

Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala
University of Córdoba

Youhanna Nessim Youssef
University of Divinity, Australia



An anonymous fragment on Pentapolis A contribution to the history of Pentapolis in the Islamic period

Introduction

The fragment under study is part of a *membrum disiectum* of a bifolia containing two different anonymous texts: a fragment of the Old Testament pseudepigraph known as *Daniel et puero Caleb*,¹ i.e. “Daniel and the boy Caleb”, which has been recently edited (fols. 1^r-2^v),² and a fragment on Pentapolis (fol. 2^v). This *membrum*, which comes from a private collection in the region of Naqādah, on the west bank of the Nile twenty five km north of Thebes, was discovered by father Angelos al-Naqādī, who kindly sent us a digitised copy.

The original foliation of the fragment has not survived, although the fragment exhibits an elegant handwriting corresponding to the Egyptian *nashī* type which shows similarities with MSS dated between the 14th-15th centuries.³ The copyist followed the orthographic rules of written Arabic, although it sometimes leads to consonantal confusion and misuses resulting from interference or mixed linguistic phenomena from the standard and colloquial varieties produced by native speakers.

The fragment is significant, since we have scarce information about this province (later under the Arab administration is mentioned as *kuṛah*) during the Islamic period when Libya fell administratively under Egypt. These five ten cities of the Roman Cyrenaica (Cyrene,

¹ Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*. 5 vols. SeT 118, 133, 146, 147, 172 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944-53), I, pp. 215-216 (henceforth G. Graf, GCAL); Friedrich Stegmüller, *Repertorium biblicum Medii Aevi: Initia biblica, apocrypha, prologi*. 11 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1940-1980), I, p. 93 (n° 117,20); Jean-Claude Haelewyck, *Clavis apocryphorum Veteris Testamenti*. Cvra et Stvdio. CC (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), p. 212, n° 268. Cf. Albert-Marie Denis, *Introduction aux pseudépigraphiques grecs d'Ancien Testament*. SVTP 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. 89-90.

² Youhanna Nessim Youssef and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, *Daniel and the boy Caleb. Fragment of an Arabic Pseudepigraph*. Study, critical edition and translation. «Aramæo-Arabica et Græca» 9 (Madrid – Salamanca: Sindéresis – Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 2023).

³ Cf. Eugène Tisserant, *Specimina codicum orientalium*. TUS 8 (Bonn: A. Marcus et E. Weber, 1914), plate 58; Agnes Smith Lewis & Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *Forty-One Facsimiles of Dated Christian Arabic Manuscripts*. With Text and English Translation. With Introductory Observations on Arabic Calligraphy by the Rev. David S. Margoliouth. SS XII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), plate XXX between pp. 58-59.

Ptolemais, Barca, formerly Barqah after the Arab invasions, Teucheirs, and Berenice), became the separate province of Libya Pentapolis or Libya superior under Diocleian,⁴ and from the Byzantine period the governors of the Pentapolis were sent from Egypt.⁵

Edition and English translation of the fragment

- ❖ ❖ ❖
- 1 بسم الاب والابن والروح القدس الاله
- 2 ❖ ❖ واحد له المجد الى الابد امين ❖ ❖
- 3 شرح ورقك بركه من القلايه المعموره المشار اليها يتضمن حفظ يوم
- 4 الاحد المقدس وعدم الاشغال فيه والاحتراز من الدعا والمنوعات
- 5 وبظاهر الورقه لما كان تاريخه سنه تمنمايه⁶ اربعة وسبعين
- 6 للشهدا الالهى او الموافق لسنت نحسمايه⁷ تلاته⁷ وسبعين
- 7 للهجره الغريبه في مملكث الناصر ابو الملك
- 8 العادل الكامل
- 9 في ايام رياسته الاب بطريك انبا مرقس الذي قبل انبا يوانس
- 10 ابن ابي غالب بطريك المدينه المعظمه الاسكندريه والديار المصريه
- 11 وانخمس مدن الغريبه والحبشه والنوبه وافريقيه ونيقيه
- 12 وكانت الخمس مدن عامره في ايامه ولا خربت الا بعد وفائه . واقام
- 13 على⁸ كرسي البطريكيه خالي بلا بطرك عليه ما يزيد عن عشرين
- 14 سنه فثانت⁹ الاساقفه من المدن الغريبه والقسوس

⁴ William Horbury, *Jewish War under Trajan and Hadrian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 197. Cf. James G. Keenan, 'Egypt', in *The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume XIV. Late Antiquity: Empire ad Successors, A.D. 425-600*, edited by Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 613-614.

⁵ Petra M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth Century Egyptian Official*. «Oxford Studies in Byzantium» (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 16, and n. 8. Cf. Irfan Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*. «Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection» (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006, repr. 1989), p. 10.

⁶ Over the hundred, in Hindi numerals, has been written in red ٨٧٤.

⁷ About the end of the hundred and the beginning of the unit, also in Hindi numerals, it has been written in red ٥٧٢.

⁸ A later hand has overwritten in red more recently على.

⁹ The second hand, again in red, has overwritten a *tā' marbūṭah* instead of *tā' maftūḥah*.

ايضا فلم¹⁰ يبقا الا اولاد القسوس واولاد الشمامسة بلا تكريس 15
ولا زواج¹¹ 16

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God to whom is the glory for ever Amen!

Explanation and a blessing paper from the inhabitant cell, mentioned, includes the guarding the Holy Sunday and not to work in it and avoiding when supplications and various and on the verso of the paper what took place in the date of year 874 of the divine martyrs (= 1158AD) or the corresponding year 573 of the Arabian Hijra (=1177AD) in the reign of al-Nāsir Abū l-Malik al-‘Ādil al-Kāmil during the chiefship of Anbā Mark who was before Anbā Yū’ānnis ibn Abī Ghālīb, the patriarch of the great city Alexandria and the countries of Egypt, and the Western Pentapolis, Ethiopia, Nubia, Africa and Nicaea Pentapolis was inhabited at his time and it was destroyed only after his death. The patriarchal seat remained vacant without patriarch for more than twenty years, so the bishops of the western countries did as well as the priests and [deacons?] and nobody remained except the children of the priests and the children of the deacons without consecration [or marriage].

Linguistic description of the fragment

The linguistic register of the fragment belongs to the so-called ‘Middle Arabic’ or ‘Mixed Arabic’,¹² i.e. a register in which the author wishes to emulate Classical Arabic, but the text experienced interferences from vernacular Arabic in the form of pseudo-corrections that make it a middle or mixed register.¹³

At the orthographic level¹⁴ we must note that the Christian *basmallāh* and the formula of divine oneness that follows are framed by decorative signs in black and red ink. The copyist uses a full stop (.) for dividing sentences and brown ink for the diacritics, and both the symbol ˇ and an oblique line above some consonants with a decorative function.

¹⁰ Ms. فلم.

¹¹ This last sentence has been overwritten in blue by a third hand.

¹² See the contributions included in *Moyen Arabe et variétés mixtes de l’arabe à travers l’histoire. Actes du Premier Colloque International (Louvain-la-Neuve, 10-14 mai 2004)*, ed. Jérôme Lentin et Jaques Grand’Henry. PIOL 58 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institute orientaliste de Louvain, 2008), and *Middle Arabic and Mixed Arabic: Diachrony and Synchrony*, Liesbeth Zack & Arie Schippers. SLL 64 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012).

¹³ Cf. Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic. Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millenium*. CSCO 267, 276, 279, S 27-29. 3 fasc. (Leuven: Corpus SCO, 1966-67). See Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 123-125; K. Versteegh, ‘Breaking the Rules without Wanting to: Hypercorrection in Middle Arabic Texts’, in *Investigating Arabic: Current Parameters in Analysis and Learning*, ed. by Alaa Elgibali (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2005), pp. 3-18.

¹⁴ On some common features of Christian Arabic copyist, see Bernhard Levin, *Die griechisch-arabische Evangelien-übersetzung. Vat. Borg. Ar. 95 und Ber. orient. Oct. 1108* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1938), pp. 12-16.

The writing is clear and corresponds to a careful copyist, although exhibits some typical characteristics of Christian Arabic manuscripts, like the use of *scriptio defectiva* in *الالهى < الالهى* (l. 6; cf. *scriptio plena* in *الاه*, l.1).¹⁵ One on occasion, *tā' marbūṭah* is replaced by *tā' maftūḥah*: *ورقة < ورقف* (l. 3) *مملكة < مملكف* (l. 7). Frequently, the two dots of both *tā' maftūḥah* and *qāf* are often written vertically in the initial, medial and final position of the word (cf. ls. 3,4,5,6,7,9,12,14,15). The *tā' marbūṭah* does not have its dots (cf. ls. 3,5,6,7,9,10,11,12,13,14,15),¹⁶ and *shaddah* is always omitted (lis. 3,9,10,11,12,13,14).¹⁷

Short vowels¹⁸ are not used throughout the text except for decorative function. The *alif maqṣūrā* (ى)¹⁹ is written like *yā'* (ي) in *على* (l. 13) and *الى* (l. 2), probably by pronouncing these terms not like *'alā* and *ilā*, but as *'alē*, and *ilē* respectively.

As for the consonantal system,²⁰ contrary to Classical Arabic, in which the phoneme /ʔ/ is stable in all the positions, the fragment exhibits in this case the interference of Neo-Arabic which has it only in initial position, even when it has lost, early on, its independent phonemic function in this position.²¹ In the fragment lack of /ʔ/ is generalized, except in the name *يوانس* (*Yuwā'nīs*, l. 9). Another consonantal peculiarity is the shift /t/ < /t̤/:²² *ثلاثة < تلاثة* and *ثمنائة < تمنياه* (ls. 5-6 respectively, as in the dialectal registers /t̤/ has lost its interdental fricative realisation and is spelled like a dental implosive.

From the syntactic point of view, it is worth highlighting the lack of concordance in *الشهدا الالهيين < للشهدا الالهى* (l. 6, “of the divine martyrs”).

At the lexical level, the following terms must be noted: *قلاية* (“cell”, l. 3), a loanword from Greek *κελλιον* (*κέλλα*) through Syriac *ܩܠܝܬܐ*,²³ *شهداء* (pl. “martyrs”, l. 7), sg. *شهيد*, an Arabic loanword with semantic influence of Syriac *ܒܬܪܝܝܪܟܐ*,²⁴ *batriyark* (ls. 9,10), a calque of Greek *πατριάρχης* through Syriac *ܒܬܪܝܝܪܟܐ* (and *batriyarkiyah*, l. 13),²⁵ *anbā* (l. 9), the name

¹⁵ J. Blau, GCA, I, pp. 77-81; Simon Hopkins, *Studies in the Grammar of Early Arabic. Based upon Papyri datable to Before A.H. 300/A.D. 912* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 10-14 § 10; J. Blau, *A Handbook of Early Middle Arabic* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Press, 2002), p. 32 § 14.

¹⁶ J. Blau, GCA, pp. 115-121 §§ 24.1-24.4; S. Hopkins, *Studies*, pp. 44-48 § 47; B. Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 109-112.

¹⁷ J. Blau, GCA, I, pp. 122-125 §§ 26.1-26.3.2; S. Hopkins, *Studies*, p. 49 §§ 48.

¹⁸ J. Blau, GCA, pp. 61-65 §§ 3-5; S. Hopkins, *Studies*, pp. 2-8 §§ 2-6.

¹⁹ J. Blau, GCA, I, pp. 81-83 §§ 10.1-10.3; S. Hopkins, *Studies*, pp. 14-16 §§ 12; B. Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 58-59.

²⁰ For the consonantal system, cf. J. Cantineau, *Études*, pp. 27-88; J. Blau, GCA, I, pp. 83-121 §§ 11-24.4; S. B. Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 59-112.

²¹ J. Blau, GCA, I, pp. 83-89 §§ 11-11.3.61; S. Hopkins, *Studies*, pp. 19-33 §§ 19-28; B. Knutsson, *Judicum*, pp. 59-78. See also J. Blau, ‘Das Frühe Neuarabisch in mittelarabischen Texten’, in *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. I. Sprachwissenschaft*, ed. Wolfdieter Fischer (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1982), pp. 100-101.

²² J. Blau, GCA, I, p. 106, § 12.4; 107-108 § 15.2.

²³ Georg Graf, *Verzeichnis arabischer kirchlicher Termini*. «Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium» 147 Subsidia 8 (Leuven: Imprimerie orientaliste L. Durbecq, 1954), p. 92.

²⁴ Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, Texts and Studies of the Qur'an 3, Foreword by Gerhard Böwering and Jane Dammen MacAuliffe (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2007), p.18 ; cf. G. Graf, *Verzeichnis*, p. 68.

²⁵ G. Graf, *Verzeichnis*, p. 25.

of the Coptic religious authority, which is a calque of Coptic ⲁⲃⲃⲁ (ⲁⲃⲃⲁϥ),²⁶ كرسى (“seat”, l. 13) comes from Syriac ܚܘܨܘܬܐ (cf. Syr. ܚܘܨܘܬܐ and Jewish Aramaic ܚܘܨܘܬܐ),²⁷ قسوس (pl. “priests”, ls. 14,15), sg. قس comes from Syriac ܩܣܝܐ,²⁸ اساقفة (pl. “bishops”, l. 14), sg. اسقف is a loanword of Syriac ܩܦܝܣܩܘܦܐ (vars. ܩܦܝܣܩܘܦܐ, ܩܦܝܣܩܘܦܐ < Gr. ἐπίσκοπος),²⁹ and شمامسة (pl. “deacons”, l. 15), sg. شماس, a loanword of Syriac ܫܡܫܡܝܫܐ.³⁰ The form of the proper name يوانس (l. 9) is an adaptation of Coptic ⲓⲠⲨⲁⲚⲚⲏⲘϥ (< Gr. Ἰωάννης),³¹ cf. the Andalusī form يوانش from Latin *Iohannes*.³²

Commentary of the fragment

One of the most intriguing features of the fragment is that the date does not correspond between the ‘Martyrs Era’³³ and the *Hijrah* calendar either. It should be year 894 of the Martyrs or 553 of the *Hijrah*. The *Hijrah* date seems to be more accurate, since Mark III ibn Zur‘ah was the 73rd patriarch of Alexandria between the years 1167 and 1189.³⁴ A significant question is the reference to kings such as Mark III ibn Zur‘ah, who was contemporary of Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and John VI ibn Abī Ghālīb (1189-1216), 74th patriarch of Alexandria,³⁵ who was contemporary to the sultanates of al-‘Ādil down to that of al-Kāmil. The events of the consecration of these two prelates are narrated by both the pseudo-Yūsāb of Fuwwah,³⁶ and by the author of the *History of the Patriarchs*.³⁷ However both of them did not make any hint about Pentapolis.

This happened almost constantly, since the situation in Egypt was really dramatic at that time. The fall of the Nile and the failure in agricultural products led to famine. On its part,

²⁶ G. Graf, *Verzeichnis*, p. 14.

²⁷ A. Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 249.

²⁸ Alfonse Mingana, ‘Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur‘ān’, *Bulletin of the Johns Rylands Library* II/1 (1927), p. 28; G. Graf, *Verzeichnis*, p. 90.

²⁹ R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*. Collegerunt S.M. Quatremere et al., Oxford, 1879, 1901 (repr. Hildesheim – New York, 1981), I, col. 342; cf. G. Graf, *Verzeichnis*, p. 8.

³⁰ G. Graf, *Verzeichnis*, p. 67.

³¹ For the spelling of consonant *hoñ*, see Ludwig Stern, *Koptische Grammatik* (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1880), pp. 19-20 § 22; Alexis Mallon, *Grammaire copte* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 2001, 5th ed.), p. 11; cf. William H. Worrell, ‘The Pronunciation of Coptic’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 50 (1930), p. 146.

³² J.P. Monferrer-Sala, ‘Confirm your Scriptures with Torah in Hebrew and the Gospel in Latin’. On the biblical quotations contained in *Tathlith al-Wahdāniyyah*, forthcoming.

³³ For the ‘Martyrs Era’, see Aaltje Hidding, *The Era of the Martyrs: Remembering the Great Persecution in Late Antique Egypt*. «Millennium-Studien» 87 (Berlin – Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2020).

³⁴ Mark N. Swanson, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt, 641-1517*. «The Popes of Egypt» 2 (Cairo – New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), pp. 67, 69, 71, 77-78, 80, 121; cf. Subhi Y. Labib, ‘Mark III, Saint’, *CE* V, cols. 1534b-1536b.

³⁵ M. N. Swanson, *Coptic Papacy*, pp. 61, 78, 83, 85; cf. Subhi Y. Labib, ‘John VI’, *CE* IV, cols. 1341a-1342b.

³⁶ Nabīh Kāmil Dā‘ūd and Samū‘il al-Suryānī, *Ta‘rikh al-ābā’ al-ba‘arīkīb li-l-ānbā Yūsāb usqf Fuwwah* (Cairo, 1989), pp. 158-161. For this autor, see Samuel Moawad, ‘Zur originalität der Yūsāb von Fūwah zugeschriebenen Patriarchengeschichte’, *Le Muséon* 119 (2006), pp. 255-277.

³⁷ A. Khater and O. H.E. Burmester, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church known as the History of the Holy Church. Volume III part II, Mark III = John VI*. «Textes et documents» 12 (Cairo: Société de l’Archéologie Copte, 1970), pp. 99-111 (Arabic), 166-168 (Eng. trans.).

crusader inroads took their toll. Yet it should be remembered that all this was of a temporary nature and bound to disappear. However, the wave of persecution of the Copts inaugurated by Šālīḥ Šalāḥ al-Dīn, and strengthened during the patriarchate of Mark III, gradually began to subside in John VI's days, and the Copts were relieved from past pressures and humiliating treatments, and they began to recover and pursue their activities undisturbed.³⁸

Under this situation, Pentapolis³⁹ was considered as part of the diocese of Egypt,⁴⁰ since the first century with Anianus (68-85), the first successor of Saint Mark. He was ordained shepherd of the flock, while Mark went to Rome, Aquileia, and the Pentapolis. From this date onwards the relationship between Alexandria and Pentapolis started.⁴¹ Another patriarch in playing a significant role in Pentapolis was Abiblius, the third patriarch of the See of St Mark (85-98),⁴² whose feast day is 1st Tuesday. These suffragan bishops and priests from Egypt and the Pentapolis converged upon Alexandria, where they took counsel with the orthodox laity and, having cast lots, unanimously selected Abilius for his chastity and knowledge of Christ.⁴³

In the third century CE, Dionysios the Great (247-264)⁴⁴ fought against Sabellius' heresy, which was spread through the Pentapolis.⁴⁵ He wrote a letter to Basilides, bishop of the Pentapolis, answering his questions about the duration of Lent and the physical conditions necessary for the reception of the Eucharist.⁴⁶

In this context, in the Coptic *Difnar* of 10 *Abīb* the following information can be read:⁴⁷

اليوم العاشر من شهر اييب استشهد القديس تادرس اسقف الخمس مدن	The 10 th of the month of Abīb, was martyred Saint Theodore, the fifth bishop of Pentapolis
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³⁸ On the treatment of Copts under Arab administration, see Anastasia M. Ivanova, 'Traits of positive and negative discrimination of the Copts in medieval Egypt as described by the "History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria"', *Scrinium* 16 (2020), pp. 214-232.

³⁹ For an overview of the history of Pentapolis, see Heinz Heinen, 'Pentapolis', CE VI, cols. 1933b-1935a.

⁴⁰ Cf. Charles Josef Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils* (Frankfurt: Anatiptosi Verlag, 2023, repr. of 1872), pp. 390-391.

⁴¹ Aziz Suryal Atiya, 'Anianus', CE I, cols. 133b-134a.

⁴² Cf. Basil T.A. Evetts, 'History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria. I. Saint Mark to Theonas (300). Arabic text edited, translated and annotated', in *Patrologia Orientalis*, edited by R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris: Firmin Didot et C^{ie}, 1904), I, pp. 149-150.

⁴³ A. S. Atiya, 'Abilius, Saint', CE I, col. 8b.

⁴⁴ A. S. Atiya, 'Dionysius the Great', CE III, cols. 909a-912a.

⁴⁵ Henry Chadwick, *The early Church*. «The Penguin History of the Church» 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1993, revised ed.), pp. 113-114, 138.

⁴⁶ Karl Gerlach, *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History*. «Liturgia Condenda» 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 199-203. Cf. Andrew Carraker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*. «Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae» 67 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 205.

⁴⁷ Ms. 357 Coptic Museum, fols. 22-23.

Υαλι ηχος αδαμ	طرح ادم له	Psali tune Adam
αιναουωνη ηρωι+ ανοκ πηρερνοβι+ ογορ ηταλεπωρος+ εσαχι επεκταιο ω πιμανεσωου+ ντε πιορ εθογαν+ ητε ηης πχς+ αββα εθοδωρος	انا انخاطي والشقي افتح فائي وانطق بكرامتك ايها الراعي الذي لقطع المسيح الطاهر انبا تادرس	I will open my mouth, me, the <i>poor</i> , sinner to talk about your honour O shepherd of the holy flock of Jesus <i>Christ</i> Abba Theodore
πιεπισκοπος+ ητ ε ηβακι+ ογορ πιμαρτυρος+ ογορ ηαποστολος ασωπι ηεν πιχογ+ ητε πιδιωγμος+ ητε πιορο ετρωου+ διοκλετιανος*	اسقف الخمس مدن والشهيد والرسول لما كان في زمان الاضطهاد الذي اثاره الملك الردي ديقلاديانوس*	The <i>bishop</i> of the Pentapolis, the <i>martyr</i> and <i>apostle</i> It happened at the time of the <i>persecution</i> of the evil king Diocletian
αφογωρη ηογκωμις+ ηεν σασα ηιβεν+ εερβασανιζιν+ ηνιχηρστιανος	ارسل مندوب الى كل ناحية ليعذب جميع النصارى	He sent a <i>comte</i> everywhere to <i>tortures</i> the <i>Christians</i>
αφογωρη ηογργμεωμ+ ενισα ητε φρικια+ ογανομος πε+ επεφραν πε πιατος	فارسل ذلك الى نواحي افريقية والى منافق يسمى بيلاطس	He sent a <i>governor</i> in the districts of Africa a <i>lawless</i> whose name is Pilate
αγερδιαβελιν+ ηπαυμακαριος+ χε ηθοφ πε πσαη+ ηνιχηρστιανος	فسعى اليه عن هذا الطوباني انه معلم المسيحين	They <i>reproved</i> this <i>blessed</i> man: "He is the master of the <i>Christians</i>
αφινι ημοφ+ ηχε πιργμεων+ αφογασανι ναφ+ ερωτ ηνιιδωλον	فاحضره الامير وامره ان يضحي للاوثان	The <i>governor</i> brought him and ordered him to sacrifice for the <i>idols</i>
πεχε παγιος+ χε ναερωου ηιβεν+ ηναϊνι ερρη+ ηραντορωουωου ηπσ	فقال القديس اني كل يوم اقدك صحايا وقرابين للرب الاهي	The <i>saint</i> said: "All my days I offer sacrifices to the Lord

ΠΕΧΕ ΠΙΔΟΥΖ ΝΑΦ+ ΧΕ ΝΕΝΝΟΥ† ΔΝΟΝ+ ΖΑΝΝΟΥ† ΔΝ ΝΕ+ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΚΣΑΧΙ ΝΘΟΚ	فقال له المندوب * وكما ان الهتنا ليس هم الهة كقولك انت	The <i>dux</i> ⁴⁸ said to him: “our gods are not gods <i>according to</i> your saying?”
ΑΦΕΡΒΑΣΑΝΙΖΙΝ+ ἸΠΑΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ+ Ἰ Ἡ ΝΕΖΟΟΥ+ ἮΕΝ ΒΑΣΑΝΟΣ ΝΙΒΕΝ ΠῆΔΕ ΔΕ ΟΝ+ ΑΥΩΛΙ ἸΤΕΦΑΦΕ+ ΑΦΕΡΦΟΡΙΝ ἸΠΙΧΛΟΜ+ ἸΤΕ †ΜΕΤΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΖΙΤΕΝ ΝΙΕΥΧΗ Ἰ..	فعذب هذا الاسقف بكل عذاب صعب اربعين واخيراً تزعت رأسه لابس اكيل الشهادة بصلوات هذا الاب	He <i>tortured</i> this <i>bishop</i> for forty days with all <i>tortures</i> By the end, his head was severed and he <i>wore</i> the crown of <i>martyrdom</i> with the prayers of this father

Another martyr in the same persecution is called Apa Nob the confessor, who was exiled to Pentapolis and returned back after the peace of Constantine.⁴⁹ Few years after the persecutions, the Pentapolis in the time of Alexander I, the patriarch of Alexandria (312-326) and the council of Nicaea, there was the Arian team which mainly consisted of Secundus, Zephyrius, Theonas, and Dathes, all from Libya and the Pentapolis.⁵⁰

Alexander, who also took part in the Council of Nicaea (325), stated the following about the authority of the bishop of Alexandria over the Pentapolis:

“Let the ancient custom prevail that was in vogue in Egypt and Libya and the Pentapolis, to allow the bishop of Alexandria to have authority over all these parts, since this is also the treatment usually accorded to the bishop of Rome” (canon VI).⁵¹

We also know that the successor of Alexander, Athanasius transferred the bishop Siderius from his see in the villages of Palaebisca and Hydrax on the fringe of the Libyan desert to the metropolitan see of the Pentapolis.⁵² In early fifth century, we know that Synesius the

⁴⁸ The military command rested with the *dux*, attested in 308/309 at the head of both Egypt and the provinces of *Libya Inferior* and *Libya Superior*, that is, Pentapolis, cf. T.D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1982), p. 211; the *dux Pentapoleos* is also attested in 472 *Codex Iustinianus* XII.59.10.

⁴⁹ René -Georges Coquin, ‘Nob, Apa’ CE VI, cols. 1796b-1797a.

⁵⁰ H. Chadwick, *Selected Writings*. Edited and introduced by William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids, Michigan : William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), pp. 84-86; Jay Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene, Philosopher-Bishop*. «Transformation of the Classical Heritage » 2 (Berkeley – Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1982), p. 172; A. S. Atiya, ‘Alexander’, CE I, cols. 81a-85a.

⁵¹ Petro Bilaniuk Pope in the Coptic Church, CE VI, cols. 1998b-2000b.

⁵² Emile Maher, ‘Ishaq, Bishop, Translation of’, CE II, cols. 398a-399b. Cf. Roderic L. Mullen, *The Expansion of Christianity: A Gazetteer of Its First Three Centuries*. «Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae» 69 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2004), p. 297; Peter Norton, *Episcopal Elections, 250-600: Hierarchy and Popular Will in Late Antiquity*. «Oxford Classical Monographs» (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 166.

bishop of Ptolemais who was born in the Pentapolis became bishop of his home under Theophilus.⁵³

In the middle of the fifth century, we learned that the bishop who accompanied Dioscorus to the council of Chalcedon is Theopistus who was a bishop of Pentapolis.⁵⁴ And in the late fifth century, in the year 482, the *Henoticon* of the emperor Zeno⁵⁵ was addressed to the bishops, clergy, monks and laity throughout Alexandria and Egypt and Libya and Pentapolis.⁵⁶

The persecution of the Emperor Heraclius⁵⁷ for those who rejected the council of Chalcedon made the people flee to the Pentapolis, but then they returned after the Arab conquest.⁵⁸ The conquest, under ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, was the last of the rapid series of victories in the years 13-19 AH/635-640 AD that had led the Arabs to overthrow the weakened Byzantine provinces of the Near East.⁵⁹ The conquest of Egypt⁶⁰ marked the virtual end of a rapid period of expansion, since after the swift conquest of the Pentapolis, the victorious Arab forces were compelled to mark time in the western parts of North Africa.⁶¹ After the Arab conquest, perhaps due to conversions,⁶² the economy of Pentapolis was prosperous, the bishop Theodorus of Pentapolis purchased fifteen hundred knidia of wine from the Tabennesiote monastery of Pouinkoris (Hermopolitan).⁶³

The last known Metropolitan of Pentapolis is Cyriacus Metropolitan of Pentapolis actually dwelling in Scetis and known as Severus occurs in a list dated 1508 AD in the time of John al-Miṣrī (1484-1524AD).⁶⁴ It seems that this was an honorific title, as it is mentioned in the document that this metropolitan was in the monastery and even he

⁵³ A. S. Atiya, ‘Synesius (c. 370-c. 414)’, CE VII, col. 2192b.

⁵⁴ Tito Orlandi, ‘Theopistus of Alexandria’, CE VII, cols. 2254a-2254b.

⁵⁵ On Zeno’s *Henoticon*, see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604)*. Translated by Pauline Allen and John Cawte (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), II/1, pp. 247 fol.

⁵⁶ W. H. C. Frend, ‘Henoticon’, CE IV, cols. 1217a-1219a.

⁵⁷ On the figure of the emperor Heraclius, see Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵⁸ Cf. Jacques van der Vliet, ‘The Copts: ‘Modern Sons of the Pharaohs?’’, in *Religious Origin of Nations?: The Christian Communities of the Middle East*. Edited by Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 286-289. For the contacts between Egyptians and Arabs before the conquest of Egypt, see Janneke de Jong, ‘Arabia, Arabs, and “Arabic” in *Greek Documents from Egypt*’, in *New Frontiers of Arabic Papyrology: Arabic and Multilingual Texts from Early Islam*. Edited by Sobhi Bouderbala, Sylvie Denoix and Matt Malczyckl (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. 3-27.

⁵⁹ For the seventh-century Islamic conquests in North Africa, see W. E. Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 69-91.

⁶⁰ For the conquest of Egypt is still valid Alfred J. Butler’s classic *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion* (Oxford – New York: Clarendon Press – Henry Frowde, 1902).

⁶¹ P. M. Fraser, ‘Arab Conquest of Egypt’, CE I cols. 183b-189b.

⁶² Hamilton A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in The Near East. I. Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century. Part II. 2 vols.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), I/2, p. 229.

⁶³ Jean Gascou, ‘Monasteries, Economic Activities of’, CE V. cols. 1639a-1645b.

⁶⁴ J. Muysier, ‘Contribution à l’étude des listes épiscopales de l’Église Copte’, *Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte* 10 (1944), pp. 115-176, esp. p. 63.

changed his name. It was in the days of the late Shenouda III that the name of Pentapolis reappeared in the ordination of the bishop of Damanhur.⁶⁵

As we can see, the History of Pentapolis contains many lacunae. We have many documents for the first centuries up to the Arab conquest, after this date we do not have enough data. Hence our document is of particular relevance as it attests that the decline of this diocese was the consequence of the ordination of bishops during the period before the consecration of Cyril III, which lasted for nearly twenty years. The last bishops have honorific titles of bishops of Pentapolis, but they never ministered there.

⁶⁵ R.-G. Coquin, 'Damanhur', CE III, cols. 686a-687b.

Appendix: Fragment photo



Abstract: The scarcity of data on Pentapolis during the Islamic period contrasts, albeit with gaps, with the information we currently have for earlier periods. With the edition, translation and study of this brief Coptic-Arabic fragment, we intend to contribute with the provision of data with which to gradually fill in the lack of information we have about Pentapolis and its history..

Keywords: Pentapolis; islamic period; Copto-Arabic; history; Christianity

Resumen: La escasez de datos sobre Pentapolis en época islámica contrasta, aunque con lagunas, con la información de que disponemos en la actualidad para etapas anteriores. Con la edición, traducción y estudio de este breve fragmento copto-árabe pretendemos contribuir al suministro de datos con el que paliar esa ausencia de información que tenemos sobre Pentapolis y su historia.

Palabras clave: Pentapolis; periodo islámico; copto-árabe; cristianismo