NEW FRAGMENTS FROM THE SAHIDIC VERSION OF THE HISTORIA JOSEPHI FABRI LIGNARIi

More than half a century has passed since Mgr. Louis-Théophile Lefort published, in this journal, the last attempt to classify the Sahidic fragments of the so-called History of Joseph the Carpenter (CPC 0037; CANT 60; BHO 532b). Lefort's codicological analysis sheds some light on the mass of disparate folios and fragments, which had been chaotically edited before him, without any particular concern as to which codices they had once belonged. In his article, he established that all the Sahidic fragments containing the History of Joseph the Carpenter came from four codices, attributing a letter to each of them, from A to D. Besides arranging all the available material according to the original codices, Lefort had also identified supplementary Sahidic leaves containing the same work.

However, the two fragments edited below had escaped Lefort's notice. These small parchment pieces belong to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and bear the inventory numbers BnF, Copte 1318, f. 148 and BnF, Copte 1322, f. 402. As with most of the Sahidic manuscripts in this collection, they were once part of the famous library of the White Monastery situated near Sohag, in Upper Egypt.

It is important to note, from the onset, that for a proper reading of the text, the faces of Paris 1318, f. 148 have to be reversed, recto becoming verso and vice versa. After this operation has been done, it appears that the fragments match perfectly, together forming the lower part of a folio. The parchment has a glassy and translucent aspect, which makes the flesh side (i.e. recto) extremely difficult to decipher. These remnants do not have any parallel in the existing Sahidic witnesses but, even if incomplete, it is still apparent from the surviving portions of the text that they contain the superscriptio, as well as parts from chapter I.1, I.2, I.3

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2 The first of them is briefly described in M.E. PORCHER, Analyse des manuscrits coptes 1311-8 de la Bibliothèque nationale, avec indication des textes bibliques, in Revue d’Égyptologie, 2 (1936), p. 122. After my identification of Paris 1318, f. 148, Enzo Lucchesi has drawn my attention to the fact that the other Parisinus fragment once belonged to the same manuscript folio. I am deeply grateful to him for providing me with this valuable information, together with his own transcription of the fragments.

and I.5 of the Bohairic and Arabic recensions. In spite of some discrepancies between these and the Sahidic version of our codex, they prove to be very useful for the recovery of most of the lacunas in our text. The versions are manifestly divergent only at I.5, where the Bohairic and Arabic are written in the third-person plural, whereas the Sahidic makes reference to the second-person singular. Another original trait of this Sahidic codex is the occurrence of Abbaton, the Angel of Death, at XXI.1, something that is missing in the parallel versions.

The paleographical features enable us to assign the newly identified fragments to Codex A according to Lefort’s classification, for which, adding the new fragments, we now know of the following items:

- Paris BN 131, f. 148 + Paris BN 132, f. 40 (p. [81]-[82]),
- Vatican Borgia 109, no 16=Zoega CXVI (p. 87-88),
- Paris BN 129, f. 13 (p. 101-102),
- Paris BN 129, f. 14 (p. 103-104),
- Paris BN 129, f. 15 (p. 105-106),
- Paris BN 129, f. 16 (p. 107-108).

As the new fragments preserve only the bottom of the leaf, the original pagination is lacking. However, comparing the length of the text on the rest of the folios with the full Bohairic account, we can conclude that between the end of the Parisian fragments and the beginning of Vatican Borgia 109, no 16 (paginated 87 and 88) there is room for only two

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5 The angel Abbaton appears on Paris BN, Copte 129, f. 15 r. Concerning the place of Abbaton in Coptic angelology, see C.D.G. Müller, Die Engellehre der koptischen Kirche, Wiesbaden, 1959, p. 282-283.

6 This codex received the sigla MONB.DI in the Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari (= CMCL) database.

folios. If this hypothesis is correct, then our fragmentary leaf once bore the numbers 81 and 82.

The *mise en page* is in two columns of about 29-32 lines each, copied by a large, untidy, but still professional hand in the bimodular style\(^8\). The paragraph capitals are enlarged and projected in the margin of the columns. Simple *obeloi*, \(\ddagger\), which mark every new paragraph, are inserted in the inter-column. On the left margin of the pages, the three-petaled flower, very common in such bimodular Coptic manuscripts of the 9th and 10th centuries, functions equally as a paragraph marker. The sign that a paragraph ends is indicated by the insertion of a *diple*. Finally, in the inter-column space of Paris 131\(^8\), f. 148, which was, as previously noted, the title page, the scribe has represented a pendulum which ends with a phytomorphic motif. This ornament was widely used by the Fayumic copyists, and Theodore Petersen even described it as one of the main characteristics of the Toutou scrip\textit{torium}\(^9\).

The superlineation system employed by the copyist is alien to Upper Egypt, but it is usual for the Sahidic documents copied in the Fayum oasis. As in the late Bohairic and Sahidic manuscripts from the Fayum, the scribe has used something similar to the *djinkim* system of superlineation\(^10\). The strokes are reduced to mere dots which are placed on the autosyllabic vowels (e.g. \(\ddot{\epsilon}\theta\omicron\alpha\omicron\lambda\alpha\omicron\)), the definite article \(\pi\cup\)- when it represents a syllabic juncture (e.g. \(\pi\tau\omicron\gamma\lambda\alpha\omicron\)), or after the glottal stop (e.g. \(\chi\omega\omicron\omega\mu\omicron\epsilon\)). Connective superlineation is also present, but rather seldom. Moreover, the Fayumic provenance of Codex A is strengthened by the peculiarities of its language\(^11\). Referring strictly to the fragments edited

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\(^{8}\) The term “bimodular” was coined by the Italian papyrologist Guglielmo Cavallo in order to designate what was previously known as “l’\'onciale grecque de type copie,” “Alexandrian script” or simply “Coptic uncial.” In his *Grammata Alexandrina*, in *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 24 (1975), p. 23-54, CAVALLO differentiates between the previous unimodular and the late bimodular script. Whereas in the first case all letters of the Coptic alphabet fit into the same, large, modulus, in the second the letters \(\epsilon\), \(\omicron\), \(\alpha\) and \(\omicron\) are narrow and oval, very different from the others. Thus, in the class of manuscripts to which our *History of Joseph* also belongs, we can find two moduli of letters, one large and one thin. See also J. IRIGOIN, *L’\'onciale grecque de type copie*, in *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, 8 (1959), p. 29-51; MICOLI, *Dodici codici della Collezione Morgan: Saggio di Codicologia e Paleografia copta*, Rome, 1981, p. 133-137.


\(^{10}\) See U. ZANETTI, *Le roman de Bakhéos sur les trois jeunes saints de Babylone, Fragments copiés sahidiques*, in B. JANSENS et al. (ed.), *Philomathestatos. Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 137), Leuven, 2004, p. 724-725, for an attempt to explain this peculiar superlineation system as appears in the late Sahidic manuscripts.

\(^{11}\) The Fayumic background of the scribe has already been pointed out by LEFORT, *Histoire de Joseph*, p. 206 n. 1, who writes about “l’influence du fayoumique dans le vocalisme.”
here, we can remark some examples of non-Sahidic vocalism, that is, mmaγ for mhooy (object preposition) and mαγ for hooy “water.” Furthermore, the spelling ẓen- for the preposition ẓn- is likewise compatible with Fayumic influence.

Lefort dated this codex to the second half of the 10th century\textsuperscript{12}, accurately so, even if his dating was somewhat a matter of conjecture. In fact, we are fortunate to have access to the remains of another Sahidic parchment manuscript which was copied by the same scribe. This originally would have been a slender volume, composed of only three quires. To the codex in question (MONB.ES) can be traced seven membria disjecta, which are dispersed today among three European archives:

- Paris BN 129\textsuperscript{16} f. 39 (p. 5-6),
- Paris BN 129\textsuperscript{16} f. 40 (p. 11-12),
- Moscow Pushkin Museum I.1.b.295\textsuperscript{1} (p. 19-20),
- Vienna K 9621 (p. 29-30),
- Vienna K 9544 (p. 31-32),
- Vienna K 9545 (p. 33-34)\textsuperscript{13},
- Moscow Pushkin Museum I.1.b.295\textsuperscript{7} (p. ?-? = last folio of the quire f and colophon)\textsuperscript{14}.

A few words are in order here concerning the number of the pages in this codex. Given that Moscow Pushkin Museum I.1.b.295\textsuperscript{2} lacks the pagination but is the last folio of the third quire, Elanskaya states that “its sides must be paged 47 and 48, each quire having 16 pages”\textsuperscript{15}. However, this statement is valid only when we envisage the “ideal” or classical structure of a quire, whereas in reality the number of the leaves may vary sometimes in a gathering. In the case of MONB.ES, the non-standard structure of its quires can be ascertained through a close examination of the surviving folios.

First of all, if we follow the codicological principle in which each quire consists of 4 parchment sheets folded in half to form 8 leaves or 16 pages, then Moscow I.1.b.295\textsuperscript{2}, viz. the last folio of the third quire, and Vienna K 9545, which is paged 33-34, originally formed the two halves of the same bifolio, the very first of this quire. However, this possibility is excluded since Vienna K 9545 and K 9544 form together a single sheet of parchment. This sheet of two leaves is numbered consecutively.

\textsuperscript{12} Lefort, Histoire de Joseph, p. 205 and n. 12 on the same page.
\textsuperscript{14} An edition of the Moscow folios can be found in A.I. Elanskaya, The Literary Coptic Manuscripts in the A.S. Pushkin State Fine Arts Museum in Moscow (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 18), Leiden, 1994, p. 99-107 and plates XXXVIII-XLI (= Elanskaya, Literary Coptic Manuscripts).
\textsuperscript{15} Elanskaya, Literary Coptic Manuscripts, p. 99.
from 31 to 34, thus proving to be the innermost bifolio of the gathering. Thus, it is obvious that the third quire of the codex did not start with page 33, as someone would expect.

Moreover, the counter folio of K 9621, which is paged 29-30, has been cut out by the codex’s copyist, as can be discerned from the remaining stub. This means that K 9621 was from the beginning a singleton inserted right before the inner bifolio of the third quire.

These details, together with the absence of many of the codex’s leaves, greatly complicate the attempt to reconstruct the original manuscript. Although several possibilities can be imagined, the arguments mentioned above leave out of discussion a classical structure of three quires made of 16 pages, as postulated by Elanskaya.

The codex contained apparently a single work, a Martyrdom of Apa Nílus (CPC 0523)\(^{16}\), belonging to the well-known cycle of Julius of Aqfahs, “the historiographer of the martyrs”\(^{17}\). The last folio, owned today, as already said, by the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, includes a dated colophon which provides us with its precise year of completion: the scribe finished his work in the year 678 of Diocletian’s Era, i.e. 961-

\(^{16}\) On this little known martyr, besides the titles cited in the two previous notes, see also H. DELEHAYE, Les martyrs d’Égypte, in Analecta Bollandiana, 40 (1922), p. 20, 80; ARN. VAN LANTSCHOOT, Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d’Égypte (Bibliothèque du Muséon, 1), LEUVEN, 1929, Fasc. 2, p. 39-40 (= VAN LANTSCHOOT, Colophons); P. PIETERS, in Analecta Bollandiana, 54 (1936), p. 395-396 (= review of TILL, Legenden); TH. BAUMEISTER, Martyr Inviitus, Münster, 1972, p. 123; A. PAPACONSTANTINOU, Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides. L’apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes (Le monde byzantin), Paris, 2001, p. 160-161. According to the report of Eusebius of Caesarea (De mart. Palaest. XIII.3 and Hist. Eccl. VIII.13.5), a certain Saint Nílus, bishop in Egypt, was martyred in Palestine under the emperor Diocletian, together with another bishop named Péleus and two other Christians: see EUSEB. DE CÉSARÉE, Histoire ecclésiastique, tome III. Livres VIII-X, texte grec, traduction et annotation par G. BARDY (Sources chrétiennes, 55), Paris, 1958, p. 28-29 and 170-171. However, the dramatis personae in the preserved portions from our text are different from those mentioned by Eusebius, and Nílus does not seem to die in Palestine but in Egypt. At least this is what we can deduce from the fact that he is condemned by the duke Culcius, who was Prefect in Egypt; on this character, common in some Coptic martyrdoms, see e.g. C. VANDERSLEYS, Chronologie des préfets d’Égypte de 284 à 395 (Latomus, 55), Brussels, 1962, p. 73-77, 103 n. 5, 87-90, 93, 107-108.

962 A.D\(^{18}\). This information is highly valuable, as it allows us to infer precisely that, being the work of the same scribe, the manuscript containing the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* should be assigned to the same period, this is, the middle or the second half of the 10\(^{th}\) century. A notice in the colophon says explicitly that the codex was given *ex-dono* the Monastery of Apa Shenoute. As to its provenance, van Lantschoot suspected that it comes from Touton, in the Fayum\(^{19}\), thus confirming our hypothesis regarding the Fayumic origin of Codex A.

In the present edition we have attempted to transcribe the Coptic text *ad pedem litterae* and have not standardized the supralinear strokes, in order to preserve an important feature of the manuscript. However, for technical reasons, we were not able to reproduce the dots placed by the scribe above some letters, using throughout a simple line. We should like to mention as well that the numbering of the columns’ lines does not correspond necessarily with the real number of lines in the manuscript, which remains unknown due to the damaged state of the folio. Its presence is rather heuristic, facilitating the orientation of the reader. To that end, we can only express our regret that the photographs supplied are not sufficiently detailed as to allow an accurate reading of all letters and traces of letters in the manuscripts\(^{20}\).

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Abstract – Focused on the figure of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus Christ, the so-called *History of Joseph the Carpenter* is one of the most renowned writings preserved in Coptic. Our article presents a couple of new Parisian fragments of this work in the Sahidic dialect of Coptic, widely regarded as the original language of the text. The study examines the testimonies mainly from a codicological and paleographical perspective.

\(^{18}\) Edited in *van Lantschoot*, *Colophons*, fasc. 1, n° 57, p. 92-94 and reedited in *Elanskaya*, *Literary Coptic Manuscripts*, p. 103.

\(^{19}\) *van Lantschoot*, *Colophons*, p. 92. On the Toutonian style, see most recently CH. Nakano, *Indices d’une chronologie relative des manuscrits copiés à Touton (Fayoum)*, in *Journal of Coptic Studies*, 8 (2006), p. 147-159.

\(^{20}\) Fortunately, during a research trip to Paris in December 2008, Dr. Einar Thomassen (University of Bergen) kindly collated for me *in situ* both fragments, confirming some of my readings and disproving others. I would like to thank him for his kind help.
NEW FRAGMENTS FROM THE HISTORIA JOSEPHI

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Paris, BN 131⁸, f. 148 + Paris, BN 132², f. 40

Recto (Flesh side)

p. [81]

[ΚΣ Ἰπεβότ]

[επηπ]

5 5

10 10

20 [ αγγελεῖ]

[Ν]ημείσαυξε [γ]ηρ

[ό]γ γερκαυ γνη

βιβλιόθεκη Ἡ

25 χωμε ρεν

[Ω]ιλίμ· πε

2000 όε ϊταν

30 λο ἡλίκι

οκ ἀναφωκ[ε]

25 μος τήρησ

τετνκοογη

χε εις τας η

30 ογ λιπ ητη

μπερπμέεγη

χε ταπ[ε] ετρεγ]
(Recto, col. I) [...] [they wrote all] these words (and) placed them in the library (βιβλιοθήκη) of books in Jerusalem. And (δὲ) the day when the righteous (δίκαιος) old man passed away is the (col. II) [26th of the month Epep...].

I.1. [...] saying: “O, my beloved brothers, these that I have chosen from the whole world (κόσμος). 2. You know that several days ago
I reminded you that it is necessary [for me to be crucified (σταυ-ροῦν)...] (Verso, col. I) [...] to clothe you (pl.) with a power from] high, [to fill you (pl.)] with [the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα), so that] you (pl.) will preach to all the nations (ἐθνοὶ). Proclaim (κηρύσσειν) to them saying: 3. ‘Repent (μετανοεῖν)! Because it is better a single digit\(^{21}\) of water which a person will (col. II) [find in the age (αἰῶν) that is coming...].’ 5. [...]a thousand years] for the sinners, while you (sg.) are weeping and lamenting, and your (sg.) voice will not be heard, and your (sg.) tears will not at all (ἄλος) be paid attention to. [...]\(^{21}\) For the meaning of τυφε, cfr Crum 397b.
Pl. 1: recto

Pl. 2: verso