

Exploring Written Artefacts

Objects, Methods, and Concepts

Volume 1

Edited by
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Paola Buzi

The Unusual Story of a Wandering Book and its Physical Metamorphosis

Abstract: Manuscripts are movable objects and colophons normally represent the most efficient means of tracing the paths taken by a book during its (sometimes) extended life. This short article deals with an unusual case of a manuscript and of the work it contains, whose itinerant life is narrated by a long and extraordinary title that provides surprising technical details about the book form, the writing material, and the historical events surrounding it.

About twenty years ago, I came across a title attributed to a homily – the Sahidic version of the *Life of Maximus and Domitius* (CC 0323) –, which was unusual in respect of its length and content.¹ At that time, I was greatly interested in the cultural phenomenon of the creation of new long (sometimes extremely long) titles attributed to old works, in order to actualize literary creations that had been written centuries before. Such a phenomenon led the Copts, between the eighth and the ninth centuries, to re-think their entire literary production, discarding what had become old-fashioned and re-shaping, also by means of titles, what was perceived to be still useful. My interest was so focused on that aspect and on the consequent classification of titles in categories,² according to their length and combination of *formulae*, that I noticed only superficially the other elements of interest of that exceptional title.

Thus, I believe that it is useful to briefly go back to the content of that title, which tells of the itinerant life of a manuscript (and the work it contains), with a series of unusual technical details – at least for the Coptic tradition – related to its tradition.³

1 Buzi 2001.

2 Buzi 2004; Buzi 2005.

3 If today I am able to see beyond, this is also due to Michael Friedrich and the stimulating series of cultural initiatives that he has organized and promoted within the activities of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, having at its core the *manuscript*, in all its possible forms and in its indivisible dual nature of physical object and intellectual product. The first time that I was invited at to CSMC as a speaker was at the conference *One-Volume Libraries: Composite Manuscripts and Multiple Text Manuscripts* (October 2010), whose results were later published in Friedrich and Schwarke 2016. At that time, I had little experience with the material

1 The Sahidic title of the *Life of Maximus and Domitius*

As is well known, books are movable objects. They may change their owner or simply can be produced in a place, to be later given or, as a result of a purchase, transferred to another place.⁴ Colophons can often help to follow the itinerant life of books, also by virtue of their documentary nature, providing a series of sociological, devotional and historical data. Titles, on the other hand, do not do this, despite the fact that Coptic titles are sometimes extremely long and, compared to other Christian oriental manuscript cultures, unusually rich in information.

The title attributed to the Sahidic version of the *Life of Maximus and Domitius* is an exception. This work is preserved by two semi-complete codices, one in Sahidic,⁵ from the Fayyūm, and one in Bohairic,⁶ from Scetis (Wādī el-Naṭrūn), and two very fragmentary manuscripts, both in Sahidic and from the White Monastery.⁷ It is the title of the Sahidic semi-complete codex that is of interest to us here.⁸

Found in 1910 in the archaeological remains of the Monastery of the Archangel Michael, near present-day Hamūli, the original codex, datable between

aspects of Coptic books, since my main research interests ranged from Coptic literature to late antique Egyptian archaeology. I can honestly say that that experience, together with the participation in the networking project *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies*, opened up a new world to me.

⁴ If one does not want to mention here the well-known phenomenon of the codices that were produced at Touton (Fayyūm) for the White Monastery (Emmel 2005, 63–70: 66; Nakano 2006, 147–159), a remarkable example of the itinerant life of a manuscript is represented by CLM 1 = CMCL.AA, a Bohairic-Arabic manuscript, which was manufactured in the Wādī el-Naṭrūn, but stored in Babylon (Cairo), from 1398, as the Arabic note (not a real colophon in fact) of Matthew, patriarch of Alexandria, attests (Vat. copt. 2, fol. v'). The original codicological unit is now divided into three shelf marks: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. copt. 2, 3, and 4; <<https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/1>>. All websites quoted in this article were accessed on 19 May 2021.

⁵ CLM 240 = MICH.BO.

⁶ Vatican City, BAV, Vat. copt. 67.2, fols 34–68 = CLM 143 = MACA.DH, second half of the tenth century.

⁷ London, British Library, Or. 3581B, fols 55–56 = CLM 1855 and London, British Library, Or. 6954, fol. 52 = CLM 1856.

⁸ Depuydt 1993, 332–335 (no. 165), 627–628 (no. 412).

the ninth and the first half of the following century, is now dismembered in five shelf marks, and preserved in four different institutions:⁹

- New York, Morgan Library and Museum, M.584: 20 leaves.¹⁰
- Cairo, Coptic Museum, MS 3818: 4 leaves (hereafter CCa).
- Cairo, Coptic Museum, MS 3814: 23 leaves (hereafter CCb).
- Cairo, Coptic Museum, MS 3817 (lower cover).¹¹
- Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, MS 583 (a single leaf).

While the Bohairic title consists of a simple, though long summary of the plot of the homily,¹² the Sahidic one¹³ contains several intriguing additions that do not have anything to do with the content of the work, but rather with its daring tradition:¹⁴

Subject (ⲉⲓⲛⲟⲩⲉⲥⲓⲥ)¹⁵ of the life of the Roman saints Maximus and Domitius, sons of Valentinus, emperor of the Romans, who completed a good life full of all virtues and who also fulfilled at all the commands of the Gospels. The one died on the 14th of the month Tōbe, the other on the 17th of the same month. It was recounted by *Apa* Pshoi of

9 For more details about the codicological description of this codex, see the record compiled by Francesco Valerio and Eliana Dal Sasso for the *Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature*: <<https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/240>>.

10 It was purchased in Paris in 1911 for Pierpont Morgan from Arthur Sambon, a dealer acting on behalf of a consortium of owners including a certain J. Kalebdian, and later restored and rebound in the Apostolic Vatican Library in the early 1920s.

11 CCa, CCb and MS 3817 were acquired by the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, where they were given the inventory numbers of the Journal d'Entrée in 1923, and transferred to the Coptic Museum in 1939. In the CMCL database, CCb is dealt with as a separate codicological unit, not as a part of MICH.BO = CLM 240, while MS 3817 is not included. CCb fol. 1 was eventually transferred to the Museum in Port Said (Egypt), where it bears the call number 3957A.

12 'The life of the Roman saints Maximus and Domitius, sons of Valentinus, emperor of the Romans, who completed a good life full of all virtues and who, during it, also fulfilled all the commands of the Gospels. One, Maximus, died on the 14th of the month Tōbe, the other, Domitius, on the 17th of the same month. It was recounted by *Apa* Pshoi of Constantinople, the first deacon who lived in Shiet (Scetis) with *Apa* Macarius, man of God, and *Apa* Isidoros who died a deacon. *Apa* Moses the Ethiopian was appointed in his place. *Apa* Pshoi wrote the life of the saints as a memorial and he left it in the church as a benefit for all those who wanted to live in accordance with God. Amen'.

13 <<https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/titles/287>>.

14 In italics, the passages that are analysed more in detail in these pages. On the relation of paratext/paracontent see Ciotti et al. 2018, <https://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/papers/CSMC_Occasional_Paper_6_TNT.pdf>. On the concept of paratext see also Andrist 2018.

15 For a reflection on the meaning of this unusual term that is used to define the literary genre the work belongs to, see Buzi 2001, 525–526.

Constantinople, the first deacon who lived with *Apa* Macarius, a man of God, and *Apa* Isidorus. He died as a deacon. *Apa* Moses the Ethiopian was appointed in his place. Pshoi wrote the life of the saints *on a papyrus roll* (ΕΥΛΟΓΟΣ ΠΧΑΡΤΗΣ). He left it in the church as a benefit and a memorial, for all readers, of a beautiful way of life in accordance with God and with virtue, for he met with them for some days while they were still alive when he came to Scetis. When Scetis had been laid waste by the Mastikoi, *Apa* Isidorus took it with him to Alexandria to the Xenon. He spoke about the life of those saints and about his great zeal for them. It then remained there until the time of *Apa* Khael, the most holy archbishop of Alexandria. It was brought to light by a deacon named Eustatios, who had found it in *a large storage box of parchment books written in quaternions* (ΟΥΝΟΣ ΠΟΗΚΕ ΠΧΩΔΩΜΕ ΠΑΠΑΣ ΕΥΧΗΣ ΕΞΕΙΤΕΤΡΑΣ ΠΧΩΔΩΜΕ ΜΜΕΜΕΡΑΝΟΝ),¹⁶ when he was looking *among books that might have deteriorated over time* (ΠΧΩΔΩΜΕ ΠΤΑΥΡ ΖΟΟΛΕ ΕΤΕΕ ΠΕΧΡΟΝΟΣ), for he was a servant of God. He then met a monk living in the Ennaton, who was from Scetis, and gave it to him. This is the way in which the life of those perfect saints of God was revealed. For the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. In God's peace. Amen.

If the mention of the act of leaving a work 'in the church as a benefit and a memorial', a model for a correct and pious life, is a recurring element in Coptic literature,¹⁷ all the other technical and bibliological details represent an *unicum*, not only in titles but also in other paratexts, such as colophons.

One may think that these details are completely fictional, a pure exercise of fantasy to make the reading of the work more appealing, but this is not the type of narrative feature that the authors of titles normally used to attract readers' or listeners' attention. In those cases, they rather made use of additional – compared to the content of the work – biographical details, reports of long series of

¹⁶ Depuydt renders the term ΤΕΤΡΑΣ with 'in quarto': 'in a large storage box of old parchment books written in quarto', or alternatively 'in a large storage box of old books, written on parchment quires in fours'. I am inclined to exclude the first translation. The Greek *lemmata* τετράδες/τετράδα are also generically used for quires. See, purely by way of example, the colophon of the parchment codex Athena, EBE, 56 (GA 773), fol. 1', which contains a *Tetraevangelium*: '[...] This venerable and divine book of the Gospels contains thirty-six quaternions in all, with the exception of the guard leaves and those glued to the plates' (von Dobschütz 1925, 280–284; Marava-Chatzinicolaou and Toufexi-Paschou 1978, 17–26, no. 1; this colophon is being studied by Francesco Valerio within the article for the proceedings of the fourth PATHs conference, 'Christian Oriental Colophons: A Structural Analysis': <<http://paths.uniroma1.it/i-colofoni-cristiani-orientali-per-un-analisi-strutturale>>). For the meaning of 'quaternion' see Lampe 1916, 1391. In fact, a quaternion is the quire *par excellence*. It should be stressed that the Coptic sentence is redundant, the term ΠΧΩΔΩΜΕ ('books') being repeated twice, in relation to the storage box ('a storage box of old books') and the writing support ('parchment books written in quires'). What is proposed here is a simplified translation, respectful of the general sense.

¹⁷ It appears, for instance, in the *Life of Onophrius* (CC 0254).

miraculous events, or, above all in martyrdoms, even lurid details about the death of the protagonists.¹⁸

Moreover, it appears very clear that this initial title is composed of an original narrative nucleus – that is almost identical in the Bohairic version –¹⁹ plus an *additamentum* that the author of the Sahidic title considered relevant for the appreciation, not only of the content of work, but also of the efforts spent to preserve it.

It is important to stress that the characters (*Apa* Pshoi,²⁰ *Apa* Macarius of Scetis, *Apa* Isidorus the deacon, *Apa* Moses the Ethiopian,²¹ the emperor ‘Valentinus’, in fact Valentinianus I [364–375]) and the historical events (the sack of the barbarian people named Mastikoi/Mazikoi/Mastiques, the presence of welfare structures in Alexandria)²² mentioned in the title, are real and

18 A different textual phenomenon is the *topos* of the finding of an ancient venerable book, related to the apostolic tradition. Coptic literature preserves several examples of this phenomenon, such as the so-called *Institutio Abbaton* (CC 0405), whose title reads: ‘An encomium which *Apa* Timothy, archbishop of Rakote (Alexandria), our holy father, who was glorious in all ways, delivered on the making of Abbaton, the angel of death. Our holy fathers the Apostles asked the Saviour about the (Abbaton), so that they might be able to preach about him to mankind, for they knew that men would ask them questions about everything. And the Saviour, who did not wish to disappoint them about any matter concerning which they asked questions, informed them, saying “the day on which my father created Abbaton was the 14th day of the month Hathōr, and he made him king over all creations, which he had made, because of the transgression of Adam and Eve”. And the archbishop wishing to learn about this fearful and terrifying being whom God made, and who pursues every soul until it yields up its spirit in misery, when he went into Jerusalem to worship the Cross of our Saviour and his life-giving tomb, on the 17th day of the month Thooout, searched through the books which were in the library of Jerusalem, and which had been made by our holy fathers the Apostles, and deposited by them therein, until he discovered (the account of) the creation of Abbaton, with an aged elder, who was a native of Jerusalem. When one asked him what was the occasion for the discourse he had forgotten what it was. And he spoke also on the holy apostle Saint John, theologian and virgin, who is not to taste death until the thrones are set in the valley of Josaphat, which is the place wherein the last strife of the world shall take place. In God’s peace. Amen’. See also Piovanelli 1993, 25–64 and above all Piovanelli 2000, 265–282, on the case of the prologue of the *Apocalypse of Paul*.

19 See above n. 12.

20 In fact, if *Apa* Pshoi of Scetis is easily identifiable, more complex is the problem of identification of Pshoi of Constantinople, who as such is probably a fictional character, inspired by a real person. For these aspects see Buzi 2001, 527–535. See also Coquin 1991, VI, 2028–2030.

21 *Apa* Moses is said to have fallen victim to the Mazikoi in 407. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, 19.1.

22 On this Libyan tribe, which periodically was responsible for attacks and sacks, above all in the Western oases, killing and enslaving the Egyptian inhabitants of both villages and

undoubtedly refer to the second half of the fourth century or to the beginning of the fifth. More ephemeral are of course the protagonists, Maximus and Domitius – on whose tomb would have been built a little church, first nucleus of the Monastery of the Romans,²³ one of the monastic communities of the Wādī el-Naṭrūn, where most of the narrative is set – but this is part of the fiction of the literary genre of *bioi*.

2 The account of the itinerant life of the work and its value

One of the most striking passages of the second part of our title is the clarification that Pshoi wrote the *Life* of the saints on a papyrus roll (ⲁⲟⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲭⲁⲣⲧⲏⲥ),²⁴ a book form that might appear surprising for a manuscript culture whose main bibliological product is the codex, but that now – in the light of a systematic census of the book forms of Coptic literary tradition – sounds perfectly credible. Thirteen horizontal rolls²⁵ and twelve vertical rolls (or *rotuli*)²⁶ are currently known, without taking into consideration those used for documentary texts, which are much more numerous.

All the extant literary rolls are datable between the fourth and the beginning of the sixth centuries, therefore the information provided by the title is certainly credible. It is not specified whether or not the *Life of Maximus and Domitius* was the only work contained in the roll, but this is very likely.

According to the title, when the Wādī el-Naṭrūn was looted and devastated by the Mazikoi, during one of their periodical incursions, *Apa* Isidorus would have brought the book to the ‘Xenon’.

The term surely refers to a *xeneôn* or *xenodokheion*, an institution used for the purposes of accommodating and giving assistance to disadvantaged people,

monasteries, see Modéran 2003, 88, 89, 93, 99, 102, 119, 154, 162 (n.), 167, 168 (the map ‘La migration vers l’Orient des Maziques et des Ausuriens entre 398 et 412–413 selon D. Roques’), 170, 172, 187 (n.), 192 (n.), 218, 266–267, 340 (n.), 454, 467 (n.), 468, 482, 579, 649–650, 729, 778 (n.). See also Boozer 2013, 275–292.

²³ Toward the end of the *Life of Maximus and Domitius*, we read: ‘After that Macarius the Great spoke in the church, saying: “Call this place quarter (ⲣⲁⲩⲏ) of the Romans”’.

²⁴ For the meaning of ⲁⲟⲙⲟⲥ as ‘roll’ see Lampe 1961, 1396 and Liddell and Scott 1968. See also, for example among the several cases, PSI 10.1146.1 (second century CE).

²⁵ <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/search/manuscripts/saved?q=horizontal_rolls>.

²⁶ <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/search/manuscripts/saved?q=vertical_rolls>.

mainly foreign, as the etymology suggests (cf. *hospitium*). *Xenodokheia* ('places where foreigners are assisted') and *ptôkeia/ptôkhotropheia* ('places where the poor are fed') were already present in all the *metropoleis* of the Christian East in the first half of the fourth century. From a juridical point of view, they were private foundations directly controlled by the bishop, and therefore they represented his ability to be effective in managing philanthropic and charitable works, constituting a direct reflection of his power. Such organization of the assistance activities is a direct legacy of the practices and values of the ruling class of Roman and Byzantine societies, echoing the *forma mentis* of the traditional elite, which expressed its prestige also by means of *leitourgiai*, more or less mandatory.²⁷

We know with certainty that Alexandria at the time of archbishop Theophilus (384–412) already had a *ptôkheion* and a *xenodokheion*, and also that Isidoros – very likely the same Isidoros mentioned in our title – was 'xenochos, and a close collaborator of Theophilus. After using him on various occasions, Theophilus condemned him to leave Egypt (in 402)'.²⁸

This means that the transfer of the manuscript from Scetis to Alexandria must have happened before the conflict between Isidoros and Theophilus and his subsequent exile. What is more interesting, however, is that our title seems to suggest that these types of institution have also had a (sort of) library, a fact that, as far as I know, was not otherwise known. Since this detail – the transfer of a book to a *xenodokheion* – is not at all obvious – on the contrary it is very surprising –, I would be inclined to take it seriously into account.

We then learn that the manuscript 'remained there until the time of *Apa Khael*', very likely to be identified with Michael I (743–767), who was from the Monastery of St Macarius (Scetis). During his long patriarchate, while stemming the harassment of the Islamic governor, he was able to keep control over the shrine of St Menas (against the Chalcedonians) and to restore the church of St Mark in Alexandria. He was thrown into prison by 'Abd al-Mālik ibn Marwān, when he discovered that Michael had contacts with the new king of Dongola,

²⁷ Fatti 2003a, 257–296: 260–261. See also the unpublished PhD dissertation, Fatti 2001, Calderini 1935, I, 138 ('Alessandria'); Martin 1996, 728; Hass 1997, 253 and 393 (n. 72); Wipszycka 2016, 248–250. Still valid, although not recent, is Constantelos 1968.

²⁸ Wipszycka 2016, 248, who also discusses his relationship with Palladius. See also Sozomen, *HE* 8.12. For the reconstruction of the life of Isidoros see Fatti 2003b, 283–435 and Fatti 2006, 105–139.

Cyriacus, a fact that might lie behind the epithet of ‘the most holy archbishop’ used in the title.²⁹

Later – but it is not specified when – a deacon named Eustatios found it in

‘a large storage box of old parchment books written in quaternions (ΟΥΝΟΣ ΠΟΗΚΕ ΠΧΩΔΩΜΕ ΠΑΠΑΣ ΕΨΗΧΕ ΕΞΕΝΤΕΤΡΑΣ ΠΧΩΔΩΜΕ ΜΜΕΜΒΡΑΝΗ), when he was looking among books that might have deteriorated over time (ΠΧΩΔΩΜΕ ΠΤΑΥΡ ΖΟΟΛΕ ΕΤΒΕ ΠΕΧΡΟΝΟΣ)’.

On the basis of this sentence it seems safe to deduce that our manuscript would have remained for some time in a sort of limbo, with other books, old parchment codices, which had probably deteriorated due to the prolonged use. Eustatios seems to be in charge of the restoration of old books. It is not specified, however, if between the moment in which the *Life of Maximus and Domitius* reached the ‘Xenon’ and its discovery – certainly post mid-eighth century –, its book form changed, moving from a papyrus roll to a parchment codex, although it is plausible.

Restoration activities are never mentioned in other titles and also seem to be extremely rare in Coptic colophons. The only colophon that I know which mentions a restoration is that of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Clarendon Press, B40.1-2,³⁰ which reads:

[...] this restoration Basil(ios) a Scriptures (ΓΡΑΦΗ/γραφή)-lover, which wants that everyone could dedicate himself (to it), for this reason he restored (ΕΥΗΖΙΣΤΑ/συνηστῶν) this book after that it deteriorated.³¹

Eustatios later met ‘a monk living in the Ennaton, who was from Scetis, and gave it to him. This is the way in which the life of those perfect saints of God was revealed’.

The Enaton/Ennaton is the famous monastery – or better, ensemble of monastic establishments, which however constituted a unique complex –, located on the strip separating the Mediterranean coast and the lake Mareotis, nine miles west of Alexandria, according to its etymology, on the way to the sanctuary

²⁹ Swanson 2010, 19–21; Elli 2003, II, 31–39. The identification of Khael with Michael II (849–851), who occupied the patriarchal seat for sixteen months is less probable because of the ephemeral nature of the historical figure and, above all, due to the fact that, in the opinion of the author of these pages, our title is older than the mid-ninth century.

³⁰ CLM 4196.

³¹ Edition and translation by Agostino Soldati. See also van Lantschoot 1929, 126–127, no. lxxvi.

of St Menas.³² Also known in Arabic as ‘Monastery of the glass’ or ‘Monastery of the glass maker’, the Ennaton was certainly a rich community, since it could take advantage of the economic activities taking place on both the sea and the lagoon.³³

It is not clear from the title if the book was moved to the Ennaton or if it is in Alexandria that Eustatios met the monk who lived in the Ennaton. The important fact, however, is that Eustatios is from Scetis and therefore thanks to this circumstance the circle closes: the *Life of Maximus and Domitius* – and the book that bears it – could go back to the place where it had been written by Pshoi.

The title which we are discussing and the related codex, however, are not from Scetis, but from the Fayyūm, and in particular from the Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Phantoou, as we said. Moreover, the codex also contains another work, that is the *Martyrdom of Theodore the Anatolian* (CC 0437), which means that, admitting that our title tells a true story – as I am inclined to think, because of the richness of historical and bibliological details that are not in the least obvious and appear to be based to a great extent on reality –, what we have is a codex derived from an *antigraphon*, very likely written in Scetis or making use of documents related to that milieu. The copyist operating in the Fayyūm must have found it so interesting that he decided to keep it, although all its unusual elements refer to another monastic context, that of the Wādī el-Naṭrūn. Does this mean that the Fayyūmic Monastery of the Archangel Michael used book models from Scetis? We cannot say it with certainty. If this hypothesis were correct, it would remain to be explained, however, why the Bohairic title, contained in a codex from the Monastery of St Macarius, in the Wādī el-Naṭrūn itself, does not include these narrative elements. It is possible to surmise that the title of the Bohairic version is an older product, but this is not a very convincing hypothesis.

Yet, there is another possibility: the copyist operating in the Fayyūm could be the creator of the title – a fact that would be corroborated by the style and structure of several other long titles found in the codices from the Monastery of the Archangel Michael.³⁴ In this case the author would have been interested not so much in the events related to Scetis – in fact already contained in the original

³² Other famous monastic centres of the Mediterranean coast were the Pempton, the Oktokai-dekaton and the Metanoia.

³³ Gasco 1991, 954–958; Goehring 2018, 538. On the problem of the location of the monastery and for a rich bibliography related to its history and socio-political role, see Ghattas 2017, 37–47. See also <<https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/places/118>>.

³⁴ Titles belonging to the categories named ‘complex structure titles’ and ‘extended complex structure titles’.

nucleus of the title – as in those relating to Alexandria and its surroundings, events that he may have reconstructed on the basis of official or semi-official documentation, as the mention of Isidorus, the ‘Xenon’ of Alexandria and bishop Khael seem to demonstrate.

To conclude this brief reflection on an unusual story of a wandering book (Fig. 1) narrated by an exceptional title, it is important to stress that, even if the second part of the title was the fruit of a vivid imagination or a fictional construction, the historical knowledge of the author – because, of course, the creator of the title is an author himself – and his consciousness of the technological aspects of books and their metamorphoses over the centuries remain significant facts.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations and IDs are used in this article:

CC	<i>Clavis Coptica</i> or <i>Clavis Patrum Copticorum</i> (the complete census of all Coptic literary works available online at < www.cmcl.it/~cmcl/chiam_clavis.html >, and < https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/works >)
CLM	Coptic Literary Manuscript (unique identifier of Coptic literary manuscripts attributed within the framework of the PATHs project and freely available online at < https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts >).

It is important to stress that, although other IDs were available for Coptic manuscripts, the introduction and systematic use of a CLM ID has become necessary because PATHs is currently the most exhaustive database of literary codicological units (<<https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts>>). All the other existing ones, including CMCL, Trismegistos, LDAB and the List of Coptic Biblical Manuscripts, are of course extremely useful, but they refer to a more limited time span or focus on specific categories of manuscripts. In any case, they are always mentioned in the PATHs database, when available.

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