

Tito ORLANDI

The library of the Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe¹

The monastery, the library, and the *scriptorium*

The Egyptian monastery which is currently called the White Monastery² was founded around the middle of the IVth century³ possibly by a certain ΠΟΛ (pCol), though his name appears only in the *Life of Shenute* by Besa, not a reliable source. Shenute himself, speaking of his predecessors, mentions a «first father» and a «second father», without an explicit name.⁴ In any case the first father (possibly called pCol) was a direct disciple of Pachom, always according to Shenute, and founded a monastery by himself for unknown reasons.

After his death, and a brief interval in which Ebonh was possibly in charge, Shenute became its head.⁵ Under his active and energetic leadership the monastery became, inter alia, the centre of the Coptic literary culture, as Shenute himself became by far the greatest Coptic writer,⁶ and also promoted a vast work of translation of Greek patristical texts.⁷ We can be reasonably sure that the monastery had a library from the beginning, and possibly also a *scriptorium*. But even the location of the library, in the building which still exists, is not clear. It is true that the

¹ I shall give a full reference of the most important bibliography only; for precisions on the location of the codices and fragments the reader should consult the web page of the «Corpus dei manoscritti copti letterari», <http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~cmcl>. In this contribution I give a general sketch of the situation; to enter into details would be tantamount to produce a history of the Coptic literature.

² The correct name is «monastery of Atripe» or «of apa Shenute» (ΠΤΟΟΥ ΝΑΤΡΙΠΕ, ΠΤΟΟΥ ΝΑΠΑ ΩΕΝΟΥΤΕ, cf. the colophons cited below), but the late denomination has become a common standard. Cf. Emmel, *Shenute's Literary Corpus*, Ann Arbor, UMI, 1993. 5 vols., p. 16-17.

³ Lefebvre, *Dair al Abiad*, in *DAACL* 4(1), 1920, col. 459-502, based on the date of the pottery in W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Athribis*, London 1908, p. 13-14. Cf. U. Monneret de Villard, *Les couvents près de Sohâg*, Milano 1925-6 and R.-G. Coquin etc., *Dayr Anba Shinudah*, in: Aziz S. ATIYA (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, New York etc., Macmillan, 1991, vol. 3, p. 761-770.

⁴ Cf. Emmel, *ibid.*

⁵ In 385, following the chronology established by S. Emmel, *ibid.* For the new monastery and church, and the inscription for Candidianus, cf. Lefebvre and *Copt. Enc.*, cit.

⁶ Cf. Tito ORLANDI, *Shenute d'Atripe*, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, t. XIV, coll. 797-804, Paris, Beauchesne, 1989.

⁷ There is no direct evidence of this, but already Johannes Leipoldt, *Geschichte der koptischen Litteratur*, in C. Brockelmann (etc.) *Geschichte der christl. Litt. des Orients*, 131-182, Leipzig, Amelang, 1907, made that suggestion.

chamber where most of the manuscripts were found by Maspero (cp. below) is known to be the one where significant inscriptions were readable until the early XX century (cf. above; now they have disappeared). Lefebvre gives rather a detailed collocation:⁸

passant enfin à l'extrémité nord-est de la basilique, nous retrouvons la pièce don j'ai parlé plus haut, [499] qui, située à gauche de l'abside principale, est construite au-dessous d'une crypte et mène à un escalier. L'escalier est bien conservé. Il monte jusqu'aux terrasses et passe, au premier étage, devant une chambrette, «dont les murs, dit Amélineau, couverts de bizarres inscriptions, attestent que plus d'une fois l'ennemi a rongé le coeur des moines successeurs de Schenoudi.» C'est dans cette chambrette, je crois, qu'est été trouvée, en 1883, les quatre mille feuillets de parchemin ...

But in earlier times, as Lefebvre rightly notes,

«la riche «bibliothèque» du Deir ... ne tenait pas tout entière dans cette étroite cellule. Où donc était la bibliothèque du couvent? On l'ignore, mais je serai [501] fort tenté de la placer dans une de ces salles ... du premier étage ...»

On the contrary, Crum⁹ is in favour of the identification of the small room (with the inscriptions, cf. below) with the ancient library. I think that Lefebvre's hypothesis is more correct, and that the small chamber became the repository of the codices only when they were no more in use.

Shenoute himself is strangely reticent of the library in his works: he often alludes to **ΧΑΡΤΗC** and **ΛΟΓΩΜΕ** from which he takes quotations, but as far as I know he never mentions a library. But this is perhaps due to the fact that the existence of a library was obvious, and the first witness that we know is found in the *Life of apa Abraham of pBow*:¹⁰

Quod attinet ad sanctum hunc Anbâ Afrahamum, ipse ad coenobium Abû Šenûdah, in montem 'Adribah, migravit, ibique commorans describere coepit regulas sancti Abû Šenudah et in chartas transferre; tum integre descriptas utribus inclusit, quos obsignatos ad monasterium sancti Abû Masis misit, monachos hortatus ut eosdem sollicitè custodirent.

A late witness of the library (which probably was already in the small chamber) is Abu Salih (or whoever is the author, ed. B.T.A. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, Oxford 1895) fol. 82b-83b.

In any case the library became with the time by far the largest Coptic library ever known, and probably contained copies of most ecclesiastical works existing in the Coptic (Sahidic) language. The conditions of the library and the *scriptorium* in the IX-XI cent. are known from the inscriptions found in the small chamber, and from the interesting *colophons* of the codices written in this period, where there is evidence that many of the codices were produced in the Monastery itself, others were commissioned elsewhere to be donated to the Monastery, others came from other libraries.¹¹ Of the inscriptions unfortunately nothing remains, but they were copied by Canon W.T. Oldfield, when he visited the monastery, and from that copy they were

⁸ Lefebvre, cit., cols. 498-9. For an adjourned plan of the building, see the article by Grossmann in this volume.

⁹ Walter Ewing Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London, British Museum, 1905, p. xi.

¹⁰ The text existed in Coptic, but only fragments remain. The Arabic text of the *Synaxarion* is an abbreviated translation. Jacques Forget, *Synaxarium Alexandrinum*, CSCO 47 48 49 67 78 90, Louvain, CSCO, 1905-1926, 6 vols.; cf. vol. I p. 401.

¹¹ Cf. van Lantschoot, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d'Égypte*, Bibl. du Muséon 1, Louvain, Ista, 1929.

published by Crum.¹² It seems opportune to republish them, reshaped according to one possible interpretation of the content, because Crum limited himself to reproduce the notes of Oldfield. The basic assumption of our interpretation, also implicit in Crum's translation, is that the writer placed the text in vertical columns, while the copy was made according to horizontal lines¹³. We have added a few notes on the possible identification of the texts. This is the result:

North wall

ΝΕΤΡΑΕΥΑΝΓΕΛΙΟΝ -- ΤΕΥΕΠΗ .ΝΘ ΝΚΟΥΙ ΜΝ ΝΝΟΘ
[59 copies of *tetraevangelion*]

ΤΡΑΕΥΑΝΓΛΙΟΝ ΝΚΟΥΙ ΝΝΟΘ ἸΝΝΑΤΚΟΕΙΖ Ι
[possibly 10 volumes not yet bound]

ΝΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΜΝ ΝΕΠΡΑΞΙΣ --- ΝΑΙ ΝΕ ΝΕΠΡΑΞΙΣ ΝΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC

East wall

ΝΛΟΚΟC ΝΑΡΧΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟC ΜΝ ΜΜΑΝΟCΥΝΓΝΟCΟΥ (?)

ΝΑΡΧΗΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟΥ ΚΖ

ΠΧΩΜΕ ΝΖΟΡΟC
ΝΖΥCΔΩΡΙΑ [Ν]ΚΥΠΡΙΑΝΟC
ΝΕΠΙCΤΟΛΗ ΝΑΠΑ ΦΑΝΑΟC

West wall

ΝΑ(Ι) ΝΕ ΝΒΙΟC ΝΝ[ΝΕ]ΤΟΥΑΒ
[general title, specified below?]
ΑΠΑ ΒΗCΑ
ΠΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗC CΕΕΡΟC
ΑΠΑ ΠΙCΗΝΘΙΟC
ΙΩΖΑΝΝΗC ΚΩΛΟΜΒΟC
ΑΠΑ ΠΑΜΙΝ
ΑΡΧΕΛΛΙ[ΤΗC]
ΑΠΑ ΖΥΛΙΑC
ΑΠΑ [Α]ΒΡΑΖΑ[Μ]
ΝΕC†ΠΙ ΝΑΠΑ [...]
ΑΠΑ ΖΕΝΟΒΙΟC
[ΑΠ]Α ΜΑΘΕΟC
ΚΕΡΙΛΛΟC ΜΝ Ι[...]
ΠΖϞΜΩΕ [read ΠΖΑΜΩΕ ?]

¹² W.E. Crum, *Inscriptions from the White Monastery*, JTS 5 (1904) p. 552-569.

¹³ Also I have taken off the invocations of apa Claudius, probably the author of the inscriptions:
(North wall) ΠΙΖΥΚΕ ΠΠΑ ΚΛΑΥΤΕ ΥΥ ΠΑΛΗΥ ΚΟΥ ΝΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ
(East wall) ΑΡΙ ΠΑΜΕΥΕ ΝΑΓΑΠΕ ΠΙΖΥΚΕ ΠΠΑ ΚΛΑΥΤΕ ΥΥ ΠΑΛΗΥ [Μ]ΙCΙΧΙΝ [ΚΟ]Υ ΝΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ
(West wall) ΠΙΖΥΚΕ ΠΠΑΠΑ ΚΛΑΥΤΕ ΥΥ ΜΜΙCΙΧΙΝ ΚΟΥΙ ΝΑΙ ΕΒΟ[Λ]

[N]NE[ΙΩΤ] ΩENOYTE H
[8 books of Shenute]

[Latin characters in Crum:] apa Paul, apa Besa, apa Shenoute

ΑΠΑΠΟΛΛΩ ΠΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC
ΑΠΑ ΜΑΘ ΠΖΥΚΕ
[Matthew the Poor]

ΠΒΙΟC Ν[N]ΕΤΟΥΑΒ
ΑΠΑ ΠΑΖΩ[M] Κ
[20 copies of the the *Lives* of Pachomius]
ΑΠΑ ΕΠ[ΙΜΑ ?]
ΑΠΑ ΜΩΕCΗC Β
[2 copies of the *Life* of Moyses of Abydos]
ΑΠΑ CΙΜΩΝ
ΑΠΑ ΚΕΠΡΙΑΝΟC
ΑΠΑ CΑΜΟΥΗΛ
ΑΠΑ ΘΕΩΤΟΡΟ[C]
ΑΠΑ ΖΕΡΜΙΜΕ

ΑΠΑΖΩΜ ΜΝ ΖΟΡ[CΙC]CΙΟC ΜΝ ΘΕΟΤΟΡΟC
ΠΕΧΟΥΤΑΒΤΕ ΜΠΡCΒΗΤΗΡΟC
ΑΠΑ ΒΗCΑ ΕΤΒΕ ΤΟΥΝΝΟCΩΜΑ ΕΖΡΑΙ
ΜΝ [ΠΕ]ΝΙΩΤ ΑΠΑ ΩΝΟΥΤΕ

[possibly a homily on the resurrection of the body, and the life of Shenute, of Besa. The homily is not otherwise known]

(... ship ... Raphael [= Cyrilli Alex. *De sacntuario Raphaelis*]
[Z]Α[ΧΑΡΙΑC] ΠΡΕCΒΥΤΕΡΟC

ΝΒΙΟC [N]ΑΠΑ ΜΩΥCΗC

ΔΑΥΕΙΔ ΠΕΡΡΟ ΙΓ
[13 copies of the Psalms]

ΝΑΙ ΝΕ ΝCΟΟΥΖ
[miscellaneous volumes? Crum suggested the Councils]

I suppose that the author of the inscriptions was the selfmentioning apa Claudios, who dressed a rough inventory of the codices placed upon the shelves after (or when?) they were brought in the small chamber.

Concerning the colophons, we may note that Van Lantschoot is exhaustive in the study of the scribes, the provenance, and the donation of the manuscripts, but does not study the relationship between the colophons and the content of the manuscripts. This remains to be done.¹⁴ Also Van Lanschoot treats in the same way the final colophons and some indications of titles or scribal annotations, which are different phenomena.

In the following table we list the manuscripts which have preserved a colophon, with the call

¹⁴ Further on those lines Coquin in the article in the *Coptic Enc.*, cit.

number of the CMCL (cf. below), the number in the Van Lantschoot sequence, the date, and the provenance: place of writing, and place of donation.

sig. cmcl	v.Lant.	date	written	donated
MONB.AB	(102)	XII	--	Atripe
MONB.EF	(070)	1002-3	s. Theodore at Shotep	s. Severus at Erebe then Atripe
MONB.EQ	(053)	939-40	tOuton	Atripe
MONB.FA	(092)	XI	--	Atripe
MONB.FO	(066)	XII	--	x then Atripe
MONB.FS	(052)	923-933	tOuton	Atripe
MONB.GO	(090)	X	--	(Atripe)
MONB.HY	(075)	920-950	Atripe	Atripe
MONB.IA	(096a)	XI	--	(Atripe)
MONB.IL	(061)	1002-3	--	x poi Atripe
MONB.IY	(086)	995-6	--	(Atripe)
MONB.JA	(074)	XI	Atripe	Atripe
MONB.LZ	(079)	XI	--	Atripe
MONB.MU	(095)	1016	--	(Atripe)
MONB.XG	(089)	X	--	(Atripe)
MONB.XH	(091)	X	--	(Atripe)
MONB.XN	(068)	1000	--	s. Shenute at Siout then Atripe
MONB.YW	(072)	X	--	
MONB.ZZ	(081)	1118	Atripe	Atripe
BL.ADD14740A.16				
BL.OR01320	(062)	1005-6	--	s. Mary at taHanhor (then Atripe)
BL.OR03581B.87	(100)	1036	--	Atripe
BL.OR03581B.88-89	(080)	1112	Atripe	Atripe
BL.OR08808	(060b)	XI	--	--
CC.8091	(125)			

CC.9255.1-3	(087)	X	--	(Atripe)
CC.9296	(101)	1170	--	x poi Atripe
CP.B40.1-2	(076)	XI	Atripe	Atripe
CU.ADD1876.24-25	(060a)	1000	--	
LG.KNS43.1-4	(056)	952-3	--	s. Cosma in the Fayum then Atripe
LL.55				
LR.040.1-8	(067)	XII	--	x then Atripe
LR.126.1-3	(073)	1000	--	--
MP.I.1.B0295.1-2	(057)	961-2	--	Atripe
MP.I.1.B0655	(058)	979-80	--	x then Atripe
MR.112	(103)	--	XII	(Atripe)
PN.129.03.171	(093)	XI		Atripe
PN.129.14.134	(096)	XI	--	Atripe
PN.131.3.39	(055)	939-40	tOuton	Atripe
PN.131.5.028	(078)	1100	Atripe	Atripe
PN.131.7.17	(064)	XI	--	x then Atripe
PN.131.7.35	(077)	1091	Atripe	Atripe
PN.132.1.66	(077)	1091	Atripe	Atripe
PN.132.1.67	(051)	927-8	tOuton	Atripe
PN.132.1.68	(098)	1031-2	--	s. pShemmao at Shmin then Atripe
PN.132.1.69	(104)	1190	--	(Atripe)
PN.132.1.70	(085)	985-6	--	Atripe
PN.132.1.71				
PN.132.1.72	(083)	957-8	--	(Atripe)
PN.132.1.73	(069)	XI	s. Mary of Karbone	x then Atripe
PN.132.1.74	(082)	930	--	--
PN.161.042				
WK.00351	(054)	939-40	tOuton	Atripe

WK.09146	(094)	XI	--	(Atripe)
WK.09436	(063)	1006-7	--	x then Atripe
WK.09480				
WK.09648				

The following table lists the colophon of manuscripts from other libraries, especially St. Michael in the Fayum and St. Mercurius at tBo (Edfu) for a comparison:

sig.cmcl	v.Lant.	date	written	donated
MICH.AB	(017)	892-3	--	--
MICH.AD	(039)	IX	--	--
MICH.AE	(012)	861-2	tOuton	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AH	(024)	IX	--	(s. Michael of Sopehes)
MICH.AI	(025)	IX	--	--
MICH.AJ	(026)	IX	--	s. George of Narmuthis then s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AL	(027)	IX	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AM	(023)	894-5	tOuton	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AN	(018)	892-3	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AO	(007)	901	s. Michael of Sopehes	--
MICH.AP	(031)	905-6	tOuton	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AR	(028)	IX	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AS	(046)	903-4	tOuton	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AT	(015)	892-3	pTepouhar	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AU	(020)	892-3	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AV	(033)	IX	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.AW	(019)	892-3	tOuton	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BA	(045)	902-3	pErpnoute	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BB	(022)	894-5	s. Michael of Sopehes	--

MICH.BC	(011)	861	s. Michael of Sopehes	--
MICH.BD	(003)	842	Kalamon	s. Michael
MICH.BE	(032)	IX	--	--
MICH.BF	(016)	892-3	pTepouhar	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BG	(030)	IX	--	--
MICH.BH	(050)	913-4	tOuton	s. Maria of x then s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BI	(013)	871-2	--	Narmuthis
MICH.BJ	(036)	IX	--	--
MICH.BL	(001)	822-3	--	s. Michael
MICH.BP	(005)+(006)	848	s. Michael of Sopehes	--
MICH.BQ	(044)	X	--	--
MICH.BR	(008)+(009)	855	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BS	(029)	IX	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BT	(037)	IX	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BV	(034)+(041)	IX	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BW	(014)	889-90	tOuton	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.BX	(035)	IX	--	s. Epima of Narmuthis
MICH.BY	(043)	X	--	--
MICH.BZ	(004)	844	Kalamon	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.CA	(049)	X	--	--
MICH.CB	(021)	894-5	Narmouthis	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.CC	(038)	IX	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MICH.CD	(048)	X	--	s. Michael of Sopehes
MERC.AA	(115)			
MERC.AB	(065)	XI	--	pColpef then s. Mercurius
MERC.AC	(119)			
MERC.AD	(060)	989-990	--	--
MERC.AE	(121)			

MERC.AF	(117)			
MERC.AH	(107)+(059)	988-9	Fayum	s. Mercurius of tBo
MERC.AI	(112)	--		
MERC.AL	(084)	--	--	--
MERC.AM	(113)			
MERC.AN	(116)			
MERC.AO	(122)			
MERC.AQ	(120)			
MERC.AR	(111)			
MERC.AS	(109)			
MERC.AT	(118)			
MERC.AU	(110)			
MERC.AV	(097)	1031	--	--
MERC.BB	(114)			
BL.OR06807.6	(060c)	XI	--	--
BL.OR06954.33				
BL.OR07594				
BL.PAP.XXXVI.20	(123)			
CC.-HAMULI-MS.3811	(042)	900	--	--
CC.-HAMULI-MS.3819	(047)	X	tOuton	s. Michael di Sopehes
CC.-HAMULI-MS.3825	(040)	IX	--	--
CC.-HAMULI-MS.3826	(010)	856	s. Michael of Sopehes	
NM.663.01	(002)	820-850	--	s. Michael
NM.664B.04				
NM.667				

The codices

If we want to confine ourselves to the evidence which is available, the typical codex that we know for sure to come from the library of the monastery of Atripe, is written in the IX-XI cent. and made of parchment. Some of the codices were produced in the *scriptorium* of the monastery, many others in different Egyptian *scriptoria*, especially at ΤΟΥΤΩΝ (tOuton, Tebtynis) in the Faium, and donated to the monastery. Touton produced codices also for other sanctuaries of the Fayum, but not, as it seems, for St. Mercurius of tBo. It is obvious that such codices are also witness to the older condition of the library, being in large part copies of older codices which had to be replaced after long use. But some important questions remain open.

First, whether in this later period the scribes, who were also scholars, simply copied the texts, when and because the codices had become not easily legible, or also made deliberate choices, leaving away texts which were not read any more for whatever reason. There are texts which are not part of the White Monastery remains (always allowing for the possible loss of fragments, or some future new identification), but may well have been part of the library in earlier times. We are alluding to works like the *Vita Aphou*, John Chrysostom *In Susannam et Ioseph*, Athanasius *De parabola vineae*, Basil *De misericordia et iudicio*, and *De templo Salomonis*, Melito of Sardis *De anima et corpore*, and John of Shmun *In Antonium*.

Secondly, it is possible that the scribes, when producing new codices, made also a reworking of some of the texts, obtaining new texts from pieces of existing ones. This is well known in the Byzantine world, and for the Coptic literature the operation of building special corpora for liturgical use (in broad sense), making some change in the texts, and also producing some new ones, is apparent already in the VIII-IX cent. We refer to works like the ps. Macarius of Tkou *Panegyric of Dioscorus*, the *Life of Lucius and Longinus*, Athanasius *In Leviticum*, in all of which works the trace of reworking of previously existing texts is evident. It is possible that part of this work was carried out inside the Monastery of Shenoute. It is interesting to note that traces of the reworking in the White Monastery of some texts are found in works like the *History of the Church* and the *Life of John of Lykopolis*, where some parts concerning the intervention of Shenute in some circumstances were probably written and inserted in the White Monastery.

Another open question is what happened of the codices of papyrus which must have been at least part of the older library. This question is mixed in some way with that of the preservation of codices of the IV-V cent., whether in papyrus or in parchment. In fact there are only two groups of documents which may be taken into consideration when we try to assess the eventual preservation of some papyrus codices from the White Monastery: first some very old codices (IV cent.), written in the so called Achmimic dialect (and with them some in parchment, like the Small Prophets or the Apocalypse); then some fragments from papyrus codices apparently from the VIII-IX cent., now kept in the Vienna collection.

The idea that a group of IV(-V) century, mostly Achmimic, manuscripts came from the monastery of Shenute was common among a group of scholars of the early XX cent.¹⁵ One may

¹⁵ Cf. Tito Orlandi, *Papiri copti di contenuto teologico*, Wien, Osterr. Nationalbibl., 1974.

quote Steindorff, already in 1899:¹⁶

Dem berühmte Kloster des Amba Schenûda bei Sohâg, dessen umfangreiche Bücherschätze schon im vorigen Jahrhundert eine Fülle wertvoller koptischer Manuskripte an europäischer Bibliotheken hergegeben haben... entstammen auch die hier veröffentlichten Texte...

Each of them referred to some individual manuscript; but generally explicit was, already in 1905, W.E. Crum (*Catalogue British Museum*, cit., p. xi-xii):

The library of the White Monastery existed however before the time when copies upon parchment had replaced the earlier papyrus volumes. Shenoute's frequent citations of the 'papyri' ($\chi\alpha\rho\tau\eta\varsigma$) existing in his and his predecessors' time [Zoega p. 389, Leipoldt p. 100], refer to that earlier state of things, little if any remnants of which however have survived. The papyri in the archaic Ahmim dialect, spoken presumably in the surrounding district until Shenoute made the Sa'idic fashionable, are said upon good authority to have come from this monastery; but no others have been traced to it.

The scholar who most strongly asserted the origin from the Monastery of Shenoute of a group of ancient papyrus codices, brought in Europe at the end of the XIXth century, was C. Schmidt, giving credit to pieces of information coming from various sources. It is important to quote the relevant passages in his writings, because they contain an appreciation of the cultural activity of Shenoute and his monks, which is unusual for Schmidt's time and cultural milieu.¹⁷

[After the Pachomian monasteries...] Ein zweites geistiges Zentrum bildete sich in dem nördlich an die Thebais anschließenden Gau von Schmin-Panopolis als dort [...] bald nach der Mitte des IV. Jhs zwei neue Koinobien, die von der Pachomiuskongregation unabhängig waren, nämlich das «Rote Kloster» des Pschai und das «Weiße Kloster» des Pgôl auf dem westlichen Nilufer beim heutigen Sohâg.

Wir sehen aus dieser Zusammenstellung, wie gerade die urchristliche Literatur in diesen Klöstern Pflege gefunden hat, und das legt ein glänzendes Zeugnis für den wissenschaftlichen Geist seiner Insassen ab. Wir besitzen in diesen größtenteils auf Papyrus erhaltenen Schriften die älteste Übersetzungsliteratur der Kopten überhaupt, da sie alle aus dem IV. und V. Jh. stammen. Freilich sind dies nur einige Trümmer aus einer viel umfangreicheren Bibliothek, denn der grösste Teil der Literatur im achmimischen Dialekt ist zugrunde gegangen, als dieser Lokaldialekt aufhörte, die offizielle Kirchensprache der Provinz zu sein. [...] sie bildeten stumme Zeugen einer ehrwürdigen Vergangenheit und sind als solche erst wieder aus dem Staube der Bibliothek aus Tageslicht gekommen [footnote: Es steht fest, daß eine Reihe der vorher genannten MS. aus der Bibliothek des Schenute-Klosters stammt.]

Cf. also *Der Erste Clemensbrief in alkoptischer Übersetzung* TU 32.1, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1908, p. 5: Neuere Nachforschung haben aber ergeben, daß alle 3 stücke aus dem berühmten «weißen Kloster» des Schenute ... stammen, wo man bei einer Restaurierung des Klosters auf das alte Bibliothekszimmer gestoßen ist und Veranlassung genommen hat, die vorgefundenen Mss. an verschiedene Antikenhändler zu verkaufen.

The manuscripts in question may be listed as follows:

title	dialect or language	place	editor	material
Minor Prophets	achmimic	Vienna Pap.Samml. K11000	Till	parchmen t

¹⁶ Georg Steindorff, *Die Apokalypse des Elias, Eine unbekannt Apokalypse, und Bruchstücke der Sophonias-Apokalypse*, TU 17.3A, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1899.

¹⁷ Carl Schmidt, *Die Urschrift der Pistis Sophia*, ZNW 24 (1925) 218-240, p. 227-8.

Ep. Clementis	achmimic	Berlin St.Bibl. Fol 3065	Schmidt	papyrus
Ep. Clementis and John	achmimic	Strasbourg Univ. Pap. 362-385	Rösch	papyrus
Sapientia Salomonis	achmimic	Berlin Staatsbibl.(*)	unpublished	papyrus
Epistula Apostolorum	achmimic	Cairo IFAO	Schmidt	papyrus
Apoc. Eliae et Sophoniae	achmimic	monb.ax (Paris and Berlin	Steindorff	papyrus
Apoc. Eliae	sahidic	Paris Nat. P135.26-33	Steindorff	papyrus
Exodus, Sirach	achmimic	Paris Nat P135.1-7	Bouriant + Lacau	papyrus
II Macc.	achmimic	Paris Nat P135.8-10	Bouriant + Lacau	papyrus
Luke	achmimic	Paris Nat P135.11	Bouriant + Lacau	papyrus
Acta Pauli	(sub-)achmimic	Heidelberg Univ. Pap. 1	Schmidt	papyrus
Cyril, Ep. Fest. 1 Homily	achmimic	Vienna Pap.Samml. K10157	Till	papyrus
Apocalypse	sahidic	monb.he (Berlin, Paris)	Goussens	parchmen t
Psalms	sahidic-greek	Vienna Pap.Samml. K 10999	Wessely	papyrus
Shenoute, Homily	sahidic-greek	monb.xp (London, Oxford)	Lucchesi	parchmen t

(*) It is to be noted that this ms. of the Sapientia Salomonis mentioned by Schmidt, Clem.Brief p. 5-7, and Carl Schmidt, (Pierre Lacau), *Gespräche Jesu mit seine Jungern nach der Auferstehung*, TU 43, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1919, has not been considered by later scholars (e.g. Till 1955, *Die koptischen Versionen der Sapientia Salomonis*, Biblica 36 (1955) 51-70, and Nagel Copt.Enc. vol. 8: *Achmimic*, p. 19-27).

We may note that Wessely, introducing the fragmentary Vienna codex of the Psalms (wk.01231-8), *Sahidisch-griechische Psalmenfragmente*, Sitzungsber. Akad. Wien, 155.1, Wien, Holder, 1908, p. 8, expressed many doubts about its provenance:

Der Fundort soll Achmîm sein. Diese Angabe rührt wohl von Theodor Graf, dem Verkäufer aus zweiter Hand her, ... Aber abgesehen davon, daß mit dem Namen Achmîm viel Unfug getrieben wurde, findet sich in den erhaltenen Resten nicht der geringste Anhaltspunkt sprachlicher oder paläographischer Natur vor, der auf einen Zusammenhang mit Achmîm hindeuten würde.

On the other hand, Stegemann, *Die koptische Zaubertexte der Sammlung Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer in Wien*, Sitz. Akad. Heidelberg 24.1, seems to have no doubts:

... zweien von den drei großen Sammlungen koptischer Urkunden, die auf mancherlei Weise von Ägypten nach Wien gelangt sind. ... [Note: Die dritte Sammlung aus dem Weißen Kloster bei Achmim enthält nur literarische Stücke.]

Actually, much though we should like to accept the opinion of C. Schmidt, which is surely sound as far as the general activity in the Shenoute's monastery is concerned, his use of poorly documented informatio about the provenance of the codices mentioned above is probably wrong.

It must be said, first of all, that the use of the Achmimic dialect makes great difficulty, even if at first sight one would consider as normal that near Achmim the Achmimic dialect would be used. But, leaving aside the fact that it is not certain that the Achmimic dialect was really spoken and written near Achmim, there is no reasonable explanation for the fact that the library which became the main centre of the literary activity in Sahidic was formed of Achmimic texts at the beginning. Nobody nowadays would give credit to the idea that Shenoute preached in Achmimic. Also the extraordinary fact that we would have recuperated either very old (IV-V cent.) or very late codices (IX cent. and later), and nothing in between plays against Schmidt's thesis.

It is true, however, that the other group of fragments which might be taken into consideration, that of the Vienna papyri, would fill the gap; they were found on the market in Egypt, and said to come from Achmim. They contain «normal» ecclesiastical works which one expects to find in VII-VIII century manuscripts: besides the Bible, there are fragments from homilies by John Chrysostom, the *Plerophoriae*, the *lives* of Athanasius, Paul of Tamma, Shenute, the *Acts of Peter and Paul*, the *Passions* of Mercurius, Gobidlaha, Ter and Erai, and the *Historia Monachorum* of Papnute. But here also the sure origin of the manuscripts is not certain. {footnote: Orlandi, *Papiri Vienna*, cit., p. 19. }

All in all, there remains a possibility that the codices listed by Schmidt and the Vienna fragments are what is saved of the library before the IX cent., and it is important that this possibility dwells in the mind of those who study the cultural activity of the Monastery of Shenoute, in case new documents are found in favour of against that hypothesis. For the moment it is not possible to infer the character or the history of the library from those codices.

Other questions are more interesting, and are worth mentioning, even if they remain in the field of speculation. Some bilingual codices have actually been found with the remains of the library (e.g. sa288, sa289, sa290 in the list of Schmitz and Mink, *Die sahidischen Handschriften der Evangelien. 1. Teil*, Liste der koptischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments, ANT 8, Berlin New York, De Gruyter, 1986; 2. Teil, 1. Halbband, 1989; 2. Teil, 2. Halbband, 1991). But it is also very probable that some Greek codices were part of the library. Have they been destroyed or dispersed during the VII-XI century? Do some of the Greek christian ecclesiastical fragments in the collections, coming from Egypt, come ultimately from the White Monastery?

Another type of evidence, that we may call indirect, cannot be neglected in the reconstruction of the history of the library. It is sufficiently sure that in the White Monastery, under the care of Shenute, the «real» Coptic literature was created, and many Greek works were translated. The works by Shenute testify to a very cultivated environment, where many people read and discussed important works of spirituality, of history, and of theology. All this presupposes the possession of many books, and a cultural activity around them, possibly a school not only elementary (this must have existed in any case) but of a high level.

When we try and understand how this happened, we can think of only two possibilities: either the monks dedicated to such activity relied for the organization from outside (e.g. in the large city of Shmin, Panopolis) or the cultural organization was inside the monastery. We are in favour of the second hypothesis, and we add that the existence of a school of high level at the White Monastery is to be supposed from the literary work done there; but in any case we must acknowledge that all relevant documents have disappeared, and what we may call the cultural testimonies do not go beyond the VII century. This leaves us with a material situation in which only manuscripts from IX-XII century survive, and are brought in the small room mentioned above. They can only be considered, when we want to describe, for what is possible, the

character of the texts remained in the library.

Tentative statistics

Confining to the codices which certainly come from the White Monastery, and were preserved in the small chamber described above,¹⁸ it is very difficult to give statistical figures. But after the long work of reconstruction with which we shall deal later, it is at least possible to give an idea of the number and contents of the codices so far identified and reconstructed, from which one can conjecture the extent of the library. In my opinion, on the basis of the existing fragments not yet belonging to some reconstructed codex, the numbers which I give may be at most the half of the real figures in the XI cent.

literary genre	number of codices
bible	94
homilies (*)	89
Shenute	78 codices
hagiography	18
apocrypha	13
lives of monks	7 + 4 of Pachomius
canones and acta conciliorum (including Agathonicus)	6
acta apocrypha	1
special cases Athanasius <i>EppFest</i> works of Paul of Tamma Rufus <i>commentaria</i>	4 + 2 + 2
miscellaneous	1
total	ca. 325

(*) There are codices with collected of homilies of one author: Basilius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom *Comm. in Hebr.*

To this calculation one should add the liturgical manuscripts, of which the remnants are very numerous, but owing to the situation of the studies the quantity of codices is a matter of guess. I think that, taking into consideration the manuscripts entirely lost, we can speak of a library of at least 1000 codices, an astonishing number compared with the largest western libraries of the same time, which seem to have kept 300 to 500 codices. As for the number of pages which formed a codex, here also from one side it varied very much, and from another, only exceptionally we have the last page of one codex, also allowing for the fact that sometimes the

¹⁸ Many have treated how certainty can be reached; best of all Emmel cit. p. 58-63

numeration of the pages began anew at the beginning of a new work, and sometimes a group of works was considered continuing in two (or more?) tomes, where the numeration of the second tome continued that of the previous one. But it is possible to say that most of the codices contained ca. 200 pages; and many got as far as 300, and sometimes even 500 hundred.

The general content of the codices has been shown above. It may be interesting now to propose a comparison with the other Coptic libraries, from which we have some remains, though it should be stressed that, given the circumstances in which Coptic manuscripts have been found, it is often difficult to infer the existence of a true library which originally kept them.

localization	modern collection	date
Dishna	Chester Beatty Library Bodmer Library Barcelona Palau Ribes	IV cent.
Saqqara, apa Ieremias	Chester Beatty Library Washington Freer coll.	VI cent.
Bala'iza, apa Apollo	Oxford Bodleian Library	IV-VII cent (and later)
Thebes	Harris collection, then British Library	VII cent.
Thebes ? apa Helias	[only catalogue] Cairo IFAO	VII cent.
Tin, s. John the Baptist?	Turin, Egyptian Museum	VII-IX cent.
Sophehes (Hamuli) s. Michael	New York P. Morgan Libr. Cairo Coptic Museum, etc.	IX-X cent.
tBo (Edfu) s. Mercurius	British Library New York P. Morgan Libr., etc.	X-XII cent.
Sketis, s. Makarius	Rome, Vatican Libr. Leipzig, etc.	IX cent. onwards

The library of the monastery of Shenoute is specially similar, for the shape of the codices, the presentation of the works inside them, and the choice of the texts, to the later libraries such as those from Hamuli and Edfu. But on the whole the works present in the Shenoute's library are also found in the previous collections, from that of Jeremia onwards. In this regard, we note changes in the shape of the titles, which in later times tend to be more explicative of the personality of the (often not authentic) authors, and of the content. Also the grouping of the works in one codex changes, because of the more technical use for liturgy.

On the contrary, we find a radical change if we consider the very old library from Dishna (the

latest codices belong to the early V century).¹⁹ If this was a library, it was very special, because of the mixture of Greek, Latin, and Coptic texts, and of classic-pagan and christian literature. It may be an example of what formed the White Monastery library of the early days, but it has nothing to do with the later situation.

This seems to imply that the true crisis in the Coptic literary tradition came from the Council of Chalcedon, and from the Arab conquest. The library of the White Monastery as we have it today is the result of the systematization done in the VIII-IX century by certain scholars, who may have worked, at least in part, in the same White Monastery.

We may add that in the later period (IX cent. onwards) the library of the White Monastery was mirrored in Bohairic in the library of the Monastery of St. Macarius of Sketis, which became the new cultural center of the Copts in the period before the prevalence of the Arabic language. When Arabic replaced Coptic as the ecclesiastical language (ca. XII cent.) the codices of the White Monastery remained (or were?) stored in a «secret chamber» in the north-east corner of the building which contained the church.

Dispersion of the library in modern times

It is possible to suppose that the codices remained, decayed but complete, in the chamber, until the XVIIIth century, when somebody having access to the chamber began to remove groups of folios from them, to be sold to foreigners interested in such material. According to Crum (Cat. Brit. Libr., cit.) the first fragments to arrive to Europe entered in the collection of the Cardinal Stefano Borgia (1731-1804). Their origin was not known, as also that of other fragments acquired by Woide (now in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Clarendon Press fund), Nani (now in Venice), Paris Bibl. Nat. P78, Curzon (now in the Brit. Library), Tattam (now in Manchester), Berlin Staatsbibl., Goleniscev (now in St Petersburg), and Rainer (now in Vienna).

This situation continued until 1883 when Maspero discovered the famous «small chamber» and all the remnants that he found were eventually brought to Paris, except for some rather large collections which were acquired by the Cairo Museum, the IFAO, the Leiden Museum, and the British Museum.

An accurate list of this dispersion was arranged by Henry Hyvernat, *Introduction* (for an article by Porcher), *Revue d'Égyptologie* 1 (1933) 105-116, to which little has to be added. Our list follows the chronology, for what is possible:

date	person or institution	quantity	passage	note
1778 sgg.	Assemani (?) for Borgia	2383 ff	Bibl. Vaticana + Napoli Bibl. Nazionale	
ca. 1784	Woide	130 ff	Oxford Clarendon Press	
--	Jacopo Nani	64 ff	Venezia Bibl. Marciana	

¹⁹ It must be stressed that the very existence of the library, and its location near Dishna, is disputed, cf. *CoptEnc*, vol. 8 p. 48-53: R. Kasser, *Bodmer Papyri*.

--	--	50 ff	Paris Bibl. Nat. 78	
--	Marcel	--	--	lost, burnt
1838	Curzon	180 ff	British Library 8800 8810,11,12	
1842	Tattam	130 ff	Crawford, then Manchester Ryldand's Univ. Libr.	
late XIX cent.	Tischendorf	60 ff	St Petersburg, Public Libr.	
--	--	50 ff -	Louvre	
--	--	--	Firenze Laurenziana	
--	--	12 ff	Paris Bibl. Nat. 102	
1875 ??	Horner	460	Brit. Libr. 100 ff, others lost	
1883	Maspero	4000	Paris Bibl. Nat., 129-133	arrived 1886-1887
1886	--	--	Berlin Staatsbibl.	
--	--	215 ff	Cairo, Egyptian then Coptic Museum	
--	--	152 ff	Leiden, Rijksmus.	
--	--	490 ff	Brit. Library 1241-2 3579-81	Acq. Budge
--	Th. Graf	1000	Oesterr. Nationalbibl. Papyrussammlung	
--	--	--	Louvre new fragments	
1888	Golenisceff	50	Moscow, Pushkin Mus.	
--	--	200 ff	Cairo IFAO	
--	De Ricci	150 ff	Paris, Bibl. Nat. 161	
--	Weill	--	Paris Bibl. Nat. ?	
--	Reinach ?	--	Berlin Staatl. Mus.	
--	--	50 ff	New York P. Morgan Libr.	
--	Hyvernat, then Thompson, Aspley Guise	50	Cambridge Univ. Libr. 1699	
--	--	100 ff	Ann Arbor Michigan Univ. Libr.	
--	Sayce	--	Oxford Eton College	
--	--	--	London Victoria & Albert Mus.	

--	--	--	Paris Acad. Inscr. B. L.	
--	100 ff	--	Strasbourg Bibl. Univ.	

Nobody, that I know, has really counted the number of pages which have survived and are available for study. A good estimate in my opinion is of ca. 10,000 leaves. The efforts of the scholars, begun late in the XIX century, were directed towards the two obvious goals of producing the catalogues of the individual collections, and of reconstructing what is possible of the codices from the fragments scattered in the collections, from the recognition of complementary fragments from the same codex in different places. The names to be mentioned are those of Von Lemm, Crum, Lefort, Till, Garitte, and Hyvernat and Horner for the Bible. The situation of the cataloguing work is today as follows:

collection	catalogues
Berlin, Staatl. Mus.	Beltz
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek (unified?)	Koptische Handschriften, description by A. Böhlig, 1960, typescript. Orientalische Handschriften, handwritten inv.
British Library	Crum, Layton: full catalogues
Cairo, Coptic Museum (ex Egyptian Mus.)	Crum, Munier: full catalogues
Cairo, Bibliothèque de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale	Coquin: rough list
Clarendon Press, Oxford	typewritten list by Hyvernat
Cambridge University Library	typewritten list by Hyvernat
[Eton college]	--
[Firenze Laurenziana]	--
Napoli Bibl.Naz.	Zoega
[London Bible House]	--
St. Petersburg M.E. Saltykov-Scedrin State Public Library	Elanskaya
Louvain-la-Neuve Univ.Cath.	Lefort
[Louvain Lefort private collection]	Lefort
Leiden Rijksmuseum	Pleyte Boeser

[London Egypt Explor. Soc.]	--
[London Victoria & Albert]	--
Moscow Puskin Mus	Elanskaya
Manchester J. Ryland's Univ. Libr.	Crum
Michigan Univ. Libr, Ann Arbor	Typewritten list by Hyvernat
Napoli Bibl. Nazionale	Zoega
New York P. Morgan Library	Depuydt, after the mss cat. by Hyvernat: full catalogue
Oxford Bodleian Library	--
Oslo University Library ??	--
Paris Louvre	--
Paris Bibliothèque Nationale	Deveria Porcher Lucchesi Boud'hors
[Roma Lincei Biblioteca Corsiniana]	--
Roma Biblioteca Vaticana	Zoega
Strasbourg Bibliothèque de l'Université	--
[Toronto University Library]	--
[Utrecht University Library]	--
Venezia Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana	Mingarelli
[Washington Freer Collection]	--
Wien Nationalbibliothek	Till: list of published items

Efforts of Reconstruction

For the scholars concerned with the reconstruction of the codices, it became soon evident that technology was essential for the success of the enterprise, which however is one of those which will never reach a perfect end. First came photography, which could partly substitute the personal inspections, and the notes taken by the scholars in the visits to the collections. So Lefort assembled in the library of the university of Louvain (now in Louvain-la-Neuve) an enormous amount of photographs of fragments known or supposed to come from the White Monastery. During the second World War the negatives went lost, but the printouts are still there. Other ample, but not systematic, collections of photos were gathered by H. Hyvernat, now in Washington, Catholic University, and by Crum, now with his papers in Oxford.

In 1969 I began an enterprise, the *Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari*, with the aim to acquire the photographic reproduction of all known Sahidic manuscripts, in first place those coming from the Monastery of Shenute, but not only those. The collection, now placed in the Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, Roma, may be considered complete (again, no collection will ever be really complete), except for the liturgical manuscripts, which were left for a later stage. It is to be noted that some difficulties arose (and still arise) from the very different policies adopted by the authorities in giving the photos of the material under their care. While some are very liberal (e.g. the British Library or the Bibliothèque Nationale), others give photos only of the pieces which the applicant declares to want to publish, and in any case only one or few pieces (e.g. Michigan University Library). This is of course disappointing for those who work having in mind not to the publication of this or that fragment, but the reconstruction of the dismembered codices, or the recognition of the consistency of the Coptic literature.

In any case the CMCL project was aimed not only at the acquisition of the photos, but also at their arrangement in a way that could facilitate the consultation, and at building around them an archive of data that could facilitate the reconstruction of the codices and in general the study of the Coptic literature. The arrangement was made separating each fragment and placing them in special frames; the data archive was done by means of traditional cards, stating paleographical and literary information.

Around 1980 came the second technological turn, the electronic revolution. Computers not only gave enormous possibilities of storage and retrieval of data, but more and more provided new means of acquiring and disseminating information, in all shapes: images, texts (also in Coptic characters), and data. In this way it is possible to process all past information on the fragments and related codices, and add much new one.²⁰ It has seemed also possible to make an attempt at the general evaluation of the library, as to its extent, its development, and the content of the codices. This is what we have tried to do above, and the reader will duly consider the fact that it is the first attempt, with all the dangers and uncertainties which it includes.

²⁰ Cf. the web page of the CMCL, URL: <http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~cmcl>.