main concerns of the text? In synthesis we can state that the following are the main concerns of the compiler:

- the Trinitarian and Christological profession of faith.
- the traditional theme of the two ways, of good and evil, which is at the beginning of moral behaviour;
- marriage and its discipline, in relation to both lay believers and the clergy (presbyters and deacons);
- penitence;
- the life of lay believers and ascetics;
- the life of the clergy;
- the prayers for consecration;
- detailed indications concerning the liturgy (baptismal and eucharistic) and the tithes.

The correct belief is strictly tied to the correct moral behaviour of both lay believers and clerics; consecration, baptismal and eucharistic liturgy play an important role; ascetism, on the contrary, does not have a great space and monks are rarely mentioned.

What kind of work is it? Surely it can be classified as a 'church order', a category which has been recently

<sup>28</sup> See F. Contardi's edition in A. CAMPLANI – F. CONTARDI, *Remarks of the Textual Contribution*, cit., 156-158.

<sup>29</sup> See canon 2 (end), p. κ (both terms); canon 27, p. λθ (τιναδαδε τενογ ετβε πκε σεεπε ηκεφαλαιον «now we will discuss the remaining kephalaia»); canon 28 p. μβ; canon 34 p. ηη; canon 100, p. ρς; final section, p. ρηζ.

<sup>30</sup> The order of the section-headings does not coincide with that of the general index. The significance of this issue has been discussed in one of our contributions, A. CAMPLANI – F. CONTARDI, *Remarks on the Textual Contribution*, cit., 145-147.





This formulation would not have been appreciated by the historical Basil of Caesarea, but finds some parallels in Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 34, Epiphanius, *Ancoratus*, 7. 8. 9. 67. 70. 71<sup>37</sup> and an extensive later literature. However, these parallels are not decisive in defining the dating and the provenance of CanBas or of the Creed.

The flesh and the humanity which the Logos has taken on it with the act of the incarnation do not result in an addition of a fourth element to the Trinity: in this discussion, a more Alexandrian flavour is perceptible<sup>38</sup>.

Among other elements, the mention of two heretics is particularly noteworthy: Sabellius (3<sup>rd</sup> century) and Fotinus (4<sup>th</sup> century), both representatives of a Trinitarian position in contrast with later orthodoxy: Fotinus, though anti-Arian, was very soon considered heretical<sup>39</sup>.

As we have seen, the creed is followed by a number of canons devoted to the moral life of lay believers and clerics. It is interesting that at the beginning of this section we find the theme of the two ways, of the highest importance and antiquity in canonical literature, since the time of *Didaché*:  $\text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{νε} \text{νε} \text{ν} \text{το} \text{λη} \text{ν} \dot{\iota} \text{τε} \text{ρι} \text{ν} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{π} \text{ω} \text{ν} \dot{\iota} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{τε} \text{ρι} \text{ν} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{π} \text{ω} \text{μ} \dot{\iota}$ <sup>40</sup>.

Liturgical rituals and moral exhortations (the *horologion*<sup>41</sup>, the toilette of men and women) are woven in the work until the end, reserved to the firstfruits and tithes and to the fictional frame of the work, both lacking in the Arabic version. The situation of these pages is not good, as physical lacunas have damaged the text. Despite this, a first look is possible thanks to the inspection of P. Buzi and the codicological analysis of N. Carlig<sup>42</sup>. Of course, the unit begins with an allusion to Numbers 18.8-10 and the OT legislation about tithes. Its development is longer than the one we find in *Didascalía Apostolorum* 18 and *Tradition apostolica* 32<sup>43</sup>. The expression «We, on our part order ...» gives origin to a unit in which are listed those vegetables and fruits which can be classified as *aparchai* reserved to windows and orphans. A subsequent quotation of Isaiah 1.11-13 has the function of explaining to the reader the new Christian meaning of these kinds of offerings. At the end there is probably the passage to the theme of apocryphal books and the prohibition of reading them.

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Now it is time to offer the announced comparison with a selection of canonical works and collections.

*The Canons of Athanasius* (CC 0089)<sup>44</sup>. The *Canons*, known to Abū 'l-Barakāt ibn al-As'ad ibn Kabar, have some material in common with CanBas, as already recognized by W.E. Crum in his notes<sup>45</sup>. A systematic comparison with the Coptic text of CanBas could be useful to enlarge the parallels between the two works.

<sup>37</sup> See M. SIMONETTI, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (SEAug 11), Roma 1975, 496, but chapter XV in its entirety should be consulted.

<sup>38</sup> C, p. Δ-Ζ.

<sup>39</sup> C, p. ε.

<sup>40</sup> «These are the commandments of the way of the life and of the way of the death»: C, p. η. On this theme and literary genre, see A.C. STEWART, *On the Two Ways: Life or Death, Light or Darkness*, Oxford 2006.

<sup>41</sup> C, pp. η-ια:  $\text{μα} \text{ρ} \dot{\iota} \text{ν} \text{ω} \text{λ} \text{η} \text{λ} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{π} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{χ} \dot{\iota} \text{ω} \text{ν} \text{ο} \text{μ} \text{τε} \text{ . } \dot{\alpha} \text{ε} \text{ π} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ | } \text{ε} \text{τ} \dot{\iota} \text{μ} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ ν} \text{τ} \dot{\alpha} \dot{\chi} \text{ρ} \text{ο} \dot{\upsilon} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{π} \text{ε} \text{ν} \text{σ} \text{ω} \text{τ} \text{η} \text{ρ} \text{ . } \text{μα} \text{ρ} \dot{\iota} \text{ν} \text{ω} \text{λ} \text{η} \text{λ} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{π} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{χ} \dot{\iota} \text{σ} \text{ο} \text{ } \dot{\alpha} \text{ε} \text{ π} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ ε} \text{τ} \dot{\iota} \text{μ} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ ν} \text{τ} \dot{\alpha} \text{π} \text{κ} \text{α} \text{κ} \text{ ω} \text{ρ} \text{ω} \text{π} \text{ε} \text{ . } \text{μα} \text{ρ} \dot{\iota} \text{ν} \text{ω} \text{λ} \text{η} \text{λ} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{π} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ μ} \dot{\iota} \text{χ} \dot{\iota} \text{π} \dot{\iota} \text{τε} \text{ } \dot{\alpha} \text{ε} \text{ π} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ ε} \text{τ} \dot{\iota} \text{μ} \text{να} \dot{\iota} \text{ . } \text{ν} \text{τ} \dot{\alpha} \text{π} \text{ε} \text{ν} \text{σ} \text{ω} \text{τ} \text{η} \text{ρ} \text{ ω} \text{ρ} \text{ω} \text{π} \text{ε} \text{ } \text{να} \text{ν} \text{ ρ} \dot{\iota} \text{τ} \dot{\iota} \text{μ} \text{ω} \text{μ} \dot{\iota} \text{π} \text{ε} \text{ν} \text{σ} \text{ω} \text{τ} \text{η} \text{ρ} \text{ .}$

<sup>42</sup> The pagination is lacking due to physical lacunas: however see in this section N. Carlig's contribution and the final table.

<sup>43</sup> See I. FASIORI, *La dime du début du deuxième siècle jusqu'à l'Edit de Milan* (313), Lateranum n.s. 49 (1983) 5-24; *Storia della decima dall'editto di Milano* (313) al secondo concilio di Maçon (585), VetChr 23 (1986) 39-61. For the *Traditio apostolica* see A. BAUSI, *La nuova versione etiopica della Traditio apostolica: edizione e traduzione preliminare, in Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production And Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi*, ed. P. BUZI, A. CAMPLANI, Roma 2011, 19-69.

<sup>44</sup> The *editio princeps* of both the Coptic and Arabic materials is in *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria*, ed. W. RIEDEL – W.E. CRUM, cit., to which is to be added H. MUNIER, *Mélanges de littérature copte I-III*, ASAE 19 (1919) 225-241: 238-241, with edition of CMCL.BG, attributable according to Orlandi to the 8th-9th century.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.* particularly the notes to the English translation of the Arabic text. The *Canons of Athanasius* have drawn the historians' attention: see among others, E. WIPSYZKA, *The Alexandrian Church*, cit., 30-31.



Here I would like to highlight a parallel attitude in both texts towards the relationship between Church and society, since they insist on the fact that the Church should be on a par with the civil authorities. In the *Canons*, 10, Jesus's saying on Caesar (Matthew 22.15-22 and parallels) is applied to bishops, presbyters and deacons in a very peculiar form: as the Old Testament kings, chosen by God, took care that their kingdoms worked well, sometimes even resorting to the imposition of personal taxes («Render to Caesar»), so the same attention must be paid by presbyters and bishops to churches and to the celebration of the liturgy («Render to God»). As clerics must pay taxes to the State in order to preserve the society, so they must give themselves to the altar and the liturgy, in the name of the liturgical dress in which the image of God is imprinted (which is the image of the 'spiritual' side of the money)<sup>46</sup>. In CanBas 86, edited in the *Appendix* by F. Contardi, the following impressive statement is to be found: «It is not right that the Church be slave in anything of this sort, but it is right that every one, a king or a prince or every man who is in high ranks, are all subject to the Church». To support the command not to receive a property burdened with taxes the example of Joseph in Gen 47:22-27 is quoted: a very original interpretation of the OT text, used to propose a distinction among the kinds of heritage to be accepted or refuted by the Church. However, an overall comparison shows that equally significant are the differences between the two work titled *Canons*:

- the *Canons of Athanasius* are written by a cleric and addressed to a public of clerics, so that very little attention is paid to the problems of lay believers;
- the monks' presence is more meaningful than in CanBas;
- while great attention is paid to the acts of cult, the altar, the life of the community, there is no quotation of prayers or rituals which are so important in CanBas;
- no credal formula is offered, and the ties between orthodoxy and moral behaviour are not stressed;
- no reference to the traditional norms is made: this could be interpreted as an indication of an ancient dating, as well as the plurality of references to the canonical literature in CanBas should be seen a sign of the latter's seriority.

If CanBas could be dated after the *Canons of Athanasius*, a further interesting issue would be that of their dependence on this work. In more general terms, it must be observed that the *Canons of Athanasius* are preserved in a codex of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 293) in which there were also the *Canones apostolorum* (CC 0091).

*Sententiae Concilii Nicaeni*.<sup>47</sup> In the *Gnomai* the opening (1,1-1,7) is devoted to exalt God in his Trinitarian articulation, his goodness, his not being a creature, and the gift of *prohairesis* to men:

ΠΝΟΥΓΕ ΠΕΙΩΤ ΟΥΑΓΑΘΟΣ ΠΕ. ΠΧΣ ΠΧΘΕΙΣ ΠΕ ΛΥΩ ΠΝΟΥΓΕ. ΟΥΑΓΑΘΟΣ ΠΕΠΠΩ ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ. ΠΝΟΥΓΕ ΜΝΤΪ ΖΟΥΕΓΤΕ. ΟΥΓΕ ΜΗ ΖΔΕ ΟΡΟΠ ΗΤΗΝΤΝΟΥΓΕ. ΗΤΟΥ ΓΑΡ ΠΕ ΤΑΡΧΗ ΛΥΩ ΠΧΩΚ ΗΠΤΗΡΪ. ΜΗΚΤΙΜΑ ΟΡΟΠ ΞΝ ΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ ΔΛΛΑ ΗΤΟΥ ΠΧΘΕΙΣ ΔΥΩΔΩΤ ΗΠΤΗΡΪ. ΜΗΝ ΠΕΤΟ ΗΧΘΕΙΣ ΕΔΔΥ ΖΗ ΝΕΦΕΒΗΥΕ ΤΗΡΟΥ. ΔΥΪ ΟΥΑΥΔΟΖΟΥΣΙΟΝ ΔΕ ΗΝΕΤΖΗ ΠΤΗΡΪ ΔΕΚΑΣ ΕΡΕ ΝΕΠΡΟΖΑΡΗΝΙΣ ΟΥΩΠΖ ΕΒΟΛ. Δ ΤΕΠΡΟΖΑΡΗΝΙΣ ΔΕ ΗΡΟΙΝΕ ΘΗΜΟΟΥ ΖΑΤΗ ΠΕΧΣ. ΛΥΩ ΔΧΔΑΤΟΥ ΠΑΡΑ ΗΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ. ΖΕΝΚΟΟΥ ΔΕ ΔΧΧΙΤΟΥ ΕΑΜΗΤΕ. ΗΠΕΠΝΟΥΓΕ ΟΥΤ ΛΑΔ ΕΦΡΟΟΥ.

God the Father is good. Christ is Lord and God, and the Holy Spirit is good. God has no beginning, nor there is any end to his divinity, for he is himself the beginning and the end of all that is. There is no creation in the trinity but the Lord himself created all things. There is no other Lord but he over all his works. He gave freewill to those who are in the world so that their inclination might be manifest. Inclination brings some to be seated by Christ, and exalts them over the angels. Others it leads to hell.

As the reader may easily understand, we have here a very short declaration of faith, Trinitarian in character, characterised by an anti-Arian tendency (God is not a creature, on the contrary creation depends

<sup>46</sup> *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria*, ed. W. RIEDEL – W.E. CRUM, cit., 23: «What sayest thou then, O priest, of the name that hath been given thee and the image of God wherewith thou art clothed in return for all these (things)? If the bishop serve not the altar as befits the reverence for its honour, but rather despiseth the presbyters and the presbyters despise the deacons and the deacons the people and everyone is neglectful in his duties, what wilt thou then say? Shall God keep silence for ever?».

<sup>47</sup> *The Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea (CC 0021): Critical Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, ed. A.C. STEWART (Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 35.), Piscataway, NJ, 2015.

on him). God has given the *autexousion* to some of his creatures. Here the foundations are laid for the moral discourse which occupies the rest of the writing. It is interesting to quote the opinion of the last editor of the text:

This introduction is firmly anti-Arian (there is no κτίσμα in the Trinity, it is stated) and the divinity of the Son is clearly upheld. However, the status of the Spirit is less clear; there is no explicit statement of the Spirit's divinity as such, and no statement that the Spirit has any role in creation, but rather the Spirit gives growth to creatures<sup>48</sup>.

These features could be interpreted as a sign of a 4<sup>th</sup> century dating. Of course, these moral indications are strictly connected to the church, which, as in CanBas, is the source for correction and pardon addressed to all: the laity and the clergy. As it is said in *Sententiae* 3,1: «The work of the church is simply prayer and intercession» (πρωτὸν ἡτέκκλησία πρῶλην ἦματε ρισοῦς).

As in CanBas (and also in the *Canons of Hippolytus*<sup>49</sup>), there are indications about dress and sexual ethics, which concern women and men, both secular and members of the clergy. What is lacking in the *Sententiae* – and here resides the great differences between the two works – is the presence of «any material regarding ordinations or the liturgy, in other words the very subjects which define the 'church order' element in the church order literature. It is the very diversity of the nature of the material found within the church orders which has led to the questioning of the legitimacy of the classification of church orders as a genre»<sup>50</sup>.

A last element should be stressed, that is, the sets of texts in which the *Sententiae* are transmitted. It is material mainly connected with the Council of Nicaea or Athanasius. *Sententiae* are preserved in a codex of the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century, containing the *Vita Athanasii*<sup>51</sup>, and two codices coming from the White Monastery, offering, among other things, a very rich synodical collection<sup>52</sup>. The environments that can be reconstructed through these manuscripts are monastic or ecclesiastic, interested to gather canonical legislation and history of the Church, so that to put canonical regulations in a historical perspective.

*Canons of Hippolytus*<sup>53</sup> (CanHipp). It is a series of thirty-eight canons transmitted only in Egypt, which can be considered a deep reworking of the *Apostolic Tradition*. The text is preserved only in Arabic, but certainly it is a translation of a Coptic text. Common elements with CanBas include:

- a profession of faith;
- a series of canons expounding the different orders, from the bishop down to the lay believers, exactly as in CanBas;
- a certain stress on the liturgical life: fasts, prayers (*horologion* as in CanBas and *Apostolic Tradition* 41), eucharist, catechesis.

Despite the fact of being preserved only in Arabic, a fact that inhibits a comparison with other collection of Coptic texts, it must be remarked that from the point of view of both structure and contents the two texts are very close. One of the reasons could be that both know the *Apostolic tradition*, which, however, is used with parsimony by the author of CanBas.

*Didascalia Patrum Nicaenorum* (=Did. Patr. Nic.). A complex textual situation is the one revealed by a set of writings which has been titled *Didascalia Patrum Nicaenorum, Syntagma doctrinae* (CPG2264 and

<sup>48</sup> *The Gnomai*, ed. A.C. STEWART, cit., 7.

<sup>49</sup> See edition by R.-G. COQUIN in PO 31,2.

<sup>50</sup> *The Gnomai*, ed. A.C. STEWART, cit., 11.

<sup>51</sup> GIOV.AJ, Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 54: it is the same library in which CanBas is preserved (GIOV.AN).

<sup>52</sup> MONB.FT (Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 393), with synodical canons, and MONB.EF (Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 359), whose contents are extraordinary: CC 0955 *Symbolum Nicaenum A*, CC 0956 *Anathemata Nicaena*, CC 0957 *Nomina Patrum Nicaenorum*. CC 0019, Anonimo. Athanasius of Alexandria *Didascalia Patrum Nicaenorum-Syntagma doctrinae*. CC 0959 *Epistula Epiphani*, CC 0960 *Epistula Rufini*, CC 0961 *Narratio de 318 Patribus Nicaeae*, cc0021 *Sententiae Concilii Nicaeni*. CC 0556 *Canones Concilii Nicaeni*. followed by the synodical materials typical of the *Collectio antiochena* and the works attributed to Agathonicus of Tarsus.

<sup>53</sup> PO 31,2. See the long introduction and T. ORLANDI, *Coptic texts*, cit., 11.

2298; CC 0019; 0956)<sup>54</sup>. They are preserved in a Turin manuscript, GIOV.AC<sup>55</sup>, coming from a milieu in which the history of canonical literature was promoted: despite the occurrence of hagiographical and homiletic texts, a nucleus in the manuscript is constituted by materials connected with the Council of Nicaea, among which the *Didascalía Patrum Nicaenorum* finds its prominent place. MONB.EF, as we have seen, is a huge collection of synodical texts, including those of the Council of Nicaea.

It can be divided in three parts: 1. a declaration of faith (*ekthesis*) which contains the Nicene Creed along with anathematizations against Sabellians, Photinians (see CanBas), anthropomorphites, and Arians; 2. monastic precepts (the so-called *Didascalía* or *Syntagma Doctrinae*); 3. an appendix to the previous section, moral in character. Not all these sections are preserved by all the recensions and manuscripts, a textual situation which casts some doubts about the original form of the work.

Despite the complex textual situation, *Did. Patr. Nic.* is the Coptic text, or compilation of texts, which exhibits two fundamental features in common with CanBas:

- 1) a stress on the dogmatic faith, with reference to the Council of Nicaea, mention of heretics, and in particular of Sabellius and Fotinus, exactly as in CanBas;
- 2) a stress on moral behaviour not only of the monks (which are conspicuously present), but also of secular believers.

In the following table the reader will find a synthesis of our comparison:

CanBas	CanHipp	CanEccl	<i>Did. Patr. Nic.</i>	<i>Sententiae</i>
Profession of faith(1)	Profession of faith (1)		Profession of faith	Profession of faith
Two ways (2)		Two ways (1-15)		Free will
Marriage (3-19)			Marriage	Marriage
Penitence (20-27)				Repentance
Prayer (28)	Prayer (27) <i>Traditio apostolica</i> 41			
Precepts for the lay (behaviour and dress), widows, ascetics (29-37)	Widows (9)	Lay believers	Monks, women, clergy	Ascetics, Mary as an example. Dress
Precepts for the clergy, prayers for episcopal consecration (38-95)	Bishops and their consecration. Precepts for the clergy (2-8)	Bishops, presbyters, deacons, readers, widows (16-23)		
Rules on liturgy (96-106).	Baptism and rules about exclusion( 10)	Oblation. Exclusion of female deacons (24-28)		
First fruits, tithes	First fruits (36)			

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<sup>54</sup> On the complex textual situation, the recensions and the versions in different languages see M. KOHLBACHER, *Minor Texts for a History of Asceticism: Edition in Progress*, in *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit. Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses*, Münster, 20.-26. Juli.1996 (Sprachen und Kulturen des christlichen Orients 6,1-2), Wiesbaden1999, 2, 144-154; R. RIEDINGER – H. THURN, *Die Didascalía CCCXVIII Patrum Nicaenorum und das Syntagma ad Monachos im Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 (a. 1276)*, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 35 (1985) 75-92. See now the edition of a new Greek fragment by L.H. BLUMELL, *P.Mich. Inv. 4461KR: The Earliest Fragment Of The Didascalía CCCXVIII Patrum Nicaenorum*, *JThS* 68 (2017) 607-620.

<sup>55</sup> Coptic Literary manuscript ID 47.

The authorities of the compiler are quite evident, although rarely mentioned: *Didaché*; the *Canons of the Apostles* (different canonical writings with the term 'apostle' in the title could be alluded to); the *Canons of the Council of Nicaea*, which include certain customs which were not dealt with by the historical collection of 20 canons of 325, but attributed to the Council either to give them authority, or because of their occurrence in the synodical collections (for example the *Collectio antiochena*) where they were numbered consecutively starting with the 20 *Canons of Nicaea*; Basil of Caesarea, whose canonical letters are certainly known to the compiler, and Athanasius, who is quoted as a person in relationship with Basil, although a direct knowledge of his works is difficult to prove.

In our recent contributions, we have exposed the problems of dating the text. We have observed that the historical figures such as Basilius, Paulinus, Athanasius, are quoted in a fictional frame and the reference to the synods have no historical value. Unfortunately, the initial profession of faith does not give a sure *terminus post quem* different from the most obvious one, *i.e.* the end of the fourth century, or, better, the first half of the fifth century. There is no distinctive Christological terminology which could point to a theological trend, apart from some expressions close to Cyril's theological language – a language however which is typical of diverse religious trends active in Egypt or Eastern Mediterranean. Basil of Caesarea is presupposed with his letters and canons; the council of Nicaea is mentioned more than once, although, according to a phenomenon that is detectable also in Western canonical literature, the references are to decisions and rules which are not preserved in the official canons<sup>56</sup>. From the above considerations it emerges that a 6<sup>th</sup> century date could be preferable, although an earlier date, in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, is not to be excluded.

It is difficult to take a position on the issue of the text's provenance. The *Canons* are not known outside Egypt in other canonical literatures of both the Christian East and Byzantium. However, on the other hand, the Egyptian origin of some of its elements has been questioned. In *Canon 46*, edited by F. Contardi, there is the particular mention of «the bishop of the *metropolis*» and/or the «great bishop», as well as the allusion to the custom of ordering the bishop by three bishops. The ordination by three bishops including a «metropolitan» is an argument against the Egyptian provenance of the text, because, according to a well-known Egyptian custom, it is the bishop of Alexandria who, assisted by several bishops, consecrates the candidates coming from the dioceses of Egypt and the Egyptian Church lacks the figure of the metropolitan bishop<sup>57</sup>.

One could place the composition of the *Canons* in a Syrian context, from where it would have been taken by the Coptic Church and translated from Greek into Coptic during the Christological controversies. We have added a liturgical parallel to this phenomenon: the new anti-Chalcedonian Church which emerged during the fifth/sixth century was marked by a celebration of the Eucharist with the *Anaphora of St Basil*, an Antiochian type of *prex eucharistica* which took the place of the older *Anaphora of St Mark/St Cyril* – a Basilian connection between Syria and Egypt which could be on the background of the *Canons* too. But we can also reverse our argument: the traces of customs foreign to Egypt could be the result of the influence of Basilian and Syriac canonical literature on an Egyptian compiler whose aim was to collect canons coming from different Churches. This statement could be considered contradictory with the likely fact that the two papyrus codices preserving Basil's *Canons* were entirely occupied by this work alone: this fact should not allow too much speculation about the culture of the environments in which these two codices were read, in consideration of the lack of other works or sets of works which could give a hermeneutical key. However, we cannot avoid a comparison with other manuscripts of the same provenance in which works are put within more complex textual structures, particularly those preserved in the libraries of This and Atripe (White Monastery).

Parallels with the *Canons of Athanasius* are to be found in the *Canons of Athanasius, Sententiae*, in *Didascalia Patrum Nicaenorum*, the so-called *Hippolytus' Canons*. They demonstrate that the Coptic audience was interested in works in which the doctrinal element, not affected too much by a polemical terminolo-

<sup>56</sup> On the issue of the date in which the 'Fathers' entered the canonical collections of the Byzantine and Syriac Churches, see H. OHME, *Greek Canon Law to 691*, in *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, ed. W. HARTMANN, K. PENNINGTON, Washington D.C. 2012, 24-114, especially 84-114.

<sup>57</sup> E. WIPSYCKA, *The Alexandrian Church*, cit., 129-146.

gy, could be used as a premise for instruction about the moral behavior, where attention was paid not only to ascetical life (which in CanBas is alluded to with parsimony) but also to the life of secular believers, with a certain interest in liturgy. The aim was not to conform to different norms, not rarely contradictory, but to build a Coptic culture open to different trends of canonical traditions, which could be put in a historical perspective, according to which changes of canonical norms were not perceived as a threat to the unity and strength of the Church.

### 3. APPENDIX. COMPARISON AMONG THE COPTIC CODICES

The existence of many manuscripts gives the possibility to inquire into the possibilities of many Coptic traditions and their relationship with the Arabic translations (here **Ar**). We will try to show the complexity of the material on the light of the canons 73-75 and 86 (in C they occupy the pages ρβ-ρθ), which have been chosen because they are preserved in the largest number of witnesses.

*Canons 73-75*, very short, are preserved in all three Coptic witnesses (A, D, T) and in the Arabic translation too, with the exception of canon 73, which is lost in T. It is interesting to observe that the Arabic translation omits, at least in part of the tradition, the canon between the 73<sup>th</sup> and the 74<sup>th</sup>.

*Canon 73*. It is extremely short and it states the prohibition for a cleric to participate in a Jewish assembly. The text, preserved in **C**, **D**, and in **Ar**, is identical in all the sources:

Ἰηελααυ ἱκκληρικος επιτηρῶ βωκ ερονη εσεναγωγη Ἰιογδαῖ  
 Ἰιογδαῖ : Ἰηιογδαῖ **D**

No cleric shall go at all to a Jewish assembly<sup>58</sup>.

*Canon 73bis*. This Canon, omitted in **Ar**, deals with the prohibition for clerics of drinking wine.

C Ἰηελααυ ἱκκληρι(κ)ος επιτηρῶ † συμβολη εσε ηρη ·

T [ ] [κλ]ηρικ[ος] [†] συμβολη [η] [ε]ηεε ·

D Ἰηελααυ · ἱκκληρῖκοῦ † συμβολη επιτηρῶ

No clerics will absolutely give a banquet (contributions) for drinking wine.

The expression † συμβολη has the meaning of “to give contributions to the expenses of a festival” or “to give a banquet”<sup>59</sup>. Only C offer the reading εσε ηρη “to drink wine” omitted in **T**, **D** and **Ar**.

*Canon 74*. This canon deals with the prohibition for an *anagnostes* to play the guitar. It is preserved in all the Coptic witnesses (**C**, **T**, **D**) and in Arabic (**Ar**).

ερωαν ογαναγνωστης · τσαβο εῤκιοαρωδος Ἰσε † σβω ηαυ · ηῤτῆκοτῆ  
 Ἰκεσοπ · αγω εφρομολογει ετῆρηζωβ επιτηρῶ · εγε† τεφепπима ηαυ Ἰσαωφε Ἰρεβδονακ  
 εωωπε εφωανσω Ἰηητῆ μαρογκαωαιροϋ Ἰμοϋ ρῆτεφταζεῖς

1 ἀναγνωστῆς : ἀγνωστῆς C | τσαβο : χιςαβο D | 1 εῤκιοαρωδος : εεῤκιοαρωδο[c] T |

1-2 ηῤτῆκοτῆ Ἰκεσοπ · αγω : T, D om.

2 εφρομολογει ... επιτηρῶ + : ετῆρ πει · ζωβ κκε̄·σοπ D | 2 επιτηρῶ : T, D om. | εγε† τεφепπима : εγνα† επειτῆμα D

3 εωωπε ... Ἰηητῆ : εωωπε δε · εφωαῖνογεω πρῶβ ετρεφῶ · Ἰηητῆ D | μαρογκαωαιροϋ ... ρῆτεφταζεῖς : εἰε εγναωαατῆ εβολ · ητταζεῖς · ητεκκλησία D | ρῆτεφταζεῖς : ητταζεῖς · ητεκκλησία D, ]† [.....]τεκκλ]†

<sup>58</sup> **Ar**: «Kein Kleriker soll in eine Versammlung der Juden gehen. In eine Versammlung der Juden soll überhaupt kein Kleriker gehen» (RIEDEL, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen*, cit., 267).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. H.G. LIDDELL, R. SCOTT, H.S. JONES, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford 1968<sup>9</sup>, s.v.

If an *anagnostes* learns to play a guitar, and he is taught not to repeat it and professes not to do the thing absolutely<sup>60</sup>, he will be given a punishment of seven weeks. If he continues with it, he should be stripped of his rank.<sup>61</sup>

D gives<sup>62</sup>: «If he wishes to continue with it, he will be expelled from the rank of the Church». Moreover it could be possible that ΝΤΤΑΖΙC · ΝΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ is a corruption of ΝΤΤΑΖΙC ΜΗΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ «from the rank and from the Church». In that case D would be closer to Ar.

Canon 75. This canon deals with the matter of sexual intercourse with a woman. I give the text of the three mss. because of some differences

C ΕΡΩΑΝΟΥΡΩΜΕ < ΟΥΩΩ > ΕΪΚΟΤ̄Κ̄ Μ̄ΗΟΥCΡΙΜΕ · ΖΩCΤΕ ΕΠΤ̄Μ̄ΑΤΕ Ν̄ΤΕΦΕΠ̄ΘΥΜΙΑ · ΜΑΡ̄Φ̄ΡΟΜΟΛΟΓΕΙ ΕΞΑΡΕΞ ΕΡΟQ Ν̄CΑΘΗ · ΑΥΩ Μ̄Φ̄Ω̄Π̄ ΖΗΟΤ Ν̄CΑΘΗ · ΖΩC ΕΑΦΜΑΤΕ Ν̄ΟΥΖΗΟΤ ·

T [ΕΡΩ]ΔΝΟΥ[ΡΩ]ΜΕ ΟΥΩ[Ω] ΕΪΚΟΤ̄Κ̄ Η[Ν]ΟΥCΡΙΜΕ [ΖΩC]ΤΕ Ν̄Τ̄Μ̄ΑΤΕ Ν̄ΤΕΦΕΠ̄ΘΥΜΙΑ · ΜΑΡΕΦ̄Ρ[Η]ΟΛΟΓΕΙ Ε[Ξ]ΑΡΕΞ ΕΡΟQ [ΠΑCΑΝΑ

D ΕΡΩΑΝΟΥΡΩΜΕ · †ΠΕΦΟΥΟΙ · ΕΞΟΥΝ ΕΥCΡΙΜΕ · ΖΩC ΔΕ · Ε̄ΝΚΟΤ̄Κ̄ ΝΗΜΑC · ΝΕΦΤΗΜΑΤΕ Ν̄ΤΕΦΕΠ̄ΘΥΜΙᾹ ΕΙΕ ΜΑΡΕΦ̄ΡΟΜΟΛΟΓΕΙ ΕΞΑΡΕΞ · ΕΡΟQ Ν̄CΑΘΗ ΑΥΩ ΜΑΡΕΦ̄ΡΕΠ ΖΗΟΤ ΖΩC ΕΑΦΜΕΤΕΧΕ · ΕΥΧΑΡΙC

Ar «Wenn jemand bei einem Weibe schlafen will und sie ihm seine Lust nicht gewährt, soll er sich verpflichten, sich später in acht zu nehmen, und danken, daß er große Gnade erfahren hat».

If a man sleep with a woman without obtaining his desire, he shall commit to guard himself from this afterwards, and he shall give thanks because he has obtained mercy.

It should be noted the dittography of ΝCΑΘΗ in C, which in general presents some mistakes.

Canon 86. This canon deals with the opportunity for the Church to accept a heritage. If it is subjected to a taxation, that is, to the political authority, the Church should avoid to accept it. All the Coptic versions (C, T, D)<sup>63</sup> call this tax *demosion*. The Arabic translation (Ar) uses the terms typical of the new fiscal system: the *ḥarāg* (land tax) and the *uṣr* (the tithe):

Ar: «Was ein Sterbender der Kirche gibt, soll zuerst dem Verwalter oder Bischof gegeben werden; es soll ihr aber nichts gegeben werden, worauf Grundsteuer ruht. Wenn jemand auf dem Totenbette seinen Besitz der Kirche zu geben wünscht, so soll der Verwalter oder Bischof oder Presbyter der Kirche ihn annehmen, wenn er in Gold oder Kleidern oder Erz oder Weizen besteht. Besitz er aber etwas, worauf Grundsteuer (*ḥarāg*) oder Zehnter (*uṣr*) ruht, so sollen sie es nicht nehmen: die Kirche darf Derartiges nicht besitzen, sondern jeder König, Fürst und Beamter muß der Kirche unterworfen sein. Denn ihr wißt meine Brüder, daß in der ersten Zeit Joseph vom Besitze der Priester keinen Zehnten erheben ließ, sondern ihr Land war zehnten-frei, und man unterhielt sie vom Hause des Königs. Und doch dienten diese Priester den Götzen und standen in den Tempeln. Die Kirche aber ist der Tempel des lebendigen Gottes; daher muß sie grundsteuerfrei sein. Der Priester des großen Königs soll den Zehnten vom Altare nehmen, aber nicht der Knecht anderer sein, denn der Herr verordnete für den, welcher das Evangelium predigt, daß er vom Evangelium den Zehnten erhalte. Der Kleriker soll überhaupt keine Frone leisten: es soll keinen Vorwand gegen sie geben. Der Kleriker soll keinem Menschen unterstehen, so wenig wie der Ökonom, damit er nicht schikaniert und in seiner Würde von einem, der unter ihm steht, erniedrigt werde» (W. RIEDEL, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen*, cit., 270).

The Coptic manuscripts offer interesting variants, namely those of D against C/T:

<sup>60</sup> «he is taught ... not to do the thing absolutely»: « he is taught not to do these things another time» D.

<sup>61</sup> Ar: «Wenn ein Anagnost die Gitarre schlagen lernt, soll er gelehrt werden, es zu beichten (?). Kehrt er dann nicht wieder dazu zurück, so soll seine Strafe 7 Wochen betragen. Will er dabei bleiben, soll er abgesetzt und aus der Kirche ausgeschlossen werden» (W. RIEDEL, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen*, cit., 267).

<sup>62</sup> T doesn't preserve enough text.

<sup>63</sup> In T is not preserved the part of the text which mentions the tax.





forced labour, nor a job will be cast on them. No cleric will do the administrator or the manager for anyone, in order that any pressure will not reach him and (his) reputation will not be despised by them who humiliate him.

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All the Coptic versions and the Arabic translation offer a relatively coherent text. Comparing **C** and **D**, the two best preserved manuscripts, we observe some differences, which are not sufficient to recognize specific textual forms. In general, **D** and **T** show more accuracy in writing than **C**, which on the contrary shows orthographic mistakes: ⲛⲕⲗⲏⲣⲓⲟⲥ (canon 73b); ⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲏⲥ (canon 74); ⲉⲓⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲁⲥⲥⲉ (canon 85) or dittography (ⲛⲥⲁⲟⲛ, canon 75).

The differences in some case are to be interpreted either as a banalization of the tradition **C/T**, or as a reworking by the compiler of **D**; for the moment we are not able to exclude the hypothesis of a double translation.

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*Abstract.* The *Canons* attributed to Basil of Caesarea were known so far through a number of Arabic manuscripts, one of which was translated in German by Riedel, but not edited; a quotation of *Canon* 1 in a Coptic liturgical manuscript of paper (published by J. Dresher); a number of fragments belonging to different Coptic codices, edited and inedited, and in particular two leaves from a lost papyrus codex coming from Deir Bal'izah (n. 31), with the text of *Canon* 36 (published by P.E. Kahle); some Chester Beatty leaves (ms 819C, ff. 1-8) from a parchment codex (*Canons* 48-96) likely deriving from the White Monastery (inedited); the Turin *Codex* XIII, which is constituted by a good number of fragmentary leaves partially edited by F. Rossi. To these textual witnesses a new entire codex has been added, now preserved in Cairo, *Coptic Museum*. The aim of this contribution is to offer an updating about the edition of the *Canons* and to place them in the context of the Coptic literature, in particular the circulation of the canonical literature in this language and the intellectual milieu that promoted it.

Keywords. Basil of Caesarea, Canons. Canonical literature. Coptic canons. Coptic translation. Coptic manuscript.