ACROSTIC PSALI BATOS AND ADAM

BY

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INTRODUCTION

In his significant article about Psalis, Yassa ‘Abd al-Masih highlighted several categories of Psalis. The alphabetic acrostic psalis are attested in the Manuscript M 574 from the ninth century. Each hymn consists of 24 stanzas. We have discovered two manuscripts which differ substantially from the pre-mentioned classical form. One of our Manuscripts has four letters in each stanza while the other has only two.

This type of hymn is very rare in the Coptic texts; however it appears frequently in the Greek hymnody as it is first attested from the fourth century in the tomb of the young Petechon, a long acrostic poem on the name of the deceased informs us that he left his earthly fiancée to become a partaker of the spirit.

1 This article is dedicated to the memory of Metropolitan Athanasius of Bani Soueif who allowed me to study some of the manuscripts in his diocese. (On this great person cf. Gawdat GABRA, Historical Dictionary of the Coptic Church, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press 2008, p.42-43 s.v.) I am grateful to my friend Ayman Samir who kindly helped me to get the photos.


THE MANUSCRIPTS

MANUSCRIPT A FROM THE MONASTERY OF BAYAD

Manuscript A is 15cm x 22cm, and consists of 14 lines per folio, written in one column. The endowment and the colophon are added in other hands. The titles are written in Arabic with red ink. Some decorative detail occurs on the first letter of each sentence. The foliation occurs on the version with uncial Coptic letters. For an unknown reason, the scribe jumps from folio number ⲉⲥⲥⲥⲥⲥ (253) to folio ⲉⲥⲥⲥⲥⲥ (256), as the text continues. The Coptic handwriting is done by a skilful scribe whereas the Arabic titles are executed in much poorer quality. It is assumed that the manuscript was copied from another manuscript, as it contains many mistakes. The manuscript is dated in the marginal note and the colophon as follows:

تم وكمل هذا الإبصاليات في سنة الف وخمسماية للشهدا الأطهار السعدا الأبرار أمين. تم وكمل كتاب الإبصاليات الجزء الثاني من برمماث إلى النسي بسلام من الربي أمين في سنة □□□□□□قبطية. اذكر يارب عبدك المهتم بهذا الكتاب منقريوس ابن نحلة لاجل غفران خطايا التاريخ الف وخمسماية وسبعة للشهدا الأطهار الموافق سنة الف مايتين واربعة عربية.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم 
وقفا موبدا وحبسا مخاد علي بيعة السيدة العذرى الطاهرة مرتمرا بدير بياض شرقي بني سويف لا يباع ولا يرهن ولا يخرج ولا يبرغ ولا يليرج من البيع المنكره بوجة من وجهة التلاف وكلمن تعدي واخرجه يكون نصيبه مع دفلا الكافر ويهوذا الاسخريوطي وكلمن لنسته ورده عاجلا يكتبوه على سبيل نقله ام قواه يكون محال مبارك وابن الطاعة تحل البركة والشكر لله دائما

7 No number is given by the collection
These psalis were completed and accomplished in the year 1500 of the pure, joyous, righteous martyrs. Amen! The book of the Psalis – from the latter part of Baramhât to Nasî – was completed and accomplished, in the peace of the Lord, in the Coptic year 1507 of the martyrs (=1791 AD).

Remember O Lord your servant who cared for this book; Manqariûs son of Nakhlah, [and grant] the forgiveness of his sins.

The date is 1507 of the pure martyrs which corresponds to the year 1204 of the Arabs.

In the name of God the beneficent and merciful! Inalienable endowment and an eternal possession for the Church of the Lady and pure Virgin, the Lady Mary, in the Monastery of Bayad to the east of Bani Sueif. Not to be sold or to be pledged elsewhere and never to change this endowment for the abovementioned monastery. Whoever transgresses this and removes [this book] from its place, will have a share with Diocletian the impious and Judas Iscariot. Whosoever finds it removed for the purpose of copying but returns it quickly, let him be absolved and blessed. Grace will be upon the son of obedience. Thanks be to God forever.

The sponsor of this Coptic book of Psalis is the late Manqariûs son of the late Nakhlah. May God repose their souls in the kingdom of heaven in the Heavenly Jerusalem. God give repose to the soul of his wife Dimyana in the paradise of joy in the Heavenly Jerusalem.

The monastery of the Virgin Mary Bayad10 is a well-known monastery.11 It was mentioned by Maqrizi as a church of Saint Antony to the

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8 Read هذا
9 Uncertain translation, the handwriting is very poor and hard to read.
south of Itfih.12 The minister of the church, priest Gad Allah, is mentioned also in the procession of the patriarch John XVI during his visit in Jerusalem.13

MANUSCRIPT B

LIT 63 BAYAD AL-NASARAH IS A RECENT MANUSCRIPT

The copying of this holy book, containing the psalms of the martyrs and the saints, was completed on Saturday the 18th of the month of Abîb 1658 of the Coptic year of the pure martyrs which corresponds to 25th of the month of July 1942 and it became inalienable endowment and an eternal possession for the Churches of the Lady Virgin in Bani Suif and Bayad al-Nasarah and Darb al-‘Id should not be taken out of his endowment or taken in pledge. The son of obedience will get blessing, Athanasius Metropolitan of Bani Suif and Behnasa.

MANUSCRIPT C

LIT 94 CHURCH OF SAMMANUD

Manuscript consists of 14 lines per folio, written in one column. No endowment or colophon survived. The titles are written in Arabic with red ink. The first and last quires are lost. Some decorative detail occurs on the first letter of each sentence. The manuscript suffered from humidity. The foliotation is on the version with uncial Coptic letters. The Coptic and Arabic handwriting are done by a skilful scribe. It is assumed that the manuscript was copied from another manuscript, as it contains many mistakes. The manuscript is not dated. Our texts occurs in ff. 370-377r.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE TEXTS

The texts published here for the first time are unique and contain several features:

- Because of that particular structure, these psalis are not mentioned by Ibn Kabar in his encyclopaedia The Lamp of Darkness. Otherwise these psalis are dedicated to Jesus Christ and this feature is the same as the daily psalis. They

- These Psalis are anonymous, while in the psalis of later periods, we

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find the name of the author; such as Sarkis, Nicodemus,18 Hermina and Christodolus,20 and many others.

- These Psalis, as we mentioned, are dedicated to Jesus Christ, whereas from the fifteenth century we have psalis dedicated to the Virgin or saints. As far as we know the first Psali dedicated to the Virgin is attributed to John Bishop of Assiut.21

- These Psalis are very short, as four letters are grouped in one stanza. Hence we have 8 stanzas which is the length of the doxologies.22 This feature is also attested in the Sahidic dialect,23 and also in Greek.24

- One of these Psalis has the refrain: “our Saviour Son of God” which also appears in the normal daily Psalis for the Sundays and the Saturdays.

- The grammar of the Coptic language is not always respected and

24 There is a Copto-Greek acrostic hymn which occurs in the book of Glorifications starting with ὅσιος ὁ θεός ἀληθινός ἵκτορ [Holy is the Father...]. cf. ATTALLA ARSENIOS AL-MOHARRAQI [The book of the holy glorifications of the Virgin, the Angels, the Apostles and the saints], Cairo 1972, p 6-8.
sometimes the meanings requires some guesswork.

Ms A.

Psali Batos,²⁵ four strophes per stanza, to be recited during the days (of the week), Saturdays and the Sunday vespers throughout the year.

I relied on You Lord. Help us, have mercy upon us, for You are the Guardian. Glory be to You, O our God.

You are worthy of glory, seven myriad times. Today let us glorify You, to You is the glory O Lover of mankind.

O Jesus Christ the sinless, destroy the power of the demons. All reasons for sin, let them flee from us.

²⁵ The tone to which hymns are sung on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The name is taken from the first stanza of the Theotokia of Thursday “The bush which Moses saw in the desert” cf. O. H. E. BURMESTER, Koptische Handschriften, die Handschriftensfragmente der Staats- Und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, 1. Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag 1975, p. 322.

²⁶ Read υψωτάς υψώτατος.

²⁷ Read υψωτάς υψώτατος.

²⁸ Read υψωτάς υψώτατος.

²⁹ A read υψωτάς υψώτατος which should be read ὑψωτάς ὑψώτατος “behold let us glorify …”

³⁰ Read υψωτάς υψώτατος.

³¹ B read loi it should be read perhaps υψωτάς υψώτατος.
Praise is due unto You, O God, suddenly in music and to You vows shall be performed forever free quotation Ps. 64 (65): 1. Incline Your ear to my supplication, look and listen to us, arise O Lord with might, O Son of the invisible God.

To You is the glory forever. Holy are You, O Lord, eternal Saviour, elevate Your servant to good things.

Be unto me a helper, wipe away uncleanness from us. (Let us) be close to Him in our distress, in order that He save us.

32 B read ▼◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻шей
Sing to the Lord a new song:  
Hasten from out of the deserts:
beseech you, O Lover of mankind,  
have mercy upon us according to  
Your great mercy.

And when we...

The author of this text changes freely from the first person singular to the first person plural in almost every stanza.
The author quotes freely biblical texts.
The scribe did not understand the meaning of the text, and hence we find many mistakes.
It seems that the author did not master the Coptic language, as validated in this stanza:
As the word uyrion does not have any meaning in this context, even if the order of the vowels were to change. The other possibilities are “wild animal”, “outside the door.” Our suggestion is only a preposition.
The stanza starts with h should be read as hp it seems that the p is missing by distraction as this tune of the strophe will be too short if we consider the scribe wrote it correctly.
Despite the late date of the manuscript (1500AM = 1784AD), this composition has some ancient features that are not common in Coptic hymns; such as the monostrophic acrostic text. We encounter this in the Greek hymn agios estin o pathr

Fol ϐ η ν- η η η η η η.
Psali Adam, to be recited on Sundays throughout the year.

Preserve me, my God, help us, my Lord, for You are my salvation, righteous are you O my Holy (One).

Through Your extremely numerous grace, behold I fled (to) God (who) delivers me.

Jesus Christ have mercy upon us according to Your goodness and be compassionate to us and make the afflictions be away from us.

Deliver me, in Your name. You comfort my mind, reveal Your name, my Saviour Jesus.

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41 The tone to which hymns are sung on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays. The name is taken from the first word of the stanza of the Theotokia of Monday “Adam was yet sorrowful of heart” cf. O.H.E. BURMESTER, Koptische Handschriften, p.321.

42 B read ḫⲛⲛⲛⲛ. It should be eron.

43 Read ⲛⲛⲛⲛ. Meaning is not clear.

44 Read perhaps ⲛⲛⲛⲛⲛⲛ. Meaning uncertain.

45 For the different meaning of this word cf. Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, “Two notes on the Coptic Theotokia” Scrinium 5 (2009) 56-84.
Incline Your ear to me, and hearken unto me quickly, then protect us, Son of God through Your deliverance.

God the merciful, hasten unto Your servant, (my) soul and my heart cried out to You.

Make Your people as holy of this world for Your Cross (sake) as Good God.

Make us perfect in Your faith, guide us to Your bride, the second tabernacle for You are merciful.

And also if we…

The psali is short, and the strophes are also short.
This Psali is inspired by several previous texts such as shown here-under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>our text A</th>
<th>Psali of Sunday (normal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incline Your ear to me, and hearken unto me quickly, then protect us, Son of God through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incline Your ear to me, hearken unto me quickly, my Lord Jesus Christ help me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48 B read □□□□□□□□□□□.
49 Meaning uncertain.
Your deliverance

Psali Batos, four strophes for stanza, yearly

I believed in You, Son of God, everybody praises You, our Saviour the Son of God

For You are my salvation, have mercy upon us according to Your great mercy. Let Your goodness reach me our Saviour the Son of God

Honour and hymns are due unto You, O God. We also praise You, our Saviour Son of God

Joyfully and worthily are due unto Trisagion. To You truly is the glory, our Saviour Son of God

Wash (away) my transgressions, grant me Your grace according to the grace of Your Spirit, our Saviour the Son of God

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50 See the description of the manuscript.

51 The title in B is "Psali Batos, two strophes for stanza, to be recited yearly."

52 This part is omitted in Ms B.
And also let Your pity be upon us and have mercy on us. Make me alive for Your mercy’s sake), our Saviour the Son of God

My sins, do not remember them, O King of Heaven, suddenly of heaven our Saviour the Son of God

Woe to me and woe to me my Lord, if You do not have mercy upon me. Let Your Holy Spirit guide me, our Saviour the Son of God

Incline Your ear O Saviour. Grant me a sweet time, hear my voice quickly, our Saviour the Son of God

Arise! Help truly us, O True Vineyard, Son of God, our Saviour the Son of God

Who gave us salvation, grant me grace and consolation. Hasten in Your divine might, our Saviour the Son of God

53 This strophe does not have any meaning but the author added in order to start with the letter □.
The rest of these days, preserve them, O Great Shepherd, Saviour the Son of God

Be for me hope, O Only-Begotten Son our Saviour, honoured without doubt (O) Son of God

I pray unto You with all my heart grant me to do what is pleasing to You, in order to praise You, our Saviour the Son of God

For You are also Holy, O (You) who knows my weakness. Listen to my voice (O) God of Jacob, our Saviour the Son of God

Give me my Lord, repentance in Your Second Coming, for to You is the glory, our Saviour the Son of God

If we …

COMMENTARY

54 Read □σ□□.
55 B read v ‘□□”
This text presented above groups not of four letters, as in the above two psalis, but only two letters, hence this psali is longer than the previous ones.

This psali also has a refrain “our Saviour the Son of God”

As with the previous two psalis, we find the frequent interchange between the first person singular and plural.

This psali is a meditation on Christ’s name.

CONCLUSION

Despite the late age of the manuscripts, these provide us with a new type of Psalis. It is expected that the publication of other manuscripts will reveal other types.

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