The Life of St Apolinaria

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This translation has been made from the Greek text in Cod. Vat. Gr. 819 (folios 213 v ff.), published for the first time by Dr. James Drescher in *Three Coptic Legends* (Cairo, 1947) pp. 159 ff., where extensive bibliographical details about the text can be found. Dr Drescher cites a Latin version of the text published in *Patrologia Graeca* 114 col. 321ff. Migne, however, states that he was unable to find the Greek, so he copied the Latin from Laurentius Surius *De probatis sanctorum historiis ab Al. Lipomano olim conscriptis nunc primum a Laur. Surio emendatis et auctis* (Cologne 1570-1575). I have not seen this work, but I will assume that Surius was familiar with the Greek version. The text published by Drescher ends at the point where Apolinaria has revealed herself to her astonished parents (219 r). Since Drescher does not indicate that the text is incomplete, one can only assume that the missing final page is the result of a publishing oversight. I have translated the remainder from the text in Migne. The folio numbers in brackets are those provided by Drescher.

Map of the area

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1 The name Apollinaris is used throughout in Migne's text. Apolinaria was one of several women who dressed as a man to gain admittance to a male monastery. For a brief but informative treatment of this phenomenon cf. Kari Vogt "The 'woman monk': a theme in Byzantine hagiography" in B. Berggreen and N. Marinatos (ed.) *Gender and Greece* (1995) pp. 141-149
In the empire of the most pious Emperor Anthimus, there was great peace. He had two daughters. One of them had an unclean spirit. The other spent her time occupied with churches, martyrs and prayers, and her name was Apolinaria. As she became well-known, her parents sought to marry her off, but she refused. One day she told her parents of her desire to go away to a monastery and hear the holy scriptures and observe the monastic rule. They said to her: 'Child, we want to marry you to a man.' She said: 'I do not wish to be married to a man, but I hope that as God has kept his holy virgins unpolluted, he will also keep me unpolluted to fear him.' Her parents were astonished that she, being of such an age, should be longing for God. She urged them again to bring a nun to teach her the Psalms and how to read. The Emperor was briefly upset that she was unwilling to marry. But when she persisted in her refusal to accept vows, her parents said to her: 'Child, what do you want?' She replied: 'I beg you to bring me to God so that you may have the reward of my virginity.' They considered her reasoning to be unshaken and that she was so loved by the Lord. They said to her: 'Child, we hope that the will of God comes to pass.' After a few days nuns were brought, and they taught her to read the Psalms and the holy scriptures. One day, when they both sitting, she said to her parents: 'I beg you to release me to the holy places that I may pray and worship the holy Resurrection and the worthy Cross.' They had no intention of releasing her, because they loved her more than her possessed sister. After a considerable time of her pestering her parents, the Emperor ordered servants, gold and silver to be brought and said to her: 'Go away and fulfil your prayer, for God wants you to be his servant.' She was put on a ship with the servants. They said to her: 'Child, think of us in the holy places.' She replied: 'As you have assured me, the Lord will save me on the evil day.' And after embracing her parents, she set sail. After a few days they reached Askalon and spent a few days there because of a storm at sea. She prayed to all the

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2 The Praetorian Prefect at Rome and regent while Theodosius II was still a child. His name is sometimes given as Anthemias.
3 Gk ἀσκήτρια
4 Latin 'non parva molestia'.
5 In Gaza.
churches and monasteries and offered up what they needed. A few days later, we found an agreement and came to the holy city. We relaxed there because of our heavy baggage and gave the servants a little rest. Blessed Apolinaria said to them: 'Let us both worship the Resurrection and the worthy Cross.' And as they prayed, she prayed to her parents and began to distribute alms to those who needed them. She went off to the monastery of the perpetual virgins and those living a solitary life and provided them with what they needed. One day one of those with her said: 'God willing, I wish to set you free.' When they heard this, they became upset. So she said to them: 'Do not be dispirited. If God pricks my humility, I will provide for your sustenance.' They accepted her eulogy and prayed her greatly. After they had departed, she went off with those left behind to the Jordan and again supplied those in need. They broke up and made their way to the holy city. After a few days had passed and after she had fulfilled her prayer, she said to those with her: 'My brothers, I wish to release you, but let us go on to Alexandria and worship Saint Menas.' They said: 'As you request, my lady.' On her way to Askalon she continued to distribute to those in need. When they found a ship departing for Alexandria,

f. 215 r

the archon of the time heard of this and sent to greet her. She would not allow this, but at night came to the archon's palace and greeted the archon and his wife. They fell at her feet, saying: 'Tell us, my lady, why did you do this? We sent to that you might bid us to come to you, while you, mistress, have come to us?' She said: 'I have always wanted to greet those with you.' And she said to them: 'Do you wish to please me?' And they replied: 'Yes, my lady.' She said to them: 'Release me because I wish to pray at (the shrine of) St Menas.' And they released her with splendid gifts. She took everything and distributed it to the poor. She remained in the city for several days. Everywhere she went off to the monasteries and provided unceasingly for them. In the place in which she had a house she found an old woman, to whom she gave a little charity, saying: 'Receive, my sister. Go into the church and buy me a monastic garment, a veil, a cowl and scapular, a girdle.'

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6 There seems to be no obvious reason why the writer switches so abruptly to the 1st person pl.
7 Migne reads: *comites*
8 έχωμαι is the verb, but έχωρετω 'thank' would probably make better sense cf. Migne P.G. 141, 321 'ingentes gratias agebant'. έχωμαι is used elsewhere in the text with the same meaning.
9 St Menas here refers to the shrine erected in the place where he is buried. For a brief survey of the stories surrounding Menas cf. article by Martin Krause in the Claremont Coptic Encyclopaedia http://cdl.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cce/id/1321
10 Footnote text: 'They boarded it and, in a few days, arrived at Alexandria.'
11 Lat 'praeses' and 'praetorium'.
12 This line is missing in the Latin text. The wording of the text is: έγώ βούλομαι αζι τούς καθ' ύμᾶς, and I have translated it using the English Present Perfect, indicating this is the result of a wish rather than an habitual condition permanent condition.
13 Lat. 'humerale'
The old woman went off and did this. When she brought them, Apolinaria thanked her, saying: 'God will help you, my mother.' She took and concealed them among the servants. When she made to go forth to the shrine of St Menas, she set them free, gave them what they needed and dismissed them. They blessed her and left. She took a eunuch with her and an old man and went in a ship to the harbour.\(^\text{14}\)

f.215 v

She arrived at the house of Philoxenus. When the *paramonarius*\(^\text{15}\) learned that she was there, he went down with great pomp and said to her: 'My lady, where do you want to stay until you come and complete your prayers?' She made him swear not to bring her anything, but said to him: 'Do me a favour. Bring me four animals that I may go and worship at the shrine of St Menas.' Next day he brought the animals. 'How much does your holiness want?' He said: 'My lady pays nothing.' She said to him: 'Trust the Lord, I will not sit on the animal unless I pay.' Paying more than was customary, she took her leave of the steward. He took the bounty from her and left. She went up and prepared the donkey driver to mount the other animal. When they reached St Menas, they paid their respects to the venerable memorial. The steward heard and went among the clergy to greet her. She was upset by this, for she did not wish to be known. The steward called upon her, 'My lady, my house is yours to command.' She said to him: 'I wish to stay in the church for the one day until God dismisses me to where I have to go.'\(^\text{16}\) He sent her the blessing of the Saint. She distributed to those in need. And after three days she said to the steward, 'Please give me a litter that I may go and pay my respects to the fathers of Scetis.'\(^\text{17}\) The one who called one of the litter-bearers said to him: 'God willing, bring me a litter tomorrow.' He said: 'As you command.' The blessed lady brought the servant who had been left with her, gave him a bounty and dismissed him, with the

f. 216 r

\(^{14}\) The Gk word as it stands in the text means 'pool, marsh', but I think it may be a miswriting of the word for 'harbour'. Lat. 'Lemna', as if it were a place name. This is not entirely impossible, but I know of no such place name.

\(^{15}\) Lat. 'Paramonarius' It is difficult to know if the Latin translator understood this to be a name or a title. GWH Lampe *Greek Patristic Lexicon* (1966) 1022a gives the meaning 'administrator, guardian' as an ecclesiastical title. The Gk passage has gone slightly awry here.

\(^{16}\) Footnote text: 'God will guide me ...'

\(^{17}\) To the SW of Alexandria. In Coptic 'shiët' (*qwr*), known as 'sht-lmit' in the Middle Egyptian story called *The Eloquent Peasant*. The mod. Arabic name, like the ancient name, refers to the large amounts of natron in the region: Wadi Natrun. It seems that two places were indicated by Scetis': the desert of Scetis and Scetis proper. The meaning of the name is uncertain: a popular derivation is *q* and *qwr* 'measure/weigh and heart'. In his monumental study *Monasteries of the Wadi Natrun* Pt 2 (New York, 1923) Hugh Evelyn-White (p.27) mentions a passage in the Coptic Life of John Kolobos that speaks of the place 'where the hearts are measured' and gives an Arabic calque translation of the name.
words 'Pray for me'. On the following day, when the litter carrier came, she waited until evening. She took her leave of the steward and the servant, went up into the litter, with her monastic garments inside. She arranged for the eunuch to go behind and the litter carrier in front and began to pray and beg help from the Lord God. Around midnight she came to a marsh near a spring which is still called the Spring of Apolinaria. She drew back the curtains of the litter to find that both had been put to sleep by a dispensation of God. She took off her worldly clothes and put on the monastic garments, saying: 'You who have ordained that I should put on this holy habit, make me worthy of it according to your will, Lord.' Making the sign of the cross, she hurled herself from the litter and went into the marsh. When God saw her love for him, he ensured her nourishment, that there would be enough dates for however long she spent there. Meanwhile, the litter-bearer and eunuch, having woken up to find that she was no longer in the litter, were extremely perplexed. They found the garments she had been wearing in the litter. They left and went to Saint Menas to explain to the steward about Apolinaria, showing him her garments. Astonished, he went into the city with the litter-bearer and the eunuch and laid out the whole matter to the archon. The archon became afraid and wrote a letter to her father the Emperor, explaining everything in order and sending her clothes. When he received the letter, he read it and wept bitterly. On seeing the clothes of his daughter, he became blind with grief and began to wail with her mother and the whole of the senate. Later, they gave thanks to God and were silent. The Emperor said: 'God who has chosen her, strengthen her in the fear of you.' Once again, while everyone was weeping, some of them said to the Emperor: 'Truly, master, she is the daughter of a pious Emperor. She is truly the child of your power. Now your good deeds have become clearer.' They said this and more than this. Everyone prayed for her. The blessed girl remained in the marsh for many years, nobly contending with the devil, so her skin became like the shell of a tortoise and she became food for the gnats. She became consumed by continence and the rule which she had taught herself. When the Lord Christ wished to make her worthy of the crown of the holy fathers, he made her leave the marsh. It was therefore unknown to all that she was a woman. It was thought she was a eunuch. He appeared to her in a vision, saying: 'If anyone asks what your name is, say it is "Dorotheos".' Early next day she was met by Saint Macarius and she said to him: 'Bless me, father'. They exchanged a kiss of peace and went for a walk in the desert. Dorotheos asked him: 'Father, who are you?' He said: 'I am Macarius.'

18 σχῆμα
19 ἄγαπη. The term has a number of meanings, and though this is the phrase used in the liturgy (Lampe Lexicon p. 8 E meaning 2), I think it may be the meaning here.
She said: 'Please let me live with the brothers.' And he immediately provided him with a cell. The whole day and night Dorotheos continued unceasingly to offer supplcations to God. The devil then began to tempt her in nocturnal visions. The blessed one struggled a great deal against him that he might not reveal her to be a woman. Her ascetic practice was beyond the norm and she did not leave the church, day and night praying to God. One day Abba Macarius came into her cell and said: 'Please pray for us.' She said: 'I wish to be blessed by you.' They sat down and prayed. Abba Macarius asked her: 'Tell me, brother, where do you come and what is your name?' She replied: 'My name is Dorotheos. I heard about the holy fathers and wanted to come and live with them if I am worthy.' The old man then said to her: 'What sort of work do you do?' She said: 'Whatever you bid me to do.' He showed her how to make baskets. Go, wishing to show her virtue, did not reveal to Abba Macarius that she was a woman. But, as a eunuch, she was thought by him to be a man. God worked many cures through her. But with the passage of time the ever hateful devil entered her afflicted sister who was living with Emperors. And he began to lacerate her: 'If you do not take me and carry me into the desert, I will not come out of her.' The devil wanted to prove that her sister was a woman. God prevented the demon from saying these things about her. The demon continued to oppress the girl badly, and some of the courtiers advised the Emperor to send her away, The Emperor sent her with much pomp to the fathers. When they arrived at Scetis, St Macarius knew why they were there. He went to meet them and receive them. He said: 'Why are you here, children?' They said to him: 'The most pious Emperor Anthimus sent his daughter that she may be cured by God and your prayers.' He took her from her bed and brought her to Abba Dorotheos and said to him: 'Be charitable to her, for she is the daughter of the Emperor and she needs your prayers and those of the fathers. Pray for her that she may be healed, for this is your reward.' When she heard this, she began to weep, saying: 'Who am I, a sinner, that you think this of me.' She bent her knees and said: 'Forgive me, my father, for weeping for my sins for they are many. I am weak and have no experience of this.' Macarius said: 'Are not the rest of the fathers miracle-workers through God? Nevertheless, the reward awaits you.' She said: 'Let the will of God be done.' And she prostrated herself. He took her into the cell. She recognized that it was her sister and, after weeping, fell silent. She greeted her and said:

20 The masculine pronoun seems to reflect that Macarius is talking to a 'man'. The pronouns hereinafter, not surprisingly, alternate according to whether the subject is Apolinaria or Dorotheos.
21 The pronoun here is in the genitive and not, as one would expect, the dative.
22 Gk 'have'. Lat. 'concepistis opinionem', and I suspect that a word like γνωμή has disappeared from this version of the text. Drescher suggests simply reading οἴκος
23 The meaning given in Lampe (q.v.)
'Welcome, sister.' The artifice of God prevented the demon from revealing that the servant of God was a woman. The demon afflicted her the more, but through prayers she overcame him. For on one day the demon began to afflict the girl remorselessly. She arose and spread her hands to heaven and weeping made a litany to God for her sister. The demon then shouted out in a loud voice: 'Perforce. Look, I am coming out.' He threw her down and came out. Apolinaria took her sister into the church cured and laid her at the feet of the fathers, saying: 'Forgive me that I have sinned among you.' They gave the (sign of) peace and called the Emperor's men and handed the girl over to them. They paid their respects to the fathers and went back to the Emperor. There was great joy in the city because of the Emperor's daughter and they all gave glory to God when they saw the great modesty of the girl. The blessed Dorotheos humbled himself all the more, increasing his ascetic practices beyond the usual and became a perfect miracle-worker. The devil once again entered the Emperor's daughter and made her appear pregnant. The Emperor began to be extremely distressed and asked her: 'How is that you are pregnant?' She said nothing, except: 'I do not know how this has happened to me.' But the Emperor questioned her even more insistently. Satan then suggested to her a thought that it was the monk treating her who had made pregnant. Full of anger the Emperor sent men to destroy that monastery. When the officials arrived there in Scetis with much help, they sought to understand what was going on there, saying: 'Give us the monk who made the Emperor's daughter pregnant.' The holy Dorotheos heard these words and came into the middle, saying: 'I am the one.' The holy fathers were troubled, saying: 'We too are coming with you.' She said to them: 'My lord fathers, just pray for me. My hope is in God and your prayers that I will greet you soon.' They went and the whole congregation of brothers assembled in the church. They offered up a prayer and came together to send off Abba Dorotheos, for Abba Macarius knew that there was no evil in him. When they reached the Emperor, Abba Dorotheos threw himself at his feet, saying: 'I beg your piety calmly to listen to the matter of your daughter. Let us go somewhere private, and I

24 Lat. 'fuit os obstructum daemoni'
25 The dative βληθο used in classical Greek in this sense
26 The Greek has to be emended to produce this meaning.
27 The Gk word τόπος, which essentially means 'place, is often used in Christian texts, as here, in the sense of 'monastery'.
28 Lat. 'Cum autem principes quam celerrime abiessent ...'
29 The infinitive form (ἐὑχεσθε) in the text here coincides phonologically with the imperative (ἐὑχεσθε)
will tell you everything. She has not been debauched and, God forbid, has no fault.' They went somewhere private, she and her parents. She said to them: 'By the Lord, give me your word that, when you know the truth, you will release me to my monastery.' The Emperor and his wife gave their word, and she said to them: 'The one who made your daughter whole, after God, is my humble self, through the prayers of the fathers.' When they heard this, they were astonished and unable to speak. She said to them: 'I will explain to you' and, having opened the neck of her tunic, she showed her breasts and said: 'I am Apolinaria, your daughter.' When they heard this, they were astonished, and there was much weeping on

f.219 r

that day. They brought

[XVIII] her sister and said to her: 'Do you know this person?' She replied: 'Yes, it is the eunuch who healed me after God,' and falling at her/his feet, she asked him about her belly. When he helped her up and put his hands on her belly, he made her once again whole. When they saw this, they were astonished and glorified God. They said: "Truly this is our daughter Apollinaris." There was joyful in the palace of the Emperor.

XIX. When she had spent a few days with her parents, she told them everything. When they had heard what she said, they praised God. They asked her to stay with them, but were unable to persuade her. Because of what they had promised her, they released her with many tears. But she asked her parents to pray for her. They replied: 'God, to whom you have been pledged,\(^{30}\) will show you mercy. Remember us, daughter, in your holy prayers.' They embraced her and let her go. They wanted to give her money for the use of the fathers, but she did not accept it, saying: 'My fathers have no need of the money of this world, lest we be cut off from the things of heaven.' After prayers they let their daughter go, joyful and exultant. When she arrived in Scetis, the brothers and fathers received her and praised God, because their brother had come back whole, and they celebrated.

XX. A few days later, when she knew that she was about depart from this world, she said to Abba Macarius: 'Please, if I should depart from this life, do not let the monks prepare my body.' He said: 'How can this be done?' After her death, the fathers came to wash her holy body. They saw that she

\(^{30}\) An echo of the 'pledge' mentioned earlier when the parents wanted to marry their daughter off.
was a woman and exclaimed: 'Glory be to you, Christ, who have many holy secrets.' Abba Macarius wondered that this had not been revealed to him. One night he saw a vision which said to him: 'Do not be distressed by this. It is fitting that you will be crowned with the holy fathers who have departed from this world.' The vision then told him the life and name of the blessed one. When her holy remains had been brought, they placed them to the east of the holy church, in the cave of Abba Macarius, with joy and glory until the present day, through God and the holy fathers. After the dormition of the saint, cures were effected through the grace and clemency of Our Lord Jesus Christ. To whom glory and power for ever. Amen