



International Association for Coptic Studies

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EXHIBITION OF MANUSCRIPTS

Entangled Communities:
*Global Egypt and Its Multilingual
Manuscript Heritage*

Exhibition curated by Lina Elhage-
Mensching and Alin Suciu
Layout by Selina Schuster
Photos by Martin Liebethuth
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International
Association for
Coptic Studies



GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN IN PUBLICA COMMODO
SEIT 1737



Niedersächsische Akademie
der Wissenschaften
zu Göttingen

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Introduction



For millennia, Egypt has stood at the crossroads of Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean. Far from being isolated, this region was deeply connected to the wider world through trade, pilgrimage, scholarship, and religion. The manuscripts displayed in this exhibition amply document these connections and reveal Egypt as a place where diverse communities, languages, and traditions interacted in often unexpected ways.

The documents, codices, and fragments exhibited here were produced between antiquity and the early modern period. They are written in a wide range of languages, including Aramaic, Demotic Egyptian, Greek, Coptic, Syriac, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Arabic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, and Pahlavi. Some were copied in monasteries of the Egyptian desert, others originated in Sinai, Ethiopia, or the broader Islamic world. They stand as witnesses to the multilingual and multicultural character of Egyptian society, documenting the networks that linked Egypt to neighbouring and distant regions.

Several manuscripts illustrate how texts travelled across linguistic and cultural boundaries. A Gospel commentary (*catena*) translated from Coptic into Arabic was later rendered into Ethiopic. Even more remarkably, the Arabic manuscript Ms. Arab. 103 contains annotations in Coptic, Syriac, and Armenian, tangible evidence that readers from different Christian traditions engaged with the same text. Others preserve marginal notes comparing Greek, Syriac, Coptic, and Arabic versions of Scripture, demonstrating the scholarly efforts to understand, interpret, and harmonise the sacred text across linguistic boundaries. Ethiopian devotional literature drew upon Coptic liturgical traditions, as shown by the manuscript Aethiop. 11. Even the boundaries between religious communities appear permeable: among the treasures displayed here is a Qurʾānic manuscript (Arab. 1) preserved for centuries in a Christian monastery.

But our exhibition also highlights the fragility of this heritage. Some manuscripts survive only as torn leaves or tiny vestiges of ancient codices, often dispersed across libraries and museums around the world. Yet even these humble remnants preserve valuable evidence for the circulation of texts, the movement of people, and the transmission of ideas.

The present exhibition invites visitors to view Egypt not as a region of separate religious or linguistic communities, but as a shared space where people constantly interacted. The manuscripts on display, all preserved in the Göttingen State and University Library, testify to worlds in which books, languages, and traditions crossed boundaries with remarkable ease. Yet ultimately, this exhibition is about the people behind the manuscripts: the scribes, scholars, monks and nuns, pilgrims, and readers who produced, transmitted, and preserved them. It is through their efforts that a remarkable manuscript culture emerged, the legacy of which continues to fascinate and to inform us as we seek to understand the past.

The curators would like to express their gratitude to Dr. Christian Fieseler, head of the Special Collections and Preservation Department at the Lower Saxony State and University Library in Göttingen, for his generous support in making this exhibition possible.

Alin Suciuc & Lina Elhage-Mensching

Display Case 1



Cod. Ms. Or. Var. 1

Multilingual Fragments from Egypt

7th century BCE–early Islamic period

Papyrus and parchment

Miscellaneous fragments written in a remarkable variety of languages and scripts used in Egypt over more than a millennium. Among them are texts in Aramaic, Demotic Egyptian, Greek, Sahidic Coptic, Pahlavi (Middle Persian), and Arabic, including letters, accounts, official documents, and literary texts.

Particularly notable are an Aramaic fragment dating to the 7th or 6th century BCE (Or. Var. 1: XX), Arabic documents from the first centuries of Islamic rule, and rare Pahlavi fragments documenting contacts between Egypt and the wider Iranian world (Or. Var. 1: XXIII–XXIV). These fragments illustrate the extraordinary linguistic and cultural diversity of Egypt, where communities speaking different languages and belonging to different religious traditions lived side by side and contributed to a shared written culture.

The fragments entered the Göttingen collections as a gift from the French archaeologist and collector Wilhelm Fröhner in 1884.



Display Case 2



Orient. Var. 40

Unidentified Sahidic Literary Fragments

9th–10th century CE

Parchment fragments

Orient. Var. 40 consists of hundreds of Sahidic Coptic parchment fragments, most of them of minuscule dimensions. Although the work has not yet been identified, the surviving passages appear to derive from a literary rather than a biblical text. Palaeographical features suggest that the fragments belonged to a codex copied in the 9th or 10th century, probably in the major scribal centre of Touton in the Fayyum Oasis.

The fragments offer a poignant illustration of the fate of many Coptic manuscripts. Once complete books, they were torn apart over the centuries and reduced to scattered remnants. Today, surviving leaves and fragments from the same codices are often dispersed among collections across the world, making their reconstruction a challenging task for modern scholarship.

Yet despite their fragmentary condition, these vestiges preserve traces of Egypt's rich literary heritage and remind us how much of the Coptic written tradition has been lost.



Display Case 2



Reconstructing a Dispersed Manuscript White Monastery, Upper Egypt

10th century CE
Parchment

The White Monastery in Upper Egypt once housed the largest library of Christian Egypt. Over the last two centuries, however, its manuscripts were sold leaf by leaf, with fragments entering more than 40 collections across the world.

The reconstructed leaf displayed here illustrates the extraordinary extent of this dispersal. It is composed of four fragments belonging to the same 10th-century parchment leaf. Today, these pieces are preserved in three different locations: the National Library of France in Paris, the Austrian National Library in Vienna, and a private collection whose whereabouts remain unknown.

The reconstruction reminds us that many Coptic manuscripts survive only in scattered fragments. Reuniting these pieces—whether physically or digitally—allows scholars to recover lost books and to reconstruct the history of one of the most important libraries of the medieval Christian world.



Display Case 3



Cod. Ms. Arab. 103 (orient. 125³)
Catena of the Gospels (Arabic)

13th–14th century CE
 Paper, 363 folios
 24.5 × 15.5 cm

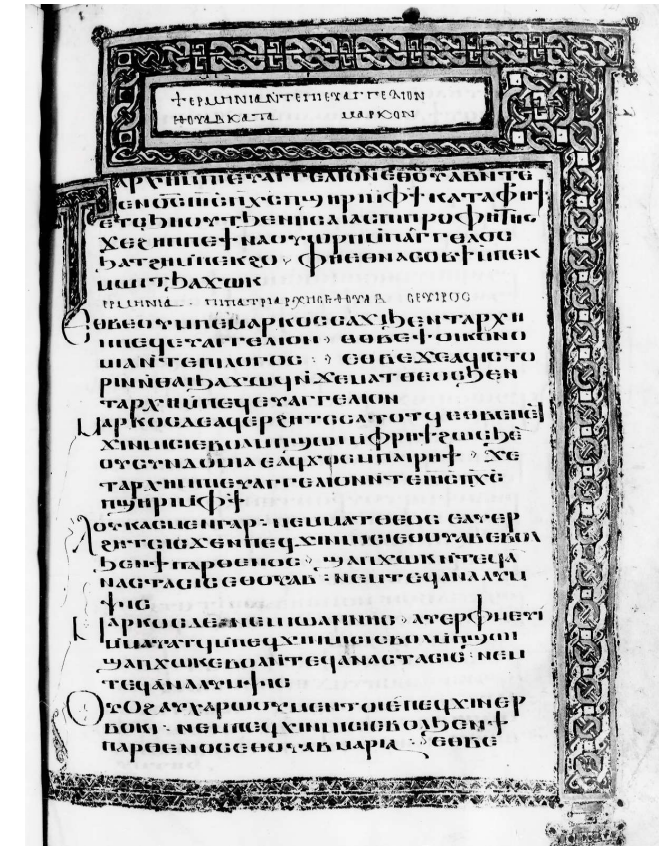
This manuscript contains an Arabic translation of a Gospel *catena*, a type of biblical commentary in which passages from the Gospels are followed by excerpts from the writings of the Church Fathers explaining their meaning. Copied in medieval Egypt, this Gospel *catena* belongs to a long chain of transmission: the Arabic text was translated from Bohairic Coptic and later served as the basis for an Ethiopic version.

The codex is especially notable for its multilingual annotations. Alongside the Arabic text, readers added notes and numbering systems in Coptic, Syriac, and Armenian. These features make the manuscript a valuable witness to the encounter of different Christian traditions in medieval Egypt and to the multilingual environment of the monasteries of Wadi Natrun.



London, BL Or. 8812, f. 121r
 Gospel *Catena* (Bohairic)

Copied in 888/889 CE
 Parchment



Display Case 4



Paul Anton de Lagarde



**born Paul Boetticher
(1827–1891)**

**An eminent 19th-century German
biblical scholar and orientalist**

- 1827 – born as son of the high school teacher Dr. W. Boetticher
- Studied theology, philosophy, and Oriental languages in Berlin and Halle
- 1850 – appointed associate professor
- 1852 – received a travel grant enabling him to travel to England and France where he worked at the British Museum and at the Bibliothèque nationale
- 1854 – adopted by E. de Lagarde, a great-aunt, and eventually changed his name
- 1854–1866 – high school teacher in Berlin
- 1866–1869 – independent scholar
- 1869 – succeeded Heinrich Ewald as Professor and Chair of Oriental Languages at Göttingen until his death in 1891.

As an editor of biblical, rabbinical, and patristic sources, as well as a linguist and scholar of religious studies, he is among the most prominent scholars of the 19th century. His life's work was dedicated to the philological recovery of the original text of the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), upon whose methodical principles the editorial work of the locally based Septuagint Project of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences is founded. Lagarde translated, edited, and reconstructed ancient manuscripts across multiple languages, including Arabic, Syriac, Coptic, and Persian.

As a radically conservative cultural critic of the German Empire, Lagarde turned his sharp polemics against the Protestantism, liberalism, and parliamentarism of his time. Through his hostility toward Jews, he became a representative of a deeply inhumane antisemitism. His “Deutsche Schriften” published in 1886, had an enduring yet highly problematic impact and legacy in the early 20th century.

In conflict with himself and the world, he was both anti-Church and anti-Semitic and he dreamed of the unification of the Germans through a nationalized Christianity.

Display Case 5



Cod. Ms. Lagarde 113

Lectionary and Liturgical Compendium (Coptic and Arabic)

17th–18th century CE

Paper, 144 folios

15.5 × 10 cm

This small Coptic–Arabic liturgical manuscript contains hymns, prayers, and services used in the Coptic Church. Among other texts, it includes *Theotokia*—hymns in honour of the Virgin Mary—as well as services for the Nativity, the Resurrection, and the funerals of nuns. The manuscript was assembled from three distinct codicological units copied by different scribes. The first unit, to which folios 1–5, 30–33, 67, and 108–124 belong, features a neat and regular handwriting on smooth paper. The second unit, comprising folios 10–29 and 125–144 features clumsy Coptic and Arabic scripts. The third unit, which makes the bulk of the codex, features stiff characters on rough paper. An Arabic colophon at the end of the manuscript records the name of one of its scribes, Michael.



Display Case 6



Cod. Ms. Lagarde 138 I
Paul de Lagarde's Transcription of White Monastery Fragments

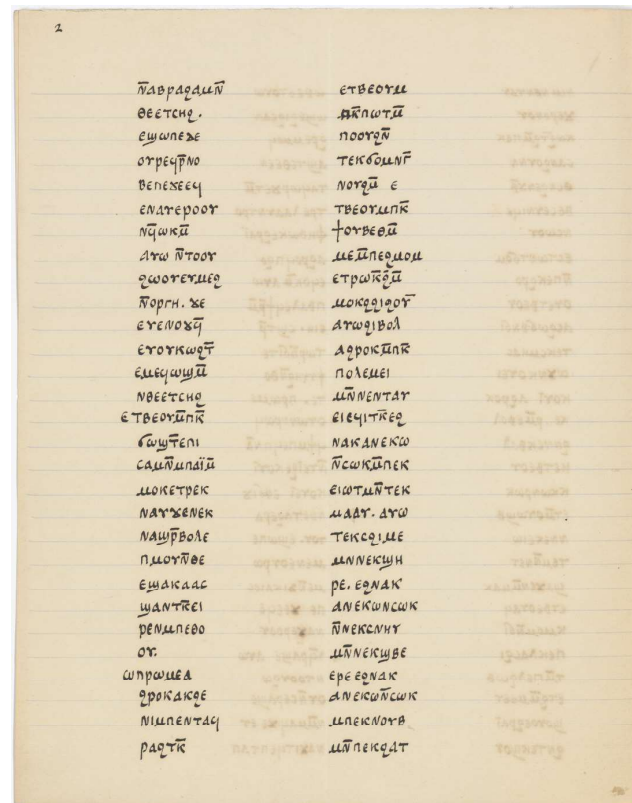
19th century
Modern paper

Transcription made by Paul de Lagarde (1827–1891) of Coptic fragments from the library of the White Monastery in Upper Egypt, one of the most important centres of Christian learning in Late Antiquity. The fragments belong to codex MONB.WZ, which features works of Shenoute (c. 347–451), archimandrite of the White Monastery and the most prolific Coptic author.

At the time of Lagarde's work, the original fragments were in the collection of Robert Curzon, 14th Baron Zouche (1810–1873). They are now preserved in the British Library (Or. 8800). Lagarde's transcription bears witness both to the modern re-discovery of Coptic literature and to the enduring legacy of Shenoute.

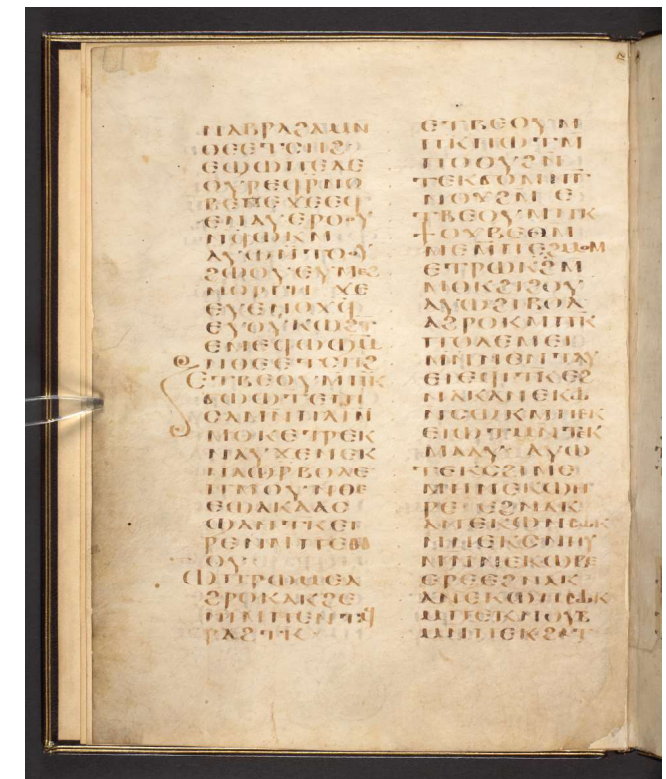


The White Monastery in Upper Egypt. Photo: Caroline Schroeder.



London, BL Or. 8800, f. 1v
Shenoute of Atripe, *De iudicio*

7th century CE
Parchment



Display Case 7



Cod. Ms. Lagarde 138a

Apophthegmata Patrum (Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers)

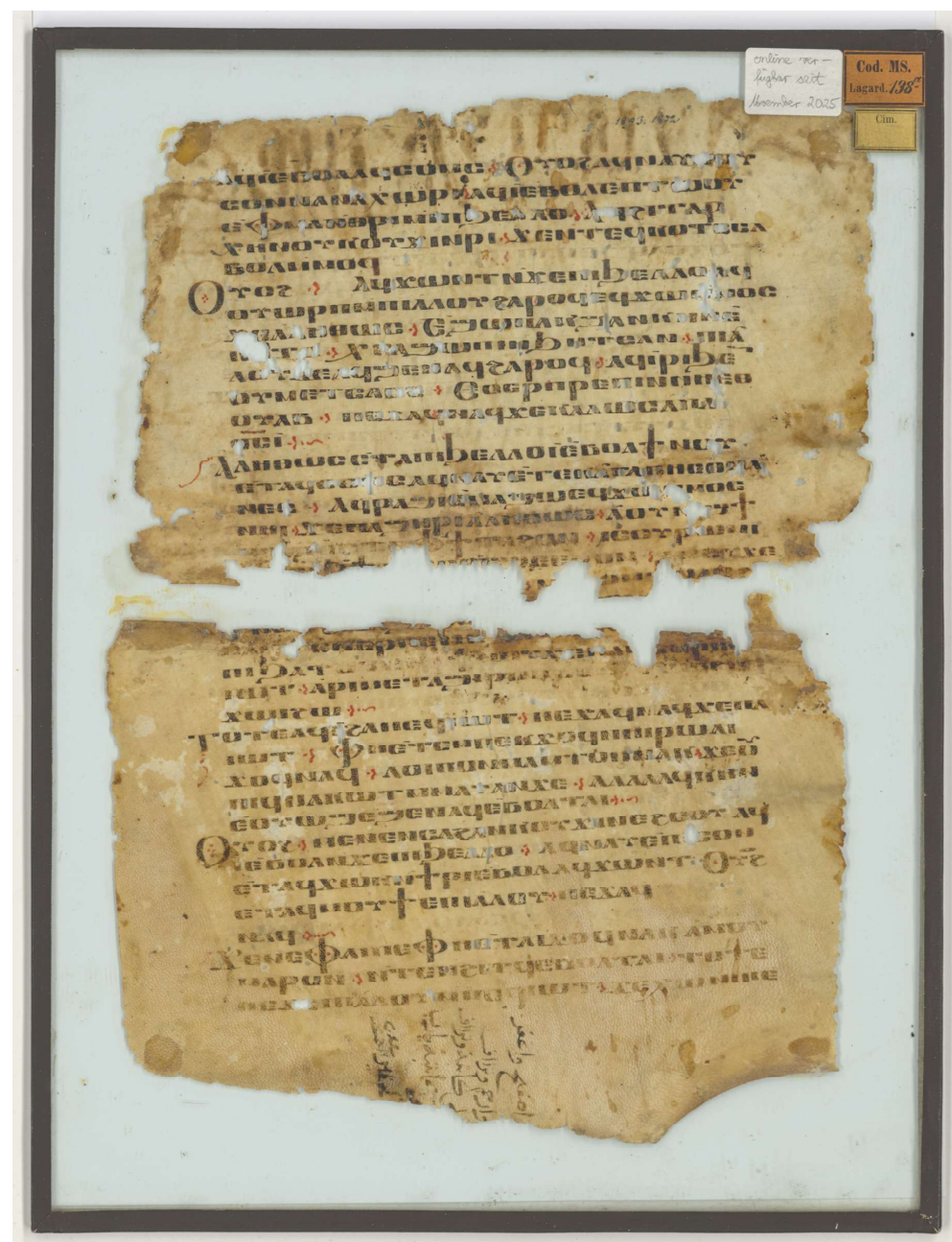
9th–10th century CE

Parchment

25 × 34 cm

This fragment preserves part of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (“Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers”), a famous collection of stories and teachings associated with the monks of the Egyptian desert. It is one of the rare surviving witnesses of the text in Bohairic Coptic, the literary and liturgical language of medieval Egyptian Christianity.

The leaf originally belonged to a large parchment codex but was later cut apart and reused in the binding of another manuscript. Its recovery provides valuable evidence for the transmission of early monastic literature and for the enduring legacy of the Egyptian desert ascetics, whose wisdom spread throughout the Christian world.



Display Case 8



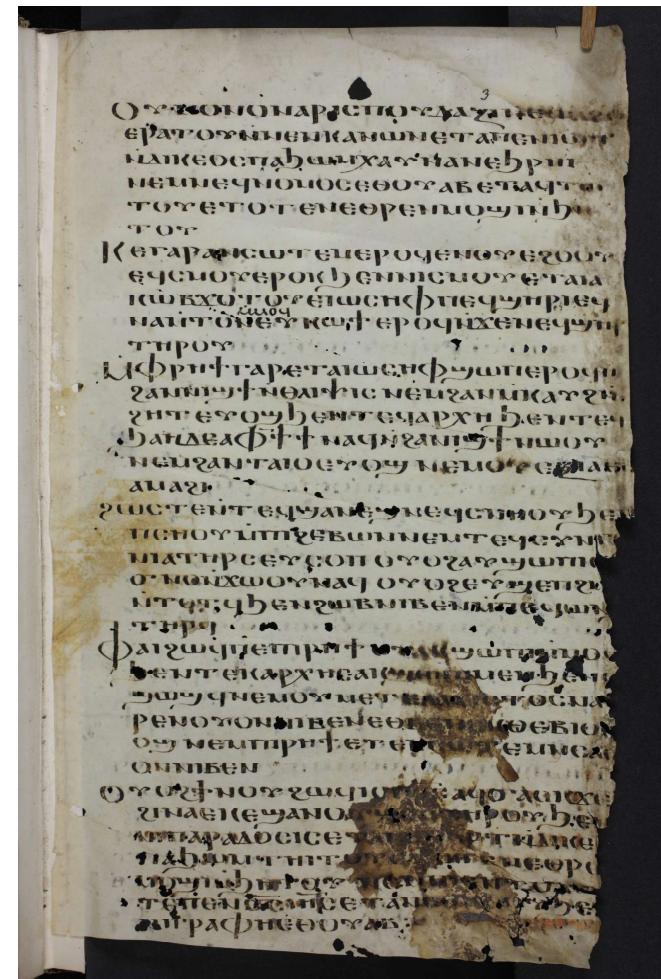
Cairo, IFAO, Copte inv. 209r
Life of Pachomius (Sahidic)

Ca. 10th century
Parchment



Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 1087, f. 3r
Life of Pachomius (Bohairic)

Ca. 10th century
Parchment
Monastery of St. Macarius, Wadi Natrun



Display Case 8



Cod. Ms. Arab. 116 (orient. 125²⁵)

Life of Pachomius (Arabic)

16th century CE

Paper, 115 folios

27.5 × 19 cm

This unpublished Arabic manuscript preserves one of the most important witnesses of the *Life of Pachomius*, the founder of Christian cenobitic monasticism. Although copied in the 16th century, the text derives from a much older Coptic model, preserving a recension of the *Life of Pachomius* that survives only fragmentarily in the original Sahidic tradition.

Scholars have shown that the manuscript includes unique narratives no longer extant in the Coptic or Greek versions of Pachomius' biography. Therefore, it is a key source for reconstructing the early history of Egyptian monasticism and the literary heritage of the Pachomian movement.



Display Case 9



Cod. Ms. Arab. 109 (orient. 125²¹)

Compendium of Theological Essays (Arabic)

Dayr Anba Bishoy, Wadi Natrun, Egypt

Completed on 13 January 1541 CE

Paper, 128 folios

26.5 × 17.5 cm

This manuscript features a wide range of texts on church law, monastic discipline, and Christian ethics. It opens with part of the *Nomocanon* of Michael, the 12th-century bishop of Damietta, one of the most influential legal collections of the medieval Coptic Church. The codex also contains other canons, pastoral instructions, and didactic poems, including works by the famous 13th-century scholar al-As'ad ibn al-'Assāl. A colophon records its completion on 5 Tobi 1257 AM (= 13 January 1541 CE) at the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Wadi Natrun.



Display Case 9



Cod. Ms. Arab. 48 (orient. 66b)

Sultanate Canons

25 Muharram 749 AH corresponding to the 25th of April 1348 CE

Oriental Paper, 150 folios

25 x 17.5 cm

Good and clear *naskh* script

Headings of the chapters and designation of paragraphs in red

The title on f. 1a reads: The Sultanate Canons written by Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Baṣrī al-Māwardī. The codex features multiple notes in cursive script on the margins. The scribe identifies himself in the colophon as Mohammad ben Ali ben Suleiman. More notes are written on the title page, the most important being on the year of passing of al-Māwardī being 451 AH corresponding to the 17th of February 1059 CE.



Display Case 10



Cod. Ms. Arab. 101 (orient. 125^h)

Book of Psalms, Canticles, and Prayers (Arabic)

Dayr Anba Bishoy, Wadi Natrun, Egypt

17th century CE

Paper, 159 folios

20.5 × 13.5 cm

This manuscript contains the Book of Psalms (including Psalm 151), followed by the biblical Canticles, the Song of the Angels, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and additional prayers in Arabic. Produced in the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Wadi Natrun, the manuscript served both liturgical and scholarly purposes. The Psalter occupied a central place in the worship of the Coptic Church. At the same time, marginal notes comparing readings from the Coptic, Syriac, and Greek versions of the biblical text, together with explanatory glosses in Arabic and Coptic, indicate that the codex was also used for the study and interpretation of Scripture.



Display Case 11



Cod. Ms. 105 (orient. 125⁶)

Praxapostolos (Arabic)

Dayr Anba Bishoy, Wadi Natrun, Egypt

Completed on 22 October 1268 CE

Paper, 247 folios

22 × 15 cm

Copied at the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Egypt's Wadi Natrun, this manuscript contains the Pauline Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, an introduction to the Pauline letters, and the *Epistle of Dionysius the Areopagite to Timothy*. Its Arabic text represents the standard version that circulated widely in the Coptic Church during the Middle Ages, being closely related to the edition printed in 1616 by Thomas Erpenius. Marginal notes preserve variant readings from Syriac and Coptic versions, indicating that the manuscript was used both for study and liturgy. A colophon records its completion on 25 Paope 985 AM (= 22 October 1268 CE).



Display Case 12



Cod. Ms. Kopt. 1 (orient. 125⁴)
Gospel Lectionary (Coptic and Arabic)

Copied in Ḥārat al-Rūm, Cairo; later kept at Dayr
Anba Bishoy, Wadi Natrun, Egypt
Completed on 14 August 1775 CE
Paper, 199 folios
40 × 27 cm

This richly decorated Gospel lectionary contains the four Gospels in Coptic, accompanied by Arabic marginal headings. Large ornamental crosses, animal motifs, and elaborate decorative panels mark the beginning of the codex and the opening of each Gospel. A colophon records that the manuscript was completed in Cairo on 10 Mesori 1491 AM (= 14 August 1775 CE) by the scribe Ibrāhīm from an earlier exemplar dated 1073 AM (= 1356 CE), at the request of Bishop Athanasius of Minoufiya. Its imposing format and rich decoration reflect the authority and prestige accorded to the Gospels in the Coptic Church.



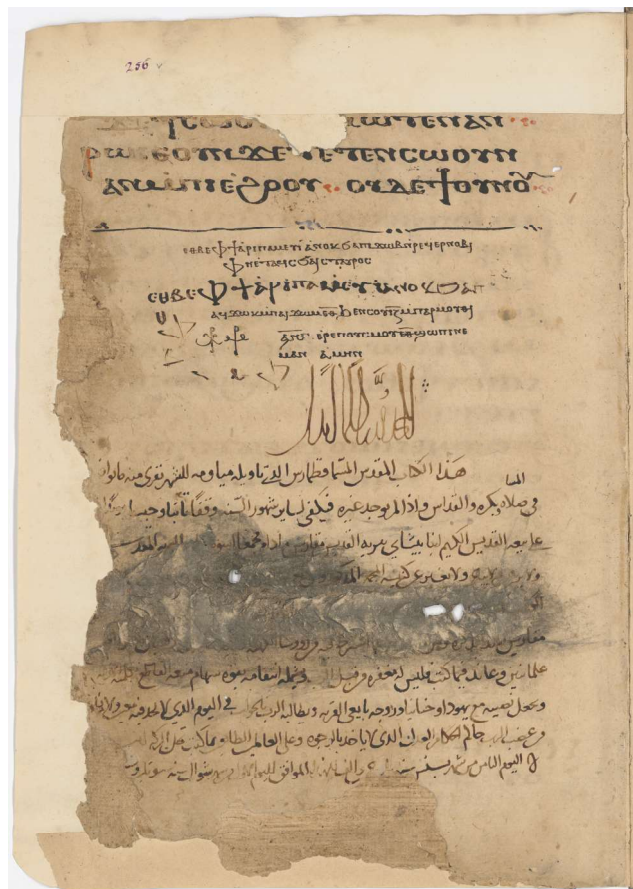
Display Case 13



Cod. Ms. Kopt. 3 (orient. 125^a)
Annual Lectionary (*Katameros*) (Coptic and Arabic)

Dayr Anba Bishoy, Wadi Natrun, Egypt
Completed on 12 April 1337 CE
Paper, 163 folios
34 × 24.5 cm

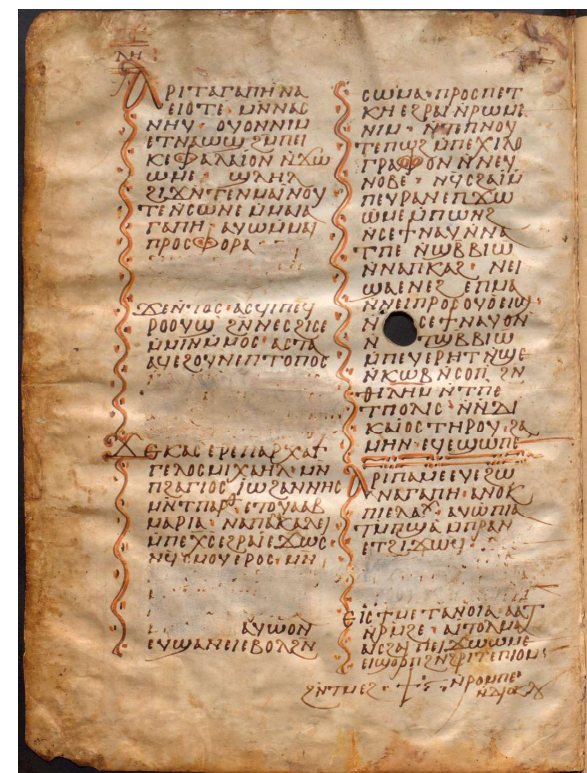
This annual lectionary (*Katameros*) contains the biblical readings appointed for major feasts and Sundays of the Coptic liturgical year. Written in Bohairic Coptic with Arabic headings, it features readings for the evening, morning, and Eucharistic services, reflecting the structure of medieval Coptic worship. Decorated initials, often shaped as birds, mark the beginning of the reading sections. A colophon records the manuscript's completion on 17 Parmouti 1053 AM (= 12 April 1337 CE). The name of its donor was later erased, suggesting a rededication of the manuscript or a change of ownership. Such erasures are not uncommon in Coptic manuscripts, despite the fact that scribes often included curses in their colophons against anyone who might remove the names of the donors or of the monastery for which the manuscript had been produced.



London, British Library, Or. 6782, f. 28v
Sahidic Coptic manuscript

Fayyum, Egypt
Copied in 989/990 CE
Parchment

The names of the female donor and the recipient monastery were deliberately erased. Such alterations are common in Coptic manuscripts and often suggest that a book was later transferred to a different location.



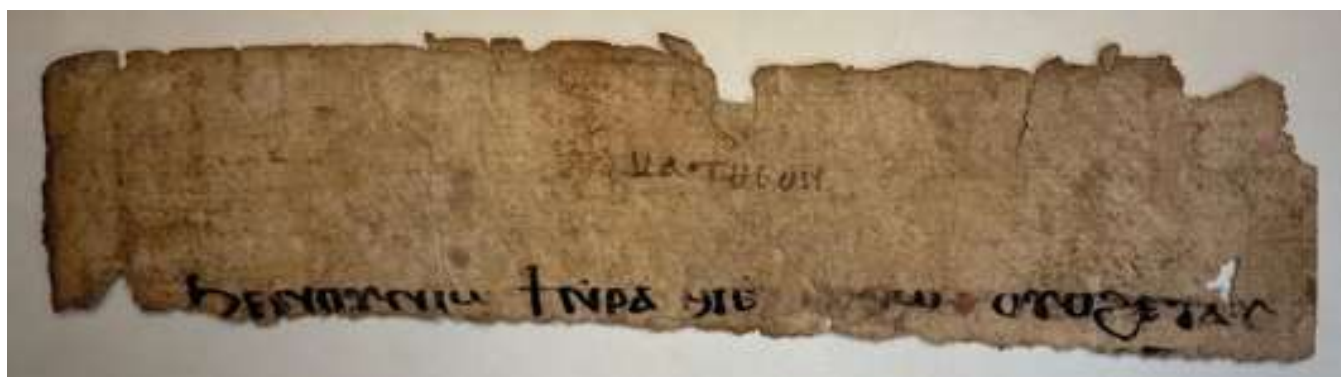
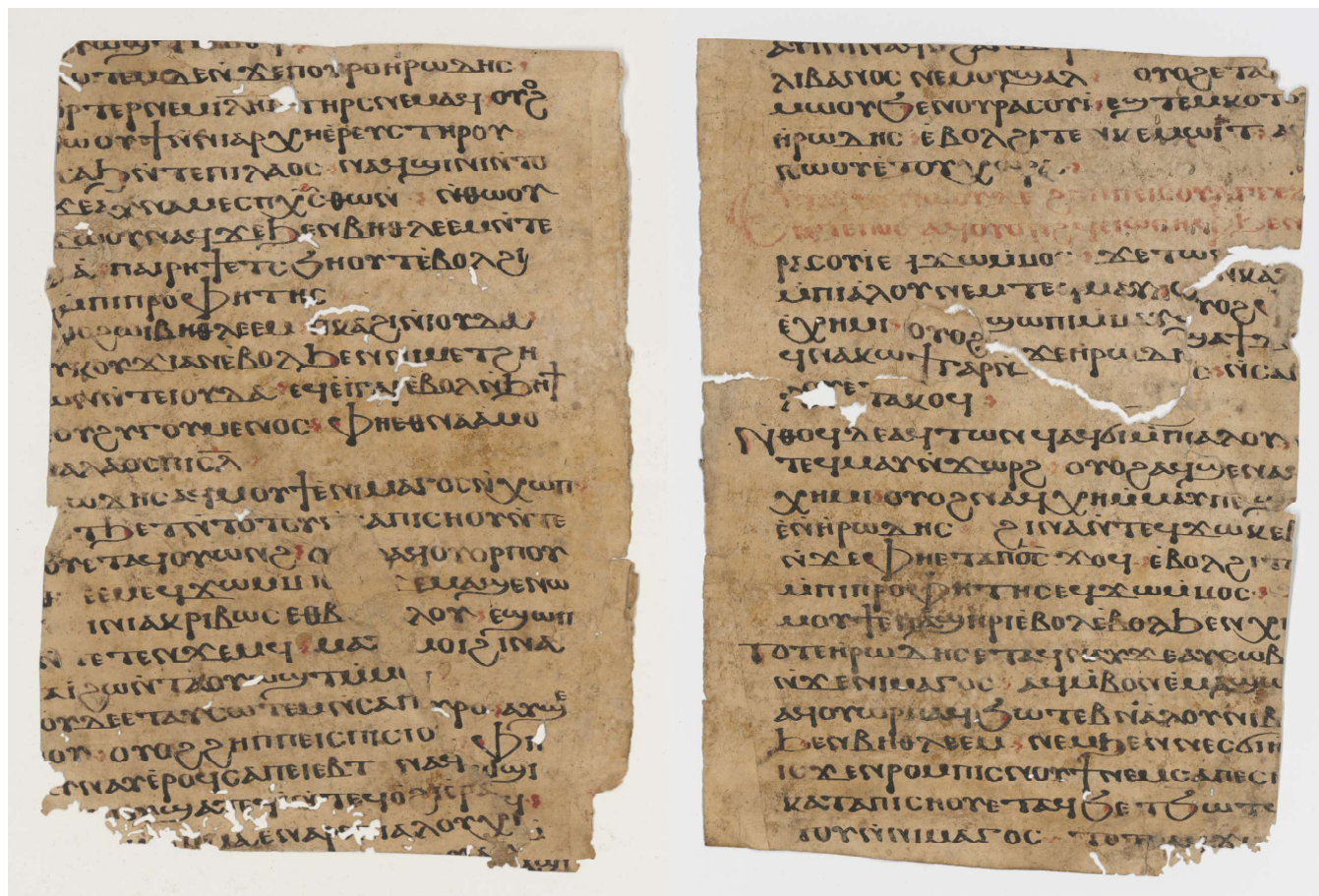
Display Case 14



Cod. Ms. Kopt. 11
Gospel of Matthew 1:19–3:3

14th century CE
Paper, 3 fragments
Ca. 20 × 28 cm

These fragments derive from a Coptic manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew. Written in an elegant book hand, the text is arranged in a single column, while chapter headings and divisions are highlighted in red ink. The extensive damage illustrates the fragmentary condition in which many medieval Coptic manuscripts have reached modern collections.



Display Case 15



Cod. Ms. Arab. 1 (orient. 125³²)

Qur'ān (Arabic)

9th–10th century CE

Parchment, 14 folios

20.5 × 16 cm

These leaves preserve portions of the Qur'ān written in an early Kūfic script, one of the oldest forms of Arabic book writing. The text is richly decorated with coloured dots and signs that guide pronunciation and indicate alternative readings, marks of the sophisticated scholarly traditions surrounding the transmission of the Qur'ān. Golden rosettes separate individual verses, while larger illuminated medallions mark groups of five verses.

Remarkably, these fragments were acquired by Heinrich Brugsch in 1878 from the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Wadi Natrun, Egypt. They represent one of the very few known examples of a Qur'ānic manuscript preserved in a Christian monastery, offering a glimpse into the entangled cultural and religious history of medieval Egypt.



The Monastery of Anba Bishoy, Wadi Natrun, Egypt. Photo: Stephen Davis.



Display Case 16



Heinrich Ferdinand Karl Brugsch



(1827–1894)

A prominent 19th-century German
Egyptologist

- Born in 1827 to a Prussian soldier, Brugsch showed an early talent for Egyptology that gained the support of King Frederick William IV.
- He conducted extensive research in Egypt and Iran, published foundational works on pre-Greek geography, and founded the oldest existing Egyptology journal in 1864.
- He served as a professor at the Universities of Berlin and Göttingen, acted as the Prussian consul in Cairo, and managed the School of Egyptology in Cairo.
- In 1867, the University of Göttingen established a dedicated professorship for Egyptology specifically for Brugsch—making it the third ever Egyptology professorship worldwide, after Paris and Berlin. This role followed his academic qualification at the University of Berlin and his extensive field research in Egypt and Iran.
- Heinrich Brugsch's tenure in Göttingen (1868–1870) was brief but significant, as it established one of the world's first formal academic seats for Egyptology. His teaching focused on Egyptian language and religion, alongside Egyptological-Coptic literary studies.
- Scholarly Conflict: During this period, he was reportedly involved in academic rivalries, notably with the Orientalist Paul de Lagarde, over the direction of Middle Eastern studies and Egyptology at the university.
- While in Göttingen, he published *Ueber Bildung und Entwicklung der Schrift* (1868), an influential work on the formation and development of writing systems.
- Coptic-Arabic Manuscripts: Brugsch donated a collection of Coptic and Arabic manuscripts to the Göttingen University Library (SUB Göttingen). These manuscripts, which include notes mentioning the Monastery of Anba Bishoy, were acquired during his travels in Egypt.
- These donations helped establish Göttingen as a major center for the study of the Christian Orient and Coptic literature, complementary to his work in Pharaonic Egyptology.
- He is also credited with bringing several biblical manuscripts from Sinai to Berlin, including fragments known as *Minuscule 257*, 653, and 654.

Display Case 17

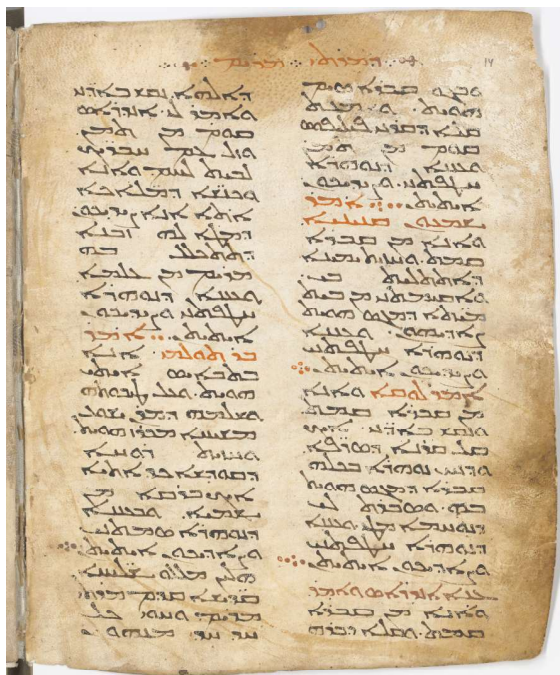


Cod. Ms. Syr. 10 Apocryphal Texts (Syriac)

6th century CE
Parchment, 37 folios
26.5 × 21.5 cm

This manuscript preserves several early Christian apocryphal writings in Syriac, including the *Proto-evangelium of James*, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, and the *Transitus Mariae* (*Dormition of the Virgin*). It formed part of a larger codex from the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, where additional leaves are still preserved.

Among the oldest witnesses to these texts, the manuscript is of exceptional importance for the study of Christian traditions about the childhood of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Its text represents an early stage in the transmission of Syriac apocryphal literature and provides valuable evidence for the complex development of these narratives in Late Antiquity.



Cod. Ms. Syr. 12 Deuteronomy (Syriac)

9th–10th century CE
Parchment, 8 folios
26 × 34 cm

These Syriac parchment leaves originally belonged to the library of the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. Written in the elegant Estrangelo script and arranged in two columns, they contain Deuteronomy 9:12–11:9, 17:1–19:6, and 31:15–34:10. An Arabic quire number on the first leaf demonstrates that the manuscript was used within the multilingual environment of Sinai.



Monastery of St Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Miriam Hjälms.



Display Case 18



Heinrich Ferdinand Wüstenfeld



(1808–1899)

A 19th-century German Orientalist

- Born in 1808, in Hann. Münden, Wüstenfeld attended Latin school in his hometown.
- He then studied Oriental languages in Göttingen and Berlin. He received his doctorate in 1831 and his habilitation in 1832 in Göttingen.
- He began working there in 1838, initially in the university library. In 1842, he was appointed associate professor.
- In 1856, he was appointed full professor of Oriental languages. From 1876, he was director of the historical class at the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen. In 1889, he resigned from his position at the university library, which he had held until then.

- Wüstenfeld is best known for his translations of Ibn Khallikan and Ibn Hisham, as well as Abu Mikhnaf's writings on Ashura. He also wrote numerous works on the language and geography of the Near East, as well as on the history and topography of Mecca and Medina, and compiled an extensive list of Arab tribes and families. He died on February 8, 1899, in Hanover.
- Selected works (titles translated into English)
 - *The Academies of the Arabs and Their Teachers* (1837)
 - *History of Arab Doctors and Natural Scientists* (1840)
 - *Genealogical Tables of Arab Tribes and Families* (1852)
 - *Comparative Tables of the Muslim and Christian Calendars* (1854)
 - Translation of *History of the City of Medina* by Samhudi (1860)
 - *The Governors of Egypt*, 4 sections (1875-76)
 - *Translations of Arabic works into Latin* (1877)
 - *The el-Zubeir – Dimashki family* (1878)
 - *History of the Fatimids* (1881)
 - *The Historians of the Arabs* (1882), including Abu Mikhnaf's writings on Ashura
 - *History of the Turks* (1899)

Display Case 19



Cod. Ms. Arab. 76 (orient. 76a)
Al-Muwaffaqiyyat (Arabic)

First part copied in 1198 CE
 Paper, 260 folios
 24 × 15.5 cm

This Muslim manuscript contains part of the *Al-Muwaffaqiyyat*, a celebrated collection of historical anecdotes and reports attributed to the 9th-century scholar al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār. Compiled for the Abbasid prince al-Muwaffaq, the work is an important source for the history of early Islam, particularly the Quraysh tribe, the Umayyad dynasty, and the rise of the Abbasid Caliphate. Combining entertaining stories with carefully transmitted historical traditions, the text offers a glimpse into the political and cultural world of the 7th–9th centuries CE.



Display Case 20



Cod. Ms. Aethiop. 11

Weddāse Māryām ("Praise of Mary") (Ethiopian)

Ethiopia, mid-15th century CE

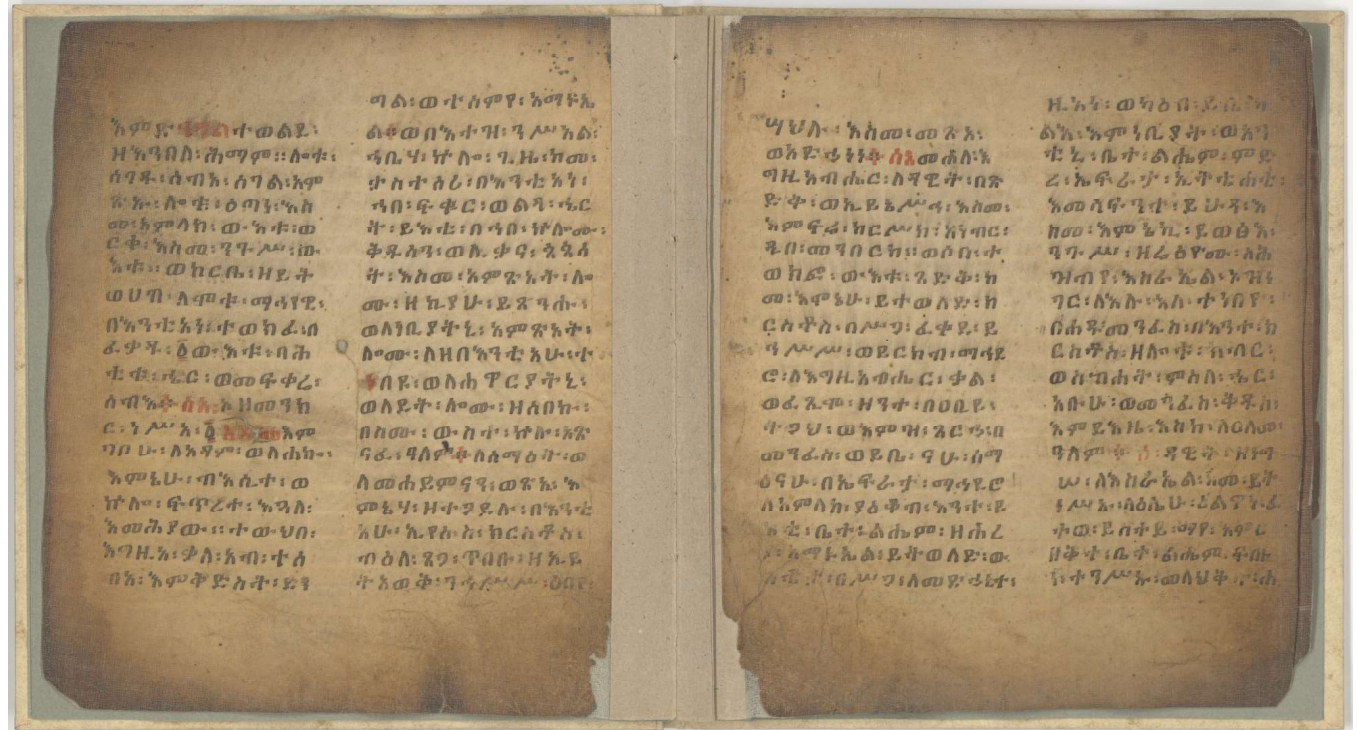
Parchment, 5 folios

16.5 × 18 cm

This Ethiopian manuscript preserves part of the *Weddāse Māryām* ("Praise of Mary"), one of the most beloved devotional texts of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Arranged as a cycle of readings for the days of the week, the work features prayers and hymns dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

The manuscript is remarkable for its beautiful calligraphy. According to an early note, it was discovered on the floor of a church in Ethiopia by the German scholar Enno Littmann and subsequently entered the collections of Göttingen University Library.

The manuscript bears witness to the close religious and cultural ties between Ethiopia and Egypt. The *Weddāse Māryām* draws extensively on the Coptic *Theotokia*, the hymns dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the liturgy of the Egyptian Church. For centuries, Ethiopian monks and pilgrims maintained a strong presence in Egypt, especially in the monasteries of Wadi Natrun and along the pilgrimage routes leading to Jerusalem. These communities fostered the transmission of texts, liturgical traditions, and devotional practices between the two churches.



Display Case 21



Cod. Ms. Syr. 23

Palimpsest with Georgian and Christian Palestinian Aramaic Texts

Upper text: 10th century CE

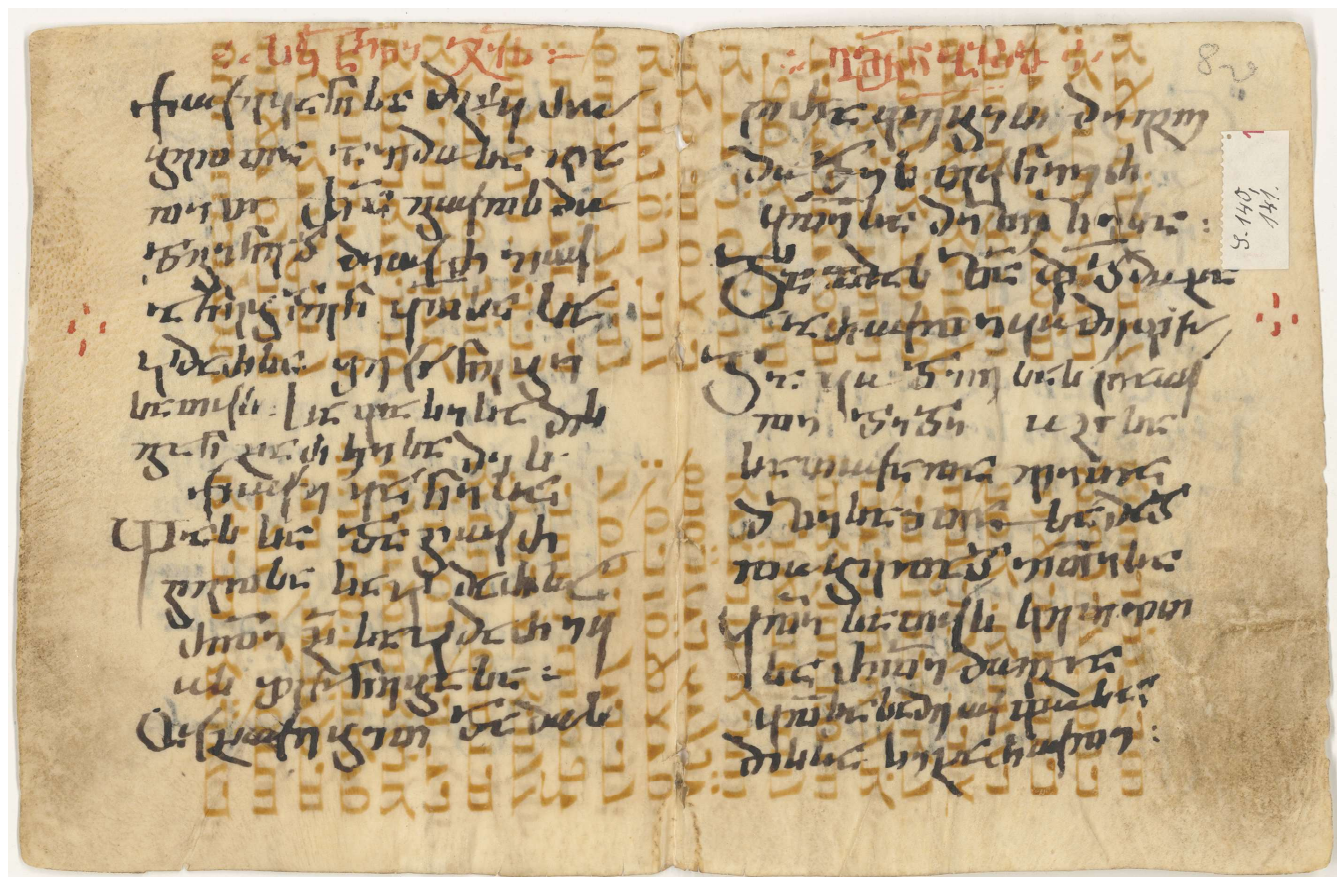
Undertext: 6th–7th century CE

Parchment

This manuscript is a palimpsest, a reused parchment whose original text was erased to accommodate a new one. The upper text is in Georgian, a language of the Caucasus, and preserves part of a treatise on the discovery of the True Cross by the 6th-century monk Alexander of Cyprus. It was copied in the 10th century by the renowned Georgian monk, scholar, and scribe Ioane Zosime, one of the most prolific figures in the literary culture of the Georgian monasteries of the Holy Land and Sinai.

Beneath the Georgian lies an older text written in Christian Palestinian Aramaic, a dialect once used by Chalcedonian Christian communities in Palestine. Dating to the 6th or 7th century, the CPA undertext belongs to a linguistic and literary tradition that has survived only in a small number of manuscripts.

Once preserved at the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, this palimpsest provides an excellent example of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the eastern Mediterranean, where Georgian, Aramaic, Greek, Arabic, and other traditions coexisted and interacted within the same monastic environments.



Display Case 21

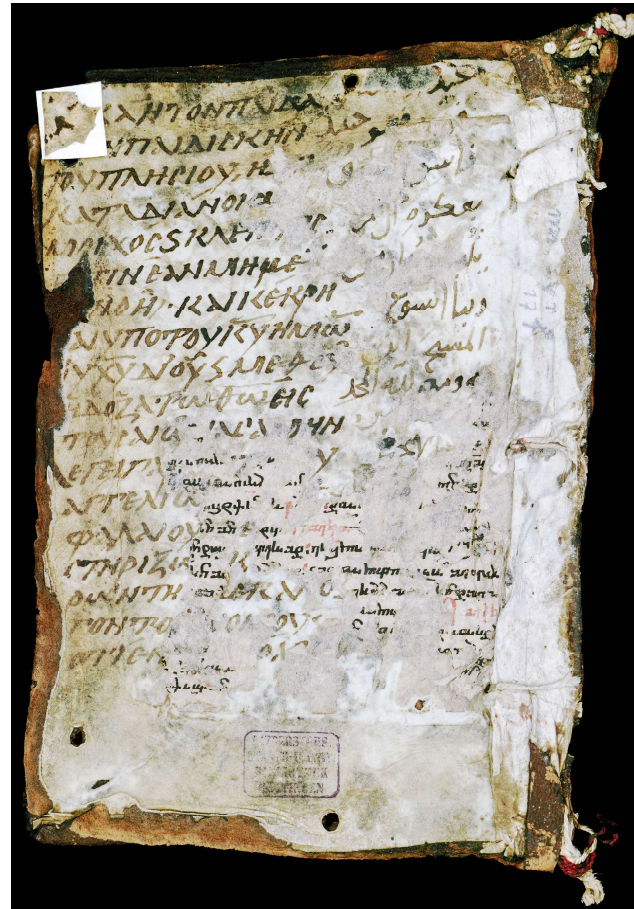


Cod. Ms. Syr. 17f
Apostolic Constitutions

8th–9th century CE
Parchment
12.5 × 19 cm

Long catalogued as a Syriac manuscript, this fragment was later identified as part of the Greek *Apostolic Constitutions*, one of the most important collections of church regulations from early Christianity. Written in Greek uncial script, it preserves a passage from Book I of the work. It is currently the oldest known witness to this section of the text.

The fragment was reused in the binding of a later codex and probably originated at the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. Its rediscovery has provided valuable evidence for the transmission of a work that shaped Christian liturgy, ecclesiastical organisation, and canon law throughout Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.



Cod. Ms. Syr. 21



References



Manuscripts preserved at the SUB of Göttingen

Case 1	Cod. Ms. Or. Var. 1
Case 2	Orient. Var. 40
Case 3	Cod. Ms. Arab. 103 (orient. 125 ³)
Case 5	Cod. Ms. Lagarde 113
Case 6	Cod. Ms. Lagarde 138 l
Case 7	Cod. Ms. Lagarde 138a
Case 8	Cod. Ms. Arab. 116 (orient. 125 ²⁵)
Case 9	Cod. Ms. Arab. 109 (orient. 125 ²¹)
	Cod. Ms. Arab. 48 (orient. 66b)
Case 10	Cod. Ms. Arab. 101 (orient. 125 ¹)
Case 11	Cod. Ms. 105 (orient. 125 ⁶)
Case 12	Cod. Ms. Kopt. 1 (orient. 125 ⁴)
Case 13	Cod. Ms. Kopt. 3 (orient. 125 ⁸)
Case 14	Cod. Ms. Kopt. 11
Case 15	Cod. Ms. Arab. 1 (orient. 125 ³²)
Case 17	Cod. Ms. Syr. 10
	Cod. Ms. Syr. 12
Case 19	Cod. Ms. Arab. 76 (orient. 76a)
Case 20	Cod. Ms. Aethiop. 11
Case 21	Cod. Ms. Syr. 23
	Cod. Ms. Syr. 21

Books Exhibited

Case 3	Francisco Javier Caubet Iturbe, <i>La Cadena árabe del Evangelio de san Mateo</i> , 2 vols. (Studi e Testi 254–255, Vatican 1969–1970).
	Paul de Lagarde, <i>Catena in evangelia aegyptiacae quae supersunt</i> (Göttingen 1886).
Case 4	Paul de Lagarde, <i>Deutsche Schriften, Gesamtausgabe letzter Hand</i> , 2 vols. (Göttingen 1886).
Case 7	Heribert Rosweyde, <i>Vitae patrum. De vita et verbis seniorum sive historiae eremiticae libri X</i> (Antwerp 1615).
Case 8	Louis Théophile Lefort, <i>Les vies coptes de Saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs</i> (Louvain 1943).
	Louis Théophile Lefort, <i>S. Pachomii Vitae Sahidice Scriptae</i> , 2 vols (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 99–100. Scriptores coptici 9–10; Louvain 1952).
	Louis Théophile Lefort, <i>S. Pachomii Vita Bohairice Scripta</i> , 2 vols (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 89–90. Scriptores coptici 7–8; Louvain 1953).
	Armand Veilleux, <i>Pachomian Koinonia</i> , vol. 1 (Kalamazoo 1980).
Case 10	Paul de Lagarde, <i>Psalterium, Iob, Proverbia Arabice</i> (Göttingen 1876).

Poster Identifications

Case 2	Reconstructed folio MONB.DH.
Case 3	London, British Library Or. 8812, f. 121r.
Case 6	London, British Library Or. 8800, f. 1v.
	The White Monastery in Upper Egypt. Photo credit: Caroline Schroeder.
Case 8	Cairo, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Copte inv. 209r. <i>Life of Pachomius in Sahidic</i> .
	Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 1087, f. 3r. <i>Life of Pachomius in Bohairic</i> .
Case 13	London, British Library Or. 6782, f. 28v.
Case 15	The Monastery of Anba Bishoy, Wadi Natrun, Egypt. Photo credit: Stephen Davis.
Case 17	The Monastery of St Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo credit: Miriam Hjälms.
Case 21	Cod. Ms. Syr. 17f.