THE SAHIDIC VERSION OF JACOB OF SERUGH’S MEMRĀ ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST*

Introduction

The literary heritage of Jacob of Serugh (452-521 CE) is a broad one and is located mainly in Syriac, albeit a significant number of his mēmrē is transmitted in other languages, notably in Arabic and Ge’ez, and occasionally in Armenian and Georgian. The fame of Jacob was great in Egypt, as attested by numerous Arabic manuscripts of Coptic and Melkite provenance which contain his works. Although it is certain that Jacob of Serugh was esteemed in Egypt, none of his writings has been known to survive in Coptic until now. Therefore, the discovery of the Sahidic version of his memrā on the Ascension of Christ, which is introduced in this article, represents the first evidence of the circulation of his writings in Coptic. In the following pages, I will offer a description of the two Sahidic manuscripts in which this memrā is preserved and then I will analyze a few peculiar features of the Coptic version. Finally, the questions of the date of the Sahidic translation, its Vorlage and original language of the translator will be addressed.

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1 A partial list of Jacob of Serugh’s homilies in Ethiopic can be found in WITAKOWSKI, Jacob of Serug.

2 All the homilies of Jacob which have survived in Armenian are transmitted under Ephrem’s name, On the Annunciation I (TASNAPETEAN, Սուրբ էփրեմ, p. 58-63), On the Annunciation II (TASNAPETEAN, Սուրբ էփրեմ, p. 64-69), On John the Baptist (see BHO 487), On Stephen the Protomartyr (see BHO 1095), On the Resurrection and the Soldiers that Guarded the Tomb (TASNAPETEAN, Յիսուսի, p. 403-417).

3 In Georgian has survived under Jacob’s name only the memrā on the Nativity, which is preserved in a single manuscript, Tbilisi A-19, dated around 970 CE; translated in PATARIDZE, Jacques de Saroug. The memrā on Elias and the Archangel Michael is preserved under the name of Ephrem in another unicum, Tbilisi A-144; French translation by Bernard Outtier in Le saint prophète Élie, p. 433-451.

4 GRAF, GCAL, p. 444-452. Cf. also SAMIR, Jacques de Saroug. The earliest Arabic manuscripts containing his works came from the Byzantine Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, although Jacob’s memory was eventually banned in the Melkite community.

5 BROCK, Isaac of Antioch, Jacob of Serugh, and Narsai, p. 286 (= no. 81). The Syriac text of this homily was edited in BEDJIAN, S. Martyrii, p. 808-832. Bedjan’s Syriac text has been republished and translated into English in KOLLAMPARAMPLI, Homily on the Ascension.
1. The Sahidic Manuscripts of the Memrā on the Ascension

The Sahidic text of Jacob’s homily on the Ascension is transmitted by two fragmentary parchment codices, both from the Monastery of Apa Shenoute, or the White Monastery, as it is most commonly called, situated in Upper Egypt near the ancient town of Atripe.

Four folios have survived from the first manuscript (Codex A). They are kept today in the National Library in Paris and the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology (IFAO) in Cairo:

- Paris, BnF Copte 130\(^{\text{f. 35}}\) = On the Ascension, verses 35-67
- Paris, BnF Copte 131\(^{\text{f. 33}}\) = On the Ascension, verses 71-100
- Cairo, IFAO copte inv. no. 205 = On the Ascension, verses 175-207a
- Paris, BnF Copte 130\(^{\text{f. 36}}\) = On the Ascension, verses 207b-246

The pages of this codex accommodate the text in two columns, which vary between 33 and 36 lines. Although some traces of the original pagination are still occasionally visible, the ink is faded, so much so that no page number can be restored. However, the comparison against the Syriac version furnishes important codicological information: 1) the homily commenced three pages before the recto of the first surviving fragment (BnF Copte 130\(^{\text{f. 35}}\))^7; 2) two folios have disappeared between BnF Copte 131\(^{\text{f. 33}}\) and IFAO copte inv. no. 205. There are arguments that the fragments BnF Copte 130\(^{\text{f. 35-36}}\), on one hand, and BnF Copte 131\(^{\text{f. 33-36}}\), on the other, were originally joint leaves. This suggests that all the four leaves identified until now belonged to the same quire, being its second and third bifolios. If this hypothesis is correct, the innermost bifolio of the quire was formed of the two leaves missing between BnF Copte 131\(^{\text{f. 33}}\) and IFAO copte inv. no. 205, which are either lost or have not yet been identified. No other fragments of this codex are known to survive.

The size of the folios is approximately 33 × 24 cm\(^{\text{a}}\). The letters are small, with occasional enlarged capitals at the beginning of the paragraphs. The overall aspect of the pages is sober, without any significant decorative marks. The supralineation system is standard, although the scribe used dots instead of lines. The portions of the manuscript identified

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\(^{\text{a}}\) The same fragments have already been mentioned as belonging to this codex in Louis, Catalogue IFAO, p. 511.

\(^{\text{b}}\) This corresponds to six columns of text. Much of the first column must have been occupied by a long title, as the late Sahidic manuscripts usually have.

\(^{\text{c}}\) This is the size of the IFAO fragment as given by Louis, Catalogue IFAO, p. 511.
until now do not contain any paleographical feature which would possibly
suggest a date for its manufacture. All one can sensibly say about the
date of this codex is that it could hardly be assigned before the 10th cen-
tury CE.

With the sole exception of IFAO copte inv. no. 205, which has been
edited and translated into French by Catherine Louis, the other three
leaves are published here for the first time. Notably, Émile Amélineau
has tentatively attributed the two fragments BnF Copte 130, f. 35-36 to
Shenoute of Atripe. This hypothesis is now dismissed by their correct
identification as parts of the Sahidic version of the memrâ on the Ascen-
sion by Jacob of Serugh.

At least seven parchment fragments have survived from a second
Sahidic manuscript (Codex B – MONB.OT) of Jacob’s homily:

Cairo, Coptic Museum no. 8013
Paris, BnF Copte 131, f. 99
Ann Arbor, Michigan University 158.37 + Cairo, Coptic Museum sine
numero
Paris, BnF Copte 133, frag. 288
Paris, BnF Copte 132, f. 61v-r
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Copt. d. 187c(P)

9 The date of most of the Coptic manuscripts is impossible to establish paleographi-
cally because dated or datable comparanda are lacking, see LAYTON, Coptic Paleography.
10 LOUIS, Catalogue IFAO, p. 512-514.
11 The entire volume 130 was considered by Amélineau to contain fragments of
Shenoute’s writings, cf. AMÉLINEAU, Catalogue (unpublished catalogue available in the
Département des manuscrits orientaux of the National Library in Paris). However, Stephen
Emmel included these two fragments among the uncertain ones in his study of the manu-
scripts containing the works of Shenoute, see EMMEL, SLC, p. 903.
12 The siglum MONB.OT is ascribed to this manuscript in the Corpus dei Manoscritti
Copti Letterari (CMCL) database, available at http://www.cmcl.it/ [retrieved 2015/01].
13 Described in CRUM, Coptic Monuments, p. 6-7.
14 The codicological connection between the Michigan fragment and Cairo 8013 is
mentioned in an unpublished typewritten checklist of the Coptic manuscripts in the Michi-
gan University collection, which can be consulted in situ. I am not aware who is the author
of this checklist, but it seems to be based on Walter Ewing Crum’s notes on the Michigan
fragments.
15 This fragment was formerly in the possession of the Coptic Patriarchate and later
transferred to the Coptic Museum. Therefore, it is not mentioned in the two catalogues of
this collection available to date, CRUM, Coptic Monuments and MUNIER, Manuscrits coptes.
16 BnF Copte 133, frag. 288 is too small to allow a proper identification of its content.
However, the flesh side certainly features verse 375 and the first word of verse 376. Only
verse 375 has been retained for the present edition. Other fragments in the same scribe’s
hand, and probably pertaining to the same codex, are BnF Copte 133, frags. 286a-287, 289-290.
All Codex B’s fragments are palimpsest. The text of Jacob’s homily is the newer writing and it is copied in a crude hand. The vestiges of this codex are more badly damaged than those of the previous manuscript, so much so that they preserve only small portions of text. The only significant fragment in terms of size is Cairo, Coptic Museum 8013, whose entire text parallels Paris, BnF Copte 1303, f. 35 in Codex A. The parts where the two fragments overlap are so similar that we may suppose not only that they belong to the same Sahidic translation, but also that one manuscript is a copy of the other. If this assumption is correct, one should expect that Codex A is earlier and served as a model for Codex B. It is likely that the palimpsest was produced in the scriptorium of the Monastery of Apa Shenoute, and that its scribe copied the text from another manuscript located in the library.

Despite their damage, two of the aforementioned fragments are of prime importance as they provide important codicological details. Firstly, Paris, BnF Copte 1318, f. 99 still bears the page numbers 13-14, indicating that Jacob of Serugh’s homily was the first text of the codex. Secondly, the recto of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Copt. d. 187c(P) contains a portion from verses 473-474, while its verso has vestiges of two columns of text copied in a different handwriting. Although only a few letters are legible, it is clear that the verso contained the closing colophon of the manuscript, which indicates that Codex B featured only the memra on the Ascension by Jacob of Serugh.

Stray fragments of another palimpsest inscribed by the same copyist are identifiable. The second manuscript of this scribe contained portions from John Chrysostom’s homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews (CPG 4440)17. From the fact that the text of the fragments pertaining to the homily of Jacob is in two columns, while that of Chrysostom’s sermons on the Epistle to the Hebrews is in a single one, emerges plainly that the surviving manuscript vestiges must be organized in distinct codices.

Paris, BnF Copte 1317, f. 68 = unidentified18
Cairo, IFAO inv. no. 226 = John Chrysostom, In Ep. ad Heb., hom. 1619

17 On the content of this codex see Suciu, Borgian Coptic Manuscripts, p. 324-325; Louis, Catalogue IFAO, p. 439 (= no. 99); the list below supplies some additions to these two directories of fragments.
18 Lucchesi, Répertoire, p. 83. According to Lucchesi, this fragment might also belong to Chrysostom’s series of homilies on Hebrews.
19 Edited and translated into French in Louis, Catalogue IFAO, p. 440-441. The fragment is not identified in Louis’ catalogue, but its verso corresponds to PG 63, col. 125. It is interesting to note that the recto of the IFAO fragment contains the title of the homily

Paris, BnF Copte 131, f. 87 (= p. [107]-108) = John Chrysostom, *In Ep. ad Heb., hom. 18*


Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek K 2607 = unidentified

Paris, BnF Copte 1324, f. 287 = unidentified

Oslo, University Library, frag. 47 piece 2 = unidentified

Oslo, University Library, frag. 51 piece 6 = unidentified

Paris, BnF Copte 1332, frags. 287, 289-290 = unidentified

The only underlying writing deciphered until now is that of the Naples fragments of John Chrysostom, which was edited by Arnold van Lantschoot. For his part, van Lantschoot tentatively dated this palimpsest to the 10th-11th century, but this is hardly more than a guess since no datable comparanda are available.

Despite their fragmentary state, Codex A and B contain a significant number of the 486 metrical verses that form Jacob’s homily on the Ascension. The present edition features the following 162 verses, which are more or less legible or can be reconstructed at least partly with some degree of certitude: 35-67, 71-92, 96-100, 157-197, 201-246, 278-295, 375-376, 415-417, 433-435. As the first line preserved in Sahidic corresponds to verse 35 of the Syriac original, and the last one to verse 474, we may safely infer that the entire memriā on the Ascension has been translated into Sahidic and not only an excerpt. The fact that much of the text is lost is due to the poor preservation of the two manuscripts extant.

(“On the celestial life”) whereas its verso features a portion of the 16th homily on Hebrews, which is situated somewhere in the middle of the Greek text. Thus, the Sahidic version is rather an extract which starts with §3 of the homily.

Formerly in the Vatican collection, these folios are described in *Zoega, Catalogus*, p. 641-642; *Buzi, Catalogo*, p. 332-333.


Lucchesi, *Répertoire*, p. 86.

Lundhaug – Suçu, *Checklist*.

At least theoretically, any of these three fragments can belong to Jacob’s sermon, although their small size impedes identification.

Van Lantschoot, *Panégyrique de S. Jean-Baptiste*.

Verses 473-474 feature on the recto of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Copt. d. 187c(P). For example, the word λαμπροφα in verse 473 is readable on line 4 of the Oxford fragment’s recto. However, these verses have not been retained for the present edition as the fragment is heavily damaged.
2. *Peculiar Features of the Sahidic Version of the Memrā on the Ascension: A Translation Intended for an Egyptian Audience*

The surviving vestiges of the Sahidic version of Jacob of Serugh’s homily on the Ascension attest numerous minor differences from the Syriac original. However, their value is difficult to determine because we do not possess as yet an edition of this text based on a sufficient number of manuscripts. Paul Bedjan used for his publication of the Syriac text only two codices, namely Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Syr. 196 and London, British Library, Or. Add. 12165. In addition to Syriac, the memrā on the Ascension is attested also in Arabic and Go’az (see Addendum, p. 63). The Arabic version is included in a devotional Coptic book published in Cairo in 1905 but, unfortunately, it does not mention which manuscript follows. The monks of the St. Macarius Monastery in Wadi el-Natrun have privately circulated a handwritten Arabic transcript of the homily that interests us here. This transcription is of some interest as it is partly based on the two Arabic manuscripts of Jacob of Serugh’s homilies in the library of the monastery (nos. 333-334). However, one must use it with caution because it intersperses the text of the original manuscripts with modern translations into Arabic from the Syriac text of Bedjan, without notifying the reader when such mixtures occur.

The lack of proper editions hampers the comparison between the Coptic, Syriac, and Arabic text. In spite of this, this endeavor is not without relevance. One can detect various dissimilarities, from minor additions and omissions to more significant alterations of the meaning of the phrase. Usually, the average number of words per addition and omission is small. In most cases, just one word is missing, although sometimes a verse can lack a whole clause. As these *variae lectiones* are of relatively minor importance, it is not the purpose of this paper to give a full account of them. Suffice to say that the Syriac and the Arabic texts generally agree

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28 Description of the manuscript in Z. Ottenberg, *Catalogues*, p. 140-144 (= no. 196).

29 This codex is dated 1015 CE. Described in Wright, *Catalogue*, p. 840-851 (= no. 824). See also Sauget, *British Library Add. 12165*.

30 *Atānāsiyūs, كتاب*, p. 635-645 (with Arabic numerals). A translation from Syriac into modern Arabic can be found in *Sonī, مقولات السروجي*, p. 2811-2823 (with Arabic numerals).

against the Sahidic (cf. e.g. verses 46, 49, 62, 188), excluding thus from the outset the possibility that the Arabic translation could be made from the Coptic, albeit both circulated on Egyptian soil. Only in a few cases (e.g. verses 40, 48, 187) the Sahidic and the Arabic versions offer an identical text. Even though the similarities are not numerous, they suggest that the Coptic and Arabic translations must have behind them partly similar, but certainly not identical, manuscripts. One reasonable explanation is that their tangential coincidence connects to the geographical circulation of the manuscripts, since the Arabic translation could also originate in Egypt.

If the Arabic translation is a source-oriented one, rendering slavishly the Syriac, the Sahidic one is more reader-oriented. Although the Coptic translator might have been aware that Jacob’s memrā/ŷ32 is metrical, there is no trace of an attempt to follow the literary mold of the original or to imitate its qualities. With several occasions, the original is adjusted in such a way as to become comprehensible to Egyptian readers. For example, the Sahidic adds editorial glosses on verses 241-242 (Bedjan, 820, 5-6), where Jacob of Serugh mentions that Jesus Christ was born in the month of Kanun (حِنَّان) and ascended to heaven in the month of Haziran (حِزايران). The translator into Coptic found necessary to explicitate the text by mentioning also the Egyptian equivalents of the Syriac names of months,

He descended in the month Chainoun, *this being Choiach*, like the Sun that descends in its degree,
He ascended in Hasiran, *this being Paone*, and he destroyed the darkness by his light.

These insertions are meant to make the text explicit to an Egyptian audience, seemingly unfamiliar with the Syriac calendar. The Arabic version lacks the two additions, providing instead an accurate translation of the original,

He descended in Kanun, like the sun descends in degrees,

He ascended in Haziran and he choked the darkness by his light.

Similarly, verse 67 (Bedjan, 811, 17), “He became for the earth a great Nisan (نيسان), full of beauties,” is missing in Sahidic. This omission seems to suggest either that the metaphor of Christ portrayed as the abundant and life-giving month of Nisan has been found too cryptic for the Egyptians or that the translator did not understand it.
Other differences between the Syriac and the Sahidic are imputable to scribal errors. For example, a corruption that may derive from the transmission history of the Sahidic text occurs in verse 38 (Bedjan, 810, 8), in which Jacob of Serugh praises the uneducated apostles, who were superior to the wise in the understanding of theology, “The fisherman conquered and the untaught \( \text{ⲁⲩϫⲣⲟ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛϭⲓⲛⲓⲟⲩⲱϩⲉ} \) became brilliant in your proclamation.” The Arabic renders faithfully the verse as \( \text{وتفاضل} \) \( \text{الصيادون} \) \( \text{غلب} \) \( \text{بكرازتك} \) \( \text{الاميون} \), “The fishermen overcame and the untaught became excellent in your proclamation.”. In Sahidic, a word in this verse has been corrupted,

\[
\text{ⲁⲩϫⲣⲟ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛϭⲓⲛⲓⲟⲩⲱϩⲉ ⲁⲩϭⲉⲡ ϫⲱⲱⲣⲉ ⛧ⲥⲙⲡⲉⲕⲧⲁϣⲉⲟⲉⲓϣ}
\]

The fisherman conquered and the taught excelled in your proclamation.

The original meaning can be restored in this case by emending \( \text{ⲉⲅⲣⲁⲙⲁϯⲕⲟⲥ} \) to \( \text{ⲉ} \) \( \text{ⲁ} \) \( \text{ⲅⲣⲁⲙⲁϯⲕⲟⲥ} \), “untaught,” making it thus to correspond to the Greek-Syriac \( \text{ⲁⲩϫⲣⲟ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛϭⲓⲛⲓⲟⲩⲱϩⲉ} \) and the Arabic \( \text{الاميون} \).

Verse 182 (Bedjan, 817, 9) is also utterly corrupted in Sahidic, “through his blessing \( \text{ⲡⲉϥⲙⲟⲩ} \) he vivified the whole world which was not revealed \( \text{ⲉⲧⲉ} \) \( \text{ⲉⲃⲟⲗ} \) \( \text{ⲡⲉ} \).” The Syriac original reads at this point, “so that through his death \( \text{ⲡⲉϥⲙⲡⲉⲕⲧⲁϣⲉⲟⲉⲓϣ} \) he might vivify the world which was not alive \( \text{ⲛⲉϥⲟⲛϩ} \) \( \text{ⲡⲉ} \).” The right meaning of this phrase can be recovered by operating a couple of corrections in the Sahidic text, that is, by emending \( \text{ⲡⲉϥⲙⲟⲩ} \) to \( \text{ⲡⲉϥ} \) \( \{ \text{ⲥ} \} \) \( \text{ⲙⲟⲩ} \) and \( \text{ⲉⲧⲉ} \) \( \text{ⲉⲃⲟⲗ} \) to \( \text{ⲡⲉϥ} \) \( \{ \text{ⲟⲩ} \} \) \( \text{ⲟⲛϩ} \) \( \{ \text{ⲉⲃⲟⲗ} \} \), “through his death \( \text{ⲡⲉϥⲙⲟⲩ} \) he vivified the whole world, which was not alive \( \text{ⲉⲧⲉ} \) \( \text{ⲉⲃⲟⲗ} \).” It is obvious that these errors cannot be imputed to the translator, but they rather occurred during the subsequent manuscript transmission of the Sahidic text.

Although the translation into Sahidic is generally accurate, the translator had made a few wrong translation choices. For example, verse 43 (Bedjan, 810, 13) begins in Sahidic with the words “Hidden is your light \( \text{ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ} \),” whereas the Syriac original has “Hidden is your fire \( \text{ⲟⲩⲟⲛⲙⲟⲩ} \).” This is probably an error due to the similarity between the Syriac words \( \text{ⲟⲩⲟⲛⲙⲟⲩ} \) “fire” and \( \text{ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ} \) “light,” the translator omitting to read the letter \( \text{ⲧ} \). Remarkably, the Arabic translates the Syriac \( \text{ⲟⲩⲟⲛⲙⲟⲩ} \) by \( \text{نار} \), which can mean both “fire” and “light.” However, one can also imagine that this alteration may have already happened within the Syriac manuscript tradition.

A more significant corruption of the original meaning of Jacob of Serugh’s text appears in verse 55 (Bedjan, 811, 5),
As can be observed in the table above, the Arabic renders the Syriac ṣawrāfēi/ζωγραφεῖν, “to paint,” instead of “to bind.” The confusion occurred because, when written without vowels, the Syriac verbs “to paint” and “to bind” are homographs. Thus, the imperfect form of the verb “to bind,” ṣawrāfē, could mistakenly be taken as coming from the root ṣawr “to paint, to draw.” The verb change obliged the Coptic translator to replace also the preposition “within” (ⲉϫⲛⲟⲩⲣϣⲱⲛ) with “on” (ⲉϫⲛⲟⲩⲩⲛ). Although grammatically justifiable, the wrong decision in choosing the right sense of the verb changed the whole meaning of the phrase.

3. The Earliest Attestations of Jacob of Serugh’s Mēmrē among the Copts

The Sahidic translation of Jacob of Serugh’s metrical homily on the Ascension raises a series of questions that are not easy to answer at our present stage of documentation. Thus, the text edited here is not only the first attestation of Jacob of Serugh in Coptic, but it may also be the first evidence of a direct translation from Syriac into Coptic, with the exception of some texts discovered in the milieu of the Manicheans of Kellis. The existence of this Memra in Sahidic is even more remarkable given that the sources written in Coptic are completely silent concerning Jacob of Serugh, as they are also about the other major theologians who wrote in Syriac, Jacob of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabbug. According to Father Khalil Samir, the first attestation of Jacob among the Copts is in the anti-Chalcedonian florilegium Confession of the Fathers, which can be dated around 1078 CE. Although this patristic collection is preserved only in Arabic and Gǝ῾ǝz, Coptic originals for at least some of its parts were written in the 16th century into Gǝ῾ǝz under the title the Faith of the Fathers (ỏብ፡ ንማኖተ፡ አበው).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syriac</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Sahidic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>من يعرف يصهر المياه داخل المنديل</td>
<td>ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲡⲙⲡⲟⲟ ⲉϫⲛⲟⲩⲣⲣⲱⲛ</td>
<td>ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲡⲙⲡⲟⲟ ⲉϫⲛⲟⲩⲣⲣⲱⲛ</td>
</tr>
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Who knows how to bind water inside a veil? Who knows how to bind water inside a veil? Who knows how to paint water on a veil?
cannot be completely ruled out. Jacob features in the *Confession of the Fathers* with four quotations extracted from two homilies: two from the *memrā* on the Nativity and two from that on the Passion\(^{35}\). However, Samir has not noticed that Jacob of Serugh features in an earlier Arabic florilegium of Coptic provenance, namely the *Precious Pearl* (*Al-durr al-thamīn*). This florilegium was compiled by Severus Ibn al-Muqqafa’, probably around the middle of the 10th century CE. Severus included in the *Precious Pearl* three quotations from Jacob\(^{36}\), two pertaining to the *memrā* on the Resurrection and an unidentified one\(^{37}\).

Although both the *Confession of the Fathers* and the *Precious Pearl* were written in Arabic, it is a murky matter how could their compilers have such a rich Christian theological culture in this language. It is possible that some of the texts included in these two florilegia were not available to their authors in Arabic, but were rather translated from Coptic. Referring to the compiler of the *Precious Pearl*, Samuel Rubenson signaled that “[t]here is every reason to suspect that Sawīrus and other authors using Arabic translated Coptic texts *ad hoc* and then included them in their Arabic works”\(^{38}\). Can we argue that the inclusion of quotations from Jacob of Serugh in these early Copto-Arabic florilegia suggests that the texts existed in Coptic? The issue is quibbling and deserves further elaboration and refinement. Unfortunately, a proper answer necessitates more voluminous documentation than we possess.

The earliest Arabic manuscript of Jacob of Serugh’s homilies of Coptic provenance is *Vaticanus arabicus* 73, a 13th century codex from the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Wadi el-Natrun. Notably, the Melkite Arabic manuscripts of Jacob of Serugh’s writings that originate from the Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai are earlier, dating from the 9th-10th century\(^{39}\).

Given the penury of sources and the fact that both Sahidic manuscripts of the *memrā* on the Ascension are acephalous, it is even possible to speculate that the text has been transmitted under the name of another author, with whom the Copts were more familiar\(^{40}\).

\(^{35}\) G. RAFF, *Das Bekenntnis der Väter*, p. 393-394.
\(^{36}\) G. RAFF, *Die kostbare Perle*, p. 73.
\(^{38}\) RUBENSON, *Translating*, p. 6.
\(^{40}\) In this case, the most compelling possibility among the Syriac Fathers is Ephrem, whose name was well-known to the Copts as attested by numerous manuscripts which preserve works attributed to him, although none of them is genuine.
4. Copts and Syrians. The Translator of the Sahidic Version of the Memrā on the Ascension

The language on which the Coptic version is based presents another problem that is difficult to assess. Although the literary analysis of the text has indicated that the Sahidic version encapsulates certain peculiar readings of the Syriac, none of them constitutes enough evidence that the Sahidic derives directly from Syriac. It is well possible that all the translational options could have already been present in an intermediary Greek text. Father Khalil Samir cautiously postulated that the Melkite Arabic translations of Jacob of Serugh preserved in the Sinai manuscripts could have been made from Greek. In her turn, Tamara Pataridze suggested that the Georgian version of the memrā on the Nativity seems to be based morphologically upon a Greek text. However, she admitted at the same time that, as no Greek translation from Jacob has survived, this hypothesis is fragile. It is perhaps more likely that the Georgian translations from Jacob were made on Arabic models somewhere in Palestine. Indeed, given that no Greek version of Jacob of Serugh’s writings exists, it is difficult to postulate an intermediary in this language between the Syriac original and the Coptic translation. Therefore, we may tentatively suppose that the Sahidic translation was made directly from Syriac, noting however that I have not been able to spot in the target language any definite indication of the source language.

The hypothesis that the translation of Jacob of Serugh’s homily on the Ascension was made directly from Syriac must be checked by determining whether the writings of Jacob were available in Egypt and who could translate such a text. Was the translator a Syrian living in Egypt or rather a Copt who learned Syriac? Although the cultural exchanges between the Syrians and Copts in the first Christian millennium are still not properly researched, the encounter of the two anti-Chalcedonian cultures on Egyptian soil is partly well documented. It is certain that the originals of Jacob of Serugh’s mēmrē were available in the libraries of the Syrian monasteries in Upper and Lower Egypt, and, consequently, someone who knew Syriac and Coptic could provide a translation. For example, sometimes between 851 and 859 CE, three monks moved to the Monastery of the Syrians in Wadi el-Natrun from another Syrian monastery situated in

41 Samir, Jacques de Saroug, p. 240.
42 Pataridze, Jacques de Saroug, p. 387-388.
44 Fiey, Coptes et Syriaques, p. 341.
Maris in Upper Egypt. They brought with them several manuscripts, including two codices that contain homilies by Jacob of Serugh. The manuscripts, kept today in the British Library, are dated 603 and 823 CE respectively. The colophon of the latter mentions that the codex was copied in Upper Egypt by a Syriac monk named Aaron. From this testimony we can infer that manuscripts containing Jacob of Serugh’s memrē were copied in Upper Egypt, where the Sahidic dialect was used, at least in the first half of the 9th century CE. Another Syriac codex of Jacob’s works, transcribed in the Wadi el-Natrun, is dated 866 CE.

The Syriac manuscripts containing texts by Jacob of Serugh that circulated in Egypt indicate that, at least theoretically, a bilingual person could translate the homily on the Ascension into Coptic. Codex Deir al-Suryan, Syr. 30C (olim MK 23) furnishes evidence that such translators existed. According to the colophon of this manuscript of the lives of the Egyptian Fathers, the texts were translated “from the Egyptian tongue into Syriac” by John, son of Macarius. The codex was inscribed by Moses of Nisibis in the year 903-904. Notably, Deir al-Suryan, Syr. 30C contains also the Life of Macarius attributed to Sarapion of Thmuis (clavis coptica 0327; BHO 573; CPG 2501). The presence of this text in the manuscript fully validates Satoshi Toda’s hypothesis that the Syriac version of the Life of Macarius was translated from Coptic (Bohairic). Other manuscripts preserve the Life of Shenoute (BHO 1074-1078; clavis coptica 0461) and the Life of Dioscorus of Alexandria (BHO 258; clavis coptica 0400) in Syriac. These vitae may also be translated from Bohairic, although an Arabic intermediary cannot be excluded from the outset.

If in the Wadi el-Natrun the monks translated texts from Coptic into Syriac, it is natural to imagine that Syriac texts could be translated into Coptic as well. The Sahidic text of the memrē on the Ascension provides some evidence that the translation was made by a Copt rather than by a Syrian. This is suggested by the fact that the translator used the

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45 EVELYN WHITE, Monasteries, p. 441. The manuscripts are kept today in the British Library, see the description in WRIGHT, Catalogue, p. 517b-524a (= no. 672), 762b-766b (= no. 781).
47 WRIGHT, Catalogue, p. 767b-769a (= no. 783).
48 Description of the manuscript in BROCK – VAN ROMPAY, Catalogue, p. 221-224; the quotation above is at p. 223.
49 Toda made this assertion before the publication of the colophon of Deir al-Suryan, Syr. 30C; see TODA, Syriac Translation; IDEM, Vie de S. Macaire.
50 Cf. GUIDI, Le traduzioni, p. 52-56; NAU, Vie de Schenoudi; IDEM, Histoire de Dioscore.
possessive article even when it is lacking in the Syriac original. This excess of possessive articles is more common in Coptic than in Syriac. Its common usage in Coptic is apparent, for example, in the translations of the biblical books. Here are the examples where the Coptic translator added the possessive article in the surviving portions of the *memrā* on the Ascension, v. 41 *ⲡⲉⲱⲧ* (sic); v. 87 *ⲡⲉⲱⲧ*; id. *ⲡⲉⲱⲧ*; v. 183 *ⲡⲉⲱⲧ*; v. 204 *ⲡⲉⲱⲧ*; v. 240 *ⲡⲉⲱⲧ*; v. 243 *ⲡⲉⲱⲧ*; v. 279 *ⲡⲉⲱⲧ*. I would simply note that the translator added a possessive each time the context tolerated. This superfluous use of possessive articles suggests that the translation was made by someone who spoke Coptic natively.

Moreover, the translation seems to be made by a person accustomed with the Sahidic version of the Bible. For example, verse 236 (Bedjan 819, 21) reads in Syriac “death was bound, Adam was freed, and the viper was bruised.” Mentioning the bruising of the serpent, Jacob of Serugh refers to the messianic prophecy of Genesis 3:15. This was a widespread patristic exegetical tradition, which saw in Genesis 3:15 a reference to Christ, the descendant of Eve who defeated the Devil. The Arabic version accurately translates this as “العَقِبُ وَنُحرِئَ الْافعِى.” However, the Coptic translator rendered the clause differently, “ⲁⲩⲱ ⲫⲟⲥ Ɫⲟⲥ Ɫⲟⲥ ⲱⲥⲧⲉⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲱⲟⲥ ⲱⲟⲥ ⲱⲟⲥ ⲱⲟⲥ ⲱⲟⲥ, “and the serpent watched his head”.

In order to understand properly the translational option of the Sahidic, we must compare the different versions of the biblical passage envisaged here. Thus, in the Masoretic text of Genesis 3:15, God curses the serpent saying, “*עָקֵב תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ וְאַתָּה רֹ֔אשׁ יְשׁוּפְךָ הוּא*” 52, “it (i.e. the seed of Eve) will bruise your head, and you will bruise its heel.” However, the LXX version has at this point, “αὐτός σου τηρήσει κεφαλήν, καὶ σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν” 53, “he will watch your head, and you will watch his heel.” The fulcrum of the patristic exegesis of Genesis 3:15 is the translation of the Hebrew masculine singular pronoun *הוּא* by *αὐτός*, which is also masculine singular. However, while in Hebrew this connects well with the masculine noun “seed,” in Greek *σπέρμα* is neuter 54. This apparent disagreement constitutes the basis for the patristic interpretations of the passage as foretelling Christ’s final victory over the Devil.

52 Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 4.
More important for the present question, the LXX (on which the Sahidic version is based) renders the Hebrew verb שׁוּף “to bruise, to trample, to crush” by τηρέω “to guard, to watch.” This refers to the seed of Eve (or to the mysterious masculine personage) watching the serpent’s head in order to bruise it, and to the serpent lying in wait in order to bite man’s heel. On the other hand, Jacob of Serugh knew Genesis 3:15 only according to the Peshitta, which follows closely the Hebrew text, לִסְתַּלֵּחַ תַּלָּחֵת. Precisely to this version he referred when he said that the “viper was bruised (חָסֲדָה).” Although the Sahidic version of the Genesis rightly translates τηρέω by θαρός, it differs both from the Masoretic text and the LXX because it says, ἣτοικ έφεκέρεξ έπεφτεκ.- ἣτοικ άσωκ εκεκέρεξ έτεκανε.56, “he shall guard/watch his heel, and you, in your turn, will guard/watch your head.” Thus, in the Sahidic Genesis 3:15 the serpent does not watch to bite man’s heel, but rather watches its own head not to be crushed by man. Only now it becomes apparent why the Coptic translation of verse 236 reads, “the serpent guarded/watched (ῥοισ) his head”57. This reading does not find support either in the Syriac original of Jacob’s homily or in the Greek LXX, but only in the Sahidic version of Genesis 3:15. The peculiar rendering of verse 236 strengthens the hypothesis that the translator must have been a Copt familiar with the Sahidic Bible. Consequently, we may conclude that the translation of the memrā on the Ascension was made by a Coptic monk who might have learned Syriac either in the Syriac monastic communities of Egypt or in Syria.

5. The Dating of the Sahidic Translation

The Sahidic version of Jacob of Serugh’s homily on the Ascension is impossible to date within narrow limits on the basis of textual evidence. As for the manuscripts, the earliest probably date from the 10th-11th century CE, which can provide only a very relative terminus ante quem. However, the translation itself must be considerably older since it is unlikely that the Copts still translated literary texts into Sahidic at such a late date.

The memrā on the Ascension may be the first genuine writing of a Syriac Father discovered in Coptic. However, nothing precludes us from hoping that other Syriac patristic writings can surface in the future from

55 Pschitta, p. 4 (with Syriac numerals).
57 The Coptic verbs θαρός and ῥοισ are synonyms in this context.
the piles of unidentified Coptic manuscript fragments. If until now our efforts to identify Coptic literary fragments have been focused primarily on authors writing in Greek and Coptic, this homily of Jacob of Serugh shows us that we should broaden our research into the Syriac milieu as well.


The edition of the Sahidic version of Jacob of Serugh’s memrā on the Ascension is made almost exclusively on the basis of photographic reproductions of the manuscript fragments. As most of the fragments’ photographs are of poor quality, especially those of Codex B, it has been impossible to transcribe all of them properly. There is one exception to that: upon my request, Stephen Emmel collated the fragment BnF Copte 1318, f. 99 in the National Library in Paris in March 2014. I am grateful to him for providing his notes on this fragment.

Although semi-diplomatic editions of Coptic manuscripts are generally preferable, the present edition follows the original verse structure of the memrā. The numbers in the margins of the pages represent the verse numbers of Jacob’s homily. As the scribes of the two Sahidic manuscripts preserving this text employed a different system of superlineation, the reproduction of the strokes above single letters or group of letters would have created a disharmonious mixture in the edition. Therefore, I have not retained the superlinear strokes of the manuscripts except for the nomina sacra.

Otherwise, the common editorial signs of the Leiden convention have been used.

Addendum

An Ethiopic version of the memrā on the Ascension also exists. It is preserved in two manuscripts, Tănăsee 177, ff. 29r-43v and Ethio-SPARE ms UM-046, ff. 14v-25v. Description of the Tănăsee codex in V. Six, Äthiopische Handschriften von Tănăsee, Teil 3 (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, XX.3), Stuttgart, 1999, p. 234-235. The existence of the Ga’az text has been revealed to me by Ted Erho (Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich). Unfortunately, I found out about it too late to include an analysis of this version in the present article.
34 verses missing

35 (A) [στρ]τρὶῳ ἁλε`ες `ἡι ἀγω εἰςπανεις τὴν μιμηρὶτ ἀγω ἐπ

πεταναῦτσῳ

γαὶ τοι περὶ ὑ πνοεῖς ἀγω ἀκως ἐπολ ὑ πνοὶς ἐπολ ἐτρημαξὲ εὐβήντκ

μιος πλοικόν-μνημηματες-μνημηφιλοσοφος. ἀγκατε

ετεινοτζετ νςκκ- ἀγω μπογεσκεμο-

ἀγχρογρημημοψε-ἀγωγεπψωψρε-μινες>γραμμαφκος

ῥηπετασεοεψ.

γτοικ πε πψιρε μπνου’τε’- γτοικ πε πψιρε μπρςψε. γτοικ

πε πψιρε μμαρα.

40 πετεσμαζκε μπεςτπανεις μπογεσκεμοι μιοκ-

ακει γα ἐπολ εαγραι- ἀγω ἀκογοκ ηςςπανεις- ακει ἐπολ

γίςπικατ

ἀγω ἀκεινε μακ νογκαψ. ἀγω ἀκωπε νας1 νογκπο- μιμ

πετανατσαζκ

πεκογοειν ςηπ- τεκεινναυ ογος ἐπολ- τεκιννος χοςε

ἀγω σεσυτρτζ νεινταπρο ετεινοτζετ νςκκ.

45 ογνεομ μεν ντταπρο εςςςς εροκ ρνομμτρμμαο-

ἀγω ογνεωμ’ μμος δι εςςςς<ςτ> νςκκ- ὑ πνοεῖς μπτθρ-

ɲμ δε πετανςτολα εκαςτε νερνακβες νκας-

ɲμ πετανςπωβ ςδ- ντινπε νιτάϕε μμους νςγω-

ἀγω νεκβι λογος ερογ-

ɲμ πετανςσεμος εβακ επεςετ εςςςςκ νναλαςα

50 ɲμ πετεογνεομ μμος εμούςτ μμννοις τηρου ςςςπεις-

ɲμ πετανςβωκ εςςςςιε-ɲμ πετεογνεομ μμος εκς υ νερνις-

ɲμ νερνιςσε ςςςςςς νςγω-

ɲμ νερνιςομ χοςα μπαμα εςςςςςςςς ςςςςςςςςςςςςςςςςςςς.
JACOB OF SERUGH: DE ASCENSIONE
Translation

34 verses missing

35 (A) [Trembles] before him and the beloved (one) is below and who could define (you)?
You are hidden, O Lord, and you showed forth, who is accomplished to speak of you?
The great sages, scribes and philosophers sought to examine you and they were not able,
But the fishermen succeeded and the <un>taught excelled in your proclamation.
You are the Son of God, you are the Son of Man, you are the son of Mary.

40 Those on high and those below could not know you.
For you came from above and you showed yourself below; you came from your Father.
And you have found for yourself a mother and you became to her an offspring; who could comprehend you?
Your light is hidden, your sight is revealed, your greatness is exalted,
And the mouths tremble examining you.

45 The mouth can indeed praise you abundantly,
But it cannot examine you, O Lord of All!
But who will dare to grasp embers of fire
Or who will not forget the number of the rain drops to reckon them?
Who can descend to the depth of the sea,

50 Or who can explore all the depths with his hand, or who can ascend to the sky?
Or who is capable to set his paths on the clouds,
And to walk upon them unto the place where lives the One-alone Christ?

A Paris BnF Copte 130°, f. 35.
nim peteoynem mmoq eamzte mpkapt 2ntpexw. H pytju ṣmpeqząmp.

ayw ncsowoŋ hntthu etporphe evoŋ nhpeqthihe nhqptbou:

nim petsooyun nswgfyfei npmooŋ exhoyrswun.

ayw nayoqehi mprh thprh ncsowoŋzq ṣmpeqząmp.

55 H nim petnacyoun pm a mnoowe mpx<o>4i 2ntmpne nhzoeqi

mpnelagog.

h nim petnawymiie: enna nbak mrapoc ṣntequinmooowe ṣmpany

ayw nim petnapagyathh npeqi taczce ncaiyowa- mavap

pnyote.

60 pai eitn mntan mmaw nteinyxi taczce ncaqyo -opacity on

kceбыhhe eito nkapt.

ayw nertyeynaŋ etqeyiwa ṣmpkosmoc- thprh nœe

mpg′oo′y.

ayw ṣmpkosmoc thprh royoqei evoŋ mmoq-

ayw teqeyihe evoŋ nœe mprh eroqeyi evoŋ ṣmpen≤ooŋ 2xiqmpkaz-

ayw apiw tcnakaq niqm mnttqamm′ o′ evoŋ mmoq.

65 ayw teqeyihe epecht aŋkw npmha mnoowe ṣmpkosmoc-

pni ṣntaqtako

芰mpnwoqe nhindoloon- ayw aŋcokh aŋnty wqmpw′t′

I verse omitted in the Sahidic version

ayw nœe nhîqarpi′ o′c [...] 3 verses missing

60 (B) [...] [...] e·· [...] [...]ntm[...[...] n2mtyq

 [...] [ayw aŋmamacio ne[biw e]trqale zm[peqa]romoc-

aŋbuk [e]zoyn ṣmpmase- aŋei evoŋ ṣntkalläh- ayw

awuqmp neqyuqpo-

ayw aŋcawbe mpqoŋ kata e eŋcq-

75 ayw aŋnoyox evoŋ ntebexi ezoyn ṣmpewkoŋ ntebqw . . . . npeqtako4.

4 MS B: mpcox. There is a dot on MS A above x, which might be an attempt of the

scribe to correct the text.

5 Paris BnF Copte 1315, f. 33.

5 There is enough space for a few letters before ṣpeqtako, but the Syriac and

Arabic do not have anything before this word.
Who is able to seize the fire in his hand or the wind in his arm(s)  
And to gather the scattered winds with his fingers and seal them?

Who knows how to paint the water on a veil,  
And the whole light of the sun and to gather it in his arm(s)?  
Or who will distinguish the path of the boat between the waves of the deep sea,  
Or who could know the path of the eagle in his journey through the air?

The one that none of us can follow, not even the fiery lightning?
And he made his rising visible in the whole world as the day,  
And the whole world was illuminated by him.  
And his appearance was like that of the sun that illuminates during the day upon the earth,  
And dissipated from it every shadow of tyranny.

And (in) his descent, he set his path in the world, the one that had gone astray  
In the worshipping of idols, and he drew it and brought it to his Father.

1 verse omitted in the Sahidic version
And like the fruits […]

3 verses missing

[ […] […]  
[…] [and he] filled it with sweet [honey] in [his] route.  
He entered through the ear, came out from the womb and became an offspring.  
And he played with the serpent, as it is written,  
And he stretched out his hand to the hole of the snake, the corrupted ….,

Paris BnF Copte 131\(^{\text{a}}\), f. 33.
αυς αφείνε εβολ νααμ.[...] αυ . τκτο [...] . . . επμα [ετμ] μαγ·

αυς αξ[λ] ελαρξ γηναι αψωψχπ εροσ δηνι•
αυς νεψβει μποβε βποκόμος [γ]ιθνεβξις ειαχ[πες]πος·
αυς νεψ[ει]νει μητρμςε μπεγος δηνς[γα]λ ετροζε·

80

αψ [...]...τού ε [...]... δηναλαγ νδψήρε μπεψψ[τ]
αψει εβολ νεε δοψειν γιανναγ υτνεδιβολος·
αψα αψιντ νεαβψπιε νρψε νιμ· αψω δηνοταλεο
αψαλεο· ννετψψε αψω αψ† νογανξγςε6 ννμκας αψτββο
ννετοςβ·

αψω αψοψψν ννβαλ ννβαλεγε· αψω αψσοτψων ννεαξ
ετψουγψγο· αψτρεναλ εατμ
85

αψτερμ νρεψννος αψω ντελψςνς αψω αψσοτψψν αψω
αψεινε ννετψψυ εβο[λ]
αψω αψαχσψ[ε] αψσοψγσγ εζογ[ν] αψτρενμπο ψαξε·
αψω νρεψνμο[τ] αψτσοψγγνγ·

αψω αψσοσψε γιαχ υγ αψω αψσοψκ εψσογ μπεψ[α]
αψω αψμασγ ε[βο] γνεψψχσβ[α]ψ[τ]νθψ
αψω αψτ[ογ]γντρψν γηνσμψε μννψμψγ μννετζψάκας·
αψω αψσιντψγ αψκαταλψ μψεμας μνσψοψ νοξψ γηνεμψντε·

90

αψω αψτέτ πςτ ψααμ 3ψπεταψ<κα>ταλεκάζε μψοψ
γιανψπογτε·

αψω γιαντενε<π>δφψ ψμοψ αψοψψν μπρο μπψαλαίςος· πψα
νσψψμε μπογνψοψ

αψκει εφουγ μπατσψλεε υταγκψ εροψ· αψω αψνοψχ
εβολ [...]·

3 verses missing

96 [...] η [...] [...] χ [...] [...] [τες]αψ [...] [...] επες[τ]
νααμ·

αψω γςε ρψμε νκοφ[ος] νρεψψμς· αψείνε εγςαι
μπμαρψκατης· ετταίνυ·

αψω αψκςμμ ννετψπεςςη· εψψψε νπαντοτςς· αψω
εψκωτε νπανετςπυκας·

100 αψκκατκ γαννεκονμουγ αψω αψκω [...]·

6 ανγςγςε δινεςς.
And he brought out Adam, [...] he … returned [...] there.
 And he incarnated, by this delivering himself to sufferings,
 And he took away the sin of the world through his sufferings on [the] cross.
 And he [brought] freedom [for] the troubled race of slaves.

80 And [...] [...] them [...] and made them the sons of his Father.
 He came out as a physician for the wounds (inflicted) by the Devil,
 And he drove away the sicknesses of every human being, and by healing
 He healed those that were sick, he relieved the pains, cleansed the lepers,
 And opened the eyes of the blind, straightened the withered hands, made
 the deaf to hear,

85 He called the sinners and the publicans and chose them and threw out the
 wicked ones.
 And he gathered the scattered, he made the mute to speak and he raised
 the dead.
 And he walked beside them, sprinkled upon them his mercy and filled
 them with his compassions.
 And he [stirred up] peace between those of heaven and those upon earth,
 And he settled them, he stopped the combat that the serpent cast among
 them.

90 And he reconciled Adam’s heart with that which condemned him (in the
 sight) of God.
 And through his crucifixion he opened the gate of Paradise, the festal
 chamber,
 And brought in the bridegroom, who was envied and thrown out [...] 

3 verses missing

96 [...] [...] [her] head [...] down.
 [Through] his [death he went] to the [abyss] of the dead, the one which
 submerged Adam,
 And like a skilled diver he brought up the precious pearl.
 And he grasped the depths looking for the buried ones and searching for
 those that perished,

100 He slept beside the dead and laid [...]
56 verses missing

(C) Ἰὸν ὄντος θυμήσεως ἑβολεῖ ἐπτάσσεσθαι ἵκνεται ἡ ὡς κατὰ ἄξιον ὑμῶν ἡ τῆς ἐπάξο(ὸ) κ(ὸ) γ ἐβολής Ἰωνικίτως ἔμν[ε][ὸ] ἀρχουσάναν ἐπερεῖνεν ἐπικοσμός ἐρωτῆσθαι Ἰὼν [...]  

2 verses missing

162 [πτο]οὐ ἡμῶν ὁμοῦσθημίαν πε ντεπτῳς[ἐ]

2 verses omitted in the Sahidic version


9 verses missing


C Paris BnF Copte 131°, f. 99.
7 MS reads ταγη.
8 The manuscript has πτοοογ but the copyist wrote ζημεία above πτ.
9 Cairo IFAO Copte inv. no. 205.
9 MS reads ἰεπτος.
56 verses missing

157 (C) And the proclamation having been perfected in his senses,
Like a human being perfect in everything, in this way he perfected them
in faith and strength.
Afterward he sent them to bring the world into the proclamation and […]

2 verses missing

162 [The Mount] of Olives is a mystery of the anointing.
Because from this mountain shall be oil of the washing of the regen-
eration,
And from it also Christ went to the height to the place of his Father.

2 verses omitted in the Sahidic version

167 And because of this, the disciples assembled with him [upon] the [mountain]

9 verses missing

175 (D) […] […] captivity […] drew […] he brought her out from stumbling blocks.
And he gave gifts to her who was weary and needy,
To the one who was returned from captivity, because she was naked; and
he ascended and sent
The Holy Spirit, the one that dresses everyone [who] is humble,
And it saved her [from] destruction by a [great] miracle.
180 He ascended and he sent the treasure of his Father to the humble one,
He came and died in <our> place and ascended to make (us) live in the place of his Father,
τεβε χε ρηπευ{c[m}ηογ αφτανω μπκοςμος θηρη. παι ετε
ηηφ{ογ}ονζ {εβ’ολ} αν πε.
αψ αρεωγι ρογ ηνετενουγ νε ημναοντς. αψ
ναποπολος ηνεπατε. ηνεπερμυστηριον
ετρηταμοογ ρογ. χε ρηναβκ εραγ ναγ νηγ. ηηνουγ
εβολ.

185 αγναγ ογη ετεραναςταςις. αψ αγιηςτεγε <ε>ρογ.
αγτνγ ετερηναγ μμαγ ετερευε[βακ] εραγ
ετεργω{ανε} μμπτρε. μτ[εα]ναςταςις.
αγ[[]] νεμεμς πκας ι[πε]ταςεοει{γ} 
αγσωμ ιηνε{γ}αμαε αψ αγ{αγ} ιηνεβαλ. αψ
αγομεμ ιηνεγεις.

190 αψ αγκογανη αγανατε μμογ. αγριμτρε ηνετεηνιοογ
θερ.
αγκοογη εβολ ινεπεις. αψ αγκογ εροογ.
 ακαες. εηεσοηε εηεμααα αεπκαη ετεργοορτ
ζηντεεπια ηεσμααα.
αγη αρηως ιμπειοτ αρταγ ετοοτ
eτρηροεις εροογ. αψ ιηνπραγ ιμπειοτ

195 αφ* λαγ ινπρηη. ετεργαας ρωου ηπκακ θηρη.
ετεργαακ εβολ ετεραγωβ ιηπρηη ινταγαας ηαγ.
αψ αφ* εοκ λαγ {αη ηη}. αψ αηχοοοκ λαγ [αη αηωοπ
ημμηηηηηη].

3 verses missing

201 [...] αψ [πραν ιμπειοτ] [...] ροεις[·]
πιωτ μεη {ραρεγ} εροου ρηπε[κραν] ηε ουνοε πε
π[εκραν].
αψ πραν ιμπειοτ ιμπααηε. εηφ* ιαε ιμπεημαοντς

205 πυηρε λα μμος λε ιηηοπ ιμμηηηηηη. αψ ιμπεξη εολ.
αλλα εηεημαα πε ιεε ιηαρηοοκ ιμπτω εβολ ιητηοογες(Β)
αψ αρεη ινεππηηα ετογααβ // αρεεηε ιαγ ιηηπητριμμαο-

210 αψ ιηοο οη ιηεημιηα πε.
πιωτ μηηηηρε ινεππηηα ετογααβ. ιεε ιηαρηοοκ.
πιωτ ροεις. αψ πυηρε κα εβολ. ιεπιηα ετογααβ. τββο-

teαριας ετογααβ ιηαπκ’ο’ςμος ταρο ερατη. εβολ ζηηοοετε
ηηνομηηιε.

3ηππαγ ηεη εητημαη απκ’ο’ςμος ηογεη ρεαριας.

* Paris BnF Copte 130°, f. 36.
Because through his death he vivified the whole world, which was not alive.  
And he gathered to him his own, the beloved disciples and apostles of his mystery,  
To tell them publicly how he shall ascend.  

Then, they saw his resurrection and believed in him,  
He brought them to see there his ascension (too),  
In order to [become] witnesses of [his] resurrection,  
And to fill the earth [with] his proclamation.  
They heard with their ears, [saw] with their eyes and grasped with their hands,  

And they knew him, touched him, and became witnesses of his entire journey.  
He stretched out his hand and blessed them  
So that the cursed earth should be blessed by his blessed hand.  
And he prayed to his Father, he gave them to him  
So that he might guard them; and in the name of his Father,  

He gave them peace so that they could give it in their turn to the whole earth,  
So that they could go with his message in the peace that he gave them.  
He fortified them and told them, “[I am with you] […]”  

3 verses missing  

[…] and [the name of the Father] […] guard,  
[And] the [Paraclete] carried the [treasures] to [the disciples].  
“Father, [keep] them in [your name] for great is [your name].”  
And the name of the Father, by the word (of the Son), accompanies his disciples.  

The Son said, “I am with you,” and he was not lying,  
But he was with them as he said in the front of the assembly.  
(E) And the Holy Spirit came // and it brought to them the treasure and it was with them too,  
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as he said.  
The Father guards and the Son forgives, the Holy Spirit sanctifies,  

The Holy Trinity through which the world was truly established.  

At that moment, indeed, the world has known the Trinity,  

E Paris BnF Copte 130⁵, f. 36.
A. SUCIU

...
The hidden mysteries were revealed, and they went out in the whole world.
He taught them, instructed them and sent them
Like the sun that sends its light upon the whole world.

215 The rays came out from the circle of the great light
After the night during which the whole world has been dark.
And they went out in the whole world to instruct and they taught the nations, and baptized them
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
The great unceasing seal of All, this being the Trinity

220 That he gave them in order to anoint all the nations of the earth.
From the Mount of Olives he gave them the name of the Trinity,
And the oil for anointing, and the Trinity for salvation.
He gave them the peace, blessed them, filled them with grace
And sent them to proclaim.

225 And they looked at him as he went up from them,
And those of heaven received him to them while bowing down their crowns before him.
And he ascended with a great shout and was mounted upon the power of his strength.
And those below and those in the height were rejoicing because he reconciled them,
And settled them, returned those who have been lost, and ascended triumphant.

230 And his bow being exalted, they were afraid before him and glorified him because he is savior.
The earth rejoiced because he threw his seed and ascended.
And the heaven rejoiced as the Lord of the heights ascended to it,
Both places were marveling over the Only Mediator.
He reunited them with each other, those in the height and those below,
because they were angered and he reconciled them.

235 And the deception was abolished, the sin fell and Amente was destroyed,
And the death was fettered behind him, Adam was freed and the serpent watched its head.
And the light reigned and the darkness withdrew from the universe,
апеооου өмөоөм дуу арқро етегүү дүәңт ңәує евол ԛитмөтреме
апрн вәәр әзрәй. әуу аркөө ҭикмепәвәмөө ңԝөрт етәәцә.

240 әуу ңәїңөe11 етәәлөқ евол· әрләү нқоъи әуу артакооу
дөөи мен епесчт ѳмөбөт кәюоңи ете хоиагп пе нөө
етепәрп нңз епесчт ңңзү ѳмөбөвәмөө
аԥпы ерләйңәл&а'әиңәне пәлүүр ҭитпепоў ⇰еина.

аԥпы ѳмөбөт ҹәңти .MODEL ҹәәрпн вәәр әзрәй епепәвәмөө
етәәцә·

аԥпы әзрәй ңңзү нәңәәре мпәуәәиң· етәәцә

32 verses missing

278 (F) . ԝ . [...]әйәс ...[е]зрәй нћңс[...ип еткө[...]ч
епесчт . зи]тңңңңңи[ceği] мңңң[...][оу]
езрәй[...]

280 пнәңтп[...] [...]ош [...][...]кпт[...] [...]оы [...][...]ос
[...]тпңг[...] х[...] [...] нөө [...] әзрәй [змң]пәр
әуу ҽѕҽрпшвб нңшде нң[етepеd]зҽ ммң
Ӡҕңп[лппп]а]

285 ҽңңг [епо]п у эә аркшөрп ебол мпңоу ѳппҽп[...]
дин ардѡтє етҽҽдшврп ҽҽｩʁпҽィт
дєеи ебол зің[д]зѹо ммңоң ҽңҽүҽҽ pledges мпңоҽңи етҽҽвбк
нммң

әуу аркөө ебол есшп єв ѳғіт н[свк] [...]q
[аңшшп]пєд нәк мәрєи әзрәй [нм]мак шлпек[ҽјшт]
птоқ ѳңѹғәпңп ћқәкшің нҽғи әуу ҭңҽңпҽңпдз ѣқѡпп
ѯп ҭңңи . . лп.&п><пш ћкшіп[т]е ммоі

290 епшшпте . . ߋ ңҭқ әуу Ѧңңєи ӈммԓ оетҽҽԥәрп ҽҽԛҽپҽіот

F Michigan University 158.37 + Cairo Coptic Museum, sine numero.
11 Variant of ҭәйєс.
The day was strong and conquered so that the night fled from the humanity. The sun ascended and remained upon its highest degree,

And he shortened the extended shadows and destroyed them.

He descended in the month Kānūn, this being Choiach, like the sun that descends in its degree,

He ascended in Ḥazīrān, this being Paone, and he destroyed the darkness by his light.

And (as) in the month of rays the sun ascends to its high degree,

The Son of the high light ascended in it.

In this month the sun stands on the top of the vault of the firmament

And it looks […]

240 And he shortened the extended shadows and destroyed them.

He descended in the month Kānūn, this being Choiach, like the sun that descends in its degree,

He ascended in Ḥazīrān, this being Paone, and he destroyed the darkness by his light.

And (as) in the month of rays the sun ascends to its high degree,

The Son of the high light ascended in it.

In this month the sun stands on the top of the vault of the firmament

And it looks […]

32 verses missing

278 (F) […] high […] […] down […] through his sufferings and his […]

She saw him mounted upon his power […] ascending […]

280 The one who […] […] […]

[…] […] […] great […] up [in the] air.

She [forgot] all the […] [in the moment of the] crucifixion.

She saw the clouds and the [mist] running before him,

And she forgot the words of those who [insulted] him on [Golgotha].

285 She saw that he hindered death in its […] and returned victorious to his place.

The daughter of light followed him in order to go (up) with him,

And she cried out saying, “Draw me after you […]

I became yours, let me ascend [with you] to your [Father].

You sought me with love, with sufferings you accepted me, and with the […] sword you saved me,

290 Behold, you […] and I will come with you to the place of your Father.
$\underline{\text{78 A. SUÇIU}}$

\begin{quote}
\text{лявк эрого ннмак епекрпнпшон. агв аинаг епексввн
дыв ытннп<пдй>эфо} $\mid$м[мок: дй. пе эоу . . . [.] \text{эп} [пе etbh]нтк

екмп[п]ро егцапе м[мок]

\text{дйпшт а[ио]пту мпна[г] егцалс н[ак] ытпмп[.] па . . . [.]}

мтс[е ннанстис]
\end{quote}

\textit{79 verses missing}

\begin{quote}
375 \text{Г} \text{[п]еклопл[е арв]вк ннмак[п а]н эпма нтарвб[к мп]о[п-
алла] [.]ара [.] [.] [.]}
\end{quote}

\textit{38 verses missing}

\begin{quote}
415 \text{Г} \text{ [. . .] [. . .] оглжос олсиц.
тама тама хорос. хорос ыненясичма мnenемост
афоахт тыроу

\text{ынпжфк2 нтпе ынпяма мпнаг ефщва епкисе нс[.]}
\end{quote}

\textit{17 verses missing}

\begin{quote}
433 [. . .] [. . .] [. . .] пейш-
ема ете неном нтедоуа ввк эрого ероq

435 агв ексооун ннаи: нпирро мн[е дадуеа: нпкпкеварпетис]

\end{quote}

\textit{51 verses missing}

\text{G Paris BnF Copte 1332, frag. 288r.
H Paris BnF Copte 1321, f. 61.}
I entered with you into the tribunal and I saw your dishonor, 
And by those that have crucified you I [...] was put [to shame because]
of you.
I was afraid and [I] perceived death in the [hour] when you were lifted
[upon the] cross, while they were mocking [you],
I fled, I hid myself in the hour when they slapped you by the [...]295
I was put to shame because of [you] in the [hour when] they [crucified]
you between the thieves [...]”

79 verses missing

375 (G) [The] cloud [did not] go with him to the place where he went,
But [...] [...] [...] 

38 verses missing

415 (H) [...] [...] [...] rang by rang,
Order by order, choir by choir, in their form and their manner they
remained all
At their place in the valley of heaven in the hour when he was flying to
the height [...] 

17 verses missing

433 [...] [...] Father,
To the place where it is not possible for another one to enter.
435 And knowing these, the true king David, the divine harpist [...] 

51 verses missing

G Paris BnF Copte 1332, frag. 288r.
H Paris BnF Copte 1321, f. 61.
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A. Suciu


THE SAHIDIC VERSION OF JACOB OF SERUGH

Abstract — Jacob of Serugh’s memrā on the Ascension of Christ has long been known to survive in Syriac and Arabic. The present article introduces a Coptic Sahidic version of this metrical homily. The Sahidic text is preserved in two newly identified fragmentary parchment codices from the Monastery of Apa Shenoute (White Monastery), situated near Atripe in Upper Egypt. Comparison between the Sahidic, Syriac, and Arabic versions shows that although the Sahidic translation is not source-oriented, it is generally faithful to the Syriac original. In a few places, the translator altered the text in order to become comprehensible to a Coptic audience. The question that arises immediately is that of the language on which the Sahidic version of the memrā on the Ascension is based. Given that Greek versions of Jacob of Serugh’s works are not attested, the article brings to the fore the possibility of a direct translation from Syriac. Despite the paucity of our sources, circulation of Jacob’s mēmrē in Egypt is documented, bolstering the hypothesis of a direct translation of the homily from Syriac into Coptic.