

An episcopal list of the Coptic Church In the time of Gabriel VI*

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Resumen: Este artículo se interesa por una lista de obispos en Egipto de mediados del siglo XV. El listado refleja las concentraciones de cristianos durante ese momento y los problemas a los que se enfrentaban, como el concubinato. Este texto contribuye al conocimiento de la *Historia de los Patriarcas*.

Abstract: The article highlights a list of bishops in Egypt in the middle of fifteenth century. The list reflects the concentrations of Christians at that time and the problems that they faced such as concubinage. This text contributes to our knowledge of the *History of the Patriarchs*.

Palabras Clave: Obispos egipcios. Cristianos en Egipto. Siglo XV.

Key Words: Egyptian bishops. Christians in Egypt. Fifteenth century,



Introduction

Since the pioneering work of H. Munier,¹ and followed by the article of J. Muiser,² little had been added to these two important studies.

The Book of the *History of the Patriarchs* is one of the most important books narrating the stories of the Patriarchs starting from the first Century till the beginning of the XXth century. It was written by

* I would like to thank father Athanasius of Saint Macarius who kindly supply me the photo of this important manuscript.

¹ H. MUNIER, *Recueil des Listes Episcopales de l'Eglise Copte*. «Textes de Documents» (Le Caire, 1943).

² J. MUYSER, "Contribution à l'étude des listes épiscopales de l'Eglise Copte", *BSAC* 10 (1944), pp. 115-176.

several authors from different backgrounds and epochs. This book was originally written in Coptic, but was translated and augmented in the eleventh century by the deacon Mawhub in Mansur ibn Muffarrig.³ Starting from the thirteenth century with few exceptions, the *Book of the History of the Patriarchs* became extremely brief.

غبريال البطرك وهو الحادي والتسعون من العدد
 هذا الاب غبريال البطرك من دير القديس انطونيوس قدم في
 اليوم السادس والعشرين من امشير سنة الف ومائة اثنين
 وثمانين للشهدا واقام بطركاً ثمانية سنين وعشرة شهور وتنيح في
 السادس والعشرين من امشير سنة الف ومائة واحد وتسعين
 للشهدا بركة صلاته تكون معنا امين

«Gabriel the Patriarch, and he is the niethyfirst of their number: This father Gabriel, the patriarch was from the monastery of Saint Antony. He was consecrated on the twenty-sixth day of the month of Amshir in the year one thousand, one hundred and eighty-two of the martyrs, and he remained patriarch for eight years and ten months. And he went to his rest on the twenty-sixth of the month of Amshir in the year one thousand, one hundred and ninty-one of the martyrs. May the blessing of his prayer be with us. Amen⁴».

1. The manuscript

The manuscript is preserved in a private collection and contains some moral, pastoral and liturgical issues:

Fol.149 recto contains the following colophon

³ For the sources of this part cf. Johannes DEN HEIJER, *Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Muffarrig et l'historiographie Copto-Arabe*. «CSCO» 513 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), p.142-143.

⁴ A. KHATER and O.H.E. BURMESTER, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church known as the history of the Holy Church*. «Textes et Documents» XIII (Le Caire, 1970), III/3, p 158 (text), 273 (translation).

نجاز هذا الكتاب الذي هو القانون الطاهر يوم الخميس المبارك
الثاني عشر من برمهاث سابع شهر سنة 1570 قبطية للشهدا
الاطهار السعدا الابرار رزقنا الله بقبول طلباتهم الى النفس
الاحير امين

وكان المهتم به الاب الفاضل الطاهر القديس الحبر الموثمن
الكامل النفيس ابونا القمص هرمينا خادم بيعة القديس العظيم
ابو هرمينا الكاينة بقاو الشرق وذلك صرف عليه من ماله
وصلب حاله فنسال الرب الاله العالي في سماه ان يساعده
عوض اهتمامه على العمل بما فيه مع غفرات خطاياهم بشفاعه
الست السيدة العدرى والملايكة والرسل والشهدا وكافة من
ارضاه امين

وقفاً موبدا وحبساً مخلداً على بيعة القديس ابو هرمينا المعروفة
بقاو شرق لايباع ولا يرهن ولا يستعار ولا يخرج من وقفيته
لوجه من الوجوه التلاف وكلمن تعدا واخرجه عن وقفيته
لوجه ما ذكر يكون نصيبه مع سيمون الساحر ومن يشبهه
ومن حفظه وصانه الله يحفظه امين

Translation:

«(Here) finishes this book, which is the pure canon on blessed Thursday 12th of Baramhat, which is the seventh month, in the Coptic year 1570 of the pure,⁵ happy righteous martyr, May God grant us, the acceptance of their prayers to the last breath. Amen!

The person in charge was the honoured pure, saint, perfect entrusted precious priest, our father the Hegumen Hermina the

⁵ = 20 March 1854AD

minister of the church of the great saint Abba Hermina⁶ at Qaw⁷ of the East, by spending his own money and his private belongings, we beseech the Lord elevated God in His Highest to help him and reward him zeal for this work, by the forgiveness of his sins, through the intercessions of Lady Madonna, the Virgin, the angels, the pure Apostles, the martyrs and all who pleased Him.

An inalienable endowment and eternal bequest for the church of saint Abba Hermina at Qaw of the East. It should be sold or given as a pledge, or borrowed, or taken out of his endowment for any damaging reason whoever transgress and took it out of his endowment for the abovementioned reason, will have his share with Simon the Magician and who resembled to him; and whoever preserved and conserved it, God may guard him; Amen!»

2. The text

بسم الله الخالق الحي الناطق وهو عوني
 نبتدي بعون الله سبحانه وتعالى بنسخ مسایل واجوبة في الاملاك والزواج
 والتسري والميراث من قول الابا معلمي البيعة الرب يرحمنا ببركة صلواتهم الى
 الابد امين

مسألة رجل تزوج بامرأة وتبيحت ثم يقصد يتزوج بانية عم ابوها فاجابوا
 واجازوا له الابا المنتخين بذلك وهم انبا ايصاك المنياوي الكبير وانبا غبريال
 السوهاجي وانبا ايصاك التلاوي وانبا غبريال النقادي وانبا ميخايل المحرقى
 وانبا يوانس الاسيوطي وانبا يوانس الفيومي وكان اجتماعهم بقلاية انبا
 غبريال الغرباوي وشمل الورقة بعلامته فوق خطوط الابا الاساقفة المذكورين

⁶ J. MUYSER, "Ermite pèlerin et pèlerin infatigable, fragment arabe de la vie d'Anba Harmin, racontée par son compagnon de voyage Apa Hor de Preht", BSAC 9 (1943), pp. 159-23. R.-G. COQUIN, "Harmina, Saint", CE, IV, pp. 1209a-1209b.

⁷ R.-G. COQUIN and M. MARTIN, S.J., "Dayr Harmina", CE, III, p. 808. Fr. Samuel AL-SURIANY and Badii HABIB, *Guide to Ancient Coptic Churches and Monasteries in Upper Egypt* (Cairo, 1991), no 101. (South of al-Badari, Izbat al-Aqbat).

بتحليله وقد اذناهم بذلك سلطان الكهنوت الصادر من الفم الصادق المقدس
القايل ما حللتموه يكون محلولا وخطوط الابا الاساقفة بذلك باجازته

Translation:

In the Name of God, the Creator, the intellectual living who is my help

We begin with the help of God, let Him be praised and elevated, to copy some inquiries and answering concerning the engagement (Imlak), the marriage, the concubinage and the inheritance from the saying of the fathers, the masters of the Church may God have pity upon us through the blessing of their prayers forever; Amen!

Inquiry: A man who was married with a woman and the latter rested, he intended to marry the cousin of her father. They answered him allowing that, I mean the chosen fathers, who are:

Anba Isaac the great of Minia
Anba Gabriel of Sohag
Anba Isaac of Talla
Anba Gabriel of Naqada
Anba Gabriel of al-Muharraq
Anba John of Assiut
Anba John of Fayoum

And their meeting took place in the cell of Anba Gabriel al-Gharbawi and he (Anba Gabriel) put his seal on the paper over the signatures of the above mentioned bishops. He (the patriarch) allowed them according to the authority given from the holy, true mouth saying what you shall loose will be loosed and the signatures of my fathers the bishops allowing that.

3. Commentary

1. The patriarch mentioned here is Gabriel VI (1466-1475AD) who was born at al-‘Arabah al-Madfunah and consequently was called al-‘Arabawi.⁸ Our manuscript mentioned him as al-Gharbawi.

2. There are another two copies on the same topic:

* *Theology* 294 (Egypt, eighteenth century), fols. 50b-86b⁹

⁸ Samir Khalil SAMIR, "Gabriel VI", CE, IV, p. 1133.

⁹ G. GRAF, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes chrétiens conservés au Caire*. «Studi e Testi» 117 (Città del Vaticano, 1934). no. 439/10; M. SIMAIKA, Y. ‘ABD AL-MASIH,

* *Theology* 295, dated 22 Abib A.M. 1549 16/27 July A.D. 1743, approximately fols. 54-90¹⁰.

3. The list shows the reduced number of bishops of that time, only 7 bishops.

Only one represents the Lower Egypt Anba Isaac of Talla
There is one for the region of Fayoum.¹¹

We may notice the concentration of the Christian of that time is between Minia and Sohag, There are four bishops (Minia,¹² al-Muharraq,¹³ Assiut¹⁴ and Sohag) there is one bishop for Naqada;¹⁵ while the important diocese of Damietta is not mentioned.

There was a bishop for the monastery al-Muharraq, replacing the other diocese such as Qusqam, Qusia, Sanabu etc

4. As this meeting took place in the patriarchal cell¹⁶ at the Church of Harit Zuweila¹⁷ at that time, we may assume that the Metropolitans 'overseas' were not able to attend. We mean by this the metropolitan of Jerusalem,¹⁸ as that time; there was no Coptic prelate for Ethiopia.¹⁹ The discussion shows the pastoral concern of the bishops and the patriarch. It seems that every bishop submitted the problems that he faced in his diocese to this synod.

5. Among the subjects treated in the text, we may notice the "concubinage" which became a serious issue for the Copts especially under Mark V the ninety-eighth of the number of the patriarchs who was imprisoned in the tower for not allowing Christian concubinage.²⁰

6. A detailed study of this manuscript will appear soon.

Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Patriarchate, the Principal Churches of Cairo and Alexandria and the Monasteries of Egypt (Cairo, 1942), II/2, p. 541/1.

¹⁰ G. GRAF, *Catalogue...*, no 443/1; M. SIMAIKA, Y. 'ABD AL-MASIH, *Catalogue...*, no 394/1.

¹¹ R. STEWART, "Fayyum", CE, IV, p. 1100.

¹² R. STEWART, "Minya", CE, V, p. 1634.

¹³ R.G. COQUIN, M. MARTIN, "Dayr al-Muharraq", CE, III, pp. 840-841.

¹⁴ R. STEWART, "Asyut", CE, I, pp. 296-297.

¹⁵ R. STEWART, P. GROSSMANN, "Naqadah", CE, VI, p.1774.

¹⁶ R.G. COQUIN, "Patriarchal residence", CE, VI, pp. 1912-1913.

¹⁷ M. WISSA, "Harit Zuwaylah", CE, IV, pp. 1207-1209.

¹⁸ For the history of this diocese cf. Archbishop BASILIOS, "Jerusalem, Coptic see of", CE, IV, pp. 1324-1329.

¹⁹ S. TEDESCHI, "Ethiopian Prelates, CE, IV, pp. 1005-1044.

²⁰ Nabih KAMEL and Samuel AL-SURIANY, *Tarīḥ al-Abā al-Batārikah –Anbā Yusab Usqaf Fuwwah*, [= The History of the Fathers Patriarchs by Yusab Bishop of Fuwwah] (Cairo, nd), p. 205.