

DETECTING EARLY MEDIAEVAL COPTIC LITERATURE IN DAYR AL-ANBĀ MAQĀR,  
BETWEEN TEXTUAL CONSERVATION AND LITERARY REARRANGEMENT:  
THE CASE OF *VAT. COPT. 57*



STUDI E TESTI

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LITERATURE IN DAYR AL-ANBĀ MAQĀR,  
BETWEEN TEXTUAL CONSERVATION  
AND LITERARY REARRANGEMENT:  
THE CASE OF VAT. COPT. 57**

Edited by Paola Buzi

Contributions by

Francesco Berno, Paola Buzi, Tea Ghigo, Ira Rabin,  
Agostino Soldati, and Francesco Valerio

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in this volume:

- BAM Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung (Berlin)
- CC *Clavis Coptica*  
Unique identifier attributed to each work (or better textual unit) by the CMCL project (see below)
- CLM Coptic Literary Manuscript  
Unique identifier attributed to each literary codicological unit by the PATHs project (see below)
- CMCL Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterati  
Project on Coptic Literature created and directed by Tito Orlandi [www.cmcl.it]
- CPG *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*  
Mauritius Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, Volumes 1-6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974-1998).
- MACA *Siglum* attributed by the CMCL project to the virtually reconstructed codices from Dayr al-Anbā Maqār, Wādī al-Naṭrūn  
Each MACA *siglum* is followed by two letters (ex.: MACA.AC corresponds to the whole *Vat. copt.* 57 that is dealt with in this volume)
- MONB *Siglum* attributed by the CMCL project to the virtually reconstructed codices from the White Monastery, Atripe
- PATHs Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature. Literary Texts in their Geographical Context. Production, Copying, Usage, Dissemination and Storage  
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PAOLA BUZI

## INTRODUCTION

### VAT. COPT. 57: AN OUTSTANDING CODEX FROM DAYR AL-ANBĀ MAQĀR

As is well known, we owe to Giuseppe Simonio Assemani (\*1742-1845)<sup>1</sup> — who, by the will of pope Clement XI Albani (on the papal throne in the period 1700-1721) had undertaken a journey to Egypt and the Near East (1715-1717/18) — the acquisition of Boḥairic parchment leaves from the monastery of Dayr al-Anbā Maqār, in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn (Skētis, or Wādī Hubayb), a monastic settlement that represented one of the most important cultural centres of mediaeval Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

When the parchment leaves (2496 ff.) obtained by Assemani were officially incorporated in the fund of Coptic manuscripts at first of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (until 1723), and later of the Apostolic Vatican Library,<sup>3</sup> they were bound in sixteen modern codices, which were

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<sup>1</sup> D. V. PROVERBIO, *Per una storia del fondo dei Vaticani Copti*, in P. BUZI – D. V. PROVERBIO (eds.), *Coptic Treasures from the Vatican Library. A Selection of Coptic, Copto-Arabic and Ethiopic Manuscripts*. Papers collected on the occasion of the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies (Rome, September 17th-22nd, 2012), Roma 2012, pp. 11-19: 14-15; A. MAZZOCONE, D. V. PROVERBIO, *Giuseppe Simonio Assemani e la Biblioteca Vaticana: una storia evenemenziale*, in B. JATTA (ed.), *La Biblioteca Vaticana e le arti nel Secolo dei Lumi (1700-1797)*, in *Storia della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana* 4, Città del Vaticano 2016, pp. 314-335. For a profile of assemani, see above all, E. TISSERANT, *Notes pur servir à la biographie d'Étienne Évode Assemani*, in *Oriens Christianus* s. iii, 7 (1932), pp. 264-276; G. LEVI DELLA VIDA, *Giuseppe Simonio Assemani*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 4 (1962), pp. 437b-440a. Other bibliographical references are to be found in the above mentioned article by Delio Vania Proverbio.

<sup>2</sup> On the features of the cultural and bibliological activities of the Monastery of Saint Macarius, compared to those of the White Monastery, see T. ORLANDI, *The Monasteries of Shenoute and Macarius: A Comparison Between Two Libraries*, in P. BUZI (ed.), *The Coptic Book: Codicological Features, Places of Production, Intellectual Trends* (= *Adamantius* 24 [2018], pp. 58-65).

<sup>3</sup> PROVERBIO, *Per una storia del fondo dei Vaticani Copti* cit., pp. 14-16. For the formation of the collection of Coptic manuscripts of the Apostolic Vatican Library see also A. HEBBELYNCK – A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani Barberiniani Borgiani Rossiani, I: Codices Coptici Vaticani*, Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae codices manu scripti recensiti, Romae, In Bibliotheca Vaticana, 1937, pp. xi-xxiv. For the Coptic manuscripts collected before Giuseppe Simonio Assemani, see A. KIRCHER, *Prodromus Copticus sive Aegyptiacus*, Romae 1636, pp. 187-195.

attributed the call numbers *Vat. copt.* 57 to 69. They all date back to the ninth-tenth century, with the exception of the leaves contained in *Vat. copt.* 60 that are rather to be dated to the twelfth-thirteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

During his journey in the monastery of Dayr al-Anbā Maqār, Assemani also acquired a Copto-Arabic Pentateuch, whose Coptic text is to be assigned to the ninth-tenth century, while the Arabic text is a later addition of the thirteenth-fourteenth century (*Vat. copt.* 1),<sup>5</sup> a Psalter, datable to the thirteenth century (*Vat. copt.* 5), an Antiphonary, dated by the colophon to the year 1218 CE (*Vat. copt.* 35)<sup>6</sup> and, apparently, an incomplete parchment codex containing a *Catena* of the Gospels (dated to 888/889 CE, according to the colophon), that, however, for some reasons, he left it in the Monastery of the Syrians, where it remained until 1838, when Robert Curzon, Baron of Haryngworth (1810-1873), found it in “a small upper room in the great square tower”.<sup>7</sup> This codex is now known as the ‘Curzon Catena’ and when, in 1917, Curzon’s library was bequeathed by his daughter to the British Museum (now British Library), it was given the call number Or. 8812.<sup>8</sup>

After having been moved to Paris, pursuant to the Tractate of Tolentino (1797), where they have been accurately studied by Étienne Marc Quatremère,<sup>9</sup> in 1817 the Coptic codices<sup>10</sup> definitively returned to Rome, by decision of the Congress of Vienna, and were located in the Galleria Clementina of the Vatican Library.<sup>11</sup>

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\* \* \*

<sup>4</sup> HEBBELYNCK – VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani* cit., pp. 1-6, 12-14, 135-142, 385-523.

<sup>5</sup> A. BOUD’HORS, *Pentateuque Copte-Arabe* (Vaticano copto 1), in BUZI, PROVERBIO (eds.), *Coptic Treasures from the Vatican Library* cit., pp. 63-71.

<sup>6</sup> *Mandante eodem Clemente, annis 1715-1718, apud monachos Nitrientes acquisivit Joseph Simon Assemani sedecim volumina membranacea, antiquitate et rerum momento praesantia, quae sunt codices 1, 5, 35, 57-69; opera eiusdem Assemani ex Aegypto allati sunt insuper quinque chartacei, nempe 18, 19, 28, 55 et 56 (codicibus 19, 55 et 56, primitus inter arabicos ordinatis.* HEBBELYNCK – VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani* cit., pp. xix-xx.

<sup>7</sup> B. LAYTON, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library acquired since the Year 1906*, London 1987, pp. 389-394 (n° 249).

<sup>8</sup> P. BUZI – F. BERNO – A. SOLDATI – F. VALERIO, *Vat. copt. 57: A Codicological, Literary and Paratextual Analysis*, in *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin* 4/2 (2018), p. 162.

<sup>9</sup> É. M. QUATREMÈRE, *Recherches sur la langue et la littérature de l’Égypte*, Lutetiae Parisiorum 1808, pp. 118-133.

<sup>10</sup> *Vat. copt.* 1, 5, 9, 12, 16, 67-69 and 71. *Recensio Manuscriptorum Codicum qui ex universa Bibliotheca Vaticana selecti iussu Dni. Nri, Pii VI. Pont. M. Prid. Id. Iul. aAn. CIOCCCLXXXVII Procuratoribus Gallorum iure belli, seu pactarum iudiciarum ergo, et in ita pacis traditi fuere*, Lipsiae 1803, pp. 335-39, nos. 150-169.

<sup>11</sup> PROVERBIO, *Per una storia del fondo dei Vaticani Copti* cit., pp. 15-17.

Within the group of modern volumes that are denominated *Vat. copt.* 57 to 69, that collect the just described Bohairic leaves, *Vat. copt.* 57 represents a special case, not only because it is the only one that contains a selection of works entirely attributed to the same author — thirty-eight homilies by John Chrysostom, whose collection, arrangement and textual re-elaboration, compared to the Greek tradition as well as real paternity, are largely discussed in the following chapters of this volume — but also, and above all, because all its leaves belong to same original codex, or better codicological unit.

In brief, it can be said that the modern volume called *Vat. copt.* 57 represents a re-bounding of the ancient codex that has lost only a few leaves compared to its original structure. On the contrary, all the other volumes of this group of Vatican manuscripts — *Vat. copt.* 58 to 69 — are rather “recueils factices”, that is collections and assemblages of group of leaves originally belonging to several codicological units or ancient codices,<sup>12</sup> although it may happen that more “blocks” of the same original codicological units have been bound together with other *nuclei* of different codices.

Such state of affairs explains the choice of dedicating an entire issue of *Studi e Testi* to *Vat. copt.* 57, which for codicological,<sup>13</sup> palaeographical and intellectual reasons, represents an extremely interesting case in order to understand the specific culture, needs, tastes and production aims of the *scriptorium* of Dayr al-Anbā Maqār.

This perfectly meets the research interests of a recently established project dedicated to Coptic literature and based at “Sapienza” University of Rome, “PATHs – Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature. Literary Texts in their Geographical Context. Production, Copying, Usage, Dissemination and Storage”, that aims at providing an in-depth diachronical understanding and effective representation of the geography of Coptic literary production, which is the corpus of writings, almost exclusively of religious contents, produced in Egypt between the third and the eleventh centuries in the Coptic language,

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<sup>12</sup> «Contrary to what is generally assumed, it is not true that the library of Shenoute gave mainly fragments, while that of Macarius mainly complete codices. It would be more accurate to say that, from Macarius, mainly entire works were recovered but from discarded codices». ORLANDI, *The Monasteries of Shenoute and Macarius* cit., pp. 58-65.

<sup>13</sup> I draw the attention on the observation by Tito Orlandi concerning the different approach, so far, to the study of texts transmitted by the libraries of the Monasteries of Macarius and Shenoute: «In the texts from the library of Macarius, the description of the manuscripts is virtually non-existent; in those from the library of Shenoute, the attention to the codicological details is even exaggerated». ORLANDI, *The Monasteries of Shenoute and Macarius* cit.

combining, for the first time in this field, philology, codicology, archaeology, archaeometry, and digital humanities, in order to explore the process of production, copying, usage, dissemination, and storage of Coptic works in relation to the concrete geographical contexts of origin of both the texts themselves and their related writing supports.<sup>14</sup>

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\*                    \*

Before dealing with the heart of the matter and describing *Vat. copt.* 57 in all its aspects, it is necessary to stress that, compared to the contemporary library of the Monastery of Shenoute, and also to the library of the Monastery of the Archangel Michael in the Fayyūm, the library of the Monastery of Macarius seems to have selected, translated and preserved a greater number of Greek patristic texts, and above all to have done it in a way that shows a *modus operandi* that is independent from what happened elsewhere in Egypt and more respectful of the Greek tradition, a fact that may be explained with the strict relationship of the monastery with the orthodox, or melchite, Coptic Patriarchate. On the other hand, the same independence of the *scriptorium* of Dayr al-Anbā Maqār in the translations from Greek is shown in the case of biblical works, whose (Boḥairic) titles — as far as structure and terminology are concerned — are in most cases much more similar to the Greek originals.<sup>15</sup>

As observed by Tito Orlandi, in spite of the efforts of Evelyn-White,<sup>16</sup> unfortunately, we do not know much about the library of Dayr al-Anbā Maqār before the ninth century. Orlandi speculates that the library of the Alexandrian anti-Chalcedonian patriarchate may have been transferred to the Wādī al-Naṭrūn when (or if) the archbishop's residence was moved there, but above all he suggests that both the library of the monastery

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<sup>14</sup> P. BUZI – J. BOGDANI – N. CARLIG – M. C. GIORDA – A. SOLDATI, *Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: A New International Project on Coptic Literature*, in *Rivista del Museo Egizio* 1 (2017) [<https://rivista.museoegizio.it/>]; P. BUZI – J. BOGDANI – F. BERNO, *The 'PATHs' Project: an Effort to Represent the Physical Dimension of Coptic Literary Production (Third-Eleventh centuries)*, in *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Cultures Bulletin* 4/1 (2018), pp. 39-58 [<https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/comst/pdf/bulletin4-1/39-58.pdf>]; [[paths.uniroma1.it](https://paths.uniroma1.it/)]; [<https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/>].

<sup>15</sup> P. BUZI, *Some notes on Coptic biblical titles (3<sup>rd</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, in *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Cultures Bulletin* 3.1 (2017), pp. 5-22: 15-19.

<sup>16</sup> H. G. EVELYN-WHITE, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrun, Part 1: New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius*, New York 1926, pp. xxi-xxiv.

and the eventual patriarchal addition must have been composed mostly of Greek codices.<sup>17</sup>

What remains of the library of Dayr al-Anbā Maqār, however, represents a much later stage of the bibliological production of its *scriptorium*, although it probably continues to reflect the original spirit, where even the use of a different “dialect”, Boḥairic, may have played an ideological role. If the choice of making use of Boḥairic would appear in great part a logical consequence of the region where the Monastery of Macarius is located, one should not forget that the contemporary Fayyūmic Monastery of the Archangel Michael makes use almost exclusively of Sa’īdic, and not of Fayyūmic, a dialect whose use was still vivid.

Moreover, it is clear that the *ratio* that is behind the selection of the homiletic and hagiographic texts, their combination and even the manufacture of the codices that transmit them is completely based on the liturgical needs of the community. It is even possible to assume that the Alexandrian *Synaxarium* was formed on the basis of this selection of texts and their consequent attribution to a specific day of the liturgical calendar.

We cannot deny that a similar phenomenon takes place also in the tenth-eleventh century White Monastery and that even there the liturgical needs become crucial, but, differently from the community of Skētis, on the shelves of the monastic library of Atripe there is still place for other kinds of literature, destined to different aims. It will be sufficient to mention here, by way of example, the anomalous codex containing the so-called *dicta philosophorum*<sup>18</sup> (MONB.BE, according to the classification of the *Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari*; CLM 291, according to the classification of *PATHs*),<sup>19</sup> or the remains of the codex transmitting the *Cambyes Romance* (CC 0159).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> ORLANDI, *The Monasteries of Shenoute and Macarius* cit.

<sup>18</sup> P. BUZI, *Le Sentenze di Menandro e l'ambiente culturale greco-copto*, in M. S. FUNGHI (ed.), *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini. Testi e lessico nei papiri di cultura greca e latina. Parte II.2: Sentenze di Autori Noti e «Chreiai»*, Firenze 2015, pp. 269-286: 280; W. C. TILL, *Griechische Philosophen bei den Kopten*, in *Mélanges Maspéro*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'IFAO, 67, Le Caire 1934-1937, II, 165-175; W. CRUM, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London 1905, no. 217 [Or. 3581 A (45)], pp. 97-98. Wien, K. 943, K. 944, K. 945 e K. 946.

<sup>19</sup> [www.cmcl.it].

<sup>20</sup> For the *Cambyes Romance*, transmitted by Berlin, Staatliche Museen P. 9009.1-6, see the following selected bibliography: G. MÖLLER – H. SCHÄFER, *Zu den Bruchstücken des koptischen Kambyesromans*, in *ZÄS* 39 (1901), pp. 1-95; T. S. RICHTER, *Weitere Beobachtungen am koptischen Kambyes-Roman*, in *Enchoria* 24 (1997-1998), pp. 55-66; E. CRUZ-URIBE, *Notes on the Coptic Cambyes Romance*, in *Enchoria* 14 (2006), pp. 51-56; M. CRAMER, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten einst und heute*, Wiesbaden 1959, pp. 51-52, 118-119; F. KAMMERZELL, *Eine altpersische (Volks-)Etymologie im koptischen Kambyes-Roman*, in *GM* 100 (1987),

Moreover, it is reasonable to think that only certain Sa'īdic texts were selected and translated into Boḥairic, because they were considered useful for the liturgy of the Monastery of Saint Macarius, as well as for the other communities in Lower Egypt, while a great part of the works were translated directly from Greek.

The cultural 'independence' of Dayr al-Anbā Maqār from the White Monastery, on the other hand, is marked also by means of the elaboration of a new script — the so-called 'Nitriot majuscule' or 'Nitriot uncial' —,<sup>21</sup> a new layout — normally in one column — and pagination system — page numbers are normally written only on the verso of the leaves, except for the beginning of the quires — and a new kind of decoration of the titles.

In brief, it can be stated that in the ninth and tenth centuries, differently from the library and *scriptorium* of the White Monastery that still produced — at least in the form of a re-arrangement and re-thinking — Coptic literature, the transcription of texts in the Monastery of Macarius takes the shape of a "musealisation of literary and book production": the codices manufactured here appears as luxury products, characterized by a careful selection of the writing material and a very elegant decoration and handwriting. The several traces of emendation and the frequent *glossae*, in Coptic and, above all, in Arabic, attributed to the texts and to the titles, confirm this impression.

It is in this specific cultural and ideological framework that *Vat. copt.* 57 should be analysed and evaluated.

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pp. 31-39; H. L. JANSEN, *The Coptic Story of Cambyses' Invasion of Egypt*, Oslo 1950; C. D. G. MÜLLER, *Romances*, in A. S. ATIYA (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, New York 1991, pp. 2059-2061; E. YAMAUCHI, *Cambyses in Egypt*, in J. E. COLESON – D. W. YOUNG – V. H. MATTHEWS (eds.), *Go to the Land I Will Show You: Studies in Honor of Dwight W. Young*, Winona Lake IN 1996, pp. 371-392; D. SELDEN, *Cambyses' Madness or the Reason of History*, in *MD* 42 (1999), pp. 33-63; D. DÖPP, *Kambyses' Feldzug gegen Ägypten: Der sogenannte Kambyses-Roman und sein Verhältnis zu griechischer Literatur*, in *GFA* 6 (2003), pp. 1-17; H. SUERMANN, *Copts and the Islam in the seventh century*, in E. GRYPEOU, M. N. SWANSON – D. R. THOMAS, *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity With Early Islam*, Leiden-Boston 2006, pp. 95-109: 101; D. L. SELDEN, *The Political Economy of Romance in Late Period Egypt*, in M. PASCHALIS – S. PANAYOTAKIS (eds.), *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel*, Groningen 2013, pp. 1-40: 2-9. For more bibliographical references, see P. BUZI, *Egypt, crossroad of translations and literary interweavings (3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century). A reconsideration of earlier Coptic literature*, in F. CREVATIN (ed.), *Egitto, crocevia di traduzioni*, Trieste 2018, pp. 15-67.

<sup>21</sup> See the chapter on palaeography by Francesco Valerio. See A. BOUD'HORS, *L'onciale penchée en copte et sa survie jusqu'au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle en Haute-Égypte*, in F. DÉROCHE – F. RICHARD (eds.), *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, Études et recherches, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1997, pp. 117-133: 120; EAD., *Pentateuque Copte-Arabe (Vaticano copto 1)*, in BUZI, PROVERBIO (eds.), *Coptic Treasures from the Vatican Library* cit., pp. 63-71: 65.

Some reflections on *Vat. copt.* 57 had been already published in a recent collective article, written by most of the contributors of this volume.<sup>22</sup> Not only, however, is the content of this issue of *Studi e Testi* original — the texts contained in the just mentioned article have been completely revised and updated —, but it also represents a much more advanced analysis of the codex, as a material object and as carrier of intellectual products. Moreover, the chapters respectively dedicated to the first homily of the codex (Agostino Soldati) and the archaeometric analysis of the inks (Ira Rabin and Tea Ghigo) are totally new, while that dedicated to the content of the manuscript (Francesco Berno) has been meaningfully enlarged.

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<sup>22</sup> BUZI – BERNO – SOLDATI – VALERIO, *Vat. copt.* 57. *A Codicological, Literary and Paratextual Analysis* cit.





FRANCESCO VALERIO

CODICOLOGICAL AND PALAEOGRAPHICAL  
DESCRIPTION\*

*Ce volume [...] est le plus beau et le plus  
ancien que j'aie vu en dialecte Memphitique*

ÉTIENNE QUATREMÈRE<sup>1</sup>

*Quire layout*

In its present state, *Vat. copt.* 57 contains 280 leaves (260 × 370 mm), forming 36 quires. All of them were originally regular quaternions, beginning with flesh-side and assembled according to Gregory's Rule, but now three quires appear to be incomplete: (a) in quire 22 (= ff. 169-174) the central bifolium is lost (that is two leaves missing between ff. 171=172); (b) in quire 23 (= ff. 175-180) the third bifolium is lost (that is a leaf missing between ff. 176 and 177, and another one between ff. 178 and 179); (c) in quire 36 (= ff. 277-280) the third and the central bifolium are lost (that is four leaves missing between ff. 278=279). If we look at the texts, it appears that the two missing leaves in quire 22 were the final leaves of Homily 21, the two missing leaves in quire 23 were the last and the fourth-last leaf of homily 22, the four missing leaves in quire 36 contained the end of homily 37 and the beginning of homily 38. Moreover, one should note that not only the beginning of homily 38 is missing, but also its final part, since the text ends abruptly in what is now the last leaf of the manuscript (f. 280v).<sup>2</sup>

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\* Standard description: HEBBELYNCK – VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani Barberiniani Borgiani Rossiani*, I: *Codices Coptici Vaticani* cit., pp. 368-384. For a general overview on the manuscript and an updated bibliography, see S. VOICU, *Vaticano Copto 57*, in BUZI – PROVERBIO, *Coptic Treasures from the Vatican Library* cit., pp. 151-161. A complete digitised copy is available at: [[https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.copt.57](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.copt.57)]. Thanks to the kind permission of Paolo Vian, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, I have been allowed to carry out a fresh inspection of the manuscript. Regarding the other Saint Macarius manuscripts in the Vatican Library, I have so far examined autoptically *Vat. copt.* 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, while for the others I rely for the moment only on the digitised copies available at: [<https://digi.vatlib.it/?ling=it>]. For the Curzon *Catena*, I have used a digitised copy of a b/w microfilm, kindly put at the disposal of the PATHs working team by Frank Feder and Alin Suciu, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Digitale Gesamtedition und Übersetzung des koptisch-sahidischen Alten Testaments.

<sup>1</sup> QUATREMÈRE, *Recherches sur la langue et la littérature* cit., p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, what remains of Homily 38 are only two leaves (ff. 279-280), or rather 'half-

To sum up, it is certain that 8 leaves are now missing from the core of the manuscript, yet we also have to assume that it is not complete at the end: at least a singleton or a bifolium was necessary to complete the text of Homily 38, however, there is no proof that the 38th was in fact the last homily of the collection. Some others could have followed, so that we cannot say how many, if any, quires are now missing.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Quire signatures and pagination*

The 36 extant quires are regularly signed, from  $\alpha$  to  $\lambda\zeta$ , on first and last page, in the top-inner margin.<sup>4</sup> Each signature is decorated with an horizontal rule and a wavy line above and a cul-de-lampe below, and is accompanied by a cross and some invocations in Greek and Coptic, inscribed in the central-upper margin of the same initial and final pages of each quire:  $\text{i}\bar{\eta}\bar{\varsigma} \text{p}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\chi}\bar{\varsigma} \ast \text{NIKA}$  ('Jesus Christ is victorious'),  $\text{i}\bar{\eta}\bar{\varsigma} \text{p}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\chi}\bar{\varsigma} \ast \text{ΛΟΓΟΣ ΠΑΤΕΡ}$  ('Jesus Christ the Word of the Father'),  $\text{i}\bar{\eta}\bar{\varsigma} \text{p}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\chi}\bar{\varsigma} \ast \bar{\gamma}\bar{\varsigma} \bar{\theta}\bar{\gamma}$  ('Jesus Christ the Son of God'),  $\text{ΛΟΓΟΣ} \ast \text{ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΕΡ}$  ('The Word of the Father'),  $\text{i}\bar{\eta}\bar{\varsigma} \ast \text{ΠΩΝΗ}$  ('Jesus Christ Life'),  $\bar{\gamma}\bar{\varsigma} \text{ΛΟΓΟΣ} \ast \text{ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ}$  ('The Son Word of God'),  $\text{i}\bar{\eta}\bar{\varsigma} \text{p}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\chi}\bar{\varsigma} \ast \text{ο Θ}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\varsigma} \text{ΗΜΩ(Ν)}$  ('Jesus Christ our God'),  $\bar{\gamma}\bar{\varsigma} \text{ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ [sic]} \ast \text{ΘΕΟΥ}$  ('Christ the Son of God'),  $\text{ΖΙΛΟΝ [sic]} \ast \text{ΖΩΗΣ}$  ('The Tree of Life').<sup>5</sup>

The pagination is expressed in the top-outer margin, on the first page of each quire (i.e. odd numbers from  $\alpha$  to  $\phi\zeta\alpha$  every 16:  $\alpha$ ,  $\iota\zeta$ ,  $\lambda\rho$ ,  $\mu\theta$  and so on) and on all the verso pages (i.e. even numbers from  $\beta$  to  $\phi\theta\Delta$ ), however, there are many errors and inconsistencies.<sup>6</sup> The 8 leaves, now lost

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leaves', since their outer half (and of f. 280 the upper margin too) is not preserved (and has been restored with modern parchment). See below, note 4.

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of completeness, one could even observe that for such a rich collection it would be extremely fitting to be introduced by a title-index listing the contents in their order of appearance (cf. e.g. the list of  $\text{NIKEΦΑΛΕΟΝ}$  prefixed to each Gospel in the Curzon Catena, i.e. London, British Library, *Or.* 8812, on which we shall return). If so, we could suppose that the manuscript had suffered a loss not only in the end, but in the beginning as well, where a bifolium or a binion (without of course a quire signature: see below in the text) would have contained such introductory contents.

<sup>4</sup> Only on f. 280v (last page of quire 36) the signature is not preserved, due to material reasons (the leaf is damaged: see above nt. 2).

<sup>5</sup> E. LANNE, *La «prière de Jésus» dans la tradition égyptienne. Témoignage des psaltes et des inscriptions*, in *Irenikon* 50 (1977), pp. 163-203: p. 200. The crosses are often decorated and coloured: see ff. 8v-9r, 16v-17r, 24v, 32v-33r, 48v-49r, 56v-57r, 64v-65r (Fig. 3), 72v-73r, 96v-97r (Fig. 8), 104v-105r, 112v-113r, 144v, 153r, 160v-161r, 168v-169r, 174v-175r, 180v-181r, 189r, 196v-197r, 204v-205r, 212v-213r, 220v-221v, 228v-229r, 244v, 260v-261r, 269r, 277r.

<sup>6</sup> Four verso pages have no page number expressed, that is f. 14v (expected number  $\kappa\eta$ ), f. 60v ( $\rho\kappa$ ), f. 81v ( $\rho\zeta\beta$ ), f. 153v ( $\tau\varsigma$ , Fig. 12). Twelve pages are assigned wrong page numbers: f. 17r ( $\mu\theta$  instead of  $\lambda\rho$  –  $\mu\theta$  is in fact the page number of the first page of the next quire!), f. 102v ( $\sigma\beta$  instead of  $\sigma\Delta$ ), f. 103v ( $\sigma\Delta$  instead of  $\sigma\varsigma$ ), ff. 175v-180v ( $\sigma\eta\Delta$ ,  $\sigma\eta\varsigma$ ,  $\sigma\zeta$ ,  $\sigma\zeta\beta$ ,  $\sigma\zeta\varsigma$ ,  $\sigma\zeta\eta$

(see above, *Quire layout*), were included in the pagination, since the corresponding page numbers are now missing.<sup>7</sup> Like the quire signatures, each page number is decorated with an horizontal rule and a wavy line above and a cul-de-lampe below. Moreover, a cross made of four dots, and surmounted by a wavy line, is inscribed in the top-central margin of almost all the verso pages.

Both the invocations added on the first and last page of a quire, and the pagination expressed only on the first page of the quire and on the verso pages, seem to be customary features of Saint Macarius parchment manuscripts, since they occur in nearly all the manuscripts acquired by Assemani, now in the Vatican Library, and in the Curzon Catena as well.<sup>8</sup>

A red oblique stroke, serving as ‘middle-quire mark’, is inscribed in the central pages of each quire, in the top-outer margin of the verso page and in the bottom-outer margin of the facing recto page.

#### *Modern foliation*

An ink foliation, from 1 to 280 (therefore *not* comprising the 8 leaves now missing in quires 22, 23 and 36), is added in the top-outer margin by an eighteenth-century hand. At times the folio numbers have been trimmed, or have become faded, and have been rewritten by a nineteenth- or early twentieth-century hand.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Parchment and page layout*

The parchment is of poor quality, as is the case in the majority of Coptic manuscripts<sup>10</sup>: flesh and hair-sides are highly different in colour and grain,

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instead of  $\tau\mu\lambda$ ,  $\tau\eta\varsigma$ ,  $\tau\zeta$ ,  $\tau\zeta\beta$ ,  $\tau\zeta\varsigma$ ,  $\tau\zeta\eta$ , f. 226v (cζ instead of γζ), f. 260v (φκγ instead of φκη), f. 264v (φλη instead of φλς).

<sup>7</sup> The missing page numbers are:  $\tau\mu\lambda$  and  $\tau\eta\varsigma$  (page numbers of the two lost leaves of quire 22),  $\sigma\eta\eta$  and  $\sigma\zeta\lambda$  (page numbers of the two lost leaves of quire 23, certainly written, like the other page numbers of that quire, with the wrong c- instead of τ-: see previous footnote),  $\phi\zeta\varsigma$ ,  $\phi\zeta\eta$ ,  $\phi\theta$ ,  $\phi\theta\beta$  (page numbers of the four lost leaves in quire 36). In quire 36, the number of the last page is also missing ( $\phi\theta\varsigma$  on f. 280v), since the upper margin of the leaf is not preserved (see above nt. 4).

<sup>8</sup> Regarding this pagination system, BOUD’HORS, *Pentateuque Copte-Arabe (Vaticano copto 1)* cit., pp. 63-71: p. 66, already noted that it ‘semble être l’habitude des manuscrits de parchemin du monastère de Saint-Macaire, et peut-être de Basse-Égypte en général’.

<sup>9</sup> Usually in pencil, but in ink in ff. 134 and 142, and in pencil, rewritten with ink, in ff. 90, 92-104, 106-107, 117. In ff. 258 and 261 the nineteenth- or twentieth-century hand has rewritten in pencil the eighteenth-century folio number.

<sup>10</sup> See P. BUZI, *Beyond the Papyrus. The Writing Materials of Christian Egypt before the Tenth Century: Ostraca, Wooden Tablets and Parchment*, in *COMSt Newsletter* 2 (2011), pp. 10-16: pp. 14-15.

and almost all leaves have irregular margins, holes, eyes (now restored with modern parchment).<sup>11</sup>

The leaves are pricked and ruled in the following way: on every page, two vertical lines to the left and a single vertical line to the right are traced with a lead, while the ruling lines (a single line for every two lines of text) are traced with a dry point.<sup>12</sup> The first line of the text is written inside the ruling.

The text is written in a single column, aligned to the left (written area: 170 × 300 mm). Each page has 36 to 38 lines, each line has 20 to 28 characters.<sup>13</sup>

Paragraphs are marked with an enlarged initial in *ekthesis*. Punctuation is provided by a single or double raised dash (=), followed by a space. A dotted *diple*, repeated in the margin of each line, is used to mark Biblical quotations occurring in the text.<sup>14</sup>

The beginning of each homily is preceded by a title, written in a bimodular script inspired by the Greek Alexandrian majuscule.<sup>15</sup> The same writing is used for the page numbers, the quire signatures and the invocations, as well as for two prayers (in the standard pattern  $\text{CMOY EPOT XW NNI EBOL' ANOK HA TICBOYI}$ , 'Bless me, forgive me; I am the disciple') added in ff. 200v and 211r, at the end of Homilies 26 and 27.<sup>16</sup>

A leaf tab is pasted in the outer margin of ff. 6, 23, 45, 51, 59, 74, 98, 122, 136, 179, 201, 218, respectively the first leaf of Homilies 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 23, 27, 29.<sup>17</sup> Though not preserved elsewhere, it is reasonable to assume that such tabs marked the beginning of the other homilies as well.

The textual and numerical elements (texts, titles, invocations, prayers,

<sup>11</sup> In ff. 183v and 225v there are even remains of animal hair. In ff. 25, 67, 83, 250 there are sewing repairs.

<sup>12</sup> According to Leroy's classification, the ruling type is X2 10A1m: see *Répertoire de réglures dans les manuscrits grecs sur parchemin*, base de données établie par J.-H. SAUTEL à l'aide du fichier Leroy et des catalogues récents à l'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes (CNRS), Turnhout 1995 (Bibliologia, 13). In ff. 225v, 231v, 232r also the ruling lines are traced with a lead.

<sup>13</sup> In ff. 140r, 141r (Fig. 11), 176r, 186r, 271r, exceeding letters of the last line of the page are written below the end of the line.

<sup>14</sup> See ff. 23v, 26v, 68r, 87r, 98r, 100v, 101v, 105r, 132r, 138r, 168v (in the same ink as the text); ff. 96v, 97r (Fig. 8), 102v, 103r, 104v, 169r (in red ink: see below, nt. 18).

<sup>15</sup> It is useful to remind ourselves that the bimodular Alexandrian majuscule is a very common type of *Auszeichnungsmajuskel* in Greek minuscule manuscripts.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding the supralinear corrections to the text, written in this script, see BUZI – BERNO – SOLDATI – VALERIO, *Vat. copt.* 57 cit., pp. 183-185.

<sup>17</sup> To be sure, in ff. 51, 122, 136 and 179, the tab itself is not preserved, but there are on the parchment obvious traces of its presence.

quire signatures, page numbers) are all written with the same brownish ink, but there are some instances of red ink being used.<sup>18</sup>

### *Decoration*

The copyist has left around each title a blank space, which in most cases has been suitably occupied by a decorative frame, infilled with interlaces of various patterns and colours. The frame at the beginning of Homily 1 (f. 1r, Fig. 1) is of course the richest and most complex, as it not only surrounds the title, but also covers the outer and the lower margin of the page. Moreover, the first word of the homily is marked by an enlarged and decorated initial (a  $\mathfrak{N}$  with the vertical strokes infilled with an interlace, and a knot in the middle of the oblique), and red ink is used for the first four lines of the text as well as for the first and third line of the title. Another 'enriched' frame, which covers the outer margin as well, is depicted in f. 179r (Fig. 15), at the beginning of Homily 23: its purpose is obviously to mark a major division in the codex, since the 23rd opens a series of homilies devoted to the Pauline Epistles. The other frames usually only surround the titles on three sides (that is they are shaped like a square bracket: [ or ]), however, there are some exceptions, for which there seems to be no specific reason.<sup>19</sup> In addition to Homily 1, there are eleven instances of a decorated initial marking the beginning of a homily, but rather than being actually 'decorated' initials, they are enlarged initials rewritten with coloured ink.<sup>20</sup>

### *Script(s) and dating*

The writing of the text is a calligraphic and yet fluid majuscule, the general features of which are: (a) the square module of the letters (unimodularity), (b) a sharp contrast of thick (verticals and descenders from left to

<sup>18</sup> Namely the page number and the cross in ff. 89v and 97v; the page number in f. 177v (the cross is omitted); the complete set of page number, invocations and quire signature in ff. 1r (Fig. 1), 81r, 88v-89r, 96v-97r (Fig. 8), 104v-105r; the dotted *diplai* in the leaves listed above, nt. 14. On f. 1r see also below, *Decoration*. On the composition of the inks, see below, pp. 77-83.

<sup>19</sup> The title of Homily 11 (f. 74r, Fig. 5) has no frame but is followed by a band made of dots and dashes, and is accompanied by an elegant branch-shaped coronis, which covers part of the outer margin of the page. The titles of Homilies 17 (f. 136v), 25 (f. 188v) and 36 (f. 267r) have no frame at all. The title of Homily 18 (f. 141r, Fig. 11) has a rectangular frame. The bracket-shaped frames surrounding the titles of Homilies 19 (f. 153v, Fig. 12) and 31 (f. 230v, Fig. 15) are depicted only in black ink, without insertion of colour. The title of Homily 37 (f. 272v) is framed by a simple rectangular, not infilled with interlace.

<sup>20</sup> See ff. 6v (Homily 2), 14v (Hom. 3), 51v (Hom. 8), 59r (Hom. 9), 66v (Hom. 10, Fig. 4), 90r (Hom. 12), 179r (Hom. 23, Fig. 13), 196v (Hom. 26), 201r (Hom. 27), 218r (Hom. 29), 225r (Hom. 30).

right) and thin strokes (horizontals, ascenders and descenders from right to left), (c) the presence of serifs. Such a script is clearly inspired by the Greek Biblical majuscule<sup>21</sup> and occurs not only in *Vat. copt. 57*, but appears to be the typical writing of Saint Macarius parchment manuscripts, christened by Coptologists ‘Nitriot majuscule’ (or ‘Nitriot uncial’).<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to observe how two general features of the Nitriot majuscule listed above (namely the sharp contrast of thick and thin strokes and the presence of serifs) are distinctive characteristics not of the ‘canonical’ form of the Greek Biblical majuscule (third-fourth century), but of the late examples of this script (the period of the so called ‘decadence’, from fifth century on).<sup>23</sup> But now let us describe in detail the hand of *Vat. copt. 57*.<sup>24</sup>

α: occurs both in the canonical form (i.e. with left and central stroke forming an acute angle) and in the looped form (i.e. with the two aforementioned strokes forming a loop), which is typical of the late Biblical majuscule.

β: the upper loop is very small and pointed (it has in fact a triangular shape); the lower one is rounded in the outer part and straight at the base.

ρ: with a squared serif at the end of the horizontal.

Δ: sometimes with a serif at the left end of the base.

ε, θ, ο, c: as a consequence of the shading, the four round letters appear to be vertically split (typical feature of the late Greek Biblical majuscule); the horizontal of ε ends with a squared serif.

<sup>21</sup> Or ‘Biblical uncial’, as English-speaking scholars prefer to label it (see e.g. N.G. WILSON, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 57 [1971], pp. 238-240).

<sup>22</sup> See BOUD’HORS, *L’onciale penchée en copte* cit., pp. 117-133: p. 120; EAD., *Pentateuque Copte-Arabe* cit., p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> On the Greek Biblical majuscule, see the pivotal study of G. CAVALLO, *Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica*, Firenze 1967 (Studi e testi di papirologia, 2), with additions and supplements in P. ORSINI, *Manoscritti in maiuscola biblica. Materiali per un aggiornamento*, Cassino 2005 (Collana scientifica. Studi archeologici, artistici, filologici, letterari e storici, 7) (partial English version in ID., *Studies on Greek and Coptic Majuscule Scripts and Books*, Berlin-Boston 2019 [Studies in Manuscript Cultures, 15], pp. 57-97). Pasquale Orsini has devoted a special study to the Coptic Biblical majuscule as well (see P. ORSINI, *La maiuscola biblica copta*, in *Segno e Testo* 6 [2008], pp. 121-150; English version in ID., *Studies on Greek and Coptic Majuscule Scripts* cit., pp. 98-132), but it is confined to Old Testament manuscripts in the Sa’idic dialect. Regarding the contrast of thick and thin strokes, it is to be stressed that I use the term ‘sharp’ here to mean that the strokes could be either thick or thin, as it is the case in the late Greek Biblical majuscule (see CAVALLO, *Ricerche* cit., p. 76) and in the Coptic Nitriot majuscule, while in the canonical Greek Biblical majuscule there are also medium strokes (see CAVALLO, *Ricerche* cit., p. 4).

<sup>24</sup> Hereafter, the term ‘canonical’ refers of course to the canon of the *Greek* Biblical majuscule.

z: the oblique is thick and the horizontals thin (typical feature of the late Greek Biblical majuscule); the upper horizontal is very short, the lower one is prolonged below the line and ends with a serif.

η: has a tall horizontal.

κ: split (typical feature of the late Greek Biblical majuscule), with a very short upper oblique.

λ: sometimes with a squared serif at the base of the left oblique.

μ: the two obliques form a single curved stroke, thin and above the line, or sometimes descending below it. This shape seems to be a compromise between the canonical four-stroke μ and the three-stroke μ of the Alexandrian majuscule.

ν: with thin oblique and thick verticals (typical feature of the late Greek Biblical majuscule). At the end of a line, it is sometimes replaced by a superlinear stroke.

ξ: the upper horizontal is small and attached to the serpentine, which is prolonged below the line and ends with a squared serif.

π: the horizontal does not extend beyond the verticals (remarkably a feature of the canonical Biblical majuscule: in the late Greek examples the horizontal is extended and ends with two serifs). However, it should be observed that, when π is followed by ε, ο or ρ, the horizontal is sometimes prolonged to the right and touches the upper part of the next letter.

ρ, ς: the vertical descends below the line, and is sometimes hooked at the base.

τ, †: with hooked serif at both ends of the horizontal; in † the vertical is also sometimes hooked at the base.

γ: the sole letter to be entirely inconsistent with the Biblical majuscule canon, as its shape is rather inspired by the corresponding letter of the Alexandrian majuscule. The vertical stroke ends above the line and has a triangular shape, while both obliques are rounded and end with a hooked or squared serif.

φ: the loop is enlarged and elliptic, but often not symmetric (the right half is narrower and more pointed); the vertical is sometimes hooked at the base.

χ: the descender from left to right is thick, straight and without serifs; the ascender is thin, wavy, starts sometimes below the line and ends with a squared or hooked serif.

ω: the left loop is rounded, the right one squared.

Ϸ, ϸ: the prolonged tail ends with a squared serif and is usually above the line.

ζ: the central part is parallel to the line, and therefore thin.



ⲁ: the descender from left to right is thick, usually with no serif; the ascender is thin and ends with a squared or hooked serif; the base is prolonged over the obliques and sometimes has a round serif on its left end.

ϸ: has a round shape and the final stroke, being parallel to the line, is thin and ends with a squared or hooked serif (it looks like a minuscule Greek *sigma*: σ).

The characters described above are of course not distinctive of solely the *Vat. copt. 57*, rather for the most part they are common to all the manuscripts written in Nitriot majuscule. We can therefore consider this script to be a canon, derived, as we have seen, from the late Greek Biblical majuscule, with sporadic elements either of the canonical Biblical majuscule (π), or of alien origin (ⲙ, Ⲏ, from the Alexandrian majuscule).<sup>25</sup>

Yet a canon in itself is quite an abstract entity, an ideal, formed by a group of hands showing a noticeable amount of common features, but also several distinctive elements, which concern both the *impression d'ensemble* and the shape of single letters, or even of single parts of a letter. Every hand is therefore the result of a complex balance of many factors, which make identifying the same hand in more than one manuscript a particularly difficult, tricky task, since for whatever analogies you notice, there will always be at least one difference which will cast a shadow of doubt over the identification.

As far as *Vat. copt. 57* is concerned, the general impression, as we have already noted, is of a carefully executed, yet at the same time fluid hand. In detail, we may consider the following letters to be somewhat distinctive: ⲁ (pointed), Ⲃ, ⲃ, π (with ligature), ϕ, ρ, ω, ϣ, ϥ, ⲉ, Ⲋ, ⲋ.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, in search of a comparison, we must take into account that the codex is equipped with a colophon (f. 184r, Fig. 14: see below, pp. 73-74) stating the very name of the copyist: 'papa Theodoros the reader' (ⲡⲁⲠⲁ ⲑⲉⲟⲗⲁⲱⲣⲟⲥ ⲡⲣⲉⲗⲱⲱ), who has accomplished his task for 'papa Biktor of the church of the great abba Macarius'.<sup>27</sup>

As a first step in our inquiry, we may take into consideration the Saint Macarius manuscripts in the Vatican Library which are *not* equipped with a colophon: as far as I have seen, no one of them appears to have been

<sup>25</sup> Of alien origin are also the seven additional characters of the Coptic alphabet, which are adapted to the 'rules' of the canon (but see next nt.).

<sup>26</sup> It is not irrelevant that the letters showing the highest degree of variation from hand to hand are the additional characters of the Coptic alphabet, since for them there was no model to which to conform.

<sup>27</sup> On the titles of *papa* and *abba*, see T. DERDA – E. WIPSZYCKA, *L'emploi des titres abba, apa and papas dans l'Égypte byzantine*, in *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 24 (1994), pp. 23-56.



written by the same hand as *Vat. copt.* 57. Hebbelynck and van Lantschoot deemed the hand of *Vat. copt.* 58<sup>1</sup> = CLM 73 = CMCL MACA.AD (*In XLIX martyres Scetenses* = CC 0986) to be ‘affinis’ to that of *Vat. copt.* 57 and of Brit. Libr., *Or.* 8812,<sup>28</sup> however, the comparison is untenable, since there are substantial differences in the shape of the letters and above all in *Vat. copt.* 58<sup>1</sup> the vertical stroke of ρ, φ, ψ, ϑ, † is *consistently* pointed or hooked at the base, which only appears sporadically in *Vat. copt.* 57 and in Brit. Libr., *Or.* 8812.

As a second step, we could scrutinise the Saint Macarius manuscripts equipped with a colophon, in order to ascertain if there are other references to a scribe named Theodoros. Indeed, there are two such instances.<sup>29</sup>

- 1) *Vat. copt.* 66<sup>2-3</sup> = CLM 133 = CMCL MACA.CU (*Vita Sinuthii* = CC 0461 and *Passio Isaac Tiphrensis* = CC 0280), f. 95r: copied in the year 924/925 CE by ‘Theodoros, the spiritual son of father Abraam son of Koltha’ (ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ ΠΩΗΡΙ ἸΠΠῆΜΑΤΙΚΟΝ ἸΠΑΙΩΤ ΑΒΡΑΑΜ ΝΤΕ ΚΟΛΘΑ).<sup>30</sup>
- 2) Brit. Libr., *Or.* 8812 = CLM 1468 (the already mentioned Curzon Catena), f. 116v: copied in the year 888/889 CE by ‘Theodoros of Abū Şir (ΘΕΟΔ( ) ΠΟΥΣΙΡ), unworthy monk of the holy Laura of the great *abba* Macarius’.<sup>31</sup>

The hand of Theodoros 1 shows substantial differences from the hands of Theodoros 2 and of Theodoros ‘the reader’ (i.e. the scribe of *Vat. copt.* 57): it is rigid and compressed and does not even use the Alexandrian majuscule as *Auszeichnungsschrift*, but the same Nitriot majuscule as the text.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> HEBBELYNCK – VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani* cit., p. 386.

<sup>29</sup> I have not taken into account *Vat. copt.* 63<sup>4</sup> = CLM 122 = CMCL MACA.CI (a Chrysostomic homily on 2Cor. 5, 17 = CC 0482), since the Theodoros who has scribbled his name (ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ [sic]) in the lower margin of f. 105v was rather a reader than the scribe himself. However, the hand of this codicological unit is different from that of *Vat. copt.* 57: it is less regular and accurate and adds more prominent serifs to the letters (note at least α, β, τ, γ, φ, χ, ω, ρ, α, σ, which are different from the corresponding letters of the hand of *Vat. copt.* 57).

<sup>30</sup> Edition in HEBBELYNCK – VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani* cit., pp. 477-478. On palaeographical grounds, the two scholars assign to the same scribe also *Vat. copt.* 61<sup>3</sup> = CLM 98 = CMCL MACA.BG (Peter of Alexandria, *De divitiis* = CC 0311), 63<sup>2</sup> = CLM 120 = CMCL MACA.CG (*Passio Theodori Anatolii* = CC 0437), 66<sup>1</sup> = CLM 132 = CMCL MACA.CT (*Passio Ignatii Antiocheni* = CC 0512), 66<sup>10</sup> = CLM 139 = CMCL MACA.DD (*Passio Anub* = CC 0257): see HEBBELYNCK – VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani* cit., pp. 421, 452, 475, 487.

<sup>31</sup> See B. LAYTON, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library acquired since the Year 1906*, London 1987, pp. 391-392 and below, pp. 73-74 n. 3.

<sup>32</sup> As distinctive letters, compare μ, ρ, ϑ, ρ, α, σ.

This leaves us with Theodoros 2, the scribe of the Curzon Catena: his hand (at least judging by the b/w images currently at my disposal) appears to be more ‘solemn’, but, if one compares it letter by letter with the hand of *Vat. copt.* 57, one has to admit a surprising amount of similarities, or even a complete identity in shape.<sup>33</sup>

However, notwithstanding the similarity in the writing of *the text*, the two manuscripts show some differences in other respects, which cannot be dismissed entirely. First of all, a difference can be seen in the ornamentation, since the decorated initials and the quire ornaments of the Catena are much more elaborated than the ones in *Vat. copt.* 57.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, the colophons themselves are written in different scripts: in *Vat. copt.* 57 the usual sloping majuscule is employed,<sup>35</sup> in the Catena the more formal Alexandrian majuscule. Finally, the same Alexandrian majuscule as *Auszeichnungsmajuskel* of the Catena is slightly different from that of *Vat. copt.* 57, as it has more pronounced serifs.

In this regard, I am inclined to think that the discrepancies are merely a consequence of the different content of the two manuscripts: a catena has many more internal partitions than a collection of homilies, and was perhaps considered a more ‘venerable’ book. Thus, in my opinion, the presence of a richer decoration and a more elegant *Auszeichnungsmajuskel* in the Curzon Catena could be accounted for by practical and ideological reasons and should not serve as a proper counter-argument against the patent similarity between the main hands of the two manuscripts.

Therefore, I would maintain with some confidence that *Vat. copt.* 57 and Brit. Libr., Or. 8812 were written by one and the same scribe, whom I would reasonably identify with the Theodoros (of Abū Šīr viz. the reader) who has signed both colophons.<sup>36</sup>

As a matter of fact, an alternative view could also be considered, namely one which would assign to the copyist of *Vat. copt.* 57 (i.e. Theodoros the reader) only the transcription of *the text* of the Curzon Catena, assuming

<sup>33</sup> The only relevant differences I have noticed are: (a) the loop of ϕ, which in the Catena occurs only rarely in the ‘asymmetric’ shape; (b) the left loop of ω, which in the Catena is usually more squared than in *Vat. copt.* 57. Note however that in the Catena the quite unusual ligature of π with ε/ο/ρ (and even with α) also occurs.

<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, the interlaces of the frames (see Brit. Libr., Or. 8812, ff. 2r, 121r) are very similar, if not identical, to those of *Vat. copt.* 57, but such ornamental motifs are in fact common to all the Saint Macarius manuscripts.

<sup>35</sup> Or ‘onciale penchée’, on which see BOUD’HORS, *L’onciale penchée en copte* cit.

<sup>36</sup> To be honest, the comparison between the hands of these two manuscripts was already proposed by HEBBELYNCK – VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Codices Coptici Vaticani* cit., p. 384, however, they simply observed that «prae scripturae indole, coetaneus videtur [i.e. *Vat. copt.* 57] codici Brit. Mus., Or. 8812», without even noticing the identity of the name of the scribes.

that another scribe (i.e. the homonymous Theodoros of Abū Ṣīr) has only added the titles, the ornamentation and the colophon, that is precisely the elements of the Catena which are palaeographically inconsistent with *Vat. copt.* 57. This is of course not an unlikely scenario, but Ockham's razor could perhaps tip the balance in favour of the 'simpler' hypothesis outlined above.

Be this as it may, if at least the identification of the main hands is accepted, the date of the colophon of *Brit. Libr., Or.* 8812 entitles us to assign (in broader terms) the transcription of *Vat. copt.* 57 to the second half of the ninth century.

### *Binding*

The original binding is not preserved. At present, *Vat. copt.* 57, just like the other Saint Macarius manuscripts in the Vatican Library, is bound in a Morocco binding, with five bands and the coat of arms of Pope Clement XI Albani (office 1700-1721) and Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili (office 1704-1730).

### *Appendix. A hypothesis about the origin of the Nitriot majuscule*

As a conclusion, I offer just a hint at a more general question concerning both Greek and Coptic palaeography. In his study of the Coptic Biblical majuscule, Pasquale Orsini observes that 'i manoscritti copti potrebero fornire elementi utili per la definizione delle caratteristiche grafiche regionali della maiuscola biblica greco-egizia'.<sup>37</sup> In this connection, he mentions Cavallo's old hypothesis of locating in the monasteries of Wādī al-Nāṭrūn the production of half a dozen Greek manuscripts in late Biblical majuscule showing similar palaeographical characteristics (they were all dated by Cavallo himself to the fifth-sixth century): among them there are the Washington, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, 06.275 (Pauline Epistles, 016 Aland, LDAB 3044, also known as 'Freer IV') and the three palimpsests Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *Par. gr.* 9 (lower script: New Testament, 04 Aland, LDAB 2930, also known as 'Ephraem rescriptus'), London, British Library, *Add.* 17210 (lower script: Homer's *Iliad*, LDAB 2231, also known as 'Cureton Homer') and 17211 (lower script: Luke's Gospel, 027 Aland, LDAB 2892, also known as 'Codex Nitriensis').<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> ORSINI, *La maiuscola biblica copta* cit., p. 145.

<sup>38</sup> See CAVALLO, *Ricerche* cit., pp. 87-93 (with facsimiles at tavv. 79, 81-83) and ORSINI, *La maiuscola biblica copta* cit., p. 147. For the Freer manuscript, see [[http://archive.asia.si.edu/collections/edan/object.php?q=fsg\\_F1906.275](http://archive.asia.si.edu/collections/edan/object.php?q=fsg_F1906.275)]. Digitised copies of the of the Paris palimpsest at [<http://archivesetmanuscripts.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc24008t>] and of the London ones at

This hypothesis had been subsequently questioned by Edoardo Crisci, who proposed to locate in a ‘Mesopotamian context’ all the manuscripts assigned by Cavallo to Wādī al-Nāṭrūn, *except* the Freer IV and the Ephraem rescriptus, which are deemed by Crisci himself to be palaeographically not consistent with the other members of the group.<sup>39</sup>

Now, if one compares the hands of the Freer IV and the Ephraem rescriptus with the Coptic manuscripts in Nitrian majuscule, it is evident that there are striking similarities in the shape of nearly all the letters, even of the π, which in the two Greek manuscripts appears in the same ‘canonical’ shape (i.e. with horizontal not extending over the verticals) we have already noticed in the Nitriot majuscule. This definitely seems to be a very good reason for acknowledging a Nitrian provenance for the Freer IV and the Ephraem rescriptus, and, if it is so, the ‘regional variant’ of the late Biblical majuscule they are evidence of should be considered the very model for the formation of the canon of the Coptic Nitriot majuscule.

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[[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_17210&index=0](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_17210&index=0)] and [[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_17211&index=0](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_17211&index=0)]. One of the reasons for this attribution was that the London palimpsests (reused together in the ninth century for the transcription of the Syriac text of the treatise against John Grammaticus by Severus of Antioch) were acquired in the mid-nineteenth century precisely in Wādī al-Nāṭrūn, in the Monastery of the Syrians (but see next footnote).

<sup>39</sup> See E. CRISCI, *Scrivere greco fuori d'Egitto. Ricerche sui manoscritti greco-orientali di origine non egiziana dal IV secolo a.C. all'VIII d.C.*, Firenze 1996 (Papyrologica Florentina, XXVII), p. 152. The palimpsest Brit. Libr., Add. 17210+17211 was indeed discovered in the Monastery of the Syrians, but it was not produced there, since the Syriac text, which forms its upper script, is accompanied by a colophon (Add. 17211, f. 53r) stating that ‘it was written by a certain Simeon, recluse of the convent of Mār Simeon of Kartamin, for Daniel, periodetes of the district of Amid’ (see W. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum acquired since the Year 1838*, II, London 1871, pp. 548-550 [n° 687], who agrees with Cureton’s hypothesis that the manuscript was brought to the Monastery of the Syrians by its abbot Moses of Nisibi: he is in fact known to have conveyed to that monastery, in 932 CE, 250 manuscripts collected during a visit to Baghdad and its neighbourhood).

## FIGURES







Fig. 1. Vat. copt. 57, f. 1r.





ρυη      ιηϛ      πωϛϛ      η  
 ρεοκμ̄ιχσ̄ιτ̄ ο̄το̄ρ̄ῑπ̄ᾱο̄ο̄ῑπ̄ᾱ  
 ρῑτ̄ ε̄το̄ῑῑῑῑ ε̄τε̄ ρ̄ᾱς̄β̄ε̄β̄ῑ  
 ῑῑο̄ε̄π̄ρ̄ω̄ῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑ  
 ρ̄ᾱς̄ρ̄ᾱϱ̄ο̄το̄ο̄ρ̄ῑτ̄ε̄ο̄ε̄ο̄ῑο̄ῡ  
 τ̄ε̄ε̄ρ̄ο̄τ̄ο̄τ̄ ε̄ε̄ρ̄ε̄ῑν̄ε̄ς̄ο̄ε̄  
 β̄ε̄ῑῑᾱ ο̄σ̄π̄ε̄ρ̄ο̄ς̄ῑτ̄ε̄ν̄ε̄ῑχ̄μ̄  
 ῑῑπ̄ε̄τ̄ε̄ω̄ῑο̄τ̄ῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑῑ  
 ε̄τ̄ᾱχ̄ο̄τ̄ο̄τ̄ν̄ε̄ῑῑο̄ε̄ρ̄ω̄ῑῑῑᾱτ̄  
 τ̄ᾱο̄ο̄ ᾱμ̄χ̄ε̄ῑθ̄ω̄τ̄τ̄ῑρ̄ο̄τ̄ῑε̄  
 ε̄τ̄ε̄ο̄ῑ  
**Φ**ῑᾱρ̄ε̄τ̄ε̄ρ̄ῑς̄ε̄ρ̄ᾱϱ̄ῑε̄ε̄ν̄ν̄ᾱο̄ε̄  
 ᾱε̄ῑπ̄ᾱε̄ρ̄ᾱῑᾱᾱχ̄ῑν̄β̄ε̄ῑο̄τ̄ῑτ̄ο̄  
 ε̄ο̄ρ̄ε̄ᾱᾱχ̄ε̄β̄ο̄λ̄ᾱρ̄ω̄τ̄ᾱφ̄ῑᾱ  
 ε̄ω̄τ̄ε̄ν̄τ̄ῑῑκ̄ω̄τ̄ῑτ̄ο̄τ̄ε̄τ̄ῑο̄  
 ε̄ε̄ε̄īō ᾱμ̄ϱ̄ᾱε̄ρ̄ῑς̄ε̄ε̄ρ̄ε̄īō  
 ε̄ω̄τ̄ε̄ν̄ϱ̄ᾱϱ̄ῑε̄π̄ῑᾱῑο̄ϱ̄ῑε̄τ̄  
 ε̄ο̄τ̄τ̄ω̄ῑ ε̄β̄ο̄λ̄ε̄τ̄ε̄ν̄π̄ᾱᾱχ̄ῑ  
 τ̄ο̄τ̄ε̄ᾱο̄ῑ ρ̄ᾱς̄τ̄ε̄χ̄ε̄φ̄ᾱρ̄ῑ  
 ν̄ε̄π̄ῑϱ̄ῡτ̄ῑε̄τ̄ε̄ω̄τ̄ε̄χ̄ε̄ο̄τ̄ε̄  
 ε̄ρ̄ῑς̄ε̄ο̄ῑᾱῑε̄π̄ᾱᾱῑε̄π̄ῑε̄  
 π̄ο̄τ̄ᾱῑπ̄ᾱρ̄ῑτ̄ε̄χ̄ε̄ῑε̄ε̄q̄η̄ε̄τ̄  
 ε̄ω̄τ̄  
 ᾱμ̄ε̄ε̄ρ̄ῑς̄ε̄ρ̄ᾱϱ̄ῑε̄ε̄ρ̄ο̄τ̄ᾱīᾱōε̄  
 ῑτ̄ο̄ε̄ᾱμ̄ᾱῑᾱη̄ε̄ο̄τ̄ᾱχ̄ε̄η̄ε̄q̄  
 ϱ̄ω̄ῑε̄ōε̄μ̄ε̄īāε̄ε̄ᾱīε̄ε̄ρ̄ε̄ōτ̄ε̄ρ̄ᾱ  
 ϱ̄ῑπ̄ᾱρ̄ῑτ̄ϱ̄ω̄ῑρ̄ᾱε̄ῑτ̄ῑρ̄q̄ōt̄  
 ᾱε̄ῑῑο̄ῑρ̄ᾱϱ̄ῑε̄ōᾱε̄ε̄π̄τ̄ῑρ̄q̄  
 ε̄ρ̄ῑο̄q̄r̄īāī  
**Σ**π̄ᾱῑχ̄ε̄ν̄ε̄ε̄ε̄ōη̄ε̄ω̄τ̄ε̄ν̄ε̄īōī  
 κ̄ᾱε̄τ̄η̄ε̄ε̄ε̄ρ̄ᾱϱ̄ῑε̄ε̄κ̄ω̄ᾱīōt̄ε̄  
 π̄ῑω̄ῑε̄ϱ̄ᾱε̄ω̄β̄ε̄ν̄īφ̄ῑᾱε̄ν̄  
 κ̄ο̄τ̄η̄ε̄ϱ̄ϱ̄φ̄ῑρ̄ ο̄τ̄ο̄ε̄π̄ῑε̄ōī  
 ε̄κ̄τ̄ε̄ε̄π̄ᾱτ̄ο̄η̄ε̄ōt̄ōϱ̄ᾱϱ̄ε̄ω̄  
 ᾱε̄π̄ῑε̄ε̄ε̄ε̄ōε̄q̄āī  
**Γ**ρ̄ᾱτ̄ε̄β̄ρ̄ω̄ῑᾱτ̄ᾱπ̄ᾱρ̄ῑτ̄ο̄ī  
 ϱ̄ᾱϱ̄β̄ᾱτ̄ε̄κ̄ōt̄ōε̄īτ̄ε̄q̄φ̄ε̄ī  
 ε̄π̄ο̄q̄ε̄β̄ōλ̄

Fig. 3. Vat. copt. 57, f. 64v.

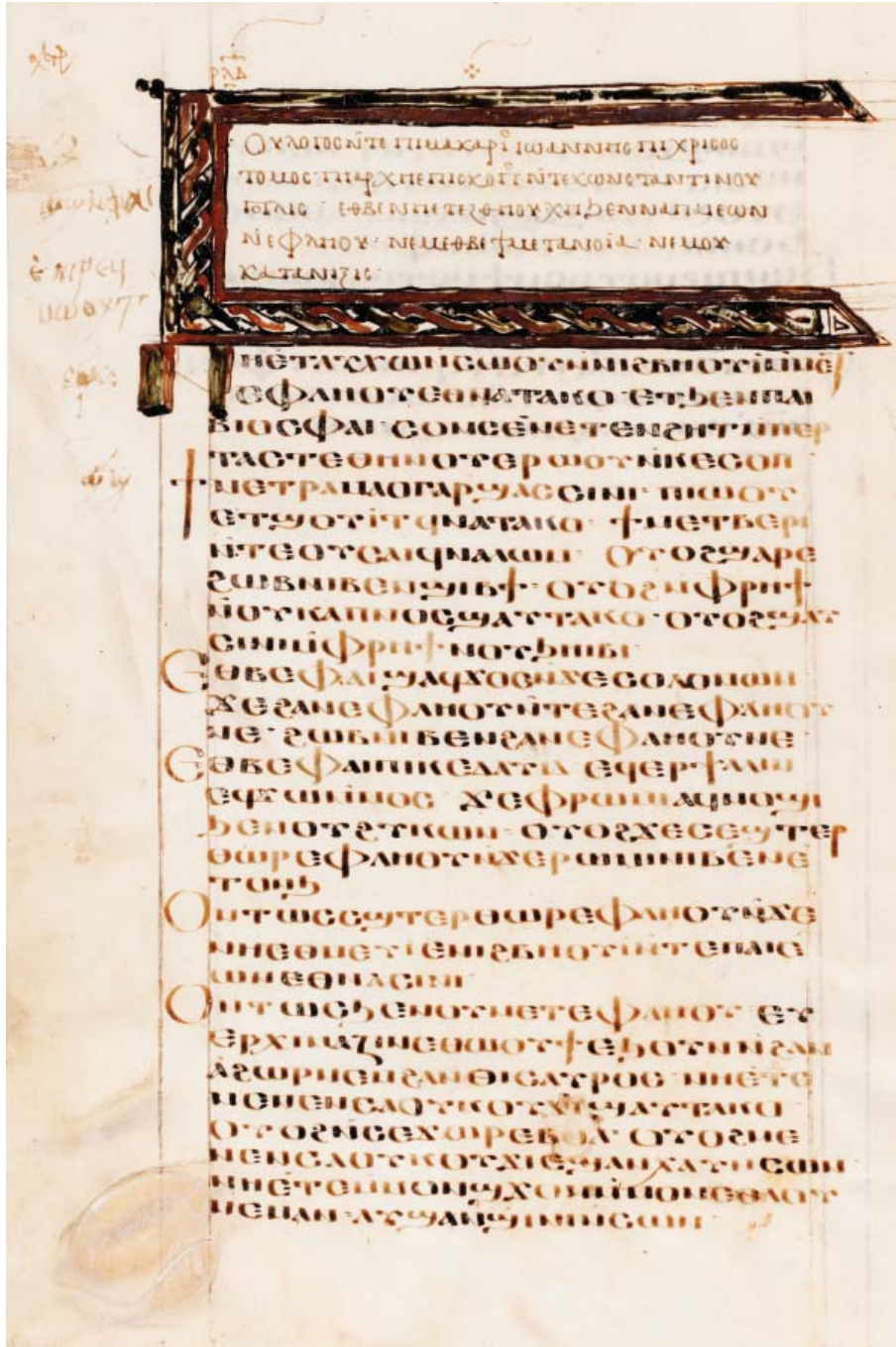


Fig. 4. Vat. copt. 57, f. 66v.



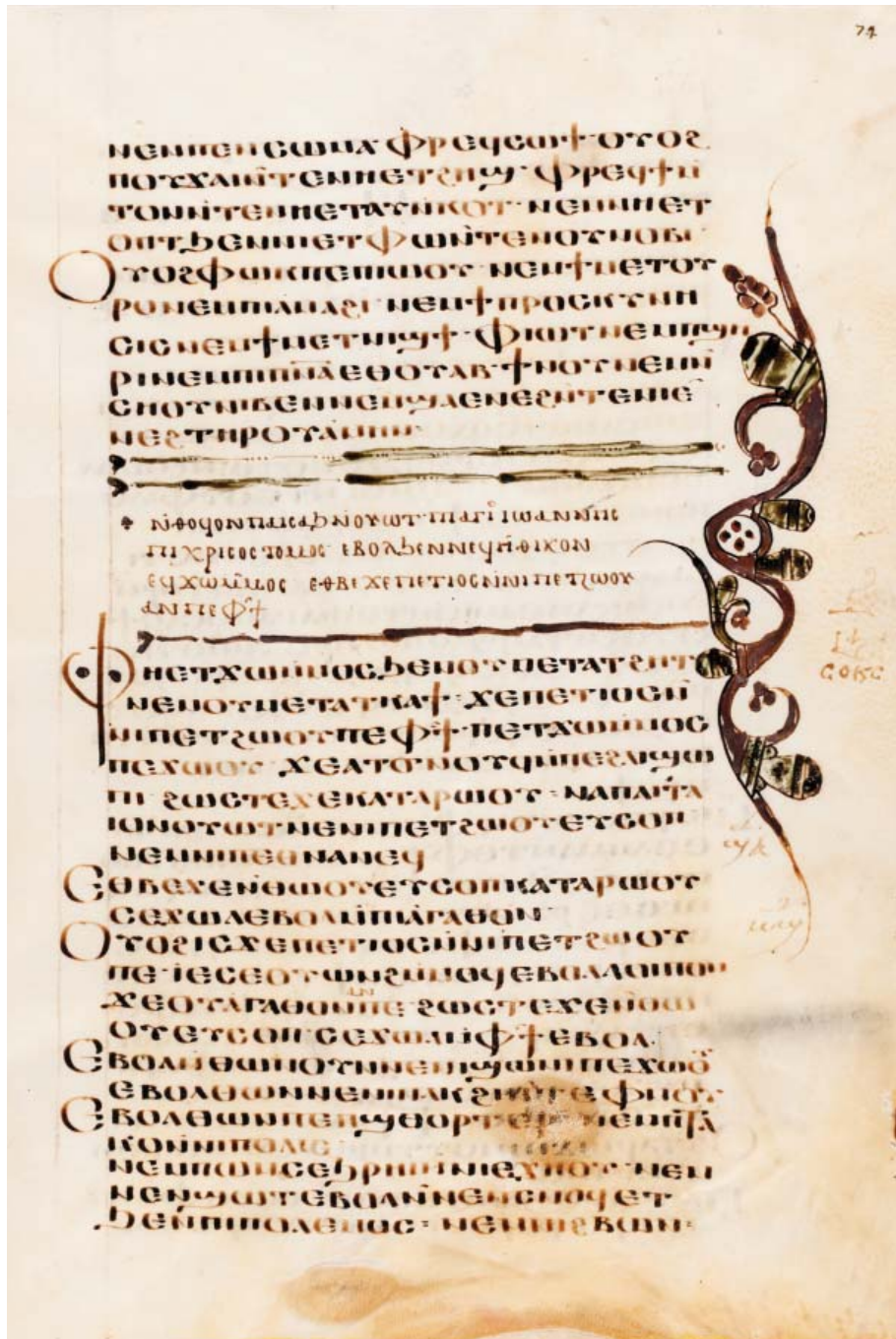


Fig. 5. Vat. copt. 57, 74r.







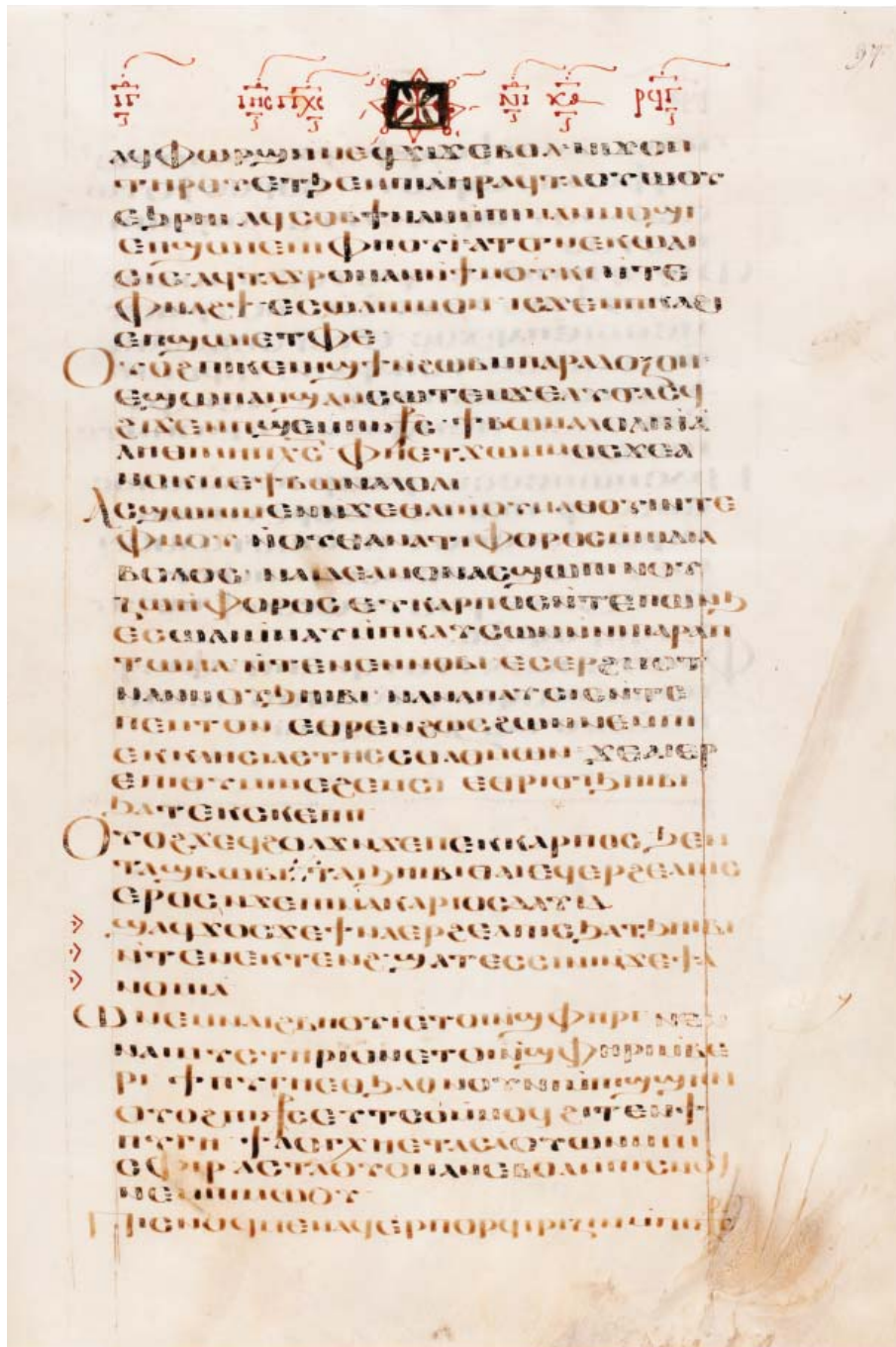


Fig. 8. Vat. copt. 57, f. 97r.



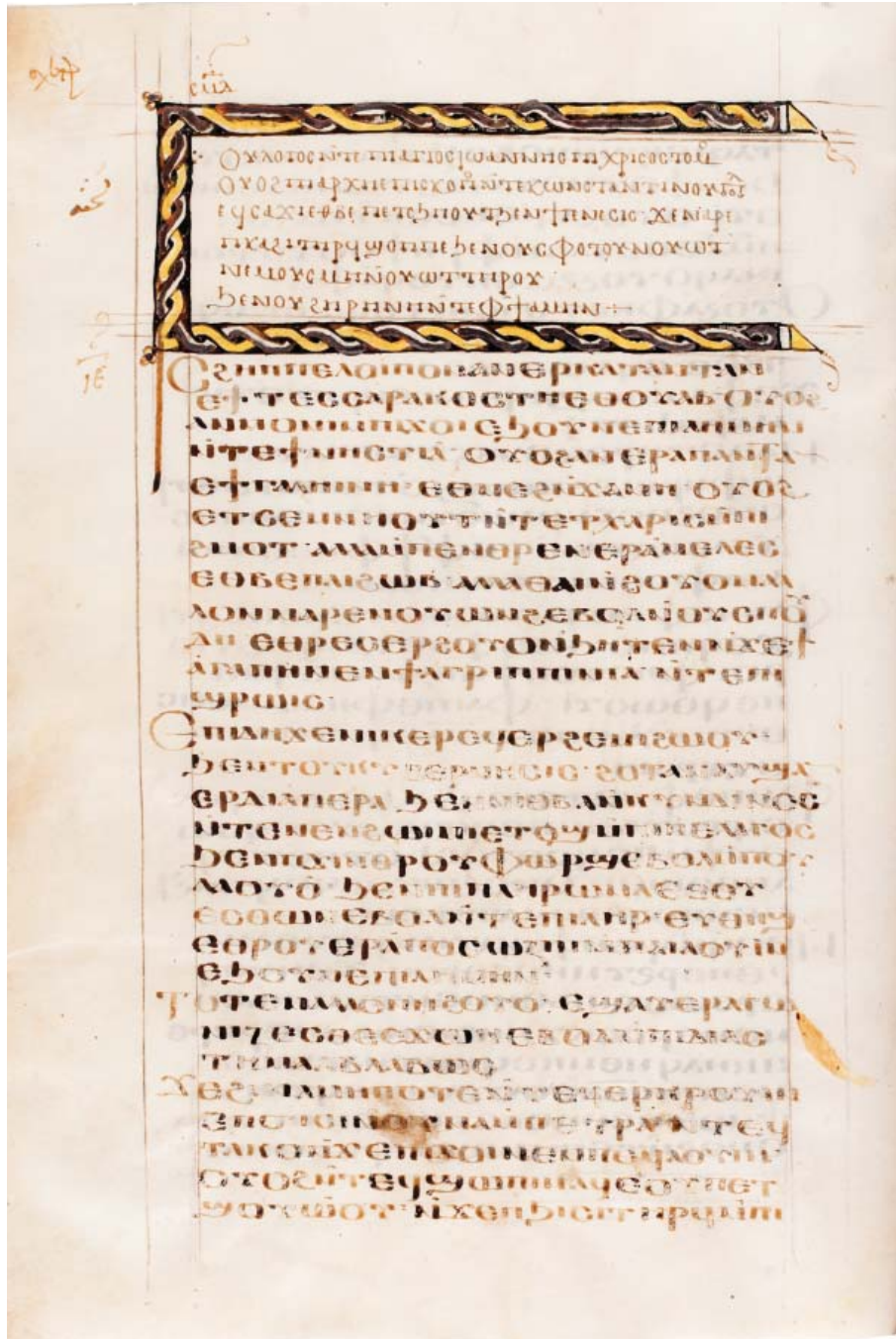


Fig. 9. Vat. copt. 57, f. 122v.

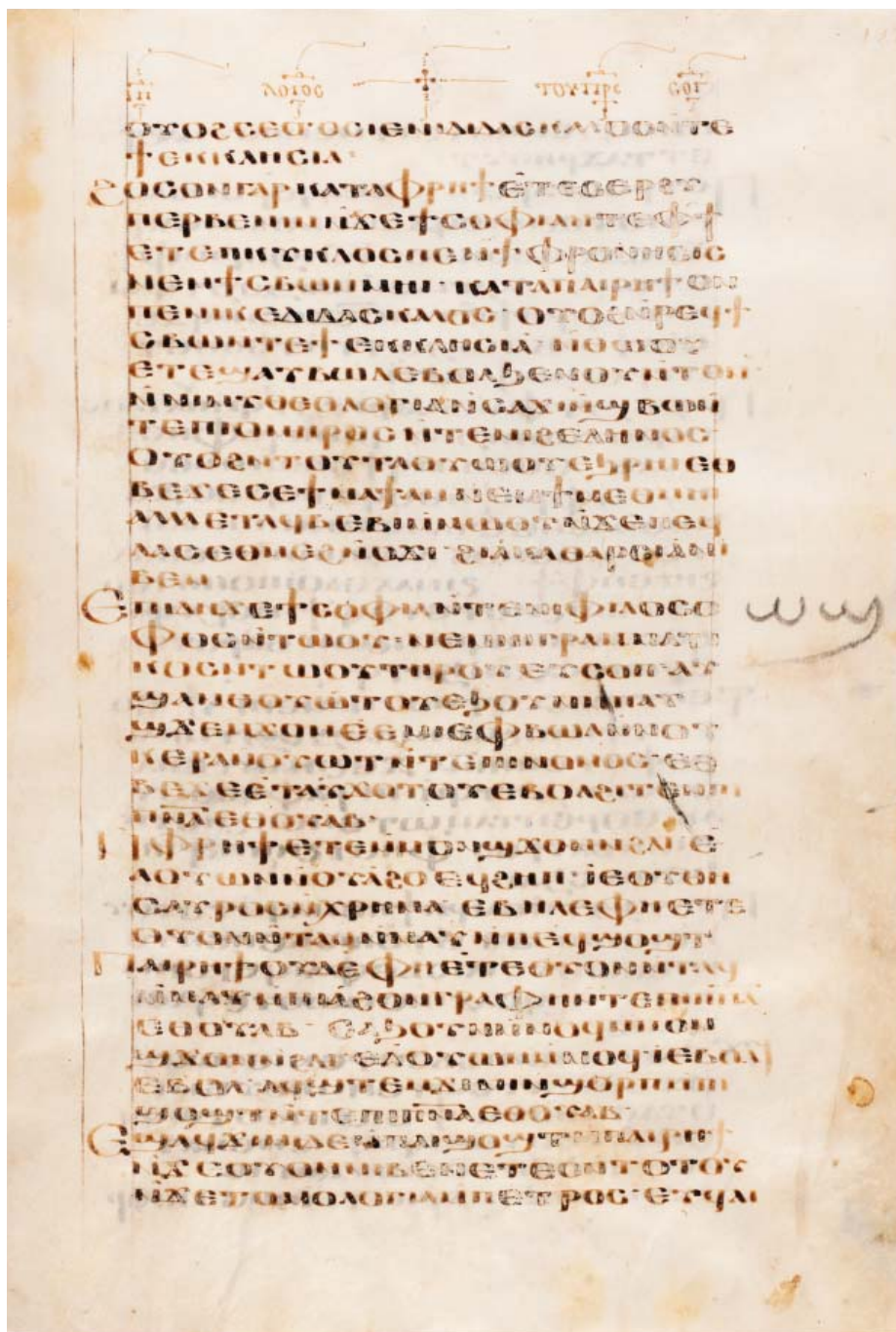


Fig. 10. Vat. copt. 57, f. 137r.









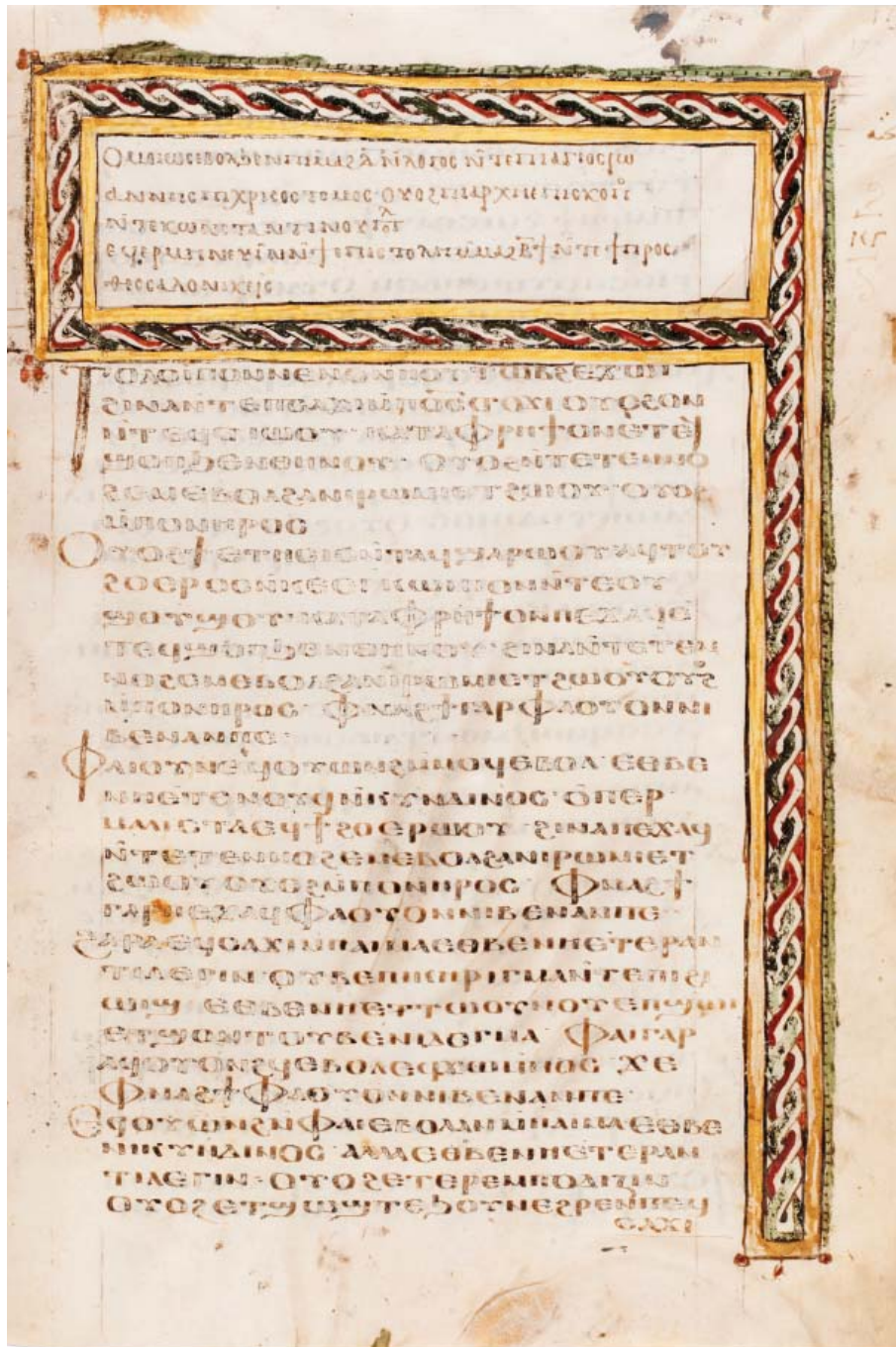


Fig. 13. Vat. copt. 57, f. 179r.













Fig. 17. Vat. copt. 57, f. 256v.